

# BLUM & POE

Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### ***Vong Co RAHZI***

EY3, Masaho Anotani, Tomoo Gokita, Teppei Kaneuji, Chihiro Mori

Blum & Poe, Tokyo

June 15-August 10, 2019

Opening reception: Saturday, June 15, 6-8 pm

Public programming:

DJ sets by EY3 and Tomoo Gokita, performance by Ho Tara (a.k.a Masaho Anotani)

Saturday, August 10, 8-11pm

TRUNK(HOTEL), Tokyo

Blum & Poe is pleased to present *Vong Co RAHZI*, an exhibition inspired by the vastly influential visual and music artist known simply as EY3 is best recognized as a pioneering figure in the transnationally influential genre of Japanese noise. Spotlighting moments of fluidity between the boundary of music and visual art, *Vong Co RAHZI* introduces a selection of work by EY3, along with compositions by four artists who draw influence from this luminary figure of artistic experimentation—Masaho Anotani, Tomoo Gokita, Teppei Kaneuji, and Chihiro Mori.

This exhibition follows the ambitious two-part survey *Parergon: Japanese Art of the 1980s and 1990s* curated by Mika Yoshitake at Blum & Poe Los Angeles in the spring of 2019. Bringing together some of the most enigmatic works that were first generated during a rich two-decade period, *Parergon* showcased key experimental multi-genre practices in which artists began to explore subversive artistic languages and integrate underground subcultures—notably with critical experimentation in the mediums of sound, noise and electro-acoustics. Although often underrecognized and considered peripheral to art history, strides made within these genres greatly impacted the cross-pollinating ecosystems of seminal artistic subcultures—the artworks featured on LPs, cassette tapes, and CDs played as much of a role in cultivating working artists' emotional and visual lexicons as the experience of listening to the music itself. As Yoshitake put it: "These non-tactile, ephemeral forms of expression had a significant influence on the artists of this time, resonating with their diversity of methods and achieving a fundamental connection with areas of the unconscious that are unreachable by human perception, memory, and language."

*Vong Co RAHZI* seeks to reveal a genealogy among artists who emerged during this timeframe and since, with practices transformed by experimentations in these subcultures and specifically by the artist EY3. The exhibition title is a neologism coined by EY3, a linguistic collage combining the words Vong Co (traditional Vietnamese music) and Laraaji (legendary American ambient musician), with the syllable "RAH" representing a primal sonic expression for the artist.

EY3 (b. 1964) is the frontman of the acid-punk band Boredoms, whose radical musicality and performance developed out of the legendary hardcore noise band Hanatarash. He is known for his dynamic live performances and genre-defying music (which itself was born out of numerous collaborations with musicians such as Sonic Youth and John Zorn), establishing his transcendence of the art/music categories. EY3 exchanged cassette recordings in a mail art network, a trend in the experimental music scene that echoes the mail art of Shozo Shimamoto, a major figure in the Gutai Art Association. He was also inspired by the 1970s psychedelic art scene when he was a teenager. Since the 1990s, his mixed-media works employ a variety of techniques and mediums ranging from airbrush to

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marker pen and collage. EYƎ's influence stems not just from the works themselves—his creative energy alone has been a source of motivation driving young artists.

Teppeï Kaneuji (b. 1978) is based in Kyoto. Shaped by his studies under major artists such as Susumu Koshimizu and Kodai Nakahara in the Department of Sculpture at the Kyoto City University of the Arts, his work uses collage to fuse elements ranging from imagery of everyday objects, people, and technology. His practice extends from two- and three-dimensional media to video and theater. Citing EYƎ as one of his biggest influences, Kaneuji has written that EYƎ's inhibition "became imprinted in my mind as what 'art' should be" and led him to realize that everyday objects too "can be possessed by a higher power."

Chihiro Mori (b.1978) also spent the latter half of the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s at Kyoto City University of the Arts. Her work ranges in media from painting, drawing, photography, video and sculpture. Mori's practice draws from her own memory, a sense of incongruity with the world, trauma, and urban observation. The titles of her works humorously connect seemingly disparate words, symbols, and objects in an exercise linked to Surrealism. Mori is fascinated by EYƎ's music and live performances—she notes his idiosyncratic physicality on stage that seemingly refutes up and down, front and back, with an unbound freedom that seeks to eschew a certain universal hidden oppression. She sees EYƎ's imagination in defiance of existing frameworks for art and empathizes with a shrewdly observant and humorous expression of contemporary urban landscape and the body. Mori sees commonalities between her practice and EYƎ's in their shared understanding of the mundane as connected to the body, memory and primal senses which she expresses as "anarchic and humanistic."

Tomoo Gokita (b. 1969) is best known for his monochromatic and greyscale paintings, but the artist also comes from a background in graphic design and an enduring interest in music culture, having designed numerous album covers in the early 2000s. Gokita's work rejects easy definition: some compositions seem grounded in specific art-historical references—ranging from Surrealism to post-war German figurative painting—yet are often imbued with the syntax of mainstream culture and its more obscure undercurrents. As epitomized in a series of fictional album covers made over the course of nearly fifteen years, each bearing a portrait of a professional wrestler, Gokita has created artworks that subvert the categories of art and design. This exhibition presents Gokita's collage and assemblage works, humorous responses to *Nanoo*, a compendium of collages that EYƎ published in 1996.

Masaho Anotani (b. 1990) began making collages as a child, his own interpretations for the covers of the punk albums he listened to at the time. His student years in Kyoto were characterized by a genre-crossing cultural scene that seamlessly interwove art, music, and theater, leading him to develop his multi-disciplinary practice encompassing painting, drawing, collage, performance, and photography. For *Vong Co RAHZI*, Anotani presents paper collage works as well as new collage-on-canvas works inspired by the title of the exhibition.

A closing program with DJ sets by EYƎ and Tomoo Gokita and a performance by Masaho Anotani will be held at the TRUNK(HOTEL), Tokyo on August 10, 8-11pm.