

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kishio Suga
Paper

Blum & Poe, Los Angeles
January 15–February 26, 2022

Los Angeles, CA, December 6, 2021—Blum & Poe is pleased to present an exhibition of Kishio Suga’s work on paper. His fifth solo presentation with the gallery, this show is the first comprehensive survey of his work in this medium, which has rarely been exhibited outside Japan. Suga’s investigation of paper has been an integral part of his practice since the beginning of his artistic career, occurring in parallel with the large-scale installations and wall-mounted assemblages for which he is best known.

The earliest work in this exhibition, *Untitled* (1968), was made shortly after Suga graduated from Tama Art University, when he worked for one year as a part-time studio assistant to Sam Francis in Tokyo. Watching Francis create his Edge paintings by moving around large canvases laid on the floor, Suga was inspired to think about the relationship of center and periphery in his own emerging practice. Painted with bright acrylics sourced from Francis’ studio, *Untitled* (1968) consists of rectangular fields of vivid red and blue, permeated with English words in various states of obfuscation and erasure. These colliding fields of color and fragments of negated language reflect Suga’s incipient interest in the discrepancies between words and meaning, and the need to allow material to speak for itself. Only months after creating *Untitled* (1968), Suga turned away from painting and toward making site-specific installations out of natural and industrial materials such as paraffin, concrete, wood, branches, metal, rope, and wire. He and a small number of other artists who worked in similarly ephemeral modes became known as Mono-ha (“School of Things”). Deeply immersed in the theoretical writings of Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze, Kitarō Nishida, Keiji Nishitani, and Mahāyāna Buddhism since his university years, Suga developed his own idiosyncratic philosophy of matter and space, which he articulates in terms of a holistic “interdependence” (*izon*) of all “things” (*mono*) “being left” (*hōchi*) in the “situations” (*jōkyō*) that unite them.

As with Suga’s installations and assemblages, his works on paper show the evolution of the artist’s thought over the last five decades. During the 1970s, Suga experimented with various forms of mark-making and manipulation on different types of paper. In *Situation of Boundary* (1971) Suga applied diagonal strokes of white chalk to conjoined sheets of black sandpaper, emphasizing a unifying field that traverses the borders of multiple units within a greater whole. Suga also created geometric compositions out of tape, marker, ink, and torn edges, such as *Lateral Realm—174* (1974) and *Corner at Phases* (1975). By contrast, in *Quantity of Territory in Position* (1976) he employed frenzied, diagonal ballpoint pen strokes to counter the gridded order of graph paper.

The early 1980s saw Suga continue to explore minimal interventions such as scoring corrugated cardboard in *Towards Order* (1981) and folding white paper to demarcate zones of space that he filled with gestural waves of pencil marks, as in *Things that Traverse—11* (1982). Later in the decade, he resumed the use of brilliant fields of paint interspersed with pencil lines as a means of deconstructing the white expanse of the paper support, such as *Few Variations, Many Transitions* (1985). *Untitled* (1988), in which only the corners are demarcated with blue and orange streaks of acrylic, recalls Sam Francis’ Edge paintings and yet is firmly rooted in Suga’s conceptual vernacular.

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Suga further expanded his repertoire of painted interventions and types of support during the 1990s, creating more sprawling configurations of acrylic and mixed media on used envelopes and densely patterned wrapping papers. In *Peripheral Spaces, Enclosed Scene* (1992), the red diagonal grid printed on the wrapping paper is overlaid with thin spokes of green and orange paint that radiate out from pools at the top and bottom edges and intersect in the middle. Since the 2000s, Suga has highlighted the duality of presence and absence by leaving geometric voids of unpainted space amid finely streaked grids of paint, such as in *Things that Go Against the Flow* (2007). Similarly, in *Oscillating Scenery* (2011), Suga dragged a ball of crumpled paper saturated with dark blue ink over a sheet of paper's white expanse and affixed the ball to the end of the meandering line that it had traced. The work presents three-dimensional evidence of movement across a two-dimensional field—an almost calligraphic revelation of the fusion of material, line, gesture, and space.

This presentation at Blum & Poe in Los Angeles coincides with a major solo museum exhibition in Japan and the release of an anthology of Suga's essays translated into English. The Iwate Museum of Art is celebrating its 20th anniversary with *Kishio Suga: The Existence of "Things" and the Eternity of "Site,"* a survey focusing on the artist's relationship with his home region of Iwate Prefecture. Meanwhile, Skira Editore, Blum & Poe, and Mendes Wood DM have published *Kishio Suga: Writings, vol. 1, 1969–1979*. Edited by Andrew Maerkele, Ashley Rawlings, and Sen Uesaki, this is the first of an ambitious three-volume anthology that makes Suga's thinking accessible to English readers as a comprehensive body of work for the first time. In spring 2023, Suga's work will be included in *Sam Francis and Japan: Emptiness Overflowing* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the first exhibition to explore Francis' work in relation to *ma* and other aspects of Japanese aesthetics.

Kishio Suga was born in Morioka, Iwate Prefecture, in 1944 and lives and works in Ito, Shizuoka Prefecture. In recent years, he has had major retrospectives at Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan, Italy (2016); Dia: Chelsea, New York, NY (2016); and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan (2015). Suga is frequently included in global survey exhibitions. Most recently, a re-creation of his groundbreaking outdoor installation *Law of Situation* (1971) was displayed in the Gaggiandre shipyard at the 57th Venice Biennale (2017). His work is featured in many institutional collections, including the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; Glenstone Foundation, Potomac, MD; Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi, UAE; Long Museum, Shanghai, China; M+, Hong Kong, China; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan; National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan; Pinault Collection, Venice, Italy; Rachofsky Collection, Dallas, TX; Tate Modern, London, UK; Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan; and the Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama, Japan.

About Blum & Poe

Blum & Poe was founded by Tim Blum and Jeff Poe in Santa Monica in September of 1994 as a space to show local and international contemporary art in all media. Blum's extensive experience in the Japanese art world combined with Poe's keen knowledge of emerging artists in Los Angeles resulted in an international program of influential artists. Throughout a twenty-seven-year history, Blum & Poe has shaped the trajectory of contemporary art by championing artists at all stages of their careers—cultivating the lineages that run between emerging and established practices, and working with artist estates to generate new discourse surrounding historical work. Currently, Blum & Poe represents forty-eight artists and eight estates from sixteen countries worldwide.

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In 2003 the gallery moved to a larger space in Culver City, and in 2009 Blum & Poe purchased and renovated its current 22,000 square foot complex on La Cienega Boulevard. In this location the gallery has since staged museum-caliber surveys, examining the historical work of such movements as the Japanese Mono-ha school (2012); the Korean Dansaekhwa monochrome painters (2014); the European postwar movement CoBrA (2015); Japanese art of 1980s and '90s (2019); a rereading of Brazilian Modernism (2019); and a revisionist take on the 1959 MoMA exhibition, *New Images of Man* (2020). To produce these exhibitions, Blum & Poe has worked with celebrated curators such as Alison M. Gingeras, Sofia Gotti, Joan Kee, and Mika Yoshitake.

In 2014, Blum & Poe opened galleries in New York and Tokyo to focus on intimately scaled projects in new contexts. These expansions tie into the gallery's wide-reaching program that includes exhibitions, lectures, performance series, screenings, and an annual art book fair at its base in Los Angeles. Blum & Poe's publishing division democratically circulates its program through original scholarship and accessible media ranging from academic monographs, audio series, magazines, to artists' books. In 2020, the gallery launched Blum & Poe Broadcasts, an online platform showcasing artists' projects in conjunction with physical installations or as standalone digital endeavors.

Across the three global locations, Blum & Poe prioritizes environmental and community stewardship in all operations. In 2015, Blum & Poe 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 & Poe is committed to fostering inclusive and equitable communities both in their physical and online spaces and believes that everybody should have equal access to creating and engaging with contemporary art.

Press Inquiries

Nicoletta Beyer
Communications and Editorial Director, Los Angeles
nicoletta@blumandpoe.com

Christie Hayden
Communications and Media Editor, Los Angeles
christie@blumandpoe.com

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