

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Kenjiro Okazaki**

***TOPICA PICTUS Revisited***

*Forty Red, White, And Blue Shoestrings And A Thousand Telephones*

**Blum & Poe, Tokyo**

**September 24–November 6, 2022**

**Opening reception: 6–8pm, September 24, 2022**

Tokyo, Japan, September XX, 2022—Blum & Poe is pleased to present *TOPICA PICTUS Revisited: Forty Red, White, And Blue Shoestrings And A Thousand Telephones*, Tokyo-based artist Kenjiro Okazaki's second solo presentation with the gallery. In October of 2021, Okazaki suffered a severe stroke. After more than six months of hospitalization and rigorous rehabilitation, his body and mind made a remarkable recovery, allowing him to resume painting—something that was predicted to be impossible early on in his convalescence. This experience led Okazaki to rediscover the relationship between the body, the mind, and the world. It also gave him a new perspective on the significance of artistic creation. This exhibition will be the first displaying new work by the artist since his discharge from the hospital.

*There was no going back—that is what I thought. I would never paint or write again. Unable to use my dominant hand or leg, I couldn't open my palm to grip anything, stand still, or sit by the edge of the bed. As I said goodbye to my former self, I felt sadness and pain. Yet, I also felt fine, even exhilarated. I parted from my former self (the place I was not able to leave behind)—but where did I end up?*

*The circuits in the brain create an expansive network. Since these circuits are located in different parts of the brain, with built-in redundancies and layers, it is difficult to draw this three-dimensional network as a two-dimensional diagram (something like a map). Spacetime cannot be captured, even in the fourth dimension, when the brain's network is explored.*

*The blow (stroke) created a hole in this network. The hole was three-dimensional (merely physical) damage, yet the extent of its impact on the brain could not be measured by its projection onto a three-dimensional image. That is because there should have already been a void within different phase spaces between the circuits within different phase spaces.*

*Ten months of convoluted (and compacted) spacetime have passed. My right hand is now painting, typing, and writing. It does not feel like my former self is returning. But as my right-hand paints and writes, it feels as if this body is revisiting a place someone else had once visited. – Kenjiro Okazaki*

TOPICA PICTUS takes its name, firstly, from *topos*, a rhetorical device that Aristotle deployed to describe a source or place from which a speaker may locate their argument. Secondly, the name is taken from the Latin word *pictus*, which means “painted.” Okazaki uses his small-scale, abstract paintings as the containing factor, a *topos*, to loosely suggest his influences and present them alongside one another. In *TOPICA PICTUS Revisited: Forty Red, White, And Blue Shoestrings And A Thousand Telephones*, the artist unites under a *topos* his encounter with becoming defamiliarized from his physicality—recorded and presented here through the act of painting—with references in the works' titles to concepts such as Bob Dylan's “Highway 61 Revisited,” Polish folklore, or 黙示, the Japanese word for “revelation.”

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Kenjirō Okazaki lives and works in Tokyo. His work was prominently featured in independent curator Mika Yoshitake's 2019 two-part exhibition at Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, *Parergon: Japanese Art of the 1980s and 1990s*, the artist's first presentation on the West Coast since his inclusion in the seminal 1994 exhibition curated by Alexandra Munroe, *Japanese Art after 1945: Scream Against the Sky* (Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama, Japan; traveled to the Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA). His work has been exhibited in institutional solo exhibitions including at the [Toyota Municipal Museum of Art](#), Aichi, Japan (2019, 2020); BankArt29, Yokohama, Japan (2014); Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan (2009); Sezon Museum of Modern Art, Nagano, Japan (2002); and Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Agen, Agen, France (1994). His work is represented in the permanent collections of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Tokyo, Japan; Chiba City Museum of Art, Chiba, Japan; Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima, Japan; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan; Museum of Modern Art, Toyama, Japan; National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan; National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan; Sezon Museum of Modern Art, Nagano, Japan; and Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Toyota, Japan, among many other museums and public collections.

Okazaki has wielded great influence within and beyond the field of art. His publication *Renaissance: Condition of Experience* (Chikuma Shobō, 2001/Bungeishunjū Gakugei Library, 2014) was praised by critic and curator Akira Asada as “the birth of the historical text.” A revered professor, he founded and directed the Yotsuya Art Studium in 2004, a base for new educational and creative activities. In 2014 he received the [Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship](#) (SARF) at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. In 2019 he won the Ministry of Education Award in Fine Arts for his publication *Abstract Art As Impact: Analysis of Modern Art* (Aki Shobō, 2018). He is currently a visiting professor at Musashino Art University and University of Tokyo.

## 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

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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.


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