

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Tomoo Gokita**

***FRESH***

**Blum & Poe, Los Angeles**  
**May 15 – June 26, 2021**

April 5, 2021, Los Angeles—Blum & Poe is pleased to present *FRESH*, an exhibition of new paintings by Tokyo-based artist Tomoo Gokita. This is the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery, and the first dedicated to his renewed engagement with painting in color.

Whether working in greyscale or in color, Gokita's paintings have long been characterized by their psychologically charged subject matter: uncanny portraits, disquieting still lifes, and dream-like abstractions. The cast of cultural archetypes seen in his works of the past decade—from wrestlers and starlets to dancers and bureaucrats—were initially drawn from photographs the artist found in vintage magazines and newspapers. Once immersed in the process of applying paint to canvas, he would spontaneously distort these images. In his recent paintings, however, Gokita no longer refers to printed matter: the figures and forms emerge directly from his imagination. More ethereal and amorphous than before, Gokita's supernatural figures are at once angelic and demonic, reminiscent of androids, aliens, and other undefinable chimeras. They recall the ominous creatures of sci-fi B-movies while evoking the vernaculars of Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali, Giorgio De Chirico, Francis Bacon, and Philip Guston. This conflation of the subconscious and the conscious is mirrored in the creative process itself, in which Gokita often paints and repaints the subject, sometimes changing the orientation of the canvas mid-way through, creating both literal and psychological palimpsests of rejected, reconciled, and mutated forms.

Although Gokita is widely known for working in greyscale, color has been a recurring feature of his practice since the beginning of his career. Some of his earliest paintings from the 2000s were landscapes and abstractions executed in the similar muted greens, yellows, and pinks seen in the current body of work. He likens this tone to faded photographs and magazine pages. At the end of the same decade, he produced a distinctive series of cloudy abstractions in blue. Gokita's return to color in the 2020s has given him a newfound sense of liberation in his expressive range. Reflecting on this shift in his practice, the artist states, "Miles Davis writes about not fearing change in his autobiography too. So I decided to change."

Blum & Poe will publish a new book on Tomoo Gokita in conjunction with this exhibition. Designed by Brian Roettinger, this 272-page publication compiles dozens of Gokita's paintings amid a vast array of other imagery, ranging from casually taken Polaroids and photoshoots, to his designs for zines, T-shirts, book covers, and album covers dating back to his former career as a graphic designer. This publication features an essay by Jamieson Webster, the first to examine Gokita's images through the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis. Webster writes: "his work, with its emphasis (at times) on realistic figuration, is made uncanny by giving it an aura of today's aggressive human relationships and the sheer fact of a culture of

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Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo

constant surveillance. Indeed what is uncanny is putting into his work the affective climate of the super-ego—showing that we live in a time that has pushed us to the limit of life and death. Our true aesthetic is the uncanny.”

This exhibition also coincides with Tomoo Gokita’s first solo museum presentation outside Japan, on view at Dallas Contemporary, Dallas, TX, from June 12 to August 22.

**Tomoo Gokita** (b. 1969, Tokyo, Japan) lives and works in Tokyo. His recent series of color paintings received their worldwide debut in *New Images of Man*, curated by Alison Gingeras and held at Blum & Poe, Los Angeles (2020). Major recent museum solo exhibitions include *PEEKABOO* at Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan (2018), and a retrospective, *THE GREAT CIRCUS*, at Kawamura Memorial DIC Museum of Art, Sakura, Japan (2014). His work has also been featured in notable surveys such as *Wonderful My Art*, Kawaguchiko Museum of Art, Yamanashi, Japan (2013); *The Unseen Relationship: Form and Abstraction*, Kawamura Memorial DIC Museum of Art, Sakura, Japan (2012); *Gateway: Japan*, Torrance Art Museum, Torrance, CA (2011); *New York Minute*, Macro Future Museum, Rome, Italy (2009); and *Collected Visions*, Pera Museum, Istanbul, Turkey (2009). Gokita’s work is included in institutional collections such as the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; the Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles, CA; and the X Museum, Beijing, China.

## 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,

# BLUM & POE

Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo

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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