

BLUM & POE

Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo

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Yukinori Yanagi

Blum & Poe, Tokyo

November 2-December 21, 2019

Opening reception: Saturday, November 2, 6-8pm

Following the announcement of the artist's worldwide representation, Blum & Poe is pleased to present the gallery's first solo exhibition with Yukinori Yanagi. This presentation succeeds the two-part historical survey exhibition curated by Mika Yoshitake at Blum & Poe Los Angeles, *Parergon: Japanese Art of the 1980s and 1990s*, which featured a selection of Yanagi's formative works from the era including the monumental *Ground Transposition* (1987) which interrogates narratives of colonial occupation and wartime incarceration, and *Pacific K100B* (1997) which confronts national histories of naval war and violence.

Yanagi is well known for his work dealing with systems of institutional and state control, national borders, colonization, diaspora, and refugee crises, often focusing on politically charged representations of nationalism and "symbolic signs of stasis." This presentation on view in Tokyo is connected to a body of work produced in the late 1990s and early 2000s that marked a shift in the artist's practice, in which he employed the Pacific Ocean as a research site for excavating hidden histories of war. The exhibition centerpiece, *Akitsushima 50-I/II* (2019), is a cast-iron replica of the World War II Imperial Japanese Navy seaplane tender *Akitsushima*, which the U.S. Navy bombed and sank in September 1944 and currently rests at the bottom of the Coron Bay of Busuanga Island in the Philippines. The numerical values of its title refer to the scale of the replica to the original at 1:50, and indicate a second iteration of the sculpture—the first was completed in 2000 and now resides in the permanent collection of the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art. The show also includes the painting *Akitsushima Instruction*, the watercolor *Diving Log (Akitsushima)*, and photo works *Akitsushima (BOW)*, and *Akitsushima (GUN)*, which document the artist's fieldwork conducted at the time while scuba diving through the sunken structure with video and still cameras in hand.

The Pacific series (1997) was the first of this thematic suite, in which Yanagi took on the plastic battleship model kits of his childhood memories, his first encounters with the remnants of the Pacific War. By enlarging the scale of the plastic model kit and producing them in cast iron, Yanagi initiates a reassessment of our collective histories of violence, focusing on the physical details that reflect technological advances in the construction of these warships that revolutionized war. The work revealed in 2019 differs from its predecessor in 2000 in that the warship and its many disparate components were first presented embedded within a frame just as one would find it packed in a plastic model kit. Today, Yanagi separates each of the components from the frame, parts deliberately scattered in disarray on the floor, ambivalently in a process of either construction or

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deconstruction. This ambiguity is deeply symbolic of the act of reflecting on the significance of war and the fraught effects of Japan's Imperialist expansion, reiterated in the title of the work which dually refers to the warship and the ancient term for Honshu (mainland) Japan.

Yanagi's work is represented in notable public collections worldwide, including the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, OH; Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Nusantara, Jakarta, Indonesia; Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna, Austria; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA; Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia; Rachofsky Collection, Dallas, TX; Tate Gallery, London, UK; and the Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama, Japan; among many more. In 2020, a large-scale exhibition focusing on key works of Yanagi's over thirty-year career will follow in Los Angeles.