

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Matt Saunders**  
*The Distances*

**Blum & Poe, Los Angeles**  
**July 1–August 12, 2023**

**Opening reception: Saturday, July 1, 5–7pm**

Los Angeles, CA, June XX, 2023—Blum & Poe is pleased to present *The Distances*, American artist Matt Saunders's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery and his first in Los Angeles since 2014.

Exploring the open border between painting and photography, *The Distances* sees Saunders delving further into his ongoing study of liminal spaces in the dividing lines that dictate visual art's medium specificities. In pointing to the limitations of these categorical barriers, the artist engages with other observed dichotomies—proximity versus distance, immediacy versus mediation, or gaze versus counter gaze. Painterly gestures atop the photographic surface evoke touch and contact while vacillating between convergence and divergence with the image below.

Oil paint has long been behind Saunders's photographic process. It now takes the forefront. Each of Saunders's works for *The Distances* begins with an oil painting on thin chiffon. Configured as a negative, wherein white is black and colors are inverted, these stretched paintings are taken into a darkroom and used to strain light onto photosensitive paper to make each photographic image. The resulting prints are brought back into the studio where paint is thoughtfully applied to their surface, thus the image comes together from both sides of the photo's process. *The Distances (Joe)* (2022) shows well the steps behind its making. Vibrant aqua interventions press forward on the picture plane, partially obscuring an expressive, almost photo-realistic face.

At each stage of his practice, Saunders activates an encounter between the image and the material that captures it. This chain of transference is not separate from the meaning of the work, which calls up themes of overlap, transformation, and the fluidity of constructed social categories such as gender. Humanizing these exchanges, the eyes of Saunders's emotive subjects gaze upon the viewer as they are also gazed upon, almost daring equal and opposite perception. The artist created the bulk of these works in the solitude of the pandemic when the interpersonal seemingly became a lost art. In dialogue with his teaching, Saunders reflected on the performative and fluid versions of gender experienced by each generation; thus, the subjects in *The Distances* return to many of the foundational muses who he painted early on in his career. With this revisitation, he creates a channel through to his early work—marking his own stylistic transitions from early to midcareer.

Matt Saunders (b. 1975, Tacoma, WA) is based between New York, Boston, and Berlin. He currently serves as a full Professor of Art, Film and Visual Studies at Harvard University. Recent solo exhibitions include *Currents 114: Matt Saunders*, Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO (2017); Tank Space, Shanghai, China (2017); *Century Rolls*, Tate Liverpool, UK (2012); and *Parallel Plot*, Renaissance Society, Chicago, IL (2010). Saunders was the 2022 recipient of the American Academy of Arts and Letters Arts Purchase Prize, 2015 Rappaport Prize from the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, 2013 Prix Jean-François Prat and 2009 Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation award. His work is represented in numerous public collections, including the Deutsche Bank Collection; Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, MA; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, Istanbul,

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Turkey; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; MUDAM, Luxembourg; Museum Brandhorst, Munich, Germany; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Tate Modern, London, UK; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; and the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT.

## 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-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-two 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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