

BLUM & POE

Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Umar Rashid

Kagetora's dream in the time of Sakoku. (Reds and Blues). Part 1

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The revolutionary ultimately dies, acquiesces, or embraces escapism as a balm. The visionary, however, maneuvers uncertainty with purpose and nurtures the vision beyond the boundaries of mortality. There, it grows. Long live the dreamers of the impossible dreams. In Kirin, we confide.

Blum & Poe, Tokyo

September 2–October 14, 2023

Opening reception: Saturday, September 2, 5–7pm

Tokyo, Japan, August 1, 2023—Blum & Poe is pleased to present:

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This presentation marks Los Angeles-based artist Umar Rashid's second solo exhibition with the gallery and his first in Japan.

Rashid makes paintings, drawings, and sculptures that chronicle the grand historical fiction of the Frenghish Empire (1648–1880) that he has been developing for over seventeen years. Critiquing common renditions of the past, Rashid poses hyperbolic counter-narratives that call attention to and propose reconsiderations of neglected or hidden portions of certain moments in history. This latest installment in the artist's visual epic picks up where Rashid's recent solo exhibition at MoMA PS1, *Ancien Regime Change 4, 5, and 6*, left off, continuing this grand saga into the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in East Asia.

Many of the paintings in *Kagetora's dream in the time of Sakoku. (Reds and Blues). Part 1* take locations within Japan as their backdrop. A meticulous viewer will be able to spot Kanagawa Prefecture, Shizuoka, Niigata (previously Echigo), the island of Dejima, and others. Loosely following the happenings of Japan's *Sakoku* isolationist period, this story charts the adventures of the fictitious Order of the Kirin across Japan and beyond. Dissatisfied with Japan's isolationist policies, this honorable and peace-loving order ironically declares war against the government, battling their way across the aforementioned sites throughout Japan.

Kirin, in this case, alludes to the chimerical creature of Japanese mythology said to bring good omens, as well as to the eponymous Japanese beer company. The contrast between these two references playfully reflects Rashid's perspective on the fallacy intrinsic to history—binaries around good and evil are often revisionist and oversimplified. The artist's protagonists are all at

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once righteous, hostile, and bumbling. The exhibition's storyline progresses with the central characters having lost their rebellious war. We follow the Kirin's retreat—tail between their legs as they flee—sailing through the Sea of Japan, the South China Sea, and the Indian Ocean.

The final chapter of this addition to Rashid's saga takes place in Tanzania, where the Order of the Kirin's leader intends to procure a giraffe. Much like the meandering nature of life itself, this ending airs on the side of the absurd, described by Rashid as "a hardcore Monty Python." All of the vignettes in *Kagetora's dream in the time of Sakoku. (Reds and Blues). Part 1* include an element of the surreal, from dance scenes in the sky to animals that shoot laser beams from their eyes.

Through his research-based practice, Rashid asserts that the canons of history are manipulated mechanisms for maintaining systems of power. Rashid deploys humor to conjure and critique fictional narratives that coexist in different locales across the globe during the Colonial Era. By, for example, inserting comic book characters into well-recorded moments in time, the artist takes an absurdist approach to addressing the shortcomings of our shared annals, revealing the inherent weaknesses and limitations therein. Freeing events of the past from their grand narrative, Rashid encourages viewers to analyze historical accounts anew and create informed meaning.

Umar Rashid (b. 1976, Chicago, IL) lives and works in Los Angeles, CA. He received his BA in cinema and photography from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL. His work was featured at The Huntington and the Hammer Museum as part of the biennial *Made in LA 2020: a version*. Recent institutional solo exhibitions include *Ancien Regime Change 4, 5, and 6*, MoMA PS1, Queens, NY (2022); *What is the color when black is burned? (The Gold War Part 1)*, University of Arizona Museum of Art, Tucson, AZ (2018); and *The Belhaven Republic (A Delta Blues)*, University of Memphis Galleries A and B, Memphis, TN (2017). Rashid's work is represented in the public collections of the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, NY; Jorge Pérez Collection, Miami, FL; Mount Holyoke Art Museum, South Hadley, MA; Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV; Ruth and Elmer Wellin Museum of Art at Hamilton College, Clinton, NY; Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT; and the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa, Cape Town, South Africa, among others.

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 over sixty artists and 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

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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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