

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 19 July 2017**



**Aotearoa’s shifting identity the focus of upcoming exhibition**

The latest instalment of an ongoing project that explores Aotearoa’s changing cultural identity opens at Te Uru in Titirangi on 29 July.

Over the next 20 years, Aotearoa’s Māori, Asian, and Pacific populations are projected to grow to make up over 50% of the total population. *The Asia-Pacific Century* is an ongoing project that responds to this shift. It is led by co-curators Emma Ng and Ioana Gordon-Smith together with a team of long-term participants, made up of artists, writers and academics. Delivered through the form of recurring exhibitions, the project explores possible reconfigurations of our national identity, as growing demographic diversity prompts renewed visions of what multiculturalism might look like in relation to our unique bicultural foundations. As a result, the successive exhibitions function more like research hubs, comprising texts, talks and workshops as well as artworks.

The first phase of the project took place at Wellington’s Enjoy Public Art Gallery in mid-2016, with a second phase about to take place at Te Uru in Titirangi from 29 July to 1 October 2017.

“The project is called *The Asia Pacific Century*”, explains co-curator Emma Ng, because during its first phase we used the idea of ‘Asia-Pacificness’ as an alternative lens for our national identity—a counterpoint to the framework inherited from our British colonial lineage.”

“Out of the initial phase of *The Asia Pacific Century* came a somewhat surprising realisation: that we were each, in our way, tickled by the idea of forming unexpected relationships. This notion of relationships—between minority groups, between immigrants and indigenous peoples, and between independent professionals working within similar terrain—has become a governing concern of the project.”

*The Asia Pacific Century: Part Two* continues the research and discussion from part one and focuses more on the notion of introductions as a key tool for brokering new relationships.

“One of the benefits of a long term approach with multiple iterations is that we can be responsive to what feels most timely at any given moment”, notes co-curator Ioana Gordon-Smith. “Last year, it felt as if the very phrase ‘Asia Pacific’ was everywhere we turned. At the moment, questions of how we co-exist feel the most urgent, and there’s an interesting echo across various disciplines who are also addressing the phenomenon of a growing demographic diversity.

“What we want to do in this particular version is speculate as to what some aspirational pathways to collective well-being might look like.”

To flesh out various visions, the project brings together an interdisciplinary cohort of collaborators — from artists to academics and writers — who have all previously been engaged with issues of identity, immigration and indigeneity within an Aotearoa New Zealand context. The research hub hosted by Te Uru creates a space to share this research in the form of artworks, writing, reading groups, workshops, and public talks, including a close reading with author Max Harris of his book *The New Zealand Project* on Monday 7 August, 11am. Further details of events will be announced on the Te Uru website.

*The Asia Pacific Century: Part Two* runs at Te Uru from 29 July – 1 October 2017  
Hours: 10am – 4.30pm daily  
Address: 420 Titirangi Road, Titirangi, Auckland  
Website: [www.teuru.org.nz](http://www.teuru.org.nz)

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

### About Te Uru:

Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, based in scenic Titirangi, is West Auckland's regional art gallery. After two years of redevelopment, Te Uru opened in November 2014 in a purpose-built building as part of the Lopdell Precinct. Te Uru receives core funding from the Waitakere Ranges Local Board of Auckland Council.

For more information, contact:

Te Uru 09 818 8087

info@teuru.org.nz

[www.teuru.org.nz](http://www.teuru.org.nz)

### About Emma:

Emma Ng is a writer and curator from Auckland. She lived in Wellington for seven years, studying at Victoria University before becoming the 2013 Blumhardt Curatorial Intern at the Dowse Art Museum. Between 2014 and 2016, she was the Curator and Manager at Enjoy Public Art Gallery, where she oversaw a programme of contemporary art exhibitions, publications, and events. Emma has written for publications such as Art New Zealand, ArtAsiaPacific and The Pantograph Punch and has recently had her first book published; *Old Asian, New Asian*, about growing up as a Chinese New Zealander. She is currently based in New York City, where she has just graduated with a master's degree in design research and criticism from the School of Visual Arts.

### About Ioana:

Ioana Gordon-Smith is Curator at Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, a recently opened contemporary gallery in West Auckland. Prior to this, she was Curator at Objectspace, a gallery dedicated to craft, design and applied arts, and interned at Artspace, New Zealand. Though her areas of interest span a broad range of disciplines, consistent throughout is a curatorial process that prioritises a close working relationship with artists. Ioana also contributes regularly to magazines and journals, was the New Zealand-based project manager for the inaugural Honolulu Biennial, and is a trustee for the community-focused art collective Whau The People.

### About *The Asia Pacific Century*:

Each iteration of *The Asia Pacific Century* comprises of both discussion with our long-term participants, an exhibition that functions as a research hub/reading room, and public lectures. The first phase of the project — which took the form of an open research space at Enjoy Public Art Gallery in August 2016 — considered 'Asia-Pacific' as a lens to think through our changing national identity. In 2016, the participants for *The Asia Pacific Century* included Bepen Bhana, Peter Brunt, Kerry Ann Lee, Lana Lopesi, Local Time, Ahilapalapa Rands, Balamohan Shingade, Melinda Webber and Anna-Marie White. *The Asia Pacific Century: Part Two* will be held at Te Uru from 29 July to 1 October and continues these discussions, and will be more public-facing.

Online resources:

<http://enjoy.org.nz/the-asia-pacific-century-part-one>

<http://www.teuru.org.nz/index.cfm/whats-on/calendar/the-asia-pacific-century-part-two/>

Statistics:

Statistics New Zealand notes that the expected growth of Aotearoa's Māori, Asian, and Pacific populations to comprise over 50% of the population are projections, rather than predictions, and should be used as indications of overall trends rather than exact forecasts. Additionally, the percentages do not sum to 100 percent because people can identify with multiple ethnicities.