

BLUM & POE

Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo

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Cecily Brown

The end is a new start

Blum & Poe, Tokyo

October 22, 2021–January 15, 2022

Tokyo, Japan, September 30, 2021—Blum & Poe is pleased to present *The end is a new start*, Cecily Brown's first solo exhibition in Japan and her first with the gallery.

Cecily Brown is best known for her large-scale gestural paintings that blend abstraction and figuration, often looking to sources that range widely from the work of old and modern masters to pop album covers in her interrogation of critical themes such as sexuality and desire. In this new suite of twelve paintings, Brown presents two bodies of work—one that continues her recent investigations into historical representations of shipwrecks, and another that looks to major works from her own oeuvre spanning thirty years as fertile grounds for new inquiry.

Over the last few years Brown has fixated her painterly gaze on images of shipwrecks, tracing this trope through history while training her frame of focus on the human drama. Brown's research has taken her on an art historical journey with the likes of Delacroix, Théodore Géricault, and most recently for this exhibition, William Etty and his *The Sirens and Ulysses* (1837). Her interpretations often zoom in on certain characters or details, amplifying the sense of urgency and claustrophobia on these vessels on the brink of disaster conjured by the force of nature. In several of the works on view, Brown uses Etty's painting as a starting point, complicating her thematic pursuit with the presence of the siren as her drama's nautical source of danger. *The Sirens and Ulysses* (1837) depicts the scene from Homer's *Odyssey* in which Ulysses resists the bewitching song of the sirens by having his ship's crew tie him to the mast. The sirens are pictured in the forefront of the painting, singing from their island littered with the carcasses of sailors who ventured before. The siren, or Greek mythology's femme fatale, embodies the threat of female sexuality as proliferated by a patriarchal narrative. Here, Brown's choice of canonical fodder seamlessly integrates another investigatory through line from her practice, that which considers the complicated power relationships between men and women.

For Brown, a painting is not finished, but rather it stops at a given point. This lack of, or flexibility in the notion of finality allows for Brown's paintings to potentially take on many different outcomes. This infinite potentiality, or painting-as-multiverse mentality, is something Brown has sought to bridle with recent techniques that incorporate digitally capturing the painting at a nascent moment, and then printing it at scale on the same linen substrate sometimes several times over. These replicas are then used as beginnings of new paintings. Sometimes the distinction between sister paintings is subtle, whereas in other cases the works differ wildly despite their shared origin. In some cases the print is completely obscured by opaque paint, but as with the four works in *The end is a new start* that integrate this new methodology, the print shows through more transparent layers of paint and glazes. Brown thinks of this process as akin to "arresting a moment and/or stopping and starting time in a painting."

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The artist's second body of work on view turns not to old masters or countercultural ephemera, but for the first time, to past milestones of her own oeuvre. Looking to early works from the 1990s and 2000s, Brown uses her own former ideas as catalysts for new investigations. As with Georg Baselitz and his Remix paintings, this grouping of paintings began as a mini retrospective realized in new work, revisiting personal thoughts and objectives through the lens of hindsight. As with her use of printing, Brown frames her relationship to these experiments in repetition in terms of temporality—freezing a moment, revisiting a moment, interpreting the flow of time as flexible and potentialist. As curator Claire Gilman describes it: “Brown’s method has more to do with repetition in the sense explored by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze wherein the gesture does not entail bland proliferation or slavish copying but rather a creative and transgressive action that comprehends meaning as something established over and over again in the moment of its enunciation rather than once and for all.”

Cecily Brown was born in London in 1969 and received her BA in Fine Arts from the Slade School of Art, London, UK, in 1993. Her work is included in renowned public collections such as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Brooklyn Museum, New York, NY; and the Tate Gallery, London, UK. A major exhibition of her work closed earlier this year at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, UK. Other important one-person exhibitions have been presented at Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. (2002); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain (2004); Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, UK (2005); Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, IA (2006); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA (2006–07); Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Germany (2009); Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover, Germany (2010), which traveled to GEM, Museum of Contemporary Art, The Hague, Netherlands; Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin, Italy (2014); The Drawing Center, New York, NY (2016), which traveled to Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA; and at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark (2018). Brown lives and works in New York.

About Blum & Poe

Blum & Poe was founded by Timothy Blum and Jeffrey 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, together resulted in an international program of influential artists. Throughout a twenty-six-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.

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 held 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*

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Images of Man (2020). To produce these exhibitions, Blum & Poe has worked with celebrated curators such as Joan Kee, Mika Yoshitake, Sofia Gotti, and Alison M. Gingeras.

In 2014, Blum & Poe opened galleries in New York and Tokyo to focus on intimately scaled projects in tandem with an expansive program of exhibitions, lectures, performance series, screenings, and an annual art book fair at its base in Los Angeles. In 2015, Blum & Poe was certified as an Arts:Earth Partnership (AEP) green art gallery and consequently became one of the first green certified galleries in the United States. Blum & Poe's own publishing division focuses on sharing aspects of its program via original scholarship and accessible media ranging from academic monographs, audio series, magazines, and 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.

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