

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Acaye Kerunen**  
***A NIEE (I AM HERE)***

**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 gallery’s first solo exhibition with Ugandan artist Acaye Kerunen, her first solo presentation in the United States. This American debut follows Kerunen’s acclaimed showcase in Uganda’s inaugural national pavilion at the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy in 2022, which received the biennale jury Special Mention award for best national participation.

Drawing the viewer into Kerunen’s immersive, cross-disciplinary practice—one which includes visual art, curation, activism, acting, poetry, writing, and performance—this exhibition emphasizes a multifaceted approach to triumphant noncompliance in a postcolonial world. Stitching, appending, twining, and knotting several commissioned works into inclusive wholes, Kerunen drives her platform home via her means of production, imagery, and materiality.

Aligning the process of its own production with activism in the service of environmentalism, resistance to colonial and patriarchal tendencies, and the dismantling of hierarchies that devalue women’s labor—Kerunen’s work addresses the greater good from the moment it is conceptualized, before it is even presented in the exhibition space. Taking a stand against climate change, the artist’s process includes communal living and materials sourced in the wetlands of her motherland, Uganda. Employing techniques Kerunen learned from her mother and the matriarchs before her, the artist constructs her work from coils of woven natural fiber that are articulated by women in her community. The individuals and philosophies called upon to make the work are living extensions of the art objects they produce, as the systems and utopias they create serve as Kerunen’s ever-evolving counterpoints against problematic structures of power.

Kerunen’s physical objects ground the artist’s oeuvre, serving as touchstones and points of entry for the viewer to investigate the other, more transitory portions of the artist’s work such as her activism, production as a form of social practice, and performance. In this exhibition, the artist uses recurrent imagery to drive home the messages of resistance that she has emphasized throughout her practice. The form of the butterfly is alluded to in *Nyakotha - The one who flies off* (2023). The butterfly’s process, beginning as a caterpillar, is one that Kerunen uses to convey sentiments of transformation and growth. In other sections of the exhibition, Kerunen similarly uses repeating tropes such as the colors black and white to indicate unified division and mappings of her own body to explore the emotions ingrained in her various stances.

Beyond the physical object and its means of production, Kerunen also engages in time-based and intangible mediums to achieve her end. As part of this exhibition, the artist deploys the moving image. This video work, an intangible media that is a relatively new form within the plastic arts, illustrates the way Kerunen has prioritized elevating types of art making that challenge the traditional canon. Whether using techniques that had been pigeonholed as craft or creating work that is partially evanescent, Kerunen’s force for change rings true in her wide-ranging choice of media.

Layer upon layer of consideration and meaning is embedded in every inch of this exhibition. Each object, activation, or communication has been imbued with heritage, sentiment, and hope for a better future—from

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sustainable materials to partial articulation by underserved communities, impactful compositions to intangible practices. All these messages commingle—unifying in a resounding chorus—to chip away at and call attention to social orders that perpetuate inequity.

Acaye Kerunen's (b. Kampala, Uganda) work was showcased in the two-person exhibition *Radiance: They Dream in Time* in Uganda's inaugural national pavilion at the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy (2022) which received the biennale jury Special Mention award for best national participation together with France. She presented her first solo exhibition, titled *Iwang Sawa*, at the Afriart Gallery, Kampala, Uganda (2021). That same year, the artist participated in a curatorial fellowship supported by Newcastle University; Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda; 32° East, Kampala, Uganda; and Afriart Gallery, Kampala, Uganda. In 2018, she showed her interactive, collaborative installation *Kendu* (2018-present) at the Nyege Nyege Ugandan Culture and Music Festival. The artist holds a BS in mass communication from the Islamic University in Uganda, Mbale, Uganda. Kerunen lives and works in Kampala, Uganda.

## 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

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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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