

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Christopher Hartmann
Nightswimming

Blum & Poe, Los Angeles
July 1–August 12, 2023
Opening reception: Saturday, July 1, 5–7pm

The sun had not yet risen. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky, except that the sea was slightly creased as if a cloth had wrinkles in it. Gradually, as the sky whitened a dark line lay on the horizon dividing the sea from the sky and the grey cloth became barred with thick strokes moving, one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually.

—Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*

Los Angeles, CA, June XX, 2023—Blum & Poe is pleased to present *Nightswimming*, London-based artist Christopher Hartmann's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

Hartmann's paintings portray situations that are seemingly detached from specific time and space. These settings often imply physical interaction or dialogue but are imbued with conflicting moods of intimacy and alienation, the indistinct yet persistent feelings of unease latent to our oversaturated media landscape, and technology-mediated social connections. The construction of the painting itself mimics the layering processes of photo-editing software, with the built-up application of artificial color tones recalling the alienating luminosity of digital screens.

This exhibition focuses on Hartmann's interest in abstraction, beginning with a series of beds that appear to have just been left. These works evoke the vulnerability of sleep, the ambiguities of dream states, and the intimacy of physical relationships. Loaded with a heightened sense of emotion and reality, they inhabit a liminal space between fact and fiction, the reality of the present and memory of the past. The bed paintings are presented in dialogue with two seascapes. The myriad folds in the bedsheets mirror in the infinite ripples on the water's surface, intimating different states of immersion—the consciousness suspended during sleep and the body suspended in water.

The sense of absence conjured by the works in the first gallery gives way to the gradual introduction of a bodily presence in further paintings that alternately explore intimacy and isolation. One depicts two pairs of legs aligned within the rippling folds of white sheets. Another two show figures lying alone, their body language alternately inviting and more guarded. Subtly larger than life yet intimate and relatable, the looming perspectives of these compositions implicate the viewer as more than a merely detached observer. The final body of work on view presents close-ups of entwined hands, concluding the exhibition with gentle moments of touch bathed in natural light.

Christopher Hartmann (b. 1993, Germany) is a German-Costa Rican artist living and working in London. He holds an MA in Communication Design from Central Saint Martins, London, UK and completed his MFA in Fine Art at Goldsmiths, University of London, UK in 2021. He is a recent grantee from the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation (2020) and resident of The Fores Project, London, UK (2020) and Nassima Landau Foundation, Tel Aviv, Israel (2022). Solo exhibitions of Hartmann's work include *State of Life, May I Live, May I Love*, T&Y Projects, Tokyo, Japan (2022) and *What I Want to Say Is This*, Nassima Landau Foundation, Tel Aviv, Israel (2021). Selected group exhibitions include *Queering the Narrative*, Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen, Germany (2022); MFA Fine Art Degree Show, Goldsmiths, University of

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London, UK (2021); *High Voltage*, Nassima Landau, Tel Aviv, Israel (2020); and *London Grads Now*, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK (2020).

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 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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