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Simphiwe Ndzube
Chorus

BLUM Los Angeles
November 4–December 16, 2023
Opening reception: Saturday, November 4, 5–7pm

Los Angeles, CA, October 26, 2023—BLUM is pleased to present *Chorus*, Los Angeles-based artist Simphiwe Ndzube's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

Expanding the reaches of his surrealist Mine Moon universe—the fictional location that has long functioned as the setting for the artist's otherworldly vignettes—*Chorus* sees Ndzube adding new tropes and mark-making techniques to his visual lexicon. Where Ndzube would previously adhere multimedia objects to acrylic on canvas, in this exhibition, he perfects his use of oil paint through carving, manipulating finishes to convey a pointillist effect, or adding sand to build out from the canvas. The artist's subject—Black choral music traditions in South Africa—serves as a vehicle, advancing Ndzube's storyline and making space for new painterly techniques.

Growing up in post-apartheid Cape Town, the artist has long been inspired to represent the underrepresented individuals who exist within systems of oppression—those who go unheard. *Chorus* marks the debut of a new series in which Ndzube explores the notion of the voice, both literal and figurative. Black choral music traditions in South Africa are deep-seated and proved to be a pivotal tool for expressing resistance during apartheid. *Amakwaya*, a type of South African choral music, refers to a traditional Zulu choir that promotes Zulu culture, incorporating indigenous percussion instruments and styles. *Chorus* is the first installment in a new series that Ndzube has titled *Amakwaya*, as it takes the culture and imagery associated with musical stylings of the same name as its subject matter.

Chorus's use of oil paint is relatively new within the artist's established oeuvre. Ndzube had previously favored acrylic for its quick drying precision and vibrance. For the artist, oil paint aligns with the fantastical qualities inherent in music in that it is more mercurial, malleable in its finish, and able to be manipulated for longer periods of time. These properties are on full display in Ndzube's smaller-scale canvases *Chorus #1*, *Chorus #2*, and *Chorus #3* (all 2023)—the vibrantly colored robes of the chorus members ripple and pop where the artist has intervened to create a dimple-like effect in his paints. The theme of gestalt echoes through these three works, as well as the whole show, in that each figure is at once immediately recognizable as well as visually divisible into a multitude of innovative and intricate marks on canvas.

While Ndzube introduces many new techniques and ideas in *Chorus*, he also returns to some of his powerful recurring imagery such as a flower that is both lotus and calla lily, the corpse flower, and boats at sea—all of which played major roles in his most recent solo institutional exhibition at the Denver Art Museum. These forms act as anchors for the Mine Moon—establishing the viewer in Ndzube's surrealist universe and its critique of apartheid and the residuals of colonialism. In *Dead Father, A Cry Song for the Nation*. (2023), Ndzube depicts a chorus of mourners in the Mine Moon, where the lotus-calla lily hybrid flower is native fauna, as they grieve the death of anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko.

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Chorus indicates a major turning point for Ndzube. It is his first solo exhibition with BLUM, debut of the *Amakwaya* series, and the premier of these new techniques and personal symbols. The combination of these elements conveys visually the audible experience of music—its associated customs and inherent whimsical qualities—as well as continues to build the artist’s distinct perspective within the magical realist discourse as a new source of recourse against structures of injustice.

Simphiwe Ndzube (b.1990, Eastern Cape, South Africa) lives and works in Los Angeles, CA and Cape Town, South Africa. He received his BFA from the Michaelis School of Fine Arts in 2015. Recent solo exhibitions include *Oracles of the Pink Universe*, Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO (2021); *The Rain Prayers*, Museo Kaluz, Mexico City, Mexico (2019); *Bhabharosi*, The Rubell Family Collection, Miami, FL (2018); and *Waiting for Mulungu*, CC Foundation, Shanghai, China (2018). His installation *In the Land of the Blind the One Eyed Man is King?* (2019) was included in the 2019 Lyon Biennale. His work is collected by the Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO; Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Geneva, Switzerland; HOW Art Museum, Shanghai, China; Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Musée d'art Contemporain de Lyon, France; Rubell Museum, Miami, FL; Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa, Cape Town, South Africa; among many others.

About BLUM

BLUM represents more than sixty artists and estates from sixteen countries worldwide, nurturing a diverse roster of artists at all stages of their practices with a range of global perspectives. Originally opened as Blum & Poe in Santa Monica in 1994, the gallery has been a pioneer in its early commitment to Los Angeles as an international arts capital.

The gallery has been acclaimed for its groundbreaking work in championing artists of Japanese and Korean postwar and contemporary movements, such as Dansaekhwa, Mono-ha, and Superflat, and for organizing museum-caliber solo presentations and historical survey exhibitions across its spaces in Los Angeles, Tokyo, and New York. Often partnering with celebrated curators and scholars such as Cecilia Alemani, Alison M. Gingeras, Sofia Gotti, Joan Kee, and Mika Yoshitake, the gallery has produced large-scale projects critically examining historical movements and work including 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); a revisionist take on the 1959 MoMA exhibition, *New Images of Man* (2020); and a survey of portraiture through a democratic and humanist lens (2023).

BLUM’s wide-reaching program includes exhibitions, lectures, performance series, screenings, video series, and an annual art book fair at its base in Los Angeles. BLUM Books, the gallery’s publishing division, democratically circulates its program through original scholarship and accessible media ranging from academic monographs, audio series, magazines, to artists’ books.

Across the three global locations, BLUM prioritizes environmental and community stewardship in all operations. In 2015, it 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 is committed to fostering inclusive and equitable communities both in its physical and online spaces and believes that everybody should have equal access to creating and engaging with contemporary art.

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