

## Yuki Kihara

May 18 - July 1, 2017

As part of Singular Pluralities ∞ Plural Singularities

Three solo shows in parallel

## Coconuts That Grew From Concrete

### Works

Clockwise from door:

*Paradise*, 2017, large scale posters

*Odalisque (After Boucher)*, 2017, printed canvas, frame

*The nude maja (After Goya)*, 2017, printed canvas

*The nude maja (After Goya)*, 2017, printed canvas

*Dystopia*, 2017, digital photograph, frame

*Girl with a Pearl Earring (After Vermeer)*, 2017, printed canvas

*George Sands Garden at Nohant (After Delacroix)*, 2017, printed canvas

*MICHAEL SACKSON*, 2015, digital print, frame

Wooden structure:

*Malia and Her Angels*, 2016, collage on paper, frame

*Blessed Malia*, 2016, collage on paper, frame

*Harem beauty (After Tanoux)*, 2017, printed canvas

Learning Unlearning  
ReLearning:

*Noa Noa (after Gauguin)*, 2017, printed card, siapo lined box

All works courtesy of Milford Galleries, Dunedin.

# Yuki Kihara

Artspace presents a new body of work from Yuki Kihara, of Japanese and Samoan heritage, focusing on her handmade and digital collage works. The exhibition brings a selection of digital collages and experimentations with industrial printing techniques, all produced by the artist while in Samoa. Borrowing photographic images from public archives and private collections, the artist juxtaposes these iconic postures with classical examples of the Western gaze, pulling from the established canon of 'exotic' or 'orientalist' imagery. Kihara's strategy is to destabilise this canon; the colonial subject as an object of desire finds itself in an intersection between portraiture and landscape. The collages are installed within a spectrum of the Samoan landscape, what is conceived of as both the projection of an escapist paradise and also a dystopian reality.

*"The title of my exhibition is adapted from the poem 'Roses That Grew From Concrete' by poet and rapper 2pac (otherwise known as Tupac Shakur) which describes the experience of persevering in the face of tyranny. The exhibition title also plays on the contradictory use of 'coconuts': on one hand as a derogatory term, often directed at Pacific migrants living in urban concrete jungles in the diaspora. From a Samoan perspective however, coconuts are seen as a prized fruit able to drift across the ocean and take root in new lands, providing sustenance to new communities. The series examines the intersecting legacies between Samoan colonial photographs and traditional Western European portraiture, and how they shape our present realities.*

*The series developed from my observations of the 'tableaux' photographs of Samoans taken in Samoa during the early 20th century by Pākehā New Zealand photographers including Thomas Andrew, Alfred John Tattersal and the Burton Brothers. The Samoan subjects were often depicted as romantic, child-like people uncorrupted by Western civilization and many of the photographs were mass produced and sold as cartes-de-visite across Europe. The poses and tableaux recreated in these colonial photographs are reminiscent of those seen in a variety of Western classical art movements including Orientalism and the paintings of the 'Old Masters'. I was particularly drawn to the traditional portraiture of European monarchs whose elaborate displays of wealth, decadence and institutional power were enriched and sustained by imperial expansion throughout the non-Western world.*

*The ongoing effects of colonisation are reflected in the establishment of the Brandt Line in 1980s, an economic indicator used to demarcate the divide between rich (Global North) and poor (Global South) countries. The Global North includes the United States, Canada, Western Europe, developed parts of East Asia, Australia and New Zealand; the Global South is made up of Africa, Latin America, and developing Asia, including the Middle East and the Pacific Island States. Coconuts That Grew From Concrete hybridises seemingly disparate and incompatible Samoan colonial photographs and Western European paintings to provide a counter-narrative to the neo-colonial creation of the Brandt Line. Whereas colonial political structures may have been dismantled, former colonies remain economically dependent upon and exploited by the stronger economies of their earlier rulers.*

*The European title of each work highlights how each merging of photograph and painting creates in turn a new narrative form. The hybrid figures reference the Samoan notion of 'taufa'ase'e' loosely translated as a 'game of deception'. The most well-known example of taufa'ase'e was that played by Samoan informants with American anthropologist Margaret Mead, who believed their elaborate hoax relating to Samoan*

*sexuality. The figures are also suggestive of Homi K. Bhabha's theory of the 'third space' where, in the discourse of dissent, third space is seen as "that space where oppressed and oppressor are able to come together, free (maybe only momentarily) of oppression itself, embodied in their particularity".*

*The original copyright signs and signatures found in the paintings and the photographs are left behind in the works to disturb the relationship between time and space, reality and fantasy, consumer and the producer, the artwork and the artist."*

- Yuki Kihara

**Yuki Kihara** is one of New Zealand's leading interdisciplinary artists whose work explores the varying relationships and intersections between gender, race, sexuality, culture and politics. Kihara's work has been presented at the Asia Pacific Triennial (2002 & 2015); Metropolitan Museum of Art (Solo exhibition, 2008); Auckland Triennial (2009); Sakahān Quinquennial (2013); Daegu Photo Biennial (2014); and the Honolulu Biennial (2017). Kihara's work has also been exhibited at the Zendai Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai; Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan; Bozar Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; Musée du Quai Branly, Paris; Trondheim Kunstmuseum, Norway; Utah Museum of Fine Arts, USA; de Young Fine Art Museum of San Francisco, USA; Orange County Museum of Art, USA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, USA; Allen Memorial Art Museum, USA; Jean-Marie Tjibao Cultural Centre, New Caledonia; Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane and Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand among others. Her recent dance production 'Them and Us' (2015) co-directed with Jochen Roller (Berlin) premiered at Sophiensaele Theatre, Berlin and then toured several theatre venues across Europe.

Kihara is currently a Fellow at the Research Centre for Material Culture awarded by the National Museum of Material Cultures, Netherlands.

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