

## **Urara Tsuchiya's solo exhibition** **The Sahara**

Exhibition dates: 25 July–8 September, 2024  
Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga  
Curator: Zane Onckule

Photo: Ansis Starks

Kim? Contemporary Art Centre is pleased to present Urara Tsuchiya's first exhibition in the Baltics. Across Tsuchiya's expansive practice – spanning intricately constructed ceramics, immersive installations, costume, performance and video – the whimsical temporality of an impulsive performance is interwoven with the longer-lasting act of calculated patience required at the kiln. Tsuchiya finds inspiration everywhere – from a naturist sauna to seedy hotel rooms to interactions on dating apps – and creates immersive environments that are likely to catch viewers off-guard, entertain and shock.

Tsuchiya is best known for her hand-painted ceramics with explicit motifs, exploring the space between the surrealistic and the ordinary and that awkward strangeness that comes along with it. These sculptures tend to take the form of realistic objects such as suitcases, underwear, toothbrushes or miniscule interior replicas filled with everyday tools and objects, serving as containers for *mise-en-scènes* depicting humans – and, at times, animals – mingling, climbing, bathing, all the while engaging in two/three/four-way sexual intercourse.

By adopting narratives from lived experience and exchanges with fellow artists and friends, as well as others pulled from TV shows and popular culture at large, Tsuchiya is concerned with subversion of kitsch and pushing the boundaries of comfort. Under the cover of playfulness and all things innocent, Tsuchiya's work explores the disconnection that can be found between the personal and social worlds by tackling tensions in modern relationships and prevailing traditional patriarchal structures.

The presentation at Kim? includes a display of ceramic works – both from an earlier exhibition as well as new works produced by the artist at ceramic studios in London and Riga. The exhibition also features the short film *The Sahara* directed by the artist's friend, and prolific fashion photographer, Ben Toms, which functions as an alternate environment to the sculptural pieces and further expands the behavioral patterns characteristic of her objects of affection.

Over the course of the video, the couple – played by Tsuchiya herself with an older male counterpart, a porn talent cast from Craigslist – engage in ordinary yet at the

same time mundane daily activities set against the background of a cheap-looking Las Vegas rental house. Evoking the interactions of a “typical” couple, they jump into the pool fully dressed in an attempt to cool down, overdramatically gesticulate during an argument over gender roles, and converse about their favourite movies and dinner plans, all leading up to a heated conclusion of evocative puppetry. At first the one pulled by the strings by her partner in this troubled union, Tsuchiya's puppet-doll stand-in concludes the *étude* by kicking her master off his feet and dragging him out of the frame.

*Disclaimer: some of the works on display in this exhibition contain adult imagery.*

Acknowledgements: Ben Toms, Gallery Union Pacific.

**Urara Tsuchiya** (b. 1979, Japan) lives and works between Glasgow and London. Tsuchiya holds an MFA from Glasgow School of Art and has studied fine art at Goldsmiths University, London. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Angel Pocket*, Union Pacific, London, UK (2024); *Throwing Caution to the Wind*, Galerie Lefebvre & Fils, Paris (2021); *Auntie Urara's Blabber Mouth*, PAOS, Guadalajara (2021); *Warm Drizzle*, Gallery Golsa, Oslo (2020); and *Home Bound*, Ada Project, Rome (2020). Selected group exhibitions include: *I Licked It. It's Mine*, featuring Oh De Laval, Shafei Xia, and Urara Tsuchiya, The Museum of Sex, New York, US (2024); *Night Shades*, with Corri-Lynn Tetz, 12.26 Dallas, US (2024), *Comfortable Hole, Bye*, Parcel Tokyo, Japan (2023), and *Pornotopia Revised*, Kunsthalle Exnergasse Kex, WUK, Vienna (2022).

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