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Oliver Lee Jackson
Machines for the Spirit

BLUM Los Angeles
March 16–May 4, 2024

Saturday, March 16
2pm: Oliver Lee Jackson in Conversation with Curator Harry Cooper
5–7pm: Opening Reception

Los Angeles, CA, February 24, 2024—BLUM is pleased to announce the representation of Oakland-based artist Oliver Lee Jackson on the occasion of *Machines for the Spirit*, Jackson’s premier solo exhibition with the gallery and his first in Los Angeles since 1982. Jackson will be co-represented with Andrew Kreps Gallery.

Jackson’s paintings combine the emotive gestures of abstraction with the artist’s signature figural forms. Jackson achieves his characteristic abstract marks through a series of highly calculated and repeatable circumstances that have come to comprise his process. He lays the canvas or panel flat so as to approach the surface equally from all sides; this condition also permits Jackson to achieve specific, desired effects with the paint. Leaving moments of reprieve in his compositions, he consistently exposes his initial markings on the canvas as essential elements of the work, allowing the viewer a glimpse into every aspect of the structure of his finished painting.

As the exhibition title *Machines for the Spirit* implies, Jackson’s oil-based paintings act as mechanisms that are meant to prompt an experience in their viewer. The artist states that, like a machine, every part of a composition must work together to function in unison. As Jackson loads each composition with dynamic interplays between figure and field, the artist’s work provokes a process of leisurely and assiduous looking as the eye takes in a sense of space, illumination, figural forms, and the abstract marks signaling the artist’s hand. Working at a scale that encourages onlookers to imagine entering the work, Jackson prefers this intimate visual reciprocity between individual and composition to some of art’s more esoteric quandaries, saying of the latter, “They are trying to make a process that is dynamic stand still.”

The earliest of the twenty paintings in *Machines for the Spirit* was made in 1983, although the majority of the exhibition represents Jackson’s new works. Consistent themes are found throughout the artist’s expansive oeuvre, including the recurrent figure of the saxophone player which can be seen in *Painting (7.14.23), 2023 (2023)*. This imagery is representational of Jackson’s close associations with musicians throughout his life, as well as a deep love for jazz that the artist developed while growing up during what is now considered a cultural renaissance for the American Midwest. The likeness of shoes also recurs in Jackson’s paintings—notably appearing in *Painting (12.4.23), 2023 (2023)*—as a way of indicating to the viewer that they are stepping into another world, thus harking back to the exhibition’s title and the transportive impact of the artist’s work.

Jackson grew up in Saint Louis, Missouri and began to exhibit his work in the mid-1960s, developing close associations with the Black Artists Group (BAG), and has since generated a prolific practice,

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notably with a recent solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC in 2019. Jackson's painting style lends itself to a certain multiplicity, reflecting on the ideologies of many movements and experiences over the course of six decades, as well as projecting its own distinctive singularity. Maintaining an emphasis on process and composition, Jackson aligns himself with the past while paving the way for painting's future.

A public program with Jackson in conversation with Harry Cooper—Curator of Modern Art at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC—will be presented on Saturday, March 16 at 2pm. This event is free and open to the public.

In 1982, Jackson relocated to Oakland, CA, continuing his prolific practice that has been presented in numerous solo museum exhibitions including: the Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO (2021); di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art, Napa, CA (2021); National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (2019); Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis, MO (2012); Harvard University, Cambridge MA (2002); Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA (1993, 1984, 1977); Seattle Art Museum (1982), and others. Honors and awards include a 2023 Lee Krasner Award for lifetime achievement from the Pollock Krasner Foundation; Award in Painting and Sculpture, Awards in the Visual Arts, Flintridge Foundation, Pasadena, CA (2003/2004); Fleishhacker Foundation Eureka Fellowship (1993); a grant from Art Matters, New York (1988); Nettie Marie Jones Fellowship (1984); and National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship (1980-81). His artworks are represented in the permanent collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Detroit Institute of the Arts, Detroit, MI; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, CA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA; Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR; Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA; Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA and many more.

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 international artists of postwar and contemporary movements, such as CoBrA, 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 exhibitions focusing on 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); among others.

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

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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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