

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Paul Mogensen

**Blum & Poe, Los Angeles
January 23–March 6, 2021**

December 14, 2020, Los Angeles—Blum & Poe is pleased to present a solo exhibition of works by New York-based artist Paul Mogensen, following the recent announcement of the gallery's co-representation of the artist with Karma. Presenting paintings dating back to the beginning of the artist's career in the 1960s and recent works from the last decade, the exhibition also marks the artist's first show in his hometown of Los Angeles in over forty years.

Based on essential numerical sequences and ratios, Mogensen creates esoteric compositions that invite the viewer to make sense of the planar space. First conceiving a system and utilizing a mathematical formula, he allows the progression to dictate the composition. Mogensen prefers not to date or title his paintings—while this can be read as a gesture foregrounding the timelessness of his work, it also underlines the necessity for a non-linear narrative in art history. Avoiding both metaphorical and conceptualist language, he rejects most canonical terminology—including “minimalism” and “abstraction.” Largely shaped by his education focusing on mathematics and art at the University of Southern California, Mogensen's practice reflects his wide interests ranging from fourteenth century Sieneese painting to Russian constructivists such as Alexander Rodchenko and Vladimir Tatlin.

Building upon the beauty of simplicity, Mogensen's works are gracefully concise and yet yield complex and intense visual experiences—similar to an elegant mathematical formula. His earliest paintings from the '60s epitomize his interest in reduction. Stacked vertically, these modular, multi-panel works are made of rectangles that gradually increase in size, and utilize negative space through exacting processes. These monochrome compositions vibrate with saturated pigments—paint he applies straight out of the tube, rejecting any mixture. The pursuit of reduction is a large and compelling part of his practice, seen in his use of pure chemical pigmentation and numerical sequencing alike. Various visual relationships—between color and form, canvas and the wall—give way to a visual illusion blending the painterly with the architectural. As longtime friend artist Lynda Benglis points out: “Paul's painting challenged both the wall and the floor space, literally breaking up the surface of the wall. This mocking of the wall was a totally new idea.” Highlighting the kinship between the works and the architectural space, one of the multi-panel works guided by the golden ratio is exhibited in the downstairs gallery constructed using the same perfect mathematical formula—with each room reducing in size in accordance with the golden section.

Continuing this application of mathematical and architectural processes onto a single canvas in his most recent works, Mogensen utilizes the $N + 1$ progression pattern to grow and propagate the square shape. Traveling around the edge, the squares migrate towards the center, creating a spiral form. The oscillation between colors and forms implies a fugal complexity, as the human brain tends to seek out and complete a pattern that might not initially be there. The use of sharp contrast in colors—deep cadmium red on black, ultramarine blue on hot pink—adds additional dimension to the single-layered surface. Isolating color, line, form, and light, Mogensen creates a pathway for the eyes to move along the edge of the canvas. Different from figurative artworks in which human faces automatically activate neural systems, geometric abstractions require active thought. This show is an invitation for deep and silent observation in an age of digital stimuli excess, providing a sanctuary for busy minds.

Paul Mogensen (b. Los Angeles, 1941) lives and works in New York. He attended the University of Southern California. In 2019 the artist received the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Art, and his work has been the subject of a solo exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX and Karma, New York, NY, and was featured in a group exhibition at the Vienna Secession, Vienna, Austria. Mogensen's work is represented in the collections of major museums in the U.S. and abroad, including: Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Harvard Art Museums/ Fogg Museum, Cambridge, MA; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Switzerland; Menil Collection, Houston, TX; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; New York Public Library, New York, NY; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT.

About Blum & Poe

Blum & Poe was founded by Timothy Blum and Jeffrey Poe in Santa Monica in September of 1994 as a space to show local and international contemporary art in all media. Blum's extensive experience in the Japanese art world combined with Poe's keen knowledge of emerging artists in Los Angeles, together resulted in an international program of influential artists. Throughout a twenty-six-year history, Blum & Poe has shaped the trajectory of contemporary art by championing artists at all stages of their careers—cultivating the lineages that run between emerging and established practices, and working with artist estates to generate new discourse surrounding historical work.

In 2003 the gallery moved to a larger space in Culver City, and in 2009 Blum & Poe purchased and renovated its current 22,000 square foot complex on La Cienega Boulevard. In this location the gallery has since held museum-caliber surveys, examining the historical work of such movements as the Japanese Mono-ha school (2012); the Korean Dansaekhwa monochrome painters (2014); the European postwar movement CoBrA (2015); Japanese art of 1980s and '90s (2019); a rereading of Brazilian Modernism (2019); and a revisionist take on the 1959 MoMA exhibition, *New Images of Man* (2020). To produce these exhibitions, Blum & Poe has worked with celebrated curators such as Joan Kee, Mika Yoshitake, Sofia Gotti, and Alison M. Gingeras.

In 2014, Blum & Poe opened galleries in New York and Tokyo to focus on intimately scaled projects in tandem with an expansive program of exhibitions, lectures, performance series, screenings, and an annual art book fair at its base in Los Angeles. In 2015, Blum & Poe was certified as an Arts:Earth Partnership (AEP) green art gallery and consequently became one of the first green certified galleries in the United States. Blum & Poe's own publishing division focuses on sharing aspects of its program via original scholarship and accessible media ranging from academic monographs, audio series, magazines, and artists' books. In 2020, the gallery launched Blum & Poe Broadcasts, an online platform showcasing artists' projects in conjunction with physical installations or as standalone digital endeavors.

Press Inquiries

Naz Cuguoğlu
Communications and Media Editor, Los Angeles
naz@blumandpoe.com

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