

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kazumi Nakamura

Blum & Poe, New York

June 1—August 5, 2017

Opening reception: Thursday, June 1

Blum & Poe is pleased to present a body of work spanning over four decades by Tokyo-based artist Kazumi Nakamura. This is Nakamura's second solo presentation with the gallery, and his first in New York.

This exhibition showcases paintings from the 1980s onward, with a variety of motifs that the artist has honed to explore the duality of political and personal semiotics as applied to pictorial space. With a lexicon of visual abstraction developed over forty years, Nakamura pursues themes ranging from identity politics in postwar Japan and American hegemony, to the internal realms of pain and loss. Nakamura mines traditional Eastern depictions of space, filtered through a lens of American Modernism. Sparsely populated canvases with diagonal grid patterns offer a critical exchange of the aesthetics of traditional Japanese latticed structures and sixteenth century screen paintings with an art historical understanding of Barnett Newman and Rosalind Krauss. In another group of paintings, a brightly colored suite called *A Bird in its Existence*, Nakamura shifts from the logical grid to emotional abstraction, employing the avian form to evoke the feeling of psychological instability. In a third motif, canvases textured with thick paint and heavy brushstrokes echo a recurring “Y”—the shape used to denote mulberry fields in Japanese cartography—a sentimental emblem for the artist, symbolizing his mother.

Nakamura began his career in the early 1980s amongst the backdrop of the Japanese New Painting artistic milieu, one that developed alongside American and European Neo-Expressionism. He entered the Tokyo University of the Arts with the intention to study art theory but soon found himself studying under Mono-ha artist Kōji Enokura, a mentor who encouraged him to focus on creating art. These years served as a turning point, in which he learned to integrate theory into practice. Nakamura cultivated an aesthetic that can be read as a link in the Japanese art historical lineage, bridging postwar movements such as Mono-ha to contemporary milestones such as Takashi Murakami's Superflat. Nakamura's work materializes this interrelationship, organically correlating Blum & Poe's longstanding exhibition program with contemporary artists Takashi Murakami and Yoshitomo Nara to more recent projects with Mono-ha artists Kōji Enokura, Susumu Koshimizu, Nobuo Sekine, Kishio Suga, and the gallery's landmark historical survey of 2012 *Requiem for the Sun: The Art of Mono-ha*.

Nakamura has declared his long-term goal as “the establishment of a form of painting that operates on a different dimension from the absoluteness, centeredness, wholeness, and purity of Western painting.”

Kazumi Nakamura (b. 1956, Chiba, Japan) received an MFA in oil painting from Tokyo University of the Arts. He has exhibited his work throughout East Asia for the past 35 years, with solo museum exhibitions including a large-scale retrospective at the National Art Center, Tokyo, Japan (2014); Iwaki City Art Museum, Iwaki City, Japan (2002); and Sezon Museum of Modern Art, Nagano, Japan (1999). He has also participated in such distinguished group exhibitions as *Europaria Japan '89*, Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent, Belgium (1989); and *Japan Art Today: Elusive Perspectives/Changing Visions* (1990-91), which toured Northern Europe. A book of Nakamura's theoretical essays on painting, *Tōkasuru hikari: Nakamura Kazumi chosaku senshū (Permeating Light: A Nakamura Kazumi Anthology)* was published by Reifū Shobō in 2007.