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Roberto Matta

All Things Are Changing in All Dimensions

Curated by Dan Nadel and Cornelius Tittel

BLUM Los Angeles

May 18–June 29, 2024

Opening Reception: Saturday, May 18, 6–8pm

**On Roberto Matta: A Discussion with Exhibition Curators Dan Nadel and Cornelius Tittel
Saturday, May 18, 4pm**

Los Angeles, CA, April 27, 2024—BLUM is pleased to present *All Things Are Changing in All Dimensions*, an exhibition of rarely seen drawings, sculptures, and paintings spanning early 1950s to late 1990s by Roberto Matta. Curated by Dan Nadel and Cornelius Tittel, this is Matta’s first Los Angeles exhibition in over twenty years.

Roberto Matta was born in Chile and found his artistic destiny in 1930s Paris. A trained architect working in the studio of Le Corbusier, his paintings won over André Breton, who, in 1937, invited him to join the original surrealist movement. Relocating to New York City in the 1940s, he became the city’s link to historical surrealism, being a naturally loquacious artist and one of the few English-speaking émigrés in the community. Matta was a friend as well as a major inspiration to Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock, and Arshile Gorky, among others. He remained a supporter of other artists, encouraging Peter Saul and William Copley, while influencing the likes of Karl Wirsum and Carroll Dunham. Matta first explored Los Angeles in 1948 while showing at his friend William Copley’s eponymous gallery. Half a century later, the city hosted his 2001 retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art.

Developing a language that he felt could capture the mutability of space and time as it appears in our shifting consciousness, he went on to investigate artistic galaxies no painter had traveled to before with decidedly cinematic works that foreshadowed the look and feel of science fiction and fantasy film spectacles. His drawing practice happened across Paris, New York, Rome, and wherever he found himself. Each work was usually drawn in a single improvised session and considered complete; he rarely made drawings to plan paintings. Matta was attempting to think those thoughts about space and time on the page (or painting) itself, imagining the madness, irrationality, eros, horror, and beauty of life through matrices of the unnamable.

In the 1950s, Matta developed his “vitreurs”—humanoids, seemingly made of glass, enacting rituals and behaviors in quasi-geometric arrangements of planes and transparent color forms. In the 1960s, Matta began drawing narrative images of protests, state violence, and revolution, and, later, sequences of images that imagine his beings—not so different from the beings he sculpted—engaged in debates, sex, transformation, and dance. These later humanoids increasingly resembled the fluid and life-like beings Matta would make in terracotta. This exhibition includes eight sculptures, seven of which have never been exhibited. These totemic objects populated his various homes like a civilization of his own making. Up until his last year, Matta continued innovating his formal language—composing horizontal spaces out of rectangular cubes and blending those with earthen spaces. His final and never-before-exhibited

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paintings, on view in the Garden Gallery, bring Matta back to his roots as an architect, imagining exploded geodesic polygons forming and unforming amidst a universe on the verge.

Roberto Sebastián Antonio Matta Echaurren (b. 1911, Santiago, Chile; d. 2002, Civitavecchia, Italy) studied architecture at the Colegio del Sagrado Corazón and the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. As a student, he attended a seminar on the theory of relativity and noted, “To understand the fact that there is no immobile point in the universe which could serve to measure distance and the speed of light was fascinating.” Soon after, he discovered Marcel Duchamp, and, furthering his interest in destabilizing points of view, gleaned that art could depict changeability in time and space. In 1933, he moved to Paris, finding work in the office of Le Corbusier until 1937. In 1936, he met the British painter Gordon Onslow Ford who introduced Matta to the Russian theoretician Pyotr Demianovich Ouspensky. Ouspensky espoused ideas about the fourth dimension. With this, and a heady dose of psychoanalytic reading, Matta began developing ideas about how to visualize consciousness. Having become enamored of surrealism, through his friend Federico García Lorca, Matta arranged a meeting with Salvador Dalí, who in turn introduced him to Breton. The elder surrealist was impressed by Matta’s near-psychedelic architectural drawings, and encouraged him to abandon architecture in favor of art. In 1938, Matta began making the paintings that imagined “inscapes” or three-dimensional visions of the modern psyche with skeins of flesh, allusive forms, and deep spaces.

Later in life, Matta lived between Paris, London, and Tarquinia, Italy. In these years, he introduced humanoid figures into his visual landscapes, enacting dramas of sex, politics, and struggle in an increasingly screen-centric and mechanized world. These images and Matta’s leftist beliefs made him a beacon for younger artists and groups for social change in the 1960s and 1970s. Matta’s first one-artist exhibition was held at the Julian Levy Gallery, New York, NY in 1940. His first major retrospective was held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (1957), which traveled to the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN (1957), and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA (1958). Retrospectives have recently been held at Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA (2001); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain (1999); Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (1985); and, with his son Gordon Matta-Clark, at the San Diego Museum of Art, CA (2006). His work is represented in collections worldwide including at Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands; and Tate Britain, London, UK.

Dan Nadel is curator-at-large for the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art. He has curated exhibitions for galleries and museums internationally including the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the Manetti Shrem Museum of Art, UC Davis, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. His biography of Robert Crumb will be published in Spring 2025.

Cornelius Tittel is editor-in-chief of *Blau International*, an art magazine published in Berlin. With Albert Oehlen, he is co-curating the Hans Josephsohn retrospective at Musée d’Art Moderne in Paris, opening in October 2025, and publishing a monograph on the sculptor with Skira Editore alongside.

About BLUM

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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-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.

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