

Press release  
Friday 22 September 2017

## Auckland Art Gallery to be obliterated this summer



A rainbow of brightly coloured dots will obliterate a pure white room when avant-garde Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama's *The obliteration room* opens on Saturday 9 December at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

Kusama's family-friendly participatory installation in the Gallery's Creative Learning Centre begins as a New Zealand living room drained of colour which will function as a blank canvas ready to be invigorated.

The white walls, ceiling, furniture and objects in the space will be obliterated over time by the mass build-up of dots into a dizzying blur of colour as visitors apply brightly coloured stickers in various sizes to every surface.

Auckland Art Gallery Director Rhana Devenport says Kusama's work welcomes people into a space to become collaborators on a celebrated artwork that has travelled the world.

'*The obliteration room* makes artists of us all. Moving away from the traditional restrictions of a Gallery space, it encourages everyone to touch, engage and create in an entirely self-directed way,' she says.

Devenport says it is an honour to have such an internationally well-loved and revered artist as Kusama exhibit at Auckland Art Gallery.

'Kusama was recently named the world's most popular artist. Her mesmerising paintings, sculptures and installations have entranced people across the globe and it

is our pleasure to deliver and share this playful, engaging and creative experience with Aucklanders and visitors to the city alike.'

The work relates to hallucinations Kusama began to experience in childhood, where her vision was clouded by spots. *The obliteration room* is a reflection of this hallucinogenic vision, as well as a way of embracing the whole world in a kind of overall pattern.

The domestic environment with local characteristics creates an air of familiarity that makes participants, especially children, comfortable enough to engage with the work with little or no prompting.

*The obliteration room*, originally developed by Yayoi Kusama for the Queensland Art Gallery's *APT 2002: Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, has toured to London, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia, Sao Paulo, Mexico City, Shanghai, South Korea, Switzerland and France, as well as the Dunedin Public Art Gallery in New Zealand.

Born 1929, Kusama studied painting in Kyoto before moving to New York in the late 1950s. By the mid-1960s Kusama had become well known in the art world for her provocative happenings and exhibitions.

For almost 70 years Kusama has been engaged in a practice encompassing painting, collage, sculpture, performance, film, installation and environmental art, as well as literature, product design and fashion, including a collaboration with Louis Vuitton in 2012.

Kusama was recently named the world's most popular artist, based on figures for global museum attendance and, in 2016, was selected as one of *TIME Magazine's* World's 100 Most Influential People.

Entry to *The obliteration room* is free.

(Ends)

**For further information, high-res image requests and interviews, contact:**

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**Exhibition details:**

*The obliteration room*

When: Saturday 9 December 2017 to Sunday 2 April 2018.

10am – 5pm daily except Christmas Day

Where: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

Corner Kitchener and Wellesley Streets

Auckland, New Zealand

Entry is free

**Image credit:** Yayoi Kusama, *The obliteration room* 2002-present.

Collaboration between Yayoi Kusama and Queensland Art Gallery. Commissioned Queensland Art Gallery. Gift of the artist through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation 2012. Collection: Queensland Art Gallery, Australia. Photograph: QAGOMA Photography.