

# BLUM

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Kaifan Wang**  
***One Piece***

**BLUM Los Angeles**  
**November 2–December 21, 2024**  
**Opening Reception: Saturday, November 2, 5–7pm**

October 24, 2024, Los Angeles, CA—BLUM is pleased to present *One Piece*, Berlin-based artist Kaifan Wang's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

There is a nomadic underpinning to the way that Wang thinks—this mindset sentimentally unifies the artist's practice as well as this exhibition. Born in Hohhot, China, an area with a long cultural history that has been buried by rapid urban development, and living in Berlin, Wang is a masterful and worldly storyteller with the unique ability to find overlap between the histories of the Chinese diaspora and the preexisting narratives embedded within the places where he lives or works. For Wang, migration is a means of traversing cultural references across time and space to find meaning in the now.

The artist draws out disparate references and discursively relates them to one another in surprising ways. Wang nods, for instance, to emigrants from Inner Mongolia through the movement and gestures in his paintings—some strokes moving along the pull of gravity or the natural flow of the composition and others moving against. Bearing in mind the stark contrast between the history of Chinese and Western abstract painting, Wang's style ruminates on fractured cultural identities and the fluidity of human migration through flowing gestures and plumes of oil, oil stick, and acrylic on canvas—offering conclusions at once intellectual and emotive on a topic that is otherwise quite slippery.

While doing research for *One Piece*, Wang visited Gustav Klimt's *Beethoven Frieze* (1901–1902), a mural commissioned for the Secession Building in Vienna, Austria in which Klimt depicted Wagner's literary interpretation of the swelling crescendos and opulence of Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony as an expression of desire. As though with a gold thread, Wang draws unlikely parallels between the gold of Klimt's goldleaf, the sandstorms of the artist's childhood, and the gold rush that drew in the first generation of Chinese migrants to the United States. Here, gold becomes the intersection of desire and personal memories.

Wang's painting *Gum Shan* (2024), for instance, takes its title from a Cantonese name given to San Francisco that translates to “gold mountain.” *Gum Shan* captures Wang's vivid visions of the glimmer of hope that might motivate nineteenth Chinese prospectors arriving in California to mine gold—encouraged to marry and have children, sometimes just months away from their departure dates, they were meant to work hard and send their profits back home. As Wang puts it, “The inherent contradiction in the relationship between searching and desire is bondage.” The yearning for happiness can be a yoke along the path to autonomy.

*One Piece*, a Japanese manga and animation, is a story of risk-taking, adventurous seafarers, each representing different civilizations and spirits. All characters in this tale are driven to find the ultimate treasure of a fabled prize known as the one piece—although its nature is shrouded in mystery, this treasure unifies the characters in a common trajectory. This idea pervades Wang's practice, apparent in

# BLUM

the fusion of his vast array of references as well as each individual story. *Reverse Mountain* (2024) is a surrealist landscape. Its water flows upward along a golden mountain range toward the important gateway to the New World. *Calm Belt* (2024) is the impediment posed toward those who want to enter this same world. In this peaceful vignette, there is neither wind nor currents that could propel a ship toward successful passage to the coveted destination.

*One Piece* coincides with the release of Kaifan Wang's first monograph. Eponymously titled, this in-depth exploration of the artist's practice features essays by Xiaoyu Weng, Martin Herbert and Marta Gnyp.

Kaifan Wang (b. 1996, Hohhot, China) lives and works in Berlin, Germany. He studied in Shanghai and Florence before completing his Fine Arts education at the Universität der Künste, Berlin, Germany in 2022. Wang has exhibited his work in prominent group exhibitions, including *Supercrowds/Super community*, TANK Shanghai, China (2024); *Bordercrossing: Possibilities and Interactions*, Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China (2023); *Briefly Gorgeous*, Songwon Art Center, Seoul, South Korea (2023); *Temporary Chapter*, Wilhelm Hallen, Berlin, Germany (2022); *Caused BY Hair*, Shanghai Himalayas Museum, Shanghai, China (2019); and *FLUXUS+Studios*, FLUXUS+ Museum, Potsdam, Germany (2019). Wang was featured in *Influential 2023: Forbes China Contemporary Young Artists* and won the Ivan Juritz Prize 2022, funded by King's College London and Mahler & LeWitt Studios in Spoleto, Italy. He also received the HVB KunstCUBE's One-Year Artist Grant. The first monograph of his work will be released in October 2024.

## 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.

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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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