HUMcard

Notes from
an artist

Kia ora e hoa. ***Welcome to our second—and very special—edition of the 2022*** **HUMcard*!*** *Designed especially for you, our supporters and members of our Publishers Circle, we send out one of these features every couple of months, highlighting an international project by an artist or arts practitioner from Aotearoa New Zealand.*

For our previous HUMcard*, Areez Katki reflected on his work in the 7th Colomboscope Arts Festival in Sri Lanka. For this edition we are very excited to give you* ***an exclusive look at Yuki Kihara's new project*** **Paradise Camp*****, premiering at the 59th Venice Biennale, from 23 April - 27 November 2022!!***

Eight years in the making, Paradise Camp *is a multimedia project filmed in Sāmoa, featuring a local cast and crew of over 80 people, which explores the intersectional issues of colonisation, identity politics and climate crisis. Now, just for you, Yuki has kindly sent us some* ***personal images taken from behind the scenes*** *of the project, and* ***written some thoughts on the process*** *involved. Keep scrolling to learn more about this inspiring work straight from the artist herself...*

(And stay tuned this week for HUM's live coverage of Paradise Camp *+ more from the Venice vernissage on our dedicated projects page.)*

From Yuki Kihara
at the 59th Venice Biennale

Image: Artist Yuki Kihara during site visit for *Paradise Camp* in the village of Vava'u, Upolu Island, Sāmoa. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara.

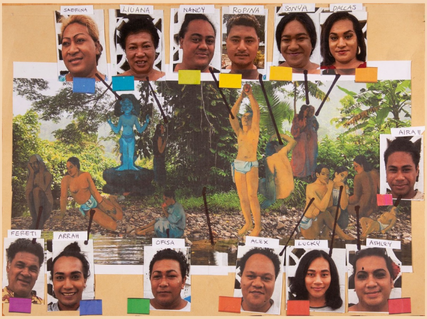
"For the New Zealand Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale, I am presenting an exhibition entitled *Paradise Camp* curated by Natalie King. Located in the Artiglierie, a central location in the Arsenale, *Paradise Camp* is an immersive exhibition which imagines a Fa'afafine (Sāmoa's third gender) utopia. Michel Foucault once proposed that "Where there is power, there is resistance". For me, binary is the power, and *Paradise Camp* is the resistance.

In this issue of the *HUMcard*, I look back at highlights from the production activities for *Paradise Camp* staged between December 2019 and April 2020 in Upolu Island, Sāmoa – a place I call home and where I have been living and working for the last 11 years. My second home is Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland), Aotearoa New Zealand."

Images: (top L, #1) Artist Yuki Kihara and Curator Natalie King on a climate change tour led by the members of the Aleipata Fa'afafine Association in Upolu Island, Sāmoa. Courtesy of Natalie King; **(top R, #2)** Curator Natalie King with His Excellency Trevor Matheson, NZ Ambassador to Sāmoa at the NZ High Commission office in Apia, Upolu Island Sāmoa. Courtesy of Natalie King; **(bottom, #3)** BTS shot of cast and crew production meeting for *Paradise Camp* in Upolu Island, Samoa, 2018. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara.

"Soon after Natalie and I visited Venice in November 2019 to secure the Arsenale as a venue for my Venice Biennale exhibition*,* I returned to Sāmoa and immediately commenced pre-production for *Paradise Camp*. As part of Natalie's curatorial research, she flew to Upolu Island from Naarm Melbourne to observe the production of *Paradise Camp.* She also conducted a series of meetings with the Ambassador of New Zealand and the Australian High Commission in Apia to galvanize support for *Paradise Camp,* particularly for its return to Upolu Island in 2023 following on from its presentation in Venice.

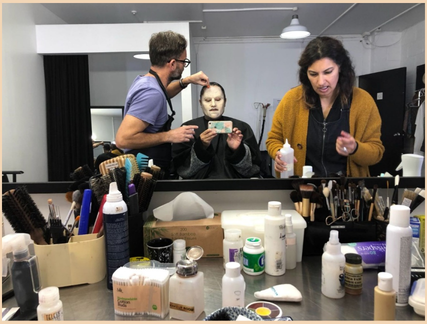
Paradise Camp features almost 40 models from the Fa'afafine and Fa'atama LGBTIQ+ community which first began with a series of consultations that included discussing the intent and the mana behind the photoshoot. I also consulted land owners of customary lands to help secure the locations. Although the Venice Biennale is not familiar to many people in Sāmoa, the idea of local people taking part in a large-scale production for an international event was enough to get everyone excited!"

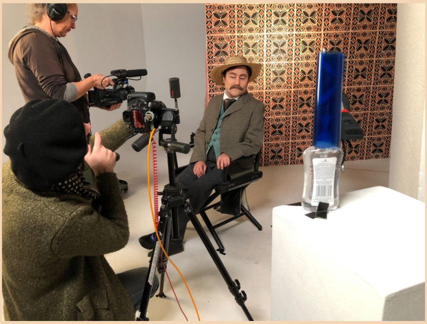


Images: (top, #1) Diagram with cast roles for *Paradise Camp*'s production of *Fonofono o le nuanua: Patches of the rainbow (After Gauguin),* 2020; **(bottom, #2)** *Paradise Camp* photoshoot at Togitogiga Waterfall in Upolu Island, Sāmoa. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara.

"In March 2020, our production house moved into Saletoga Sands Resort to set up office and accommodate the cast and crew of over 80 people for a seven-day photoshoot. We had a gruelling production schedule with drivers constantly picking up and dropping off cast, crew and equipment from location to location. I was grateful to have an experienced group of people on set in my Sāmoa-based production team to help realise *Paradise Camp.*

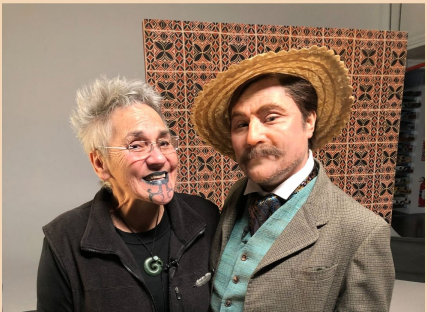
Directly following the production in Sāmoa, I flew to Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) to stage the second part of *Paradise Camp* photoshoot, which involved myself undergoing three-hour prosthetic transformation to upcycle Paul Gauguin's painting, *Self-Portrait with a Hat* (1893-94). This time on set, we had Assistant Pasifika Curator Ioana Gordon Smith and Emeritus Professor Ngahuia Te Awekotuku to observe the photoshoot."





Images: (top, #1) Artist Yuki Kihara undergoing prosthetic transformation on set in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara; **(bottom, #2)** BTS from Yuki Kihara's transformation into Paul Gauguin. Auckland, New Zealand, 2020.

"*Paradise Camp* was inspired by an unpublished essay written by Ngahuia Te Awekotuku presented at a Paul Gauguin symposium held at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki in 1992. Her essay explored the early encounters between the colonialists and Indigenous queer peoples in the Moana Pacific. After the photoshoot, we filmed an extended conversation between myself as Gauguin, Ngahuia and Ioana, which unpacks the nuances of my 'drag' and where I put the Indigenous into drag that I call *In-drag-enous.* To have Ngahuia on set of *Paul Gauguin with a Hat (After Gauguin)* (2020) felt like *Paradise Camp* was coming full circle as I completed the final image of the series."



Images: (above) Artist Yuki Kihara as Paul Gauguin standing beside Emeritus Professor Ngahuia Te Awekotuku on set in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland), Aotearoa New Zealand. Photo courtesy of Evotia Tamua; **(header banner)** *Si'ou alofa Maria: Hail Mary, (After Gauguin)* (detail), 2020, from *Paradise Camp* series, 2020, by Yuki Kihara. Image courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand; **(below)** Portrait of Yuki Kihara. Photo: Evotia Tamua.

More on the artist

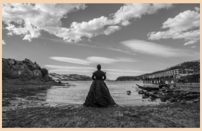
A native of Sāmoa, **Yuki Kihara** is an award-winning interdisciplinary artist of Japanese and Sāmoan descent whose work seeks to challenge dominant and singular historical narratives through visual arts, dance, and curatorial practice, engaging with postcolonial history and representation in the Pacific and how they intersect with race, gender, spirituality and sexual politics. Kihara lives and works in Sāmoa, where she has been based over the last 11 years.

In 2008, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York presented a solo exhibition of Kihara's work entitled *Living Photographs*. The exhibition was held at the Lila Acheson Wallace Wing in the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art featuring highlights of her interdisciplinary art practice, followed by an acquisition of her works by the museum for their permanent collection. Kihara's works have been presented at the Asia Pacific Triennial (2002 & 2015); Auckland Triennial (2009); Sakahàn Quinquennial (2013); Daegu Photo Biennale (2014); Honolulu Biennale (2017); Bangkok Art Biennale (2018); Venice Biennale (New Zealand Pavilion 2022) and Aichi Triennale (2022). Kihara is a research fellow at the National Museum of World Cultures in The Netherlands since 2017. Kihara's work can also be found in collections, among others, including Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand; Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, British Museum and Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts to name a few. Kihara is represented by Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand.

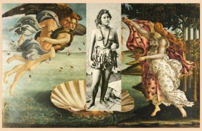
As a curator, Kihara has curated the touring solo exhibition of Banaban artist and scholar Katerina Teaiwa entitled *Project Banaba* jointly presented alongside *Te Kaneati – Banaban cultural revitalization workshops* currently held at Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. *Project Banaba* will tour the Kingdom of Hawai'i in 2024.

Selected current and forthcoming projects include: *A Sea of Islands*, Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden, the Netherlands, 21 February 2020 – July 2022; *Alter Egos | Projected Selves*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA, 22 November 2021 – 1 May 2022; *Paul Gauguin – Why are you angry?,* Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin, Germany, 25 March – 10 July 2022; *Paradise Camp*, Venice Biennale, Italy, 23 April – 27 November 2022 and *Aichi Triennale*, Japan, 30 July – 10 October 2022.

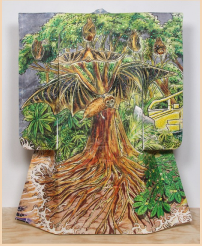
Learn more about the artist here and about New Zealand at Venice here.



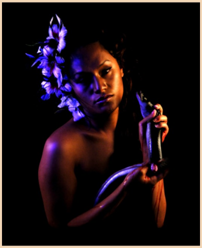
Kamau Taurua Quarantine Island, 2021. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand.



Birth of Venus (after Botticelli), 2017/20. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand.



Fanua (Land), 2021, siapo kimono 1. Photo by Glen Frei. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand.



Sina ma Tuna; Sina and Her Eel, 2003. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand.

We hope you've enjoyed this HUMcard and we look forward to sharing more projects with you throughout 2022. With your generosity and encouragement, you help us champion New Zealand's creative practitioners working in an international context, increasing their—and Aotearoa's—visibility on the world stage.

If you know anyone interested in New Zealand arts please consider sharing our *Support page* ***with them.*** *Every donation helps us continue our work. Thank you and ka kite anō!*

HUM

HUM is the only platform dedicated to the international activity of creative practitioners from New Zealand. In December 2021, HUM celebrated 5 years of documenting and publishing about Aotearoa arts abroad!! As always, we want to thank all of you who have supported us over the years.

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