

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

***Borrowed Landscapes***

**Blum & Poe, Tokyo**

**May 13–June 24, 2023**

**Opening reception: Saturday, May 13, 5–7pm**

Tokyo, Japan, May 9, 2023—Blum & Poe, Tokyo is pleased to present *Borrowed Landscapes*, a group exhibition of work by Friedrich Kunath, Masayoshi Nakamura, Kenjiro Okazaki, Akane Saijo, Magdalena Skupinska, and Daichi Takagi.

The floor-to-ceiling glass window of Blum & Poe’s Tokyo outpost defies the blank slate of the standard white cube. The art presented in the space—with its sweeping views of the forest surrounding the main shrine buildings of Meiji Jingu—is always in conversation with the natural world beyond the gallery’s walls. While some exhibitions may passively engage this external landscape, making it merely a backdrop that changes with the seasons, *Borrowed Landscapes* draws the exterior inward—recontextualizing the greenery of Meiji Jingu’s inner garden as a focal point in the exhibition, leaning into the art historical tradition of the landscape as a uniquely personal expression, and visually expanding upon the philosophy that inspired Dr. Honda Seiroku while he led the forest’s planting.

Work on the man-made forest began in 1915. The park has been allowed to grow relatively untouched ever since. Approximately 100,000 trees from all over Japan were donated and planted. Each tree was intended as a vessel for Shinto beliefs, wherein divinity is attributed equally to all items within the natural world. Prior to beginning this project, Dr. Honda Seiroku completed his studies at the world’s first-ever forestry school in Tharandt, near Dresden, Germany. It was here that he would have encountered the persisting ideals of German Romanticism—rejecting industrialism and urbanism while emphasizing the “beautiful” or the “sublime.” The work presented in this exhibition reflects facets of the park’s philosophies—its commingling of the different modes of reverence for nature that are paramount in environmentally centered ideologies such as Shinto and Romanticism.

**Friedrich Kunath** (b. 1974, Chemnitz, Germany) studied at the Braunschweig University of Arts, Braunschweig, Germany, and now lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. Kunath utilizes a personal style of Romantic Conceptualism, layering poetic phrases with poignant, often melancholy imagery. The work embraces comedy and pathos, evoking universal feelings of love, hope, longing, and despair. The artist’s journey from Germany to Los Angeles plays a key role in his work, incorporating German Romanticism and Western popular culture with still life, cartoon imagery, commercial illustration, nature photography, and lyrical references.

**Masayoshi Nakamura** (b. 1924, Aichi Prefecture, Japan; d. 1977) studied with Nakamura Gakuryō, an important figure in Japanese painting known for his subversion of traditional Japanese art practices. Initially participating in the Nitten exhibitions, Nakamura later left the group and worked independently. The nature of Nakamura’s work earned him a reputation as a nonconformist and iconoclast artist. A versatile artist, he also worked for the movie industry and theater. Nakamura founded the Hitohito Art Association, aiming for a renewal of Japan’s art world. *Doha* (ca. 1955) and *Path* (ca. 1955) utilize traditional *nihonga* techniques and materials. Nakamura painted these landscapes while suffering from a lung ailment. During this time, he imagined the world beyond the bed rest necessitated by his illness, conjuring his figments in paint.

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**Kenjiro Okazaki** (b. 1955, Tokyo, Japan) has developed a wide range of interdisciplinary practices that transcend conventional artistic genres and classifications of art, including painting, sculpture, relief, robotics, and architecture. He is also an acclaimed art critic and theorist. Okazaki's thinking is rooted in the exploration and reconstruction of time and space at the foundation of human perception. The singularity of time and space that emerges from the postmodernist fragment (as opposed to the all-encompassing, all-knowing whole of modern perception) has long been the subject of Okazaki's paintings. *月花 (Ipomoea alba) / No idea why I was going there / あるいは空中の椰子果 (2022)*, and *あお空の奥か (le bleu du ciel) / Seen with an ideal, Out the window / きたいの中に溶ける魚 (2022)* reference two paintings by Japanese pre-war Surrealist artist Harue Koga: *The Moon and Flowers* (1926) and *Sea* (1929). Okazaki points out that Koga's work can be explained by three key words: "machine," "animal," and "death." This selection of words is inspired by Freud's concept of the id, ego, superego, and death drive. Okazaki's response to Koga arrives close to one hundred years after the original work's creation, putting forth a conversational time frame that passes casually in the lifespan of a forest, but is unknowable to most human beings.

**Akane Saijo** (b. 1989, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan) completed her BA in Fine Art and MA in Ceramics at Kyoto City University of Arts, Kyoto, Japan, and received the grand prize at the first edition of MIMOCA EYE at Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art, Kagawa in 2022. Saijo creates ceramics—including *Wetland* (2021) and *Homunculus* (2021), in collaboration with the sound artist Valentin Gabelier under the alias TÔBOE—with intricate glazes that evoke the gradation of different tree species in a far-off forest. Saijo often collaborates with performers to activate the cavities and holes in her ceramic works, turning them into sound-producing devices. Through this activation, the boundary between body and object becomes blurred. The resulting awareness of the distance between self and exterior provokes a reconsideration of one's relationship to society and nature.

**Magdalena Skupinska** (b. 1991, Warsaw, Poland) completed her BA in Fine Art at Central Saint Martins, London, UK, and her MA in Painting at Royal College of Art, London, UK. She has participated in residencies at Selebe Yoon, Dakar, Senegal; Fundación Casa Wabi, Oaxaca, Mexico; La Ira de Dios, Buenos Aires, Argentina; and the Atlantic Center for the Arts, New Smyrna Beach, FL. Her work has been the subject of international solo exhibitions and a monograph released in 2022. Deeply rooted in her surroundings, Skupinska's work draws from a process of research and experimentation into the flawed, but present, symbiotic relationship between human and non-human forces. *Elate* (2023) was inspired by nature and organic, found materials such as the powder of camphor trees, one of the species of tree found in the Meiji Jingu Forest. Portions of *Elate's* canvas are painted with camphor powder as a reference to the Tree of Life archetype—its connotation to the heavens above and the underworld below.

**Daichi Takagi** (b. 1982, Gifu, Japan) lives and works in Kanagawa. He received his BFA and MFA in Painting from Tama Art University, Tokyo. He received a Japanese Government Oversea Research Program Grant from the Agency for Cultural Affairs and resided in Amsterdam, Netherlands, in September 2018. The landscapes depicted in Takagi's works are intuitive expressions of the various lexicons that the artist has absorbed through personal experience and art history. *Wanderer* (2023) shows a figure standing in a forest on a moonlit night. With layers of yellowish-green, brown, and deep-blue paint, *Wanderer* is reminiscent of the German Romantic paintings of Caspar David Friedrich. *Rain* (2023) depicts a scene of rain falling on a quiet night, topped by a pattern of scratches made with a painting knife. *Wanderer*, *Rain*, and *Tree Trunk* (2023) all evoke the sensation of walking through a forest.

**About Blum & Poe**

# BLUM & POE

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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-nine-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 the 1980s and 1990s (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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