

# LISSON GALLERY

## Press Release

### Kelly Akashi

February 20 – March 29 2025

1037 N. Sycamore Avenue, Los Angeles

Opening: February 19, 6 – 8pm

Lisson Gallery's inaugural exhibition with Los Angeles-based artist Kelly Akashi was set to open on January 31 in L.A., featuring an entirely new body of work that both Lisson and Akashi were eager to share with her hometown. Akashi is an artist whose work and practice are imbued with the shared ethos and identity of her city. The beginning of 2025 brought heartbreaking devastation to many Angelenos. Akashi's cherished home and studio were among the countless losses as the destructive fires tore through communities across Los Angeles in early January.

With an incredible amount of perseverance and support from her community, Akashi immediately went back to work, rebuilding and recontextualizing her exhibition. For her first exhibition with Lisson Gallery, Akashi triumphantly presents a number of new bodies of work featuring glass, earth, stone, lace, and bronze elements, incorporating both inherited and uniquely processed materials. Akashi personally recovered several bronze cast and borosilicate glass forms from the wreckage of her studio. She includes these objects in the exhibition, now with the somber patina created by the fire, acting as a record and acknowledgment of the event. These, along with other works, are hung on the gallery walls and installed among a landscape of stone and marble sculptures mounted on Corten steel pedestals, creating a singular and associative environment with its own circular ecosystem, rich with the possibilities of making, displacing, and reclaiming.

Intimate groupings of objects are dispersed across several oxidized plinths and tables, some splayed and disarranged, others forming concatenating configurations between carved and rough-hewn pillars and wedges of marble, as well as cast body parts and delicately hand-blown glass flowers. This mode of display mimics natural occurrences, perhaps of hands enclosing like caverns or plants growing out of cracks in the ground. Nearly every other object, however, has undergone a meticulous and labor-intensive transformation, shaped both by the artist and the forces of nature. This may involve the cutting and sculpting of multiple layers of materials such as alabaster, basalt, onyx, and limestone, or a remarkable alteration of substances—transforming skin into crystal or stems into glass. Other works present intriguing juxtapositions, such as an organic form emerging from a bronze cast of the artist's lower face, or a delicate glass chain, damaged by the Eaton Fire, that adorns a basalt structure. A cornerstone of the exhibition, Akashi presents an exceptionally elaborate glass sphere made from finely latticed borosilicate glasswork, its detailed and delicate structure seemingly impossible in its complexity and ethereal nature.

Draped over the weathering steel surfaces are a number of lace doilies that belonged to the artist's grandmother and recently came into her possession. While these might suggest traces of the personal, domestic and emotional narratives attached to such heirlooms, something the artist is known to do, they also contain the universal truth of familial lineage, of the passing down of knowledge and the unavoidable, constant inheritance of history.

From recent exhibitions centering on the fragility and complexity of the figure and especially her own body, Akashi now turns to the resilient and regenerative properties of nature, through a series of scanned, sculpted, and drawn seed pods. Initial CT scans of Devil's Claw, Sweet Gum and Datura seedpods, among other species, are blown up to triffid-like proportions, 3D-printed and cast in bronze. Whether hanging like ornamental, ceremonial lights or scored into surfaces with silverpoint like cave paintings, these pods offer up their secrets to life more or less readily, some seeds lying dormant but still filled with potential while others have long ago scattered and sprouted new growths – all have the potential to change the world. Akashi's alchemical transformation of matter

enacts the continuous life cycle begun by the seed, revealing how all of existence is already in front of us, even if what was once made of one substance may now appear in a different form and might yet soon become something else anew.

## About the artist

Executed with deft manual skill and astute material knowledge, Kelly Akashi's visual language emphasizes the impermanence of the natural world, recording and indexing fragmented moments in time. Her singular practice is characterized by a rigorous conceptual approach, yet the work is distinguished by a deep reverence for process. Always a student, Akashi is perpetually studying new practices and physical techniques such as glass-blowing, casting, candle-making and stone carving. The repeated use of the hand as motif serves as a symbol for Akashi's ongoing investigation into the temporality of the human experience. Often cast in bronze or crystal, her hands bear the mark of time on her body, her growing fingernails, and aging flesh. Towering sculpted weeds, delicately glass-blown flowers, a to-scale depiction of her body in polished travertine, enlarged casts of extinct species of shells; Akashi poetically and objectively encapsulates the notion of mortality in a ritualistic gathering of objects. However, her take on her own practice is not a morbid one. Akashi references the phrase *mono no aware*. "It refers to a wistful awareness of impermanence—the 'pathos of things'. It's central to *hanami*, the Japanese custom of venturing out to enjoy the brief season of cherry blossoms."

Kelly Akashi was born in 1983 in Los Angeles. She received a BFA from Otis College of Art & Design in 2006 and an MFA from the University of Southern California in 2014. She also studied at the prestigious Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste (Städelschule) in Frankfurt am Main, Germany in 2010. Akashi has been chosen as the Artist in Residence at Pilchuck Glass School for 2025. Recent solo exhibitions include 'Kelly Akashi – Converging Figures' Fondazione Furla Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Milan, Italy (13 September – December 8 2024) and 'Kelly Akashi: Encounters' at the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, USA (September 30, 2023 – June 15, 2024) and her 10-year survey, 'Formations', which began at the San José Museum of Art in 2022, travelled to the Frye Art Museum in Seattle and then to the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, through 2024. Recent group exhibitions include 'A Garden of Promise and Dissent', Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT, USA (17 November 2024 – November 2025); 'Spirit House', Cantor Arts Center, Stanford, CA, USA (September 4 2024 – 26 January 2025); 'Ecstatic: Selections from the Hammer Contemporary Collection', Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA, USA (2023); 'Ground/work' at Clark Institute, Williamston, MA, USA (2020); 'Possessed', MO.CO Panacée, Montpellier, France; 'Take Me (I'm Yours)', The Jewish Museum, New York, NY, USA (2016); and 'Made in LA: a, the, though, only', Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA, USA (2016).

## About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 70 international artists across spaces in London, New York, Los Angeles, Shanghai and Beijing. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists and others of that generation, from Carmen Herrera and Olga de Amaral to Hélio Oiticica and Lee Ufan. In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Liu Xiaodong, Otobong Nkanga, Pedro Reyes, Sean Scully, Hiroshi Sugimoto and Wael Shawky. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists including Dana Awartani, Cory Arcangel, Garrett Bradley, Ryan Gander, Josh Kline, Hugh Hayden, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost and Cheyney Thompson.

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