

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Marc Richards
Los Angeles Portraits
Organized by Jonas Wood

Blum & Poe, Los Angeles
March 12–April 30, 2022

Los Angeles, CA, February 28, 2022—Blum & Poe is pleased to present *Los Angeles Portraits*, a selection of drawings by Marc Richards. Organized by Jonas Wood, the works shown here depict well-known figures in the Los Angeles art scene prior to the global turning point of 2020. Taken as a whole, this collection of work presents a time capsule—the opportunity to revisit a moment of blossoming social art history in Southern California, blissfully frozen on a precipice. A catalog of the work in *Los Angeles Portraits* will launch in tandem with the exhibition.

A Portrait of the Collector as a Young Artist:
Marc Richards' Los Angeles Portraits

Up the stairs behind an elegant storefront on La Brea in Los Angeles Marc Richards prepares for his first solo exhibition. Gallery debuts might happen every weekend, but rarely does an artist emerge after almost fifty years of trading and collecting art, and even more rarely at one of the most prominent contemporary art galleries, Blum & Poe, organized by established artist Jonas Wood.

“I’m 72 years old and I’ve never had a show, I’ve never thought of having a show. Never even dreamed of having a show.” Begun on a whim, against the wall in black frames lean almost fifty portraits of the dealers, artists, collectors, and impresarios that make up the Los Angeles art world in 2020, both a collection of characters and a time capsule.

With a good tan behind a thin beard and a dapper driving cap, Richards leans back behind his desk to tell his story of how after a lifetime of trading art, he’s making his artistic debut. “In 1972, I took a few months off to travel before attending law school. In Morocco, I found myself in awe of what I was seeing. I’d get high and I’d spend hours and hours looking at carpets and at craftsmen’s hands hammering copper and my aesthetic sensibilities woke up. I never made it to law school.”

This nascent feeling set him into the business end of art—from antiquities to contemporary art and back again—and until recently that’s where his aesthetic sensibility stayed. The works that surround him in the gallery tell his tale too. An ancient Chinese statue and a ceremonial African mask stand on pedestals not far from a large photograph plucked from Google Street View by Canadian artist Jon Rafman and a painting still in its packing by Los Angeles’s Aaron Garber-Maikovska, brushstrokes peeking from behind translucent plastic.

“A couple years ago I started dabbling, mostly drawing psychedelic-like figures with pastels. Then one day, I started to think I’d do a realistic image. After drawing a couple of celebrities, I realized why not do the art world. After all, this is the community I’m in. I posted one on Instagram and I got this cool response from everyone.”

Richards describes his pictures as residing somewhere between “a portrait and a caricature, but mainly I want to convey the sincerity and respect I feel for my colleagues.” The art world to many outsiders is an

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insider's game. One of the old myths about art is that of the lonely genius, but contemporary art has always been made within communities of support and often commerce. Behind every picture and sculpture, video and performance, stand hundreds of people from cohorts to curators, collectors and dealers, trying to midwife art into existence. And here alongside 49 portraits of LA artists such as Njideka Akunyili Crosby and Mark Grotjahn are all the diverse characters that make up a time and place, from dealers like iconic LA gallerist Shaun Caley Regen and François Ghebaly, to collector (and recent art fair founder) Dean Valentine alongside museum directors Ann Philbin and Michael Govan. Within many of the pictures, Richards has drawn objects that he associates with each subject: some absurd, some direct. Behind art dealer and hotelier Benjamin Trigano is a "No Vacancy" sign, next to a "Waiting List" for collectors trying to secure (one assumes) work of the more sought-after artists in the gallery. Collector and dealer Stefan Simchowicz, in the large-brimmed hat he often wears, looked to Richards "like an avocado farmer," so he appears with a couple of those green fruits floating above him. Woods beams from one of the pots made by his wife, artist Shio Kusaka, and Kusaka appears a few portraits later with basketballs from Jonas' paintings bouncing behind her. Above gallerist Tim Blum, Richards has added a red sun, symbolic for him of Blum's enduring support for Japanese artists.

On the impetus for this exhibition Richards explains, "Jonas has a real passion for what I'm doing—he says somehow without knowing it, I documented the art world in a moment in time. And he found that fascinating." A time capsule of a moment as seen by one of the unlikely figures who stumbled into art and stuck around for a lifetime, the portrait series is wrought with a charm naive in its approach as it is sophisticated in its knowledge of how all these people fit into the cultural history of a place. The time that Richards has worked in the art world tracked with the rise of Los Angeles from a relative backwater to one of the global centers of contemporary art. That boom has attracted, shaped, and aided almost every single person he's drawn.

"Though I'd like to do more, the problem is unfortunately I couldn't do everybody," he said shifting through the last of his framed portraits. "But it wasn't formulaic at all, I just started with the people I knew."

– Andrew Berardini

Marc Richards lives and works in Los Angeles, California. Richards has been involved in contemporary art for more than thirty years as both a dealer and collector. He is the producer and moderator of "Art Matters," a series of panel discussions interviewing members of the Los Angeles art community.

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 fifty artists and nine 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

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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 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.

Press Inquiries


Nicoletta Beyer
Communications and Editorial Director, Los Angeles
nicoletta@blumandpoe.com

Christie Hayden
Communications and Social Media Editor, Los Angeles
christie@blumandpoe.com

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