

*The Gods of All Things*

Yukari Kaihori

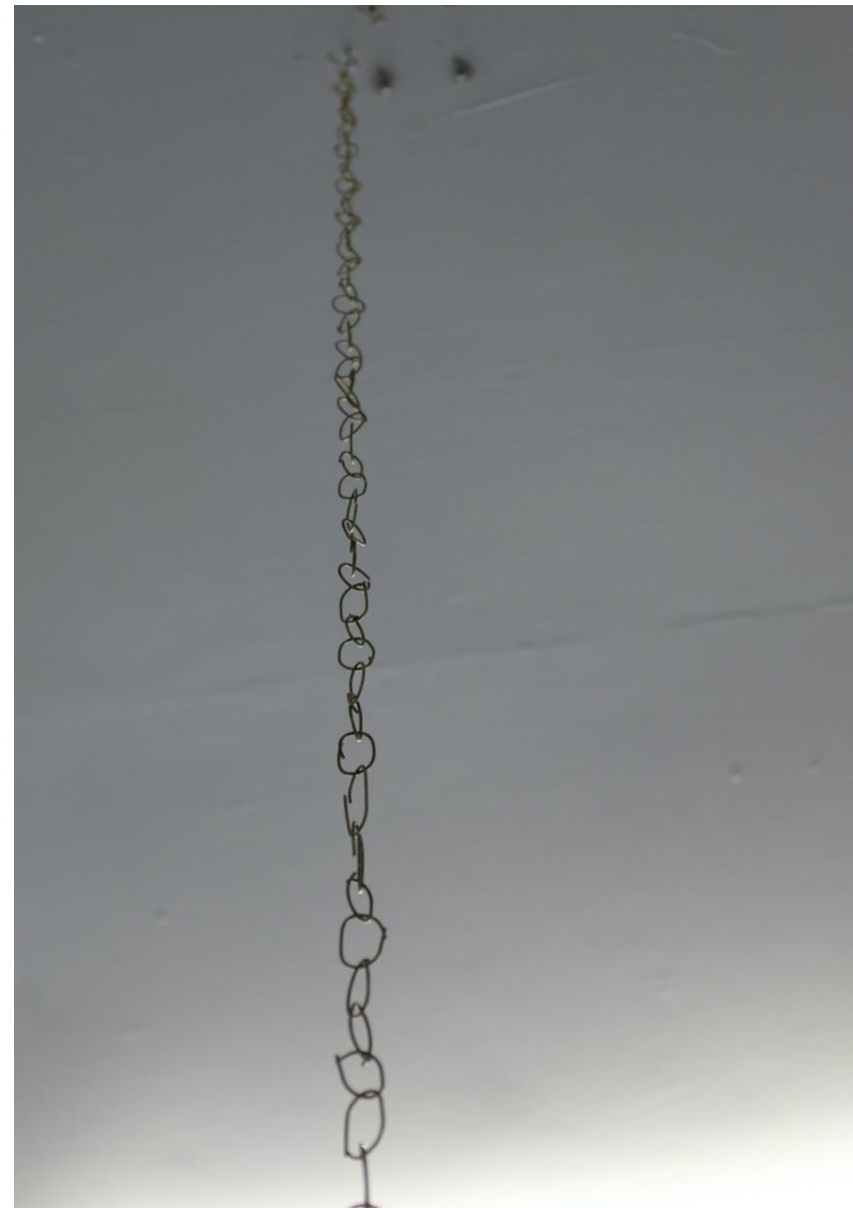
RM Gallery Exhibition

*In Searching for the Deities*, 17 March-10 April, 2021

Like a scrupulous detective, Yukari Kaihori has meticulously identified all the dents, marks and other miscellaneous obscurities in the gallery for her exhibition, *In Searching for the Deities*. In each tiny hole drilled into the walls from exhibitions passed Yukari has stuck pieces of copper wire. She has also used these off-cuts to create a rectangle on the floor where an object has left a grey outline in the cement. In various chips in the cement, she has placed bronze lumps. None of these works have names, Yukari simply uses their material components to identify them.

There is a protest happening all around us. In how Yukari makes, places and names her work she is exploring ways to delink from the progressive line of modernity. The four copper chains that she hung from the ceiling, one piling on the floor, the others dangling above it, are symbolic of this. In order to reconstitute ways of thinking, language, life and so on, like these broken chains, we must delink from the overall structure of knowledge.

Yukari reconstitutes the gallery itself in her practice. She also takes one step further – she removes us from it altogether. A trail of pebbles made from clay sourced from a local stream begins on the gallery's floor. On closer inspection, we notice that the pebbles lead us down the steep staircase and to outside. The pebbles





follow the boundary between footpath and buildings all the way down the road to Samoa House's back door. We are immersed in the infinite details of the world outside. We are removed from the heavily coded gallery space. We are where we were before we stepped into the gallery, but it is no longer liminal, instead it's alive with meaning.



Yukari's acute awareness of cultural rules and hierarchies is not surprising. Since she was a child she has lived and travelled around the world observing, adapting (where necessary) and moving on again. Yukari was born in Kyoto, Japan. When she was little her family moved to Brazil. Yukari later studied her undergraduate degree in studio art in the United States (Oregon) and returned to

Japan to work. When she visited Aotearoa on a hiking trip she saw glimpses of Brazil and Oregon in the vegetation and decided to move here.

These various and diverse experiences can often be unsettling and create feelings of ambiguity about identity and belonging. However, Yukari's work isn't burdened by introspective anxieties. Instead, she has cultivated her observations of numerous, often contrasting and conflicting, cultural values and beliefs and applied these in her practice. In particular, she is interested in drawing parallels between certain ideas, values or philosophies and applying these in work, which allows for her work to be read from a variety of perspectives.

*In Searching of Deities* she explores the animistic components of object-oriented ontology, the philosophy centred on the idea that all object relations (human and non-human) are on equal ontological footing, and the belief in Shintoism that anything and everything can be inhabited by supernatural beings and powers called *kami*. According to Yukari, the gallery itself is inhabited by local deities. If we think about objects in this way, then Yukari hopes we can become motivated to care for our immediate environment.

Resisting the urge to make big gestures, Yukari works in measured, subtle ways to maintain an equilibrium and give power back to space. However, as with any attempt to dismantle the status quo, Yukari's work is constantly under threat. At the gallery opening,



attendees repeatedly sent Yukari's pebbles scattering across the floor and the gallery minders after them. The rectangle became an amorphous pile of copper. The paper sheet where she had made rubbings of the floor with pencil was trodden on and displaced.

When she prepared for her graduate show her work faced similar perils. She had to place notes on each work in her studio that said "this is an artwork — do not clean this area" so the cleaner did not vacuum them up. Unfortunately, the first time she left the work in her studio she didn't do this. The next day she found a smooth wooden floor — the various oak tree leaves, branches and bronze and pewter casted acorns she had installed had been sucked up by a vacuum the night before.

Yukari's methodical interrogation of physical space brings the shapes, lines and textures that create the space into focus. Yukari's interest in a world where there is no separation between physical things and how she conveys this interest in her practice are compelling. After visiting *In Searching of Deities*, an explosion of plaster and dust on the side of the street from a nearby construction site seemed intentional and worth deliberating. Be sure to tread lightly, Yukari reminds us. We are always treading on something.

Text by Eloise Callister- Baker

