

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tony Lewis

EONS OF NEON NESCIENT PEONS POPCORN INFLUENCE AND SUCH

Blum & Poe, Los Angeles

March 12–April 30, 2022

Opening Reception: Saturday, March 12, 2–8pm

RSVP Required

Los Angeles, CA, February 25, 2022—Blum & Poe is pleased to present *EONS OF NEON NESCIENT PEONS POPCORN INFLUENCE AND SUCH*, Chicago-based artist Tony Lewis's third solo exhibition with the gallery.

This presentation shows Lewis further engaging with the medium of drawing in three distinct groupings. In the first grouping of work, Lewis uses the modern English alphabet as signifiers, employing his signature graphite to explore intuitive permutations within the written word. In the two other bodies of work presented here—both taking as their conceptual departure point the symbolic sign system of Gregg shorthand—Lewis further examines the liminal space between this repertoire of signifiers and the expressive nature of gestural abstraction.

Open (2022), *Ppn ocor* (2022), and *Eon* (2022) are works created as variations on words lifted from journals, ruminations on ideas of race, that the artist kept while completing his MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago; back when he was brewing what could be considered the foundation of his visual practice's interest in linguistics. Each word, appropriated from the artist's prior self, is presented here as an anagram that has neither a distinctive entry nor exit point, though there is always a through line deceptively indicating how one might traverse the letters that they encounter. *Eon*, for instance, might be read as "one" or "eno" if the viewer were to follow its line in either direction.

In Lewis's pieces containing signs from Gregg shorthand, the artist is reprising and expanding upon some of the ciphers that originated in his alphabet-based pieces. *Peon* (2022) and *Neon* (2022), for instance, toy with the set of phonetics shared by *Open*, *Ppn ocor*, and *Eon*—reconfiguring the sound of each word and presenting it with a different set of signifiers. The shorthand works allow Lewis to further explore the formal qualities of the text. These shorthand signs, which Lewis inserts into his gestural graphite compositions, interlace both the structures of typeface and the intuitive elements of abstract expressionism: the architectural pairs with the corporeal, form collides with emotion, and everyday modes of imparting meaning are infused with the artist's ability to channel the unfathomable.

The third body of work presented here sees Lewis further leaning into the rhythmic, bodily qualities of language. In *Her* (2021), *Nescient* (2021), and *Influence* (2021) the artist begins with a gesture that responds to the sound of the word that makes up each title. The composition then continues to evolve as an innate response to its linguistic subject matter. Color and form support the title, serving its conceptual end and propping it up.

EONS OF NEON NESCIENT PEONS POPCORN INFLUENCE AND SUCH advances Lewis's parsing of the modes of communication that are inherent in the visual expression of language. His appropriated words become fodder for an endlessly evolving drawing practice, extending into shorthand drawings and abstraction and pushing the forms of communication into an ever more physical realm. The artist channels

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his instincts to whittle the methods of communication down to their finest minutiae—reaching an instinctual connection to the meaning of his chosen word or words that supersedes semiotics and generates a conduit to comprehension.

Tony Lewis (b. 1986, Los Angeles, CA) lives and works in Chicago. His work has been the subject of recent solo exhibitions including *Anthology 2014–2016*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. (2018); *Plunder*, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA (2017); *Alms, Comity and Plunder*, Museo Marino Marini, Florence, Italy (2016); and *nomenclature movement free pressure power weight*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, OH (2015). Lewis participated in the 2014 iteration of the Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, NY and was the recipient of the 2017–2018 Ruth Ann and Nathan Perlmutter Artist-in-Residence Award at the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, Waltham, MA.

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 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

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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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