

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sonia Gomes
When the Sun Rises in Blue

Blum & Poe, Los Angeles
November 6–December 18, 2021

Los Angeles, CA, October 22, 2021—Blum & Poe is pleased to present the first U.S. solo exhibition of São Paulo-based artist Sonia Gomes. This presentation serves as an introduction to her practice, spanning key bodies of work integral to the artist's oeuvre, and a new site-specific installation produced over the course of a year and a half.

Sonia Gomes combines found and gifted textiles with scavenged materials such as driftwood, fishnet, buttons, and birdcages, often bound by thread and wire, to create abstract multi-dimensional compositions that reclaim the Afro-Brazilian experience. Employing historically feminized materials and crafts, she creates powerful assemblages that capture and celebrate marginalized histories, rendering those of women, people of color, and countless anonymous individuals, visible. From a mother's wedding dress and a grandmother's towel to tablecloths and bed throws, the artist invites each item to tell its story—memories and traces of identity that she weaves into the grand narrative conjured in sculptural form. She says: "There's a relationship between time and reflection—all the materials that I work with are an exercise in exploring the soul of these objects. It is closely linked to the intimate history of other people."

At the entry point of the exhibition, a sculpture rendered from a broken birdcage hangs in solitude. From Gomes's *A vida não me assusta* or "Life Doesn't Scare Me" series, the work conjures both the radical freedom of a bird and its existence within the constraints of a cage. Citing Maya Angelou as a reference for these compositions, Gomes applies an element of gravity to each work by inserting a single rock inside.

Sinfonia Branca (2021) or "White Symphony," is a large-scale site-specific hanging installation of pendulum-like swathed structures in pale fabrics and laces. Together these sculptures from the artist's *Pendentes* or "Pendent" series generate a labyrinthine presence. The work is installed in dialogue with the shifting shadows and natural light that pass through the gallery during the course of a day. These forms verge between cosmic and biomorphic, with tendrils like umbilical cords. Gomes has been working with such fiber sculptures since the mid 2000s, initially as vehicles for performance work tied to Carnival and the Tropicália movement.

In an adjacent gallery, sculptures from her *Raizes* or "Roots" series rest on the floor, with cocoon-like and bulbous fabric twined around tree roots. The wall works that hang nearby, called *Patuás*, are soft forms that incorporate amulets such as coins, written messages, and sacred herbs. These sculptures channel her childhood years in the Brazilian city of Caetanópolis, where she witnessed her grandmother, a benzedeira, perform Afro-Brazilian spiritual rites and divinations.

Quando o sol nascer azul (2021) or "When the Sun Rises in Blue," is an arresting wall work in blue that recalls the sea and the movement of the waves. Crafted from a range of fabrics—some that have been in Gomes's collection for almost twenty years—*Quando o sol nascer azul* is layered with fish casting nets and Renascença lace salvaged by her assistant in his hometown in northeastern Brazil.

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Sonia Gomes lives and works in São Paulo. Gomes's first institutional solo exhibition in Europe premiered in 2019, at the Museum Frieder Burda, Salon Berlin and Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden, Germany. Her first major institutional solo exhibition in Brazil toured in 2018, at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo and at the Museu de Arte Contemporânea of Rio de Janeiro. Her work has been exhibited in significant institutional group exhibitions such as the Liverpool Biennial, Liverpool, UK (2021); Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea (2021); *Revival*, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C. (2017); *New Shamans/Novos Xamãs: Brazilian Artists*, Rubell Family Collection, Miami, FL, traveled to the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C. (2016); *Revolution in the Making: Abstract Sculpture by Women 1947-2016*, Hauser Wirth & Schimmel, Los Angeles, CA (2016); 56th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (2015); *Art & Textiles—Fabric as Material and Concept in Modern Art*, Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, Germany (2013); *A Nova Mão Afro-Brasileira*, Museu Afro Brasil, São Paulo, Brazil (2013); and *Out of Fashion. Textile in International Contemporary Art*, Kunsten Museum of Modern Art Aalborg, Aalborg, Denmark (2013). Her work is represented in public collections worldwide including the Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires, Argentina; Museu Afro Brasil, São Paulo, Brazil; Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Brazil; Museu de Arte do Rio, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Muzeum Susch, Zerne, Switzerland; Rubell Family Collection, Miami, FL; San Antonio Museum of Art, San Antonio, TX; and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY.

About Blum & Poe

Blum & Poe was founded by Tim Blum and Jeff 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 resulted in an international program of influential artists. Throughout a twenty-seven-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. Currently, Blum & Poe represents forty-eight artists and eight estates from sixteen countries worldwide.

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 staged 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 Alison M. Gingeras, Sofia Gotti, Joan Kee, and Mika Yoshitake.

In 2014, Blum & Poe opened galleries in New York and Tokyo to focus on intimately scaled projects in new contexts. These expansions tie into the gallery's wide-reaching program that includes exhibitions, lectures, performance series, screenings, and an annual art book fair at its base in Los Angeles. Blum & Poe's publishing division democratically circulates its program through original scholarship and accessible media ranging from academic monographs, audio series, magazines, to 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.

Across the three global locations, Blum & Poe prioritizes environmental and community stewardship in all operations. In 2015, Blum & Poe was certified as an Arts:Earth Partnership (AEP) green art gallery in Los

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Angeles and consequently became one of the first green certified galleries in the United States. The gallery is also a member of the Gallery Climate Coalition, which works to facilitate a more sustainable commercial art world and reduce the industry's collective carbon footprint. Blum & Poe is committed to fostering inclusive and equitable communities both in their physical and online spaces and believes that everybody should have equal access to creating and engaging with contemporary art.

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