

Black.

Zhu Jinshi, Quentin Morris, Kōji Enokura

Blum & Poe Los Angeles

May 13 – June 25, 2016

Opening reception: Friday, May 13, 6 – 8pm

Blum & Poe is pleased to present *Black.*, an exhibition investigating the notion and function of monochromatic black painting by way of the work of three artists: Zhu Jinshi, Quentin Morris, and Kōji Enokura. Via three distinct impulses, the artists convey identity, practice, and methodology from the fringe – be it sociopolitical, geographical, or spiritual – manifested through a spectrum of scale, timbre, and texture, as a platform for the black pigment palette. *Black.* is comprised of three rooms respectively presenting the work of three artists.

In the first gallery, the viewer is confronted with Zhu Jinshi's staggering work titled *Wall of Air*; ten canvases adjoined to metal frames, spanning over 65 feet in length. These paintings are created through a highly physical process, oil paint applied to canvas in a manner akin to pouring asphalt pavement for roadwork. The reference to labor is never distant from the artist's practice – coming of age during the onset of the Cultural Revolution of China, Zhu was assigned factory work as a youth and thereafter developed his painterly skills by apprenticeship and without formal academic training. Zhu has consistently experienced the position of the outsider – operating on the sociopolitical fringe of oppressive Cultural Revolution era China by virtue of being an experimental artist; and in self-exile, relocating from Beijing to Berlin in 1986, remaining in the West for the following twenty years. The color black of this sprawling piece channels Eastern lexicons: Heaven's Color (I-Ching), Daoist color symbology, and the artist describes the color as one comprised of five others – the antithesis of void and deprivation, but rather a dynamic amalgam.

In a second room, Philadelphia artist Quentin Morris' black monochrome circle paintings float on charcoal walls – unframed, unstretched, and affixed by only the crest of the canvas. Morris has been almost exclusively employing black paint and the form of the circle in his art practice for fifty years, beginning as a student at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. These narrow aesthetic parameters serve the artist as tools for prodding and navigating identity politics and spirituality; they function in the critical analysis and subversion of laden Western connotations surrounding the color, and engage signifiers central to Buddhist concepts of enlightenment, transcendence, and the void. Morris explains, "I began exploring monochromatic painting ... exclusively black using a myriad of tonalities and textures to present black's intrinsically enigmatic beauty and infinite depth, to refute all negative cultural mythologies about the color, and ultimately, to create work that innately expresses the all encompassing spirituality of life." Morris' process consists of the application of graphite, powdered pigment, crayon, spray-paint, ink, and acrylic to surfaces of canvas, linen, mylar, or found paper as they lay flat on the studio floor. What results is a body of work with a plethora of subtle variations, yielded from a half-century meditation on the color black.

The work of Kōji Enokura is rooted in the existential anxiety that permeated Japan in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Amid a politically tense climate of antiwar protest and concerns about the environmental cost of Japan's rapid postwar modernization, artists focused on the elemental questions of material and space. At this time, Enokura was associated with Mono-ha, a group of artists who explored the qualities of natural and industrial materials, and the interdependent relationships among them and their surrounding space. Discoloring the floors and walls of galleries and outdoor sites with oil, grease, soil and mortar, Enokura's

interventions were some of the most enigmatic examples of the Mono-ha practice. From the end of the 1970s, he shifted these acts of staining onto cotton cloth, which are displayed in the third gallery. The artist built up dense fields of smooth black paint, allowing it to bleed into unmarked sections of the canvas. The phenomenological relationship between the wall, floor, and everyday objects remains crucial to many of these works. In the *Intervention* series, the artist variously leaned wooden beams against the canvas or affixed bottles, houseplants, and electrical sockets to the surface; drenching each of them in paint. In the *Figure A* series, he pinned all-black cloths to the wall and let them fold out onto the floor.

Zhu Jinshi has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions, including at Blum & Poe, New York (2016) and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles (2012). A retrospective of the artist's work *Performance in Paint* curated by Melissa Chiu, director of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington DC, recently closed at the Inside-Out Museum, Beijing. Other important solo shows include *On the Road*, City of Prague Museum, Czech Republic (2002); *Tao of Rice Paper*, Museum of Vancouver, Canada (1997); and *Fangzhen*, DAAD Galerie, Berlin (1990). Recent group exhibitions include *Alone Together*, Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2012); *Mind Space: Maximalism in Contrasts*, University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (2011); and *China Now – Art in Times of Change*, ESSL Museum, Vienna, Austria (2006).

Quentin Morris has exhibited at numerous museums across the country and internationally, including a retrospective of the artist's work at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia in 2004. His work has been featured in group exhibitions at such institutions as the African American Museum in Philadelphia (2006, 2000); Arcadia University Art Gallery, Glenside, PA (2001); The Drawing Center, New York, NY (2002, 1993); Emory Museum of Art and Archeology, Atlanta, GA (1990); Moore College of Art and Design, Philadelphia, PA (1991, 1990, 1988); Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Recife, Brazil (1993); Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (2010, 2004, 1975); Philadelphia Museum of Art (1999); and The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY (2009, 2006, 2004).

This will be the third exhibition at Blum & Poe to feature the work of Kōji Enokura, including a solo exhibition in 2013, and his inclusion in the monumental, historical presentation of Mono-ha curated by Mika Yoshitake in 2012, *Requiem for the Sun: The Art of Mono-ha*. The artist has had numerous solo exhibitions at Japanese galleries and museums, including the National Museum of Art, Osaka (1994), and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2005). Enokura's work has also been included in landmark surveys, such as *Prima Materia*, at the Punta della Dogana, Venice, Italy (2013); *Reconsidering Mono-ha*, National Museum of Art, Osaka (2005); *Avanguardia Giapponese degli Anni 70*, Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna di Bologna (1992), and Setagaya Art Museum, Tokyo (1993); Venice Biennale (1978); Biennale of Sydney (1976); Paris Biennale (1971); and *Tokyo Biennale '70: Between Man and Matter*, Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum (1970).