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Yukie Ishikawa and Akane Saijo

BLUM Tokyo

May 18–June 22, 2024

Opening Reception: Saturday, May 18, 5–7pm

Tokyo, Japan, May 9, 2024—BLUM is pleased to present a two-person exhibition with Tokyo-based artist Yukie Ishikawa and Kyoto-based artist Akane Saijo. Alongside this presentation, the gallery is proud to announce Saijo's representation and the premier of Ishikawa's new TSUKISHIRO series.

With a nearly-thirty-year age difference, these two Japanese artists both seek to subvert cultural norms and the traditional usages of their chosen medium. Ishikawa began making paintings as a critique of Japan's consumerist society in the late 1980s and 1990s. In her later career, she has continued this quietly contrarian spirit with her Impermanence series. With these works, she reworks her own, previously finished canvases into intricately layered, shifting compositions rooted in Japanese aesthetics to bypass the flat, horizontal and vertical grids that were often utilized by Western modernists. Saijo, in her Phantom Body series, marries the seemingly disparate disciplines of ephemeral performance and tactile clay sculpture. Introducing spaces for the body into the ceramic medium's delicate constitution, Saijo defies art's standard practice of severing the object from the suggestion of touch.

In her earliest work, Ishikawa took imagery from various forms of printed matter— notably advertising from magazines—and enlarged, projected, and traced them onto the canvas as abstract forms that were barely recognizable compared to the original imagery. This exhibition features two works from the 1990s that the artist added to in 2008—*IMPERMANENCE 2009* (2009) and *IMPERMANENCE 10* (2008)—which contain elements from a cup noodle or spaghetti advertisement. It was in 2008 that Ishikawa began to devise a way to transpose the idea of impermanence into an abstract geometric language. Revisiting unfinished works from the 1990s and 2000s, she added layers of lines and grids. Later, she began creating completely new canvases with this technique. This dense layering prevents the eye from settling in any one area or focusing on any one zone of spatial depth—a principle rooted in Japanese ink painting and ukiyo-e prints. This fluidity stands in opposition to the more rigid compositions popular amongst Western painters in modernism.

This exhibition marks the debut of Ishikawa's TSUKISHIRO series, begun in 2023. Ishikawa explains that *tsukishiro* translates literally as "Moon-White" and refers to the way the sky gradually becomes brighter and whiter before the moon rises in the east. These works express the longing of those gazing upwards as they wait for the moon to rise on the fifteenth night. The word can also be pronounced *geppaku*, which refers to a white color with a pale bluish tinge reminiscent of moonlight.

Saijo cites Marcel Duchamp's concept of *inframince*—the infinitely small space between or differentiating both people and things—as an important influence for her intricate ceramic work. Saijo delves into and hyperbolizes this phenomenon. Though Duchamp refrained from overtly defining *inframince*, in notes archived at the Centre Pompidou he describes: "The exchange between what one puts on view... and the glacial regard of the public... Very often this exchange has the value of an infra thin separation meaning that the more a thing is admired and looked at the less there is an infra thin separation." The negative spaces in Saijo's sculptures complement the positive space of the human body, and the artist often collaborates with performers to engage with these orifices in her ceramic

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works. The artist's forged forms engulf the performers—their mouths or entire bodies—as they breathe into the work's holes to create sound. With these activations, the space of *inframine*, the miniscule separation between the work and the viewing body, is pushed to its utmost limit and nearly eliminated.

The body—as commingled with ceramic—is also an integral portion of the construction of these works, as it has been since the inception of this medium. Working the clay with her hands, Saijo combines various traditional techniques to construct her clay bodies—unfettered by the question of art versus craft that is often applied to handmade ceramics created in the contemporary period. With her intensive research practice and educational background in ceramics, Saijo seamlessly merges art's conceptual concerns with technically skilled craftsmanship.

Yukie Ishikawa (b. 1961, Tokyo, Japan) graduated from the Department of Oil Painting at Musashino Art University, Tokyo, Japan in 1983. She currently lives and works near Kawagoe, Saitama Prefecture. Since the late 1980s she has held regular solo exhibitions in Japan including at Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo (2020) and most recently *Impermanence* at Red Gold Fine Art, Taipei, Taiwan (2023). Her paintings have been featured in prominent group exhibitions, including *MOT Collection: Garden of Light / Continuing Whispers*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan (2022); *The Herstory of Abstraction in East Asia*, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, Taiwan (2019); *Minimal/ Post Minimal—The Contemporary Japanese Art from 1970s*, Utsunomiya Museum of Art, Utsunomiya (2013); *Primary Field: The State of Contemporary Art—Conversation with the 7 Fields*, Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura & Hayama (2007); *Remaking Modernism in Japan 1900–2000*, University Art Museum, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, *The Power of Painting—Japanese Painting since 1980*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2003); and Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2004); and *The Vision of Contemporary Art*, Ueno Royal Museum, Tokyo (1995 and 1999). Her work is represented in the collections of the Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima, Japan; Iwaki City Art Museum, Iwaki, Japan; National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan; Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura & Hayama, Japan; National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan; National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan; Rachofsky Collection, Dallas, TX; Sezon Museum of Modern Art, Karuizawa, Japan; and Utsunomiya Museum of Art, Utsunomiya, Japan, among others.

Akane Saijo (b. 1989, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan) completed her BA in Fine Art and MA in Ceramics at Kyoto City University of Arts, Kyoto, Japan, and received the grand prize at the first edition of MIMOCA EYE at Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art, Kagawa in 2022. She will have her first museum solo exhibition at the Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art in early 2025. Her work is represented in the collections of the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, Aichi, Japan and Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan, among others.

About BLUM

BLUM represents more than sixty artists and estates from seventeen 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-

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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 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.

Press Inquiries

Nicoletta Beyer
Communications and Editorial Director, New York
nicoletta@blum-gallery.com

Christie Hayden
Communications and Social Media Editor, Los Angeles
christie@blum-gallery.com