

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Asuka Anastacia Ogawa
pedra

Blum & Poe, Los Angeles
March 11–April 15, 2023
Opening reception: Saturday, March 11, 5–7pm

Los Angeles, CA, March 1, 2023—Blum & Poe is pleased to present *pedra*, Los Angeles and New York-based artist Asuka Anastacia Ogawa's fourth solo presentation with the gallery.

This exhibition finds Ogawa diving further into her ongoing investigations of the spirituality that pulses through the natural world, the artist's studies in ikebana, and the foremost religions in Japan. In the works presented here, Ogawa deploys her signature, childlike figures, depicting them in scenes of quiet meditation or rituals centered around natural talismans. Drawing on her knowledge of polytheist and animist practices in Japan and Brazil—where Ogawa spent her formative years—the artist paints a hyperbolized magical world filled with spiritual guides and plants with supernatural powers. This altered reality heightens and underscores the cultural overlaps in the artist's experience, calling attention to the hyper-globalized state of the world and Ogawa's encounters with reconciling multiple sociological influences.

Ogawa's smaller paintings set the tone for this exhibition, emphasizing the significant attention paid to earthly forms: a red flower cranes in front of an olive-toned-beige background. In her larger compositions, the artist's characters have made potions or incenses that they are applying to themselves and others as part of traditional Brazilian or Japanese customs. By ingesting botanicals or using them on their bodies, the players in Ogawa's narrative oeuvre begin to merge with the natural world.

The artist's depiction of practices involving organic totems foregrounds communion between humans and the earth—a central theme of this exhibition. For Ogawa, some of these rituals are personally witnessed accounts and some are imagined extensions of the cultural phenomena that she encountered living in Japan and Brazil. As the child of a Brazilian mother growing up in Japan, Ogawa recalls that her mother would often pray to angels. While only two percent of the Japanese populous identifies as Christian, the artist notes taking comfort in seeing her mother keep this practice. In *mochi* (2023) a figure shrouded in pink raises an offering of the Japanese rice cake mochi to the heavens.

Further threading the needle between religious practices in Brazil and traditions in Japan, *eyepad* (2023) depicts a shaman and another figure flanked by flowers as they pray against a deep amethyst backdrop. In Japanese worship, it is commonplace to make offerings of flowers or food to the local shrine or the place of prayer in the home. Ogawa paints these floral offerings to nature, known as *kuge*, throughout the exhibition as her own form of reflective meditation and as a means of archiving this devotional practice.

Hinted at through backdrops derived from a dark and shadowy color palette, this new series offers weighty reflections on a personal period of change and growth for the artist. This transition, Ogawa notes, was catalyzed by her own encounters with these depicted rituals and traditions, which offered a deeper understanding of human nature and her own spatial roots.

Asuka Anastacia Ogawa (b. 1988, Tokyo, Japan) spent much of her childhood in Tokyo, Japan. When she was three years old, Ogawa moved from this vertical urban backdrop to rural Brazil, where she passed a

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Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo

handful of formative early years amongst wandering farm animals and rushing waterfalls. The artist later relocated to Sweden when she was a teen, where she attended high school, and soon thereafter she moved to London to pursue her BFA from Central Saint Martins. After having her first solo show at Henry Taylor's studio in Los Angeles, CA in 2017, she had a solo show at Blum & Poe, Tokyo in 2020, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles in 2021, and Blum & Poe, New York in 2022. Her work is in the collection of the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX, the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham NC, and X Museum, Beijing, China. She is currently based in Los Angeles, CA and 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 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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