

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Eddie Martinez**

### *Green Thumb*

**Blum & Poe, Los Angeles**

**May 15 – June 26, 2021**

March 15, 2021, Los Angeles—Blum & Poe is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Brooklyn-based artist Eddie Martinez. This is the artist's first solo presentation with the gallery, following the announcement of his representation last fall.

**Alison M. Gingeras:** Tell me about the flowers. I don't know a lot about your process when you're working in a figurative mode.

**Eddie Martinez:** My process is straightforward. These are just still life paintings. Except, they are not from life. They are these fantastical flowers. When I am painting these things, it is pretty basic. It is just an object.

**AG:** Do you start from an archetype? There are certain floral forms that repeat from canvas to canvas. Is there an archetypal image of a still life in your head that you generate permutations from?

**EM:** Yeah, there always is a big cartoon flower. Sort of like Christopher Wool who adopted that cartoony daisy a long time ago. That daisy is always there, sort of tilting to the left. Then generally, there is a mushroom. And there are some circular things like berries.



Eddie Martinez, *BAP Flower 8 (Polka)*, 2020

**AG:** Is there a particular reason you paint them?

**EM:** My initial thought is no. But then, if I think about where I grew up and the local vegetation of those places like Florida and California, I can't help but see the connection and the long-distance

# BLUM & POE

Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo

memory of that and how it has impacted me. Both of my parents always kept potted plants, interesting ones, like weirdo succulents that looked like peas on a string and those little ones that look like a butt. I was obsessed with the Venus flytraps you could get on your way outta Publix. *Little Shop of Horrors* made a big impact on me. At one point I kinda thought about titling this show “Feed me, Seymour” but I guess I wimped out.

**AG:** And are these still life pictures a vehicle for something else in your work, formally speaking?

**EM:** Definitely. The composition is there, and it is basically the same. And then it allows me that space to play with color, shape, and line.

**AG:** Is there an automatism going on with these paintings? When I look at your abstractions, I read them as part of an art historical lineage, coming from automatic drawing processes. How much of that is also happening in these more figurative works?

**EM:** It is. But I think it is more about the automatism that comes with the color and the shapes because I do want them to retain some kind of floweriness. The lines are a little more controlled as far as wanting them to look like flowers versus an abstraction, where the line can be all over the place. I think the freedom comes with the color and shape in these.

**AG:** I also like how some of them are whited out, becoming ghosts of themselves.

**EM:** Exactly, there is a lot of freedom and automatic movement in those. But I think that they often start with a skeleton.

**AG:** Do they start from drawing?

**EM:** I draw a lot so they generally start from a drawing, or sometimes I will just visually chop them up after I have made some and make a new one.



Eddie Martinez, *BAP Flower 3 (White Sunrise)*, 2020

**AG:** Do you paint from that drawing process, or do you paint it directly onto the canvas? How built-

up are these?

**EM:** You mean texture-wise?

**AG:** Or between the texture and the image. Do you work out some things on paper and then directly paint onto the canvas?

**EM:** I don't work on the paper that much. I just do a line drawing, and how much of it goes on there depends. Sometimes I could lay down the base, be really light with it, and be happy with that. Or sometimes I paint over it a bunch. Then you get that automatic texture buildup. Sometimes I will add things, like some kind of detritus, studio trash and baby wipes.

**AG:** Do you have them fixed to the canvas?

**EM:** One way or the other with paint or glue. But sometimes I paint them into the canvas.

**AG:** It is so hard to see on the images of the paintings. It doesn't translate.

**EM:** I know. I am not going to try and make them sound like there is some mystical thing in them. They are just flowers, as simple as that. Then all the other things that happen are in my general studio practice. It is not like all of a sudden, because I am painting flowers, I am going to paint them hyperrealistically or something extreme.

**AG:** Art historically speaking, are you looking at anything specific? Obviously, the history of the flower as a subject is very rich and super interesting. How much are you thinking about that history?

**EM:** Certain things are just burned into my brain at this point. Matisse's handling of flowers is definitely one of the most important to me.

**AG:** What is it about Matisse particularly?

**EM:** Just everything; they are so wispy. It looks like they were never really thought of, but they are so considered at the same time. I think they are amazing. I also like Picasso's weirder works with heavy black lines and outer space. Also, Cézanne and Van Gogh's works are beautiful. I don't know if I really think about it anymore. I already thought about it so much that it is all just in there. Bernard Buffet made these brutal flower paintings I love. Isa Genzken's roses, Grace Hartigan and Lichtenstein. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner painted super vibrant flowers as does Judith Linhares.

**AG:** That visual memory informs the automatic-ness on an unconscious level?

**EM:** Basically, it's all part of a mental Photoshop thing at this point.

**AG:** Maybe this is a little off-topic, but I was also thinking about this French painter from the 18th century: Anne Vallayer-Coster. Her flower paintings are amazing. The genre of still life was obviously tied up with gender politics because women artists were not allowed to be trained in the

# BLUM & POE

Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo

same way as their male counterparts. Academic training with access to a live nude model was a no-no. And even if there were a handful of top tier female genre painters, her floral landscapes stand out in that 18<sup>th</sup> century world. Her flowers are insane, and they have this abundance that I think your works have. Vallayer-Coster's work seems to treat abundance and joy as her prime subject. And of course, the history of the still life or all of vegetal motifs over the course of art history have always carried charged or coded meanings. In Van Eyck's paintings, the seventy-odd flowers and plants in the *Ghent Altarpiece*, for example, each had specific symbolic meanings! Sadly, I feel like over the course of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the viability of joy and abundance as a "valid" subject was destroyed or outmoded. Do you connect with the subject of joy through these paintings?



Anne Vallayer-Coster, *Bouquet of Flowers in a Blue Porcelain Vase*, 1776, © 2017 Dallas Museum of Art.

**EM:** Definitely. That is what I was trying to get at before when I was saying they are just flowers. It is a really enjoyable thing for me to paint. I don't feel the need to inject any kind of justification or deeper meaning into these paintings. It is such a basic and generic subject matter that allows me to have a lot of fun with it. I do get a lot of joy out of it actually. You can be really feminine with them, and there is obviously a lot of history with the sexuality of flowers: Georgia O'Keeffe, Louise Bourgeois. I paint these mushrooms that look like dicks all the time, and they are also in there. You can be humorous with them and they are easy. I don't think I'd have to think about them at all. As I am making them, the question is whether I like the way they look or not. It is really that matter of fact, which I enjoy. That brings me joy.

**Eddie Martinez** (b. 1977, Groton Naval Base, CT) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. Martinez's unconventional practice has received growing institutional support, with five museum solo shows in the last three years, including at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit and the Yuz Museum in Shanghai in 2019, a show of new sculptures and paintings at the Bronx Museum in 2018, an exhibition that featured a rotating display of his recent works on paper at the Drawing Center in 2017, and an exhibition at the Davis Museum at Wellesley College, MA in 2017. His works are represented in international public collections including the Aurora Museum, Shanghai, China; Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx, NY; Davis Museum at Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA; Hiscox Collection, London, UK; La Colección Júmex, Mexico City, Mexico; Marciano Collection, Los Angeles, CA; Morgan Library, New York, NY; RISD Museum, Providence, RI; Saatchi Collection, London, UK; and the Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China, among others.

**Alison M. Gingeras** is a curator and writer based in New York and Warsaw.

# BLUM & POE

Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo

## 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

## Follow Blum & Poe

 @blumandpoe

 @blumandpoe

 @blumandpoe