POWERHOUSE ANNOUNCES YUKI KIHARA: PARADISE CAMP

Powerhouse today announced the Australian premiere of Yuki Kihara: Paradise Camp; co-commissioned by Powerhouse and Creative New Zealand, and curated by Natalie King OAM. Paradise Camp garnered international acclaim at the 2022 Aotearoa New Zealand pavilion at the 59th la Biennale di Venezia. Opening 24 March 2023 at Powerhouse Ultimo, the exhibition will feature new works created in response to the museum’s Sāmoan collection.

An interdisciplinary artist of Japanese and Sāmoan descent, Yuki Kihara’s work interrogates and dismantles gender roles, (mis)representation and colonial legacies in the Pacific. She was the first Pasifika, Asian and Fa’afafine (Sāmoa’s ‘third gender’) artist to represent Aotearoa New Zealand at la Biennale di Venezia.

Kihara created Paradise Camp after recognising Sāmoa and aspects of the Fa’afafine community in Paul Gauguin’s post-impressionist paintings, which she was first introduced to when presenting a solo acquisitive exhibition at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art in
2008. *Paradise Camp* comprises 12 tableau photographs featuring a cast and crew of 100 people in Sāmoa, repurposing and upcycling Gauguin paintings. Reflecting on the injuries of colonialism and patriarchal structures by presenting a renewed worldview that is open, inclusive and humorous, each image has a depth of meaning related to the impact of colonialism on the Fa’afafine community and Western misconceptions of the Pacific.

Shot and filmed on location in Upolu Island, Sāmoa, Kihara’s performative photography is presented against a vast wallpaper of a landscape decimated by the 2009 tsunami. Works include *Fonofono o le nuanua: Patches of the rainbow (After Gauguin)* featuring a group of Fa’afafine models from the Aleipata Fa’afafine Association who were among the first responders to the tsunami posing riverside. Inspired by the faleaitu (house of spirits) skits performed in Sāmoan culture, Kihara also casts herself as Gauguin in *Paul Gauguin with a hat (After Gauguin)*, transformed via silicone prosthetic and costume.

The exhibition also features *First Impressions: Paul Gauguin*, a five-part talk-show series comprising a group of Fa’afafine commenting wittily on select Gauguin paintings. ‘Vāarchive’ – a term coined by Kihara that uses the Sāmoan concept of Vā to describe her relationship with her archive of research – includes personal research, rare books by 19th century explorers, colonial portraits, pamphlets, news items, a geological sculpture and activist material to provide never before seen visual links between Gauguin and Sāmoa.

For the Powerhouse, Kihara will complete an eight-week creative residency at Ultimo and undertake community engagement, including with First Nations artists.

‘I’m inspired by the Powerhouse Museum’s Pacific collections and look forward to presenting new works as part of the *Paradise Camp* exhibition that questions the idea of modernism as a singular Western heteronormative phenomenon,’ artist Yuki Kihara said.

‘Following on from presenting *Paradise Camp* to 485,079 visitors at the Venice Biennale, it’s timely to exhibit Kihara’s ensemble exhibition in Sydney with its focus on some of the most urgent issues of our times including intersectionality, small island ecologies and environmental crises,’ curator Natalie King said.

‘Powerhouse is thrilled to present the Australian premiere of *Paradise Camp*. Yuki Kihara is an incredible artist whose provocative and engaging work was one of the standout exhibitions at this year’s Venice Biennale. We look forward to seeing Kihara’s unique artistic response to the Powerhouse’s collection and sharing this internationally acclaimed exhibition with Australian audiences,’ Powerhouse Chief Executive Lisa Havilah said.

A companion publication has been published by Thames & Hudson, edited by Natalie King, featuring international commissions exploring the interwoven strands running through Kihara’s *Paradise Camp*. 
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DOWNLOAD IMAGES

Yuki Kihara: Paradise Camp
Curated by Natalie King
Powerhouse Ultimo
24 March 2023 – December 2023
Free, no registration required

https://www.maas.museum/event/paradise-camp-by-yuki-kihara/

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About Powerhouse
Powerhouse sits at the intersection of arts, design, science and technology and plays a critical role in engaging communities with contemporary ideas and issues. We are undertaking a landmark $1.4 billion infrastructure renewal program, spearheaded by the creation of the flagship museum, Powerhouse Parramatta; expanded research and public facilities at Powerhouse Castle Hill; the renewal of the iconic Powerhouse Ultimo; and the ongoing operation of Sydney Observatory. The museum is custodian to over half a million objects of national and international significance and is considered one of the finest and most diverse collections in Australia. We are also undertaking an expansive digitisation project that will provide new levels of access to Powerhouse collections.