

BLUM

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Tom Anholt
Distant Islands

BLUM Tokyo
April 12–June 14, 2025
Opening Reception: Saturday, April 12, 5–7pm

March 28, 2025, Tokyo—BLUM is pleased to present *Distant Islands*, Berlin-based artist Tom Anholt's second solo exhibition with the gallery and his first in Tokyo.

Compared with Anholt's earlier works, the paintings comprising *Distant Islands* reveal a rougher edge—expressive, textural brushstrokes hint at the prickly, exhilarating feeling of going into the unfamiliar. For the artist, this sentiment arrives as an amalgamation primarily brought forth from two sources: contemporary interpretations of the naturalist and individualist ideals of German Romantic painters and the autobiographical experience of a solo traveler immersing himself in Japanese culture for the first time. Recalling years of imagery that have emanated globally out of Japan as he prepared for this exhibition, Anholt becomes a spectator within his own subconscious—recontextualizing latent ideas and creating paintings that gaze upon something with which the artist has become acquainted anew.

With several works in *Distant Islands* referencing compositions by famed German Romantic artist Caspar David Friedrich, particularly the exhibition's titular work, Anholt's paintings utilize figures as surrogates for the viewer. Composed in a manner that makes the canvas's subject both the onlooker and the observed, one is encouraged to examine their own dual role as a spectator of culture and as an object to be surveyed within the public sphere. Examining the queries of the German Romantics for a new generation, this dissection of the solo beholder versus the group of the surveilled feels uniquely pertinent in a post-internet, post-global era.

With BLUM's Tokyo gallery perched aloft and overlooking one of the city's major parks, where tourists come from across the world to view cherry blossoms or *sakura*, *Distant Islands*'s theme of observation also serves to call attention out the window to some of Japan's most well-known motifs—drawing them back into the gallery space. Synonymous with springtime in the region, the branches and blooms of this iconic flora become snaking mahogany brushstrokes and punctuated, vivid pink marks in vignettes such as *Cherry Blossom* (2025). In the perceived depths of this work, a careful viewer will also note a passing traveler upon the sea as he takes in this seasonal splendor.

Another major influence that Anholt cites for this exhibition is the oeuvre of celebrated Japanese *ukiyo-e* artist Utagawa Hiroshige. Seeking an ambiguous middle ground between the flatness of this print medium and the pictorial depth of Western painting, Anholt layers his picture planes as if printing and adds depth therein. *Shallow Dive* (2025), for instance, finds a diver plunging into a sweeping river through the flatness of silhouetted trees. As he hurls into the dark water below, this diver also furthers adventurous themes permeating throughout *Distant Islands*.

Tom Anholt (b. 1987, Bath, UK) lives and works in Berlin, Germany. He holds a BA from the Chelsea College of Art and Design, London, UK, and studied at Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts and Design, Stockholm, Sweden. Anholt's work was the subject of the solo presentation *Time Machine* at

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Kunstverein Ulm, Germany (2018) and featured in group presentations at the Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles, CA (2023); Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany (2020); and KH7 Artspace, Arhaus, Denmark (2018). His work is represented in numerous public collections including Collection DBC, Copenhagen, Denmark; Collection Majudia, Montreal, Canada; Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles, CA; and M Woods, Beijing, China.

About BLUM

BLUM represents more than sixty artists and estates from twenty 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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