

JHANA MILLERS

CLAUDIA KOGACHI CV

Born 1995, Awaji-Shima, Japan. Lives in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand

EDUCATION:

Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honours (First Class), Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland (2017)

360 Exchange Programme - 1 year of BFA, University of Hawai'i at Manoa (2015)

EXHIBITIONS:

2024

Upcoming show, Jhana Millers Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington

Raumati, Laree Payne, Kirikiriroa (Hamilton)

Labour of Love, Phillida Reid, Condo London

2023

Tokyo Gendai Art Fair, Philida Reid Gallery, Yokoshima Japan

Exit 8, Aupuni Space, Honolulu Hawai'i

SWEET, SWEET FANTASY BABY, Aotearoa Art Fair, Jhana Millers Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington

2022

Blue Moon, Melanie Roger, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

Penthouse, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

Heaven Must Be Missing An Angel, Jhana Millers, Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington

2021

The Path, Hastings City Art Gallery, Hastings

When the dust settles, Art Space Aotearoa, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

Hot girls with IBS, Hot Lunch, Ōtautahi, Christchurch

Homespun, Franklin Arts Centre, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

It Is What It Is, Jhana Millers, Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington

Rugged Heart, Visions, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

2020

Obaachan During The Lockdown, Wahiawa, Hawai'i, Te Tuhi, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

The New Artist Show, Artspace Aotearoa, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

The Medium is the Message, Gus Fisher Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

Everyone Has A Horse Phase, Sanderson Contemporary, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

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Uncle Gagi, PlayStation Gallery, Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington

2019

New Zealand Painting & Printmaking Award Exhibition, The Atrium - Wintec, Kirikiriroa, Hamilton

Beijing International Art Biennale, National Art Museum of China, Beijing, China

Those are My Fucking Shoes!, Sanderson Contemporary, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

Free Snacks From The Airport Lounge, Allpress Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

2018

Mother and Daughter on Hiatus, Sanderson Contemporary, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

Hound Dog, Franklin Arts Centre, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

Dog Pit, Saatchi & Saatchi & Saatchi, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

Like a Boss, NZ Steel Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

Two Sagittarius One Show, Satchi and Satchi and Satchi, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

You're not a Princess you know, Window Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

Mom, are we friends?, Meanwhile Gallery, Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington

2017

Spaces In Between, George Fraser Gallery, University of Auckland, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

The Protagonist, Project Space, University of Auckland, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

2016

Under Pressure, The University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Hawai'i

COLLECTIONS:

The Dowse Art Museum

Christchurch Art Gallery

AWARDS AND RESIDENCIES :

TRADES Artist in Residence program (est. 2016) in Hawai'i (2023)

KareKare House Artist residency (2022)

Debra Porch Award and residency with Artspace Aotearoa and the Australian Arts Council (2022)

Supreme Winner, New Zealand Painting & Printmaking Award (2019)

First in Course Award, Elam, University of Auckland (2014)

360 Auckland Abroad Exchange Travel Awards, University of Auckland (2016)

Gordon Harris Art Supplies Prize, Elam, University of Auckland (2018)

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Jhana Millers Gallery

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JHANA MILLERS

Claudia Kogachi

Heaven must be missing an angel

28 April – 21 May 2022

Kogachiworld

K. Emma Ng

Claudia Kogachi can't resist inserting the people in her life into her paintings. This time, it's her partner Josephine alongside her, in imagined moments from iconic movies. Together, they're (two of) Charlie's Angels; they're Catwoman and Batwoman; they're Uma Thurman and Lucy Liu in Kill Bill; they're recreating the sexy pottery scene from Ghost; they're together on a horse in Brokeback Mountain; and they're Vin Diesel and Michelle Rodriguez in The Fast and the Furious.

The series is a continuation of Claudia's movie fantasies, which began with Self Portrait as Suki, exhibited at Artspace last year. In that painting, Claudia reclines on the hood of a car in the manner of Devon Aoki in 2 Fast 2 Furious. Along with Lucy Liu, Aoki was part of a miniscule pantheon of cool Asian girls on-screen in the 2000s. But already, I'm underselling the fun of Claudia's work. Aoki and Claudia might have Japanese-ness in common, but it's not so much about "seeing yourself represented on screen," and instead about believing that you could be anyone—even Vin Diesel. After all, Vin Diesel is already a cartoon, so why shouldn't Claudia paint herself in his place, complete with muscle tank and chains?

Claudia's paintings hum with energy, with snappy colours and instinctive, wavering lines. But their most overwhelming quality is their embrace of Surface. As objects, these paintings are large, flat, and hard-edged. Paint is mostly applied without shading or modelling. The light is high-key. In Kogachiworld, no one ever casts a shadow.

Surface has been accused of all sorts of things—at worst, seen as a distracting denial of depth or reality. In *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), Guy Debord wrote of a "flattened universe" that "obliterates the boundaries between self and world" as well as the "boundaries between true and false". Claudia's paintings don't make us forget these boundaries, but they do play with them. They unzip a space between these zones of "self and world" and "true and false." Each painting is like a twilight zone that exists somewhere between fact and fiction, somewhere between the self and the world at large.

Kogachiworld is a space for play. Play is a process that allows people to test and develop their sense of self in relation to the world around them. In the expansive plane of each of Claudia's paintings is a whole little world to play in, where everyone—regardless of their hair, skin colour, sexual orientation, weak or strong physique—gets to be a protagonist.

There is a boundless sense of possibility that comes from casting yourself in your own art—turning yourself and your figures into hypersubjects. They are always in motion, identities continually evolving, always a step ahead of any attempt to fix them to one particular idea.

With this series, it's tempting to compare Claudia to other artists who like to dress up, like Yvonne Todd or Cindy Sherman. All three have created distinctive worlds to play in, populated by

JHANA MILLERS

ever-shifting hypersubjects—and all three delight in a bit of ugliness. It feels wrong to say that there's some ugliness in Claudia's paintings, because ultimately they're so appealing, but it's true—Claudia doesn't shy away from ugliness. Think of her series where everyone is bothered by flies, mosquitoes, and roaches; or those gassy green fumes in her artworks about IBS; or her celebration of flawed human ego in her paintings about mother-daughter tension.

Speaking of emotional ugliness, sometimes it feels like the painter is on a bit of a power trip. She gets to imagine how a situation might play out, manipulate each figure like a marionette, and set their features to her will. Having the last word is the artist's privilege. Josephine must be relieved that in this series she gets to share in loving gazes and kick some butt alongside Claudia.

But in Kogachiworld nothing is ever dire. More often, the emotions that wiggle their way through Claudia's paintings tend to be mildly annoying, a little offputting, or maybe the hehe kind of funny. Even the romantic moments in this series have a gentle sweetness, like a fingertip tracing a heart in steam on the bathroom mirror.

Claudia treats life and fiction as equally malleable, bending the narrative truth of both towards each other until they meet. Her artworks are imaginary negotiations of real relationships and real feelings. And it is because they dabble in minor feelings that these artworks are so relatable.

So, give in to their charms, and allow yourself to pass through the Kogachiworld horizon. In Kogachiworld it's neither day nor night. In Kogachiworld there's no such thing as two- or three-dimensional. In Kogachiworld everything is real and everything is made-up. In Kogachiworld you are ageless. You can be your own hero... or antihero. Kogachiworld is for trying on new identities, and slipping them off again. In Kogachiworld you can be anyone you want.

K. Emma Ng, April 2022

JHANA MILLERS

Claudia Kogachi

It Is What It Is

26 March –10 April 2021

Spectacular catharsis: Claudia Kogachi's It Is What It Is

Francis McWhannell

Claudia Kogachi's work leans into the personal. The artist frequently depicts herself and members of her family carrying out everyday and leisure activities, using these to explore interpersonal dynamics and emotional states. Early paintings show her and her mother engaging in competitive pursuits, such as boxing and table tennis, which become metaphors for the combative dimension of the parent–child relationship. The images are bold and cartoonish. The figures have blue skin, a reference to 'feeling blue' that also makes them appear otherworldly or like comic-book characters. Often, the scenes stretch credulity, not least when they take place in domestic settings that point to the circumstances of the underlying discord but are incongruous with the activities. It is not hard to imagine the pictures scribbled in a diary alongside entries about spats between mother and daughter. At the same time, the characterisations are frank and impartial. Neither figure is obviously presented as the hero or the villain. Neither is idealised. Their bodies are distorted, lumpy. The women are full of energy and strength, but they are not flawless.

Similar frankness is present in the seven paintings (all from 2021) that form the core of *It Is What It Is*. They show Kogachi and her partner being assaulted or impeded by a variety of creatures as they attempt to go about their business. In *The one with the mosquitoes*, the couple lies in bed. Jordi — who framed all the works in the exhibition — sleeps, but he has clearly been bitten by the eponymous insects. Kogachi is awake, her face a picture of anxiety. Both figures are presented in an unglamorous fashion, stressing their vulnerability. The scenes are more immediately credible than those in her earlier paintings. While few people box in the lounge, many are bugged by sand hoppers while sunbathing. As before, however, deeper narratives are at play. The artist speaks of anxieties and frustrations that she has experienced recently, in the context of individual relationships, and as a consequence of issues affecting broader communities, such as the local art scene. Kogachi keeps the precise irritants covert. But she amps up the intimacy in other ways. The works include personal features, like freckles and tattoos. The fantastical blue skin is gone.

In 2020, Kogachi began producing pictorial rugs using tufting guns. The decision to do so was stimulated in large part by the nationwide COVID-19 lockdown, which limited her access to painting supplies. Three substantial bodies of work resulted, one reproducing items associated with her late jiichan (grandfather), one exploring jobs she could take on in order to support her art career, and one reflecting on memories of time spent with her obaachan (grandmother) in O'ahu, Hawai'i. The last two series relate in large part to the pandemic, which caused Kogachi to worry whether she would be able to sustain her practice in a shifting world, and prevented her from travelling to visit her obaachan. Aspects of the rug works creep into her paintings in *It Is What It Is*. *The one with the caterpillars*, for instance, centres on a part-time gardening job undertaken by Kogachi to bring in extra

JHANA MILLERS

funds. *The one with the blue bottle jellyfish* shows her practising surfing, a sport she has enjoyed for some time, and one that clearly connects with Hawai'i. One might detect in the bites and stings, and the frowns and grimaces, hangovers of a year of serious stress.

However, as has long been the case with Kogachi's work, there is also an air of hopefulness and stability. The images abound with delightful and humorous details. They possess great pictorial strength, being marked by balanced compositions and melodic patterns. In *The one with the head lice*, for example, the artist's hair forms a bold design. Painted in bands of brown, it spreads out to the edges of the image. At first glance, the work might appear to be an aerial view of a landscape. In a sense that is appropriate. For the nits colonising her crown, she is a terrain. Her face is peppered with delicate creases, but it remains placid. Possibly she is snoozing, as yet unaware of the invaders. Possibly she is blocking them out. I recall Kogachi's choice of title: *It Is What It Is*. As New York Times columnist [William Safire](#) [has pointed out](#), the applications of the phrase are. It is both an expression of philosophical resignation and an avowal that one refuses to dwell on a lousy situation. Bad things happen. They bother one, keep one awake at night. But one deals with things, and moves on. Ultimately, Kogachi's works represent a spectacular catharsis.

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Claudia Kogachi was born in Awaji-shima, Japan, in 1995. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Auckland's Elam School of Fine Arts. In 2019, she won the New Zealand Painting and Printmaking Award. Recent exhibitions include: New Artists Show 2020, Artspace Aotearoa, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland; Obaachan during the lockdown, Wahiawā, Hawai'i, Te Tuhi, Tāmaki Makaurau; Uncle Gagi, play_station, Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington; and Everyone Has a Horse Phase, Sanderson Contemporary, Tāmaki Makaurau (all 2020).

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Saturday, 11 – 4pm

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