

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Alma Allen

Blum & Poe, Los Angeles

January 14–February 25, 2023

Opening reception: Saturday, January 14, 5–7pm

Los Angeles, CA, January 6, 2023—Blum & Poe is pleased to present Mexico-based artist Alma Allen's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery. This show coincides with Allen's solo museum presentation at Anahuacalli Museum in Mexico City.

Alma Allen is an American-born sculptor known for his orchestration of arresting gestural immediacy and distinctive material engagement, meticulously carved and cast to draw attention back to the work itself. This presentation marks the debut of Allen's wall-hanging bronze reliefs. Works ebb and flow in both their shape and color, with reflective surfaces in a high-polish shine or patinas of a painterly soft black. Like rushing water, these sculptures spill out from their station on the wall, reaching toward the viewer, then recoiling back. Calling to mind the peaks and valleys of landscape and body, they offer both a muscular materiality and fluid sense of the expanded experiential plane. Centered amongst the bronzes is a single stone sculpture carved into shiny pleats from a local marble, revealing hues of rose, milk, and umber. Whimsical in form, oblong like a pickle or an eggplant, the soft shape of the work belies its notable weight, a suggestive joke within an abstract charge.

In the adjacent garden stands a tall bronze among greenery—a visceral courtship of chaos, it twists in upon itself, both gleaming outwardly and withholding its innermost contents. Like a banyan tree, a bundle of twine, or the fibrous tissue that unites muscle with bone, the strands of this work seem to reflect objects from the natural world in a manner both familiar and infused with intimate notation. Its banded construction may very well reference the flowing lava produced by the eruption of Xitle, a volcano that destroyed Cuicuilco, one of the many pre-Hispanic cities that preceded Mexico City.

In preparation for both this and his upcoming museum presentation, Allen explored parallels in his work and in Diego Rivera's approach to designing the Anahuacalli Museum, his final work. On Rivera's vision for the pyramid-like building built over lava flow, the museum states that his "genius lay in his ability to recognize... a unique combination of environmental features that constitute an identity that is inseparable from location: rock, earth, breath, blood, the quality of light." Throughout Allen's multi-leveled practice, these same qualities are flooded with a psychological valence. Within the collision of elements in Allen's work is rooted a distinct series of repeated, recognizable gestures that allow poetics, mythologies, and narratives to emerge within the timeless qualities of sculpture and material.

Relocating from Joshua Tree to Tepoztlán in 2017, Allen's work has expanded into and absorbed his new environs, responding to the energetic forces near his studio. His proximity to Mexican stone quarries permits Allen to work directly not only in the carving but the selection of material. Along with his bronze foundry, Allen's long dedication to making his work within his own studio has expanded craft notions of the handmade and cemented his reputation as a modern steward of classical sculptural techniques. This exhibition captures a recent chapter and takes it to its natural pinnacle—as Allen continues his exploration of symbolism and existential volatility in intricate forms whose weight, balance, and presence reconcile transient physicalities and inner visions against the eonic span.

Alma Allen (b. 1970, Heber City, UT) currently lives and works in Tepoztlán, Mexico. Recent group exhibitions include *Intervención/Intersección*, curated by Su Wu, Rockefeller Center, New York, NY (2022); *At The Luss House*, The Gerald Luss House, Ossining, NY (2021); *At The Noyes House*, The Eliot Noyes House, New Canaan, CT (2020); Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT (2018); deSaisset Museum, Santa Clara, CA (2016); and *2014 Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2014). *In Conversation: Alma Allen & JB Blunk*, a two-person exhibition that began at the Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, CA in February 2018, traveled to the Nevada Museum of Art, Reno in Spring 2019. A comprehensive monograph on the artist's work was released by Rizzoli Electa in 2020.

BLUM & POE

Los Angeles, New York, 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-one 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 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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