

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

By Any Means Necessary
Curated by Lonnie Holley

Blum & Poe, Los Angeles
April 29–June 10, 2023
Opening reception: Saturday, April 29, 5–7pm

Blum & Poe is pleased to announce *By Any Means Necessary*, an exhibition curated by Atlanta-based artist Lonnie Holley and featuring work by Holley, Louisiana Bendolph, Hawkins Bolden, Joe Light, Ronald Lockett, Joe Minter, Rita Mae Pettway, and Mary T. Smith. This presentation accompanies the first major exhibition in Los Angeles focusing on the work of Holley's close friend and colleague, Thornton Dial, and honors their shared histories and passions. This show is presented in conjunction with *Lonnie Holley: If You Really Knew* at MOCA North Miami, Holley's first major exhibition in the South and featuring work from this same cohort of artists he champions including Thornton Dial, Mary T. Smith, and Hawkins Bolden.

"As an artist, it's an honor to curate my first serious show on the occasion of my dear friend Thornton Dial's first exhibition in Los Angeles.

This show, which also includes my own work, is a tribute to some of the many voices that cried out in the wilderness for so long. All the artists in the show—Louisiana Bendolph, Hawkins Bolden, Joe Light, Ronald Lockett, Joe Minter, Rita Mae Pettway, and Mary T. Smith—were or are dear friends of mine and Mr. Dial and created works of art for the same reasons that we have: as a testimony about our lives and experiences growing up in the harsh reality of the South.

We all used different materials or means, based on what was available to us—the fabric scraps turned into patchwork quilts by Louisiana Bendolph and her mother, and many others in Gee's Bend, Alabama; the found objects that Joe Minter transformed; or the tin from old barns that were recycled by Ronald Lockett and turned into something beautiful—all were used by us in our daily lives. We took something that had been discarded or cast aside and tried to give it new meaning and purpose, much the same as we tried to do with our own lives.

I dedicate this show to William Arnett, who had the vision not only to support so many African American artists, but also to help us learn that we were part of something larger and that what we were doing really mattered."

– Lonnie Holley, 2023

Louisiana Bendolph (b. 1960, Gee's Bend, AL) is an American quilt artist known for intricate compositions of an almost architectural or conceptual character and striking formal inventiveness. Bendolph's instantly recognizable style exemplifies her lifelong immersion in the deep structures of design and pattern. Born and raised in Gee's Bend, Alabama, she learned her art at the feet of many women ancestors, including her mother (Rita Mae Pettway) and grandmother, who passed down to her their community's generations-old, and now world-famous, quilting traditions. Bendolph works in other media, as well, including a 9' x 16' ceramic mural commissioned in 2015 by the San Francisco International Airport. Her quilts have been exhibited throughout the world and are in the permanent collections of numerous museums. She lives and works in Mobile, AL.

Hawkins Bolden (b. 1914, Memphis, TN; d. 2005, Memphis, TN) was a found-object sculptor from Memphis, TN. A childhood accident left him blind, able to sense only the presence of light, and ended his boyhood dreams of professional baseball. As an adult, Bolden created anthropomorphic “scarecrows” for his home garden in inner-city Memphis. These objects (he did not use the term “art”) range from minimal, mask-like forms to large, totemic constructions. They incorporate discarded metal cookware, garden tools, furniture, construction materials, appliances, machine components, and other scrapyards finds. These works are further elaborated with garden hoses, clothing, limbs of artificial Christmas trees, carpet scraps, shoe leather, toys, and other odds and ends, and are strategically patterned with punched holes that suggest human facial features such as eyes and mouths.

Lonnie Holley (b. 1950, Birmingham, AL) is based in Atlanta. Holley's artworks encompass an expanse of mediums, including sculpture, drawing, painting, collage, and digital, as well as musical performance. His musical style is likewise diverse, blending blues, jazz, spoken word, funk, and folk idioms. His work has been celebrated for its complex storytelling and insights into issues of race, class, social justice, environmental disaster, and the transformative potential of art itself. Holley's work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions including at MOCA North Miami, FL (2023); Dallas Contemporary, Dallas, TX (2022); Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, NY (2021); Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta, GA (2017); Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art; Charleston, SC (2015); Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, AL (2004), and many more. His work is represented in major public collections worldwide including Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; among many others.

Ronald Lockett (b. 1965, Bessemer, AL; d. 1998, Bessemer, AL) was an American visual artist. Born and raised in Bessemer, AL, he came of age after the civil rights movement had radically remade the political and economic landscape for Black Americans and for Lockett's home region, the American South. Lockett's artistic practice often explored the experience of *belatedness*—that is, of arriving too late to participate in the epic deeds and historic accomplishments of earlier generations. His “Traps” series, for example, uses whitetail deer, a species that has managed to survive amid human development and encroachment, as a proxy for himself and his Black peers whose lives felt immobilized by larger social forces. Lockett eventually gave up representational painting almost entirely to focus on compositions of cut tin, a unique process he developed by scavenging from the postindustrial environment of his Bessemer neighborhood. Lockett died in 1988 of complications from AIDS.

Joe Light (b. 1934, Dyersburg, TN; d. 2005, Memphis, TN) was an American painter and assemblage artist who worked in Memphis, TN. Light's art combines elements from throughout pop culture, especially comics and cartoons, along with a debt to the genres of still life and landscape painting, with a strong affinity for the desert vistas of the American Southwest. Light encountered many of his influences during years of dealing bric-a-brac in flea markets, where he bought and sold everything from mass-produced kitsch to reproductions of well-known paintings from throughout the Western tradition. He ultimately invented a full-blown visual language to express his religious and moral convictions, using a personal iconography that includes flowers, mountains, rivers, birds, abstract glyphs, various alter egos, and signage. Light's philosophical beliefs took shape in the 1960s, during a period of incarceration, when he converted to Judaism—more specifically, the texts and principles of the Old Testament, independent of formalized religion—through which he discovered guidance for navigating the challenges of life as a Black man in the modern American world. Light's paintings are held in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., among others.

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Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo

Joe Minter (b. 1943, Birmingham, AL) is an American sculptor and painter, based in Birmingham, AL, who is best known for a sprawling, outdoor art environment that he calls “African Village in America.” In 1989, Minter began building a sculpture garden (next to a Black cemetery where his family members are interred) as a memorial to what he terms the “foot soldiers” of the civil-rights movement—its unheralded change-agents. In the decades since, his vision has expanded to address issues of human rights and environmental justice on an international scale. Minter’s signature style mixes found-object assemblage and welded scrap metal, frequently accompanied by hand-lettered texts and bold, vivid paintings. With wit and optimism, his works juggle trenchant political commentary and a deep love of the natural world, all inspired by his Afrocentric worldview. Minter’s art is in the permanent collections of museums throughout the United States.

Rita Mae Pettway (b. 1941, Gee's Bend, AL) is a quilt artist from Gee’s Bend, AL. From age four, after her mother’s death, Pettway was raised by her grandparents and aunts, who taught her to quilt. Her grandmother Annie E. Pettway produced some of the most important surviving Gee’s Bend quilts of the Depression era and served as a crucial artistic mentor to Rita Mae. Annie was reportedly fastidious about technique and craftsmanship but possessed an open-ended, freeform attitude toward pattern and composition. Rita Mae created her first full quilt at age fourteen and has carried forward the aesthetic principles imparted by her accomplished ancestors. Her daughter, Louisiana (Pettway) Bendolph, has in turn taken these approaches into new frontiers of design. Pettway’s quilts have been widely exhibited and are represented in museums including the Virginia Museum of Art.

Mary T. Smith (b. 1904, Covich County, MS; d. 1995, Hazlehurst, MS) was an American painter whose powerfully expressionist images of herself, her family and friends, plants and trees, and her pets and animals were created to adorn her home and roadside property in Hazlehurst, MS. Born in Covich County, MS, she was the daughter of sharecroppers and grew up under segregation in the Jim Crow South. Essentially deaf since childhood, she was briefly married, had one child, and worked as a domestic servant. Smith lived alone and turned to painting later in life as a way to both identify and express herself to the world. She created nearly all of her surviving paintings in her seventies and eighties. While her themes are often local in their evocation of day-to-day existence, and at times devoutly religious in their proclamation of divine love and care, her paintings’ mix of personal humility and stylistic boldness possesses a tacitly political resonance. Smith’s paintings are in the permanent collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and other institutions.

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);

BLUM & POE

Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo

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, New York
nicoletta@blumandpoe.com

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

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