

Get your international culture fix at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki



Image credit: Gilbert & George, *BAG DAY*, 2020.

This media release originally issued on Friday 25 February 2022 was updated on Monday 4 April 2022 to reflect new dates for *Gilbert & George: The Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland Exhibition* and *Suji Park: Meonji Soojibga | Dust Collector*.

International artists, 14th to 19th-century religious icons and an exhibition celebrating the work of contemporary Pacific artists are some of what visitors can expect from Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki this year.

Auckland Art Gallery Director Kirsten Lacy is excited to share these new exhibitions, alongside the major international show *Mary Quant: Fashion Revolutionary*, which visitors have been enjoying since the start of summer.

‘Auckland Art Gallery has certainly delivered for summer with *Mary Quant* providing a much-needed injection of joy, playfulness and colour. The coming exhibition schedule builds on this, and we’re so excited to announce two international, ticketed exhibitions to start off 2022,’ says Gallery Director Kirsten Lacy.

‘Internationally renowned, celebrated and award-winning British artists Gilbert & George will be exhibiting their cheeky, often controversial, and always thought-provoking art, direct from their own personal collection to Aotearoa for the very first time.’

Developed exclusively with Gilbert & George by Auckland Art Gallery, *The Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland Exhibition* is scheduled to open in Autumn. It brings together existing and new work from the 21st century to look back over a joint career that has courted controversy, challenged the status quo and championed alternative views.

For Gilbert & George anything – and everything – is a potential subject matter for art. They have peered closely at the big questions of life: religion, sex, violence, hope, addiction and death. From their own bodies to their longtime home in London’s East End, nothing is too personal or too forbidden for these two artists whose work is a portrait of life today.

Opening in early April, *Heavenly Beings: Icons of the Christian Orthodox World*, offers a gateway to the profound tradition of devotional art from the Orthodox Christian world. Explore over 100 icons, painted with egg tempera and gold leaf on gesso over wood, with works spanning 500 years. Icons will include examples by some of the most famous workshops of the post-Byzantine world, including the Cretan masters, Nicholas Tzafouris,

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Angelos Aketantos, Constantine Tzanes, and Andrea Pavias.

'*Heavenly Beings: Icons of the Christian Orthodox World* is a truly impressive survey with over 100 hauntingly beautiful icons, rarely seen in Aotearoa,' adds Lacy.

'Alongside these ticketed exhibitions, there's so much to which to look forward, including *An Arrangement for 5 Rooms* by contemporary Korean New Zealand artist Yona Lee, featuring a major sculpture that breaks through the Gallery walls into Albert Park, and *Declaration: A Pacific Feminist Agenda* – a long-awaited look at the trajectory of feminism in contemporary Pacific art.'

Opening late February, *Yona Lee: An Arrangement for 5 Rooms* considers and renegotiates the relationship we share with space, objects and living. Conceived in the context of a global pandemic, with closed borders and a changing relationship to public and private spaces, Lee's signature welded and refined stainless-steel tube will weave through the Gallery.

Celebrating contemporary Pacific art, *Declaration: A Pacific Feminist Agenda* will feature works by artists from the region. Declaring a new set of principles that form a Pacific feminist agenda, *Declaration* acknowledges the existing ways in which indigenous and Pacific societies have always empowered women.

Coming up at Auckland Art Gallery are:

***Yona Lee: An Arrangement for 5 Rooms:*
Opening Sat 26 Feb – FREE**

Within the context of a global pandemic, restricted borders, and a changing relationship to public and private spaces, *Yona Lee: An Arrangement for 5 Rooms* negotiates the relationship we share with domestic and public spaces and objects. The five rooms of the Gallery's park-side exhibition spaces take the visitor on a meandering journey through both densely and sparsely filled rooms.

Lee picks up the signature handrail of the Gallery's architecture and weaves it playfully through the building, turning it into sculpture, and supplying new seating and lighting for visitors. She even pushes the railing into Albert Park where it knots and pauses in the shade of a neighbouring tree. Incorporating familiar signs, like the fabric of Auckland Transport seating and bus bells, this new sculptural installation will interweave common experiences of transit for many across the Auckland region.

Proudly supported by the Contemporary Benefactors, the Asia New Zealand Foundation and Chow:Hill.



Image credit: Yona Lee, *An Arrangement for 5 Rooms*, 2022 (artwork detail)

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***Declaration: A Pacific Feminist Agenda:*
Opening Sat 26 Mar – FREE**

Declaration: A Pacific Feminist Agenda brings together 12 prominent artists from across the Pacific whose works set a feminist agenda by bringing to the fore the most pressing issues of our times: climate change and resilience, activism, social justice and tino rangatiratanga – sovereignty.

Artists in this exhibition draw on the power of matrilineal knowledge, put their bodies on the line and amplify voices to reflect an approach to feminism that empowers the agency of all genders. Presenting major commissioned projects, rarely seen artworks and ephemera from institutional and private collections, *Declaration* builds a Pacific feminist trajectory within contemporary art.

Declaration: A Pacific Feminist Agenda will feature works by Jasmine Togo-Brisby, Marti Friedlander, Jessicoco Hansell, Taloi Havini, Lonnie Hutchinson, Ioane Ioane, Sione Monū, Suzanne Tamaki, Latai Taumoepeau, Molly Rangiwai-McHale & Luisa Tora, Kalisolaite 'Uhila and more.

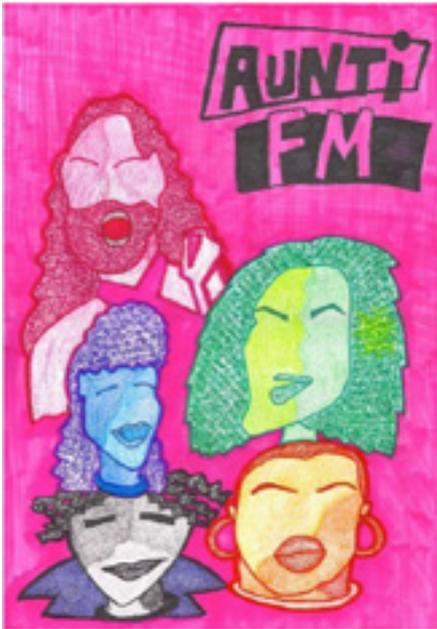


Image credit: Jessicoco Hansell, *AUNTI FM: To be of Secret Service (Frequency Unknown)*. Installation. Commissioned by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2022.

New commission – Sione Monū & Manu Vaeatangitau: *Kindred: A Leiti Chronicle*: Opening Sat 26 Mar – FREE

Tāmaki Makaurau-based Tongan artists Sione Monū and Manuha’apai Vaeatangitau present *Kindred: A Leiti Chronicle*, a multisensory installation that projects leiti (transgender women) experiences into a futuristic alternate reality. Executed in Monū and Vaeatangitau’s animated and playful graphic style, each portrait pays homage to these leiti and their significance in these artists’ lives.

Set in a time where colonisation has not occurred, we follow the journeys of ultimate leiti in an alternate world firmly embedded in the familiar landscape of Tāmaki Makaurau. In this new commission, Monū and Vaeatangitau broaden the pantheon of ultimate leiti in a series of portraits that include important leiti leaders such as activist and advocate Joey Mataele and Monū’s family members Tisha Manumua and George Manumua. Together they move freely in a utopian world, undertaking mundane activities such as eating sushi

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whilst listening to *The Meaning of Mariah Carey* audiobook and spiritual pilgrimages to Māngere Mountain.

Further drawing viewers into the work is an accompanying soundscape which, like many of Monū’s video works, intertwines speech with minimalist music to evoke emotional responses, memories and space to dream. This mashup of imagery and sound, crossing between the material and immaterial, creates dream-like sequences that are at once fleeting, humorous and fragile.



Image credit: Sione Monū, *Only Yesterday*, 2020. (detailed still) Courtesy of the artist.
Photo credit: Edith Amituanai.

New commission – Suji Park: Meonji Soojibga | Dust Collector
Opening late June – FREE

Suji Park is a Korean-New Zealand ceramic sculptor and artist, known for creating pieces of distorted human forms, vessels and abstract objects.

For her North Terrace commission, Suji Park’s project consists of many heads. Heads that turn, pushed and pulled, pressed and cracked, holding space within them like vessels. The forms themselves are imaginatively based on the traditional totem poles found in South Korea across the countryside.

‘When I was travelling around visiting small villages in Korea I could find janseung (Korean totem poles), sotdae (wooden poles or stone pillars with carved birds on their top), doctap (a stone built pagoda) and sinmok (sacred trees) in the entrance way. While the origin of these structures is unknown, they are believed to bring protection,’ explains Park.

Park’s installation reveals her truly creative handling of clay, drawing from linguistic, cultural, ceramic and sculptural traditions – its highly material display will be a sumptuous feast of hand-melded traditions.



Image credit: Suji Park, *Dodo* (detail).
Photo by Jungwoo Lee

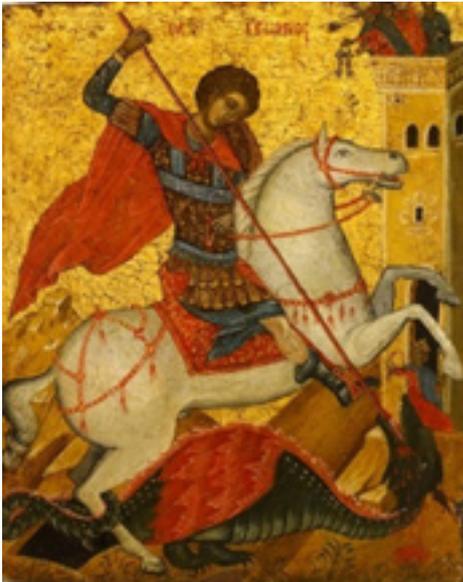
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Heavenly Beings: Icons of the Christian Orthodox World
Opening Fri 15 Apr – Adults \$24.50

Heavenly Beings: Icons of the Christian Orthodox World introduces the profound and timeless tradition of icons, the devotional art of the Orthodox Christian world. This ancient visual tradition, which until 1453 was centred in the Byzantine Empire, is surveyed through over 100 hauntingly beautiful icons dating from 1350-1800. To believers then and today such images of holy figures, painted on gilded wood panels according to age-old methods, serve as ‘windows into heaven’ during the act of prayer.

The exhibition includes examples of extreme rarity by some of the great icon-painting regions and workshops and of Russia, Crete and beyond. The spirit of the Russian artist-monk Andrei Rublev and the touch of Cretan masters, Angelos Aketantos, Andreas Pavias, Nicholas Tzafouris and Constantine Tzanes animate icon after icon, created in deference to the divine. Discover the beauty and power of icons, and their dynamic role in the lives of pilgrims, priests and everyday believers of the early modern world.

The most ambitious exhibition of icons to be staged in Aotearoa in over 40 years, *Heavenly Beings: Icons* unites exceptional examples from private and public collections across Aotearoa and Australia and highlights the richly enigmatic icon traditions of Russia, Greece, Macedonia, Italy, the Balkans, Ethiopia, Syria and Egypt.



Saint George and the Dragon, Crete circa 1500 Egg tempera, gold leaf and gesso on wood Private collection, Canberra

Gilbert & George: The Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland Exhibition
Opening Autumn – Adults \$24.50

Often controversial, sometimes cheeky and always questioning, British artists Gilbert & George have been creating art together ever since they met in 1967 at one of London’s leading art schools. From the very beginning, they have appeared as subjects in their own art and shared a belief in ‘Art for all’.

For Gilbert & George anything – and everything – is a potential subject matter for art. They have peered closely at the big questions of life: religion, sex, violence, hope, addiction and death. Through their films and ‘LIVING SCULPTURE’, they have challenged taboos, fought artistic convention and taken a fresh look at the way we live now. From their own bodies to their long-time home in London’s East End, nothing is too personal or too forbidden for these two artists whose work is a portrait of life today.

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Developed exclusively with Gilbert & George by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, *The Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland Exhibition* brings together existing and new work from the 21st century to look back over a joint career that has courted controversy, challenged the status quo and championed alternative views. Exhibiting work direct from Gilbert & George's own personal collection, it brings some of the most exciting of British art to New Zealand for the very first time.



Image credit: Gilbert & George,
BAG DAY, 2020.

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