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Mark Grotjahn
Opaque Landscapes

BLUM Tokyo
September 20–October 26, 2024
Opening Reception: Friday, September 20, 5–7pm

Tokyo, Japan, August 2, 2024—BLUM is pleased to present *Opaque Landscapes*, Los Angeles-based artist Mark Grotjahn's tenth solo exhibition with the gallery.

In his new body of work, Grotjahn uses various modes of paint treatment and application to form dense, abstract compositions of vibrating lines across pools of striking colors to form what he is calling the Opaque Landscapes. Using brushes on linen and without the cardboard substrate that he has become known for, these new paintings have an immediate and fluid presence which communicates a conscious move toward a more improvisational style.

As a logical next step from his Skull paintings (2016–2024) in which Grotjahn riffed on and decorated over renderings of skulls in excited lines and screaming colors, the Opaque Landscapes series sees him moving to completely obliterate the need for an image as an anchor. Although called landscapes, the new paintings do not draw from an image or observation of nature. Grotjahn's primary consideration in these paintings is not a rigorous plan or strategy for a picture, but, instead, a reflection of his own formal and sensory response as he builds each composition. By allowing himself the freedom and play to open up his process this way, he is able to let the paintings evolve without restriction.

It is typical for Grotjahn to home in on a method for mark making within each body of work that, for him, is both visually satisfying and mechanically reassuring. While his marks in the Backcountry paintings (2021–2024) are mostly made using cutting, hard-edged strokes—conversely, the fields, daubs, and strands of colors in the Opaque Landscapes are made with a considered intimacy, hugging inward rather than exploding out. Compact, solid areas of color are applied with soft, rippling edges. At times slivers and gaps where the shapes do not touch reveal ghostly traces of paint that were either washed on or sanded away. Fault-like lines and quick dashes carve through stacked forms to create complex strata, giving the paintings their landscape-like qualities while also conjuring the expressive style of Kandinsky and other early Bauhaus artists.

The edges of the paintings, each contained within a rectilinear space, are fuzzy and surrounded by a border of linen, some with uneven or frayed cuts. By revealing the mechanics of the painting and allowing the roughness to be visible Grotjahn further reinforces his embrace of a more essential practice without betraying his confidence and proficiency as a painter.

Mark Grotjahn lives and works in Los Angeles. His work has been exhibited extensively around the world including in recent solo exhibitions at Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2018); Kunstverein Freiburg, Germany (2014); Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas (2014); the Aspen Art Museum (2012); and in group exhibitions at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2014); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2014); and the Whitney Biennial, New York (2006). His work is represented in numerous public collections,

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including the Broad Art Foundation, Los Angeles, CA; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH; Dakis Joannou Collection, Athens, Greece; De La Cruz Collection, Miami, FL; Des Moines Art Center, De Moines, IA; François Pinault Collection, Venice, Italy; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Rubell Family Collection, Miami, FL; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Tate Modern, London, UK; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; among many more.

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-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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