

BLUM & POE

Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo

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Alexander Tovborg

Sacrificial Love

Blum & Poe, Los Angeles

March 23 – May 1, 2021

March 3, 2021, Los Angeles—Blum & Poe is pleased to present *Sacrificial Love*, an exhibition of new paintings and a bronze sculpture by Copenhagen-based artist Alexander Tovborg. This marks Tovborg's third solo presentation with Blum & Poe.

In his paintings, drawings, sculptures, and performances, Tovborg approaches spirituality and mythology as crucial components of the human experience. Aiming to reconstruct history, his work invites us to redefine humankind's position in relation to the hierarchies and power structures inherent to these oral and written narratives. Characterized by speculative and fictional tale-telling, these works come to life as a visualization of a new alphabet through fragmented and poetic imagery. Focusing on subplots of Western religions and European folk traditions in which the artist is rooted, his works are a hybrid of fantasy and raw abstraction, staging dreamlike sceneries featuring biomorphic forms. Tovborg's past bodies of work, such as *The Knight of Faith*, finding its central theme in the myth of Noah's Ark, *The Rape of Europha*, a meditation on Europe's current political crises, and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, an overarching parable of good versus evil, all come together to tell a delicately layered story, which has often been excluded from historical accounts.

In his new series *Sacrificial Love*, Tovborg continues his critical approach towards grand religious narratives, and reconstructs them through a personal and intimate story—the pregnancy of his partner, cellist Cæcilie Trier. Born on the feast day of Saint Cecilia, who symbolizes the central role of music in the liturgy, Trier is portrayed as this most famous virgin martyr of the early church in Tovborg's recent works. The paintings and the bronze sculpture in the show are imbued with Christian symbolism: evil dragons, lilies for divine sacrifice, and the seduction of Eve by the serpent. Tovborg reclaims the mythological chain of power in these narratives by manipulating the characters, depicting the Virgin Mary with a daughter, or speculating about a new mythical creature that is half-human and half-scorpion, echoing Trier's zodiac. With feathers and halos around her figure Cæcilie becomes part of nature and the cosmos, challenging the man-made linear history suggesting one that is cyclical and holistic. The artist's choice of household materials, such as cleaning cloths or bedlinens, as his primary painting surface further aims to problematize the portrayal of women as domestic workers throughout history.

Tovborg's works draw a mystical circle in the exhibition space—one that is beyond time and space, initiating from the cycle of motherhood and eventually leading to an existential awareness that is both sensual and poetic.

Alexander Tovborg (b. 1983, Copenhagen, Denmark) received his BA from Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Karlsruhe, Germany and his MFA from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen, Denmark. Tovborg's work has been the subject of international solo exhibitions

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including *The Deity and its Creators*, Rudolph Tegner Museum & Statue Park, Dronningmølle, Denmark (2019); *Knight of Faith*, GL STRAND, Copenhagen, Denmark (2016); *The Rape of Europha*, State of Concept, Athens, Greece (2016); *Bocca Baciata*, Overgaden Institute for Contemporary Art, Copenhagen, Denmark (2014); *Teenage Jesus*, Hospitalhof, Stuttgart, Germany (2012); and *Tre*, Museet for Religiøs Kunst, Lemvig, Denmark (2011). Selections of his oeuvre have been featured in institutional group exhibitions including at Camden Arts Centre, London, UK (2020); the 9th Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art, Gothenburg, Sweden (2017); Museet for Religiøs Kunst, Lemvig, Denmark (2016); Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland (2013); and the Museo Nacional de la Estampa, Mexico City, Mexico (2012). At Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, CA in 2015, Tovborg's work was included in *The Avant-Garde Won't Give Up: Cobra and Its Legacy*, a rereading of the Cobra postwar movement, curated by Alison M. Gingeras. Tovborg's work is permanently installed in various public Danish institutions and was recently acquired by the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA.

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.

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