

MISA SHIN GALLERY

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Press Release
June 2022

PARADISE OKINAWA

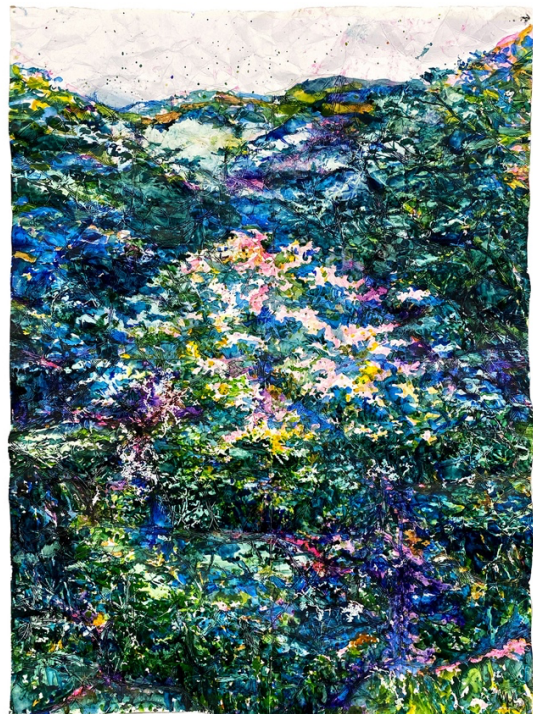
Teruya Yuken, Ishigaki Katsuko, Iha Linda, Uehara Sayaka

Thursday, June 23 -Saturday, August 6, 2022

Tuesday-Saturday 12:00-19:00 (Closed on Mon, Sun, Public holidays)



Teruya Yuken, *Untitled*, 2018
Watercolor, 34.5 x 25 cm



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MISA SHIN GALLERY is pleased to announce *PARADISE OKINAWA*, a group exhibition by four artists from Okinawa—Teruya Yuken, Ishigaki Katsuko, Iha Linda, and Uehara Sayaka—from Thursday, June 23 through Saturday, August 6, 2022.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of Okinawa's return to Japan. In the half-century since U.S. rule ended, Okinawa is generally said to have undergone a complete transformation, with a huge increase in tourists, waves of development, and concern for destruction of the environment. Okinawa has been given the brand image of a subtropical paradise, but injustices and other issues stemming from the continued presence of U.S. military bases persist, unchanged, to this day.

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Teruya Yuken is an artist known for works such as three-dimensional pieces in which he cuts 'trees' and 'branches' out of materials like paper bags from fast food restaurants and toilet paper rolls, and for traditional Okinawan bingata-dyed kimonos adorned with motifs related to U.S. military bases and the natural environment. Teruya is currently based in Berlin, but here he exhibits works that he produced in Okinawa, including watercolor reliefs with letters cut into paper folded repeatedly to give the surface its third dimension. Through elegant works that intricately intertwine multiple perspectives, Teruya searches for a way forward regarding decidedly political issues that tend to become polarized—issues such as the ongoing landfill work to take over the sea for U.S. military base construction and the changes in coastlines and forests due to development. His vibrant colors and poetic sentiment communicate the way that inherited wisdom and history have enabled the people of Okinawa to retain their own culture and their ability to live in harmony with nature, despite the strains of the bases. At the same time, these works present a warning, reminding us that wars and environmental destruction remain a continuous presence in our world.

Ishigaki Katsuko is an artist who attempts to capture the scenes of U.S. military bases, housing for military personnel and Okinawa towns and cities which continue to undergo change since the end of the war. For generations who grew up taking the presence of U.S. military bases in Okinawa for granted, the bases in the landscape have existed in parallel with archetypal images of the inoh—which is the Okinawan word for shallow water surrounded by coral reef—of Ishigaki Island, where Ishigaki lived until she was five. In 2008, Ishigaki relocated her studio to Koza (former name of Okinawa City), where the Kadena Air Base is located. The base that she sees everyday when commuting eventually has become a common scenery for her, and it took ten years before she began painting the scene of base facilities. If the day comes when the land is returned to Japan, such scenes will disappear, but she does not want people to forget that the base existed. As she paints, the cityscape in front of her today reminds her of the gruesome war of the past. Facilities exclusively for military personnel and the homes of local people, seemingly have been left behind by development, are all bathed in the light of the Okinawan sun. She depicts them in flat colors and brushstrokes, awakening in the heart of the viewer the mix of conflicting emotions of cheerfulness and grief that is a fact of life in Okinawa.



Ishigaki Katsuko, *View from RyCom Crossing III*, 2018
Oil on canvas, 38 × 45.5 cm

Iha Linda's father, a second-generation Okinawan born in Hawaii, worked on the military bases in Okinawa. Her resulting familiarity with the bases seems to have left Iha caught in the middle—

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torn between the self and the outside world, Okinawa and America, and inside and outside the fence—and leads her to try to bridge the gap through her photography. Icons of American culture brought to Okinawa by the military bases ‘occupy’ the sense of distance she feels from



Iha Rinda, *Sleep in Contradiction*, 2016
Archival pigment print, 25 x 37cm

Okinawa's distinctive culture, and become inserted into the Okinawan landscape, along with her own identity. Iha's photography, such as the *Sleep in Contradiction* series, which consists of staged portrayals of Okinawa, and the *Design of Okinawa* series, which captures the daily lives of American troops stationed in Okinawa and their portraits, reflects a distinctive sense of distance from the subject and the fluctuation of subtle feelings, and it is this sensibility that draws the viewer in.

When studying in Tokyo, Uehara Sayaka felt a sense of discomfort in the way that images of Okinawa were detached from actual life there. This motivated her to return to Okinawa and begin her photography work. She feels the majority of images of Okinawa inundating the media are limited to stereotypical representations, such as images of the blue ocean, a soothing paradise, or the military base issues, giving her the impression that Okinawa is being consumed as a place to be viewed. *The Others*, which was shot on Okinawa Island between 2016 to 2022, captures scenes that show Okinawa as a place where people live. When you look at everyday scenes of Okinawa, and see the emergence here and there of the influence of U.S. military bases and American culture mixed into urban landscapes and architecture typical of any city in modern-day Japan, along with distinctive Okinawan elements that the maintain a resolute presence, however damaged they are, those scenes seem to provide a metaphor for an aspect of the lives of Okinawans. Many layers of images can be seen in cross-section in a single matter-of-fact photo, bearing witness to the disparate times that have shaped the location.



Uehara Sayaka, *The Others*, 2019-2022
Archival pigment print, 18 x 27cm

The different techniques and diverse perspectives of these four artists make PARADISE OKINAWA an opportunity to gain a more nuanced understanding of Okinawa's past, present, and future.

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Teruya Yuken

Born in 1973 in Okinawa, lives and works in Berlin, Germany. Received his BFA from Tama Art University, Tokyo and his MFA from the School of Visual Arts, New York. His works have shown at museums including P.S.1 (NY, 2005), ZKM (Karlsruhe, 2007), Guggenheim (NY, 2007), Mori Art Museum (Tokyo, 2010), 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa (2009, 2015, 2018, 2019), Centre Pompidou Metz (2017), Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo (2021). His major international exhibitions include Yokohama Triennale (2005), Sydney Biennale (2012), Shanghai Biennale (2018) and Bangkok Art Biennale (2020).

Ishigaki Katsuko

Born in 1967 in Okinawa, lives and works in Okinawa. Graduated from Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts. Her recent exhibitions include "Uncertain Landscapes" Yokohama Civic Art Gallery Azamino (2018), "Mabuni-peace project" (Okinawa, 2019), "Okinawa Asia International Peace Project" (Okinawa, 2020), "Portraits of Ryukyu: Turnover from Models to Artists" Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum. She is participating in the group exhibition at the Sakima Art Museum, Okinawa from June 17, 2022.

Iha Linda

Born in 1979 in Okinawa, lives and works in Okinawa. Her father is a second-generation Okinawan born in Hawaii, and her mother was born in Tinian where her family immigrated. In 2009, she participated in Shomei Tomatsu's digital photography workshop. Her major group exhibitions include "Artists Today" Okinawa Prefectural Museum and Art Museum (Okinawa, 2019), "VOCA 2020" Ueno Royal Museum (Tokyo, 2020), Sapporo International Art Festival 2020 (Online).

Uehara Sayaka

Born in 1993 in Okinawa, lives and works in Okinawa. Graduated from Tokyo Zokei University. In 2020, her "The Others" won the New Photography Award at the 36th Higashikawa Awards, Japan. Her major solo exhibitions include "The Others" Canon Open Gallery 1 (Tokyo, 2019), "The Others" IINTERFACE - Shomei Tomatsu Lab. (Okinawa, 2019), and "The Others 2020-2021" IG Photo Gallery (Tokyo, 2021). Her photo book will be published in 2022 from the AKAAGA Art Publishing Inc., Japan.

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