

EN

A Whole New World

Simon Fujiwara





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New World**

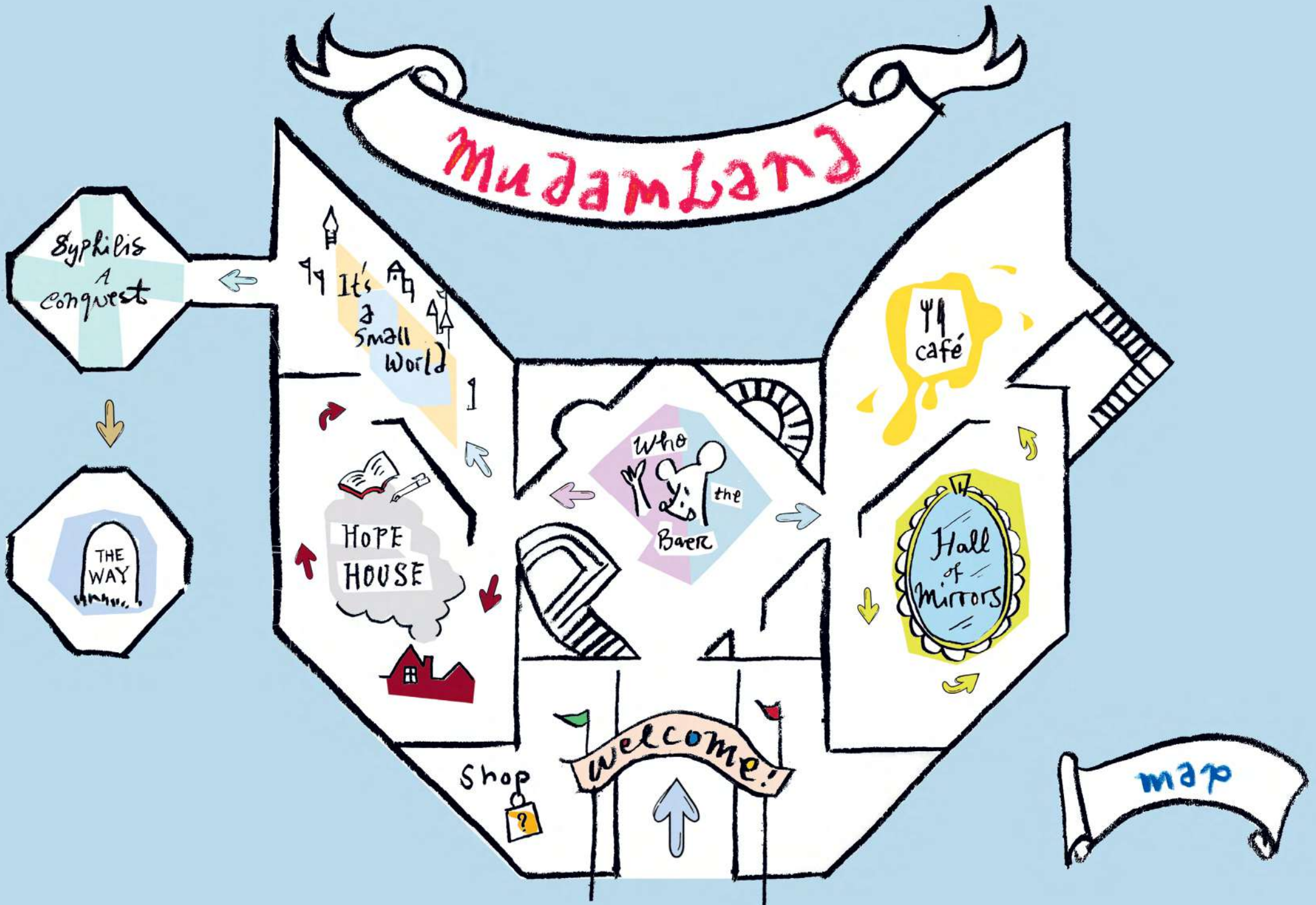
20.03 – 23.08.2026

Curators

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assisted by Nicole Wittmann

Production team

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Tawfik Matine El Din, Jordan Gerber,
David Celli, Richard Goedert,
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and Lucie Chrétien



Once Upon a Time...

The work of British Japanese artist Simon Fujiwara invites us to confront the contemporary world in all its beauty and complexity, its absurdities and contradictions. The artist holds a mirror up to society, reflecting life in a fast-paced, image-saturated era by creating playful, surreal and sometimes unsettling experiences.

Fujiwara's work encompasses a broad range of subjects from history, mythology, sexuality and psychoanalysis to architecture, art history and anthropology. Despite its ambitious scope, his work is always closely tied to his own lived experiences, offering a personal lens onto larger societal questions.

Recurring motifs such as iconic figures, cartoons, theme parks, mass tourist sites and museums, show his fascination with the ways in which society represents, exaggerates or invents images of itself. He looks under these seemingly seductive surfaces to reveal a poignant question: why do we long for authenticity even as we build ever more artificial realities?

Bringing together nearly twenty years of work, this exhibition reveals the breadth of Fujiwara's artistry, which spans painting, film, performance, animation and storytelling, using these diverse tools to paint portraits of the twenty-first century as it unfolds.



Who is Who?

'I created a cartoon in order not to become one myself.'

Meet Who the Bær, a cartoon character created by Simon Fujiwara. Who has no fixed identity – no set race, gender, nationality or sexuality. Constantly shapeshifting into images drawn from popular culture and artworks, Who treats identity like a series of costumes that can be worn and discarded. Inspired by cartoons and theme-park mascots, Fujiwara conceived this playful and entertaining figure as a symbol of our tendency to reduce our identities to labels.

Over time, Fujiwara has created nearly 1,000 works featuring Who, including paintings, drawings, animations, installations and even a line of merchandise. Through repetition and transformation, Who the Bær questions the value of identity and images in a world increasingly saturated by them. Yet for Who there is seemingly no real world behind the screen or canvas. They live in a total media reality – a world that looks increasingly like our own.

In this exhibition, Who transforms into artworks by renowned artists like Henri Matisse, Andy Warhol and others, offering an accelerated, witty tour through various stages in the history of art. As they traverse ever more imagery in search of another Self, we are left with the question: Who is Who?

Who the Bær





▲ The new commission *A Whole New World (for Who?)* (2026) reimagines Pablo Picasso's iconic anti-war painting *Guernica* (1937). Featuring Who the Bær, Picasso's figures are shown exhausted and collapsed in a large pile as dawn breaks on a new day behind them. In an era flooded with digital images, the work reflects on our collective fatigue from the overconsumption of pictures of war, conflict and suffering. As technological shifts are heralded as the dawn of a new era, the work poses a pressing question: Who is the new world for?

In *Whodam – A Whoseum of Art for Who?* (2026), Who the Bær appears as a megalomaniac mascot, rebranding the museum in their own image by inhabiting multiple roles ranging from director, art handler, artwork and architecture. Irreverent and mischievous, the character turns Mudam into a theme-park-like attraction, even transforming existing artworks into cartoonified versions of themselves. Through this exaggerated takeover, Who offers a wry commentary on the growing pressure placed on art, artists and museums to perform, entertain and compete within a world shaped by capitalism, marketing and branding. ►



Hall of Mirrors

In fairy tales, mirrors often appear as magical objects that promise self-knowledge, while revealing unsettling truths. Simon Fujiwara's work can be seen as a distorted mirror held up to the strange realities of life today. These works mirror social questions, reflecting how we shape our identities through the images that surround us or that we create of ourselves. Together, they depict our search for the true Self as if in a hall of mirrors – endlessly reflecting, replicating, concealing and distorting reality.



Identity

In *The Mirror Stage* (2009–13), Fujiwara explores a childhood encounter with an abstract expressionist painting – an experience that shaped both his desire to become an artist and his understanding of himself as gay.

Originally presented as a theatre play in 2009, the work draws on psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's theory of the mirror stage. In it, identity is first encountered as a reflected image. Fujiwara explores how the Self is both real and imagined, shaped through a dialogue with the objects, images, products, myths and stories that surround us.

In *Joanne* (2016–18), Fujiwara asks what it takes to reclaim an image of a Self you no longer have control over. Former beauty queen, champion boxer and artist Joanne Salley was also Fujiwara's art teacher at school. She became the subject of a tabloid scandal when nude images of her were circulated online without her consent.

Drawing on lessons he learned at school, they collaborate on a project that probes the freedoms, limits and risks of the mediated Self as they search an 'authentic new image' for Joanne.





Excess

At the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, Fujiwara encountered countless reproductions of Vincent van Gogh's *Sunflowers* (1887–89) on merchandise covering an entire wall of the gift shop. The experience led him to question why objects of such significant cultural value are reduced to trivial commodities. Presented here en masse on a plinth, the flowers form a landscape shaped not by nature, but by commerce.

Vanity

The Vanitas tradition in art is concerned with impermanence, vanity and the futility of worldly pursuits. Fujiwara explores this theme through material processes in which he transforms everyday items to reveal what lies beneath the surfaces of beauty and power. In *Fabulous Beasts* (2015–19), once-luxurious fur coats are shaved in a process that reveals the violence, labour and history concealed beneath their glamorous exterior. In *Masks (Merkel)* (2015–17), Fujiwara uses the make-up of Angela Merkel – a former world leader – in paintings that show how we conceal or consolidate power. Together these works suggest that ideals of authenticity, beauty and authority are carefully crafted as illusions that can reveal themselves over time and as cultural values shift.



In *Fifty Shades Archive* (since 2017), Fujiwara exposes the hidden ecological and sociological costs behind our mass obsessions. Having sold over 100 million copies, the erotic pop novel *Fifty Shades of Grey* often finds its way into second-hand stores. The book, which centres around a billionaire's sexual appetites, is unable to be recycled due to the toxic compound in the binding. In response to the overwhelming quantity of donations, the charity shop Oxfam posted a viral tweet begging people to stop donating them.

Fujiwara purchased the entire remaining stock from the charity shop to create the world's largest archive of a single, unwanted book. He displays his archive as a monument to the tensions between mass and individual, excess and scarcity, cultural obsession and inequality.



it's a small world

During a visit to a theme park manufacturing company, Fujiwara discovered a pile of discarded cartoon figures in the trash. The broken sculptures and their fragments reminded him of lost civilisations like ancient Rome or Greece, inspiring him to imagine his own society: one in miniature, whose entertainment-obsessed culture is surrounded by the ruins of these characters.

In the world he has invented, prisons, cemeteries and temples rise around the decaying statues of entertainment industry icons. Armed guards oversee the tiny population, suggesting a society where pleasure, commerce and control are inseparably linked.

It's a Small World (2019–21) envisions a cartoonish future where heroes, villains and caricatures become our cultural icons or leaders, defining our public spaces and institutions. The work asks us to consider whether this is a fantasy or a future that has already arrived.



Hope House

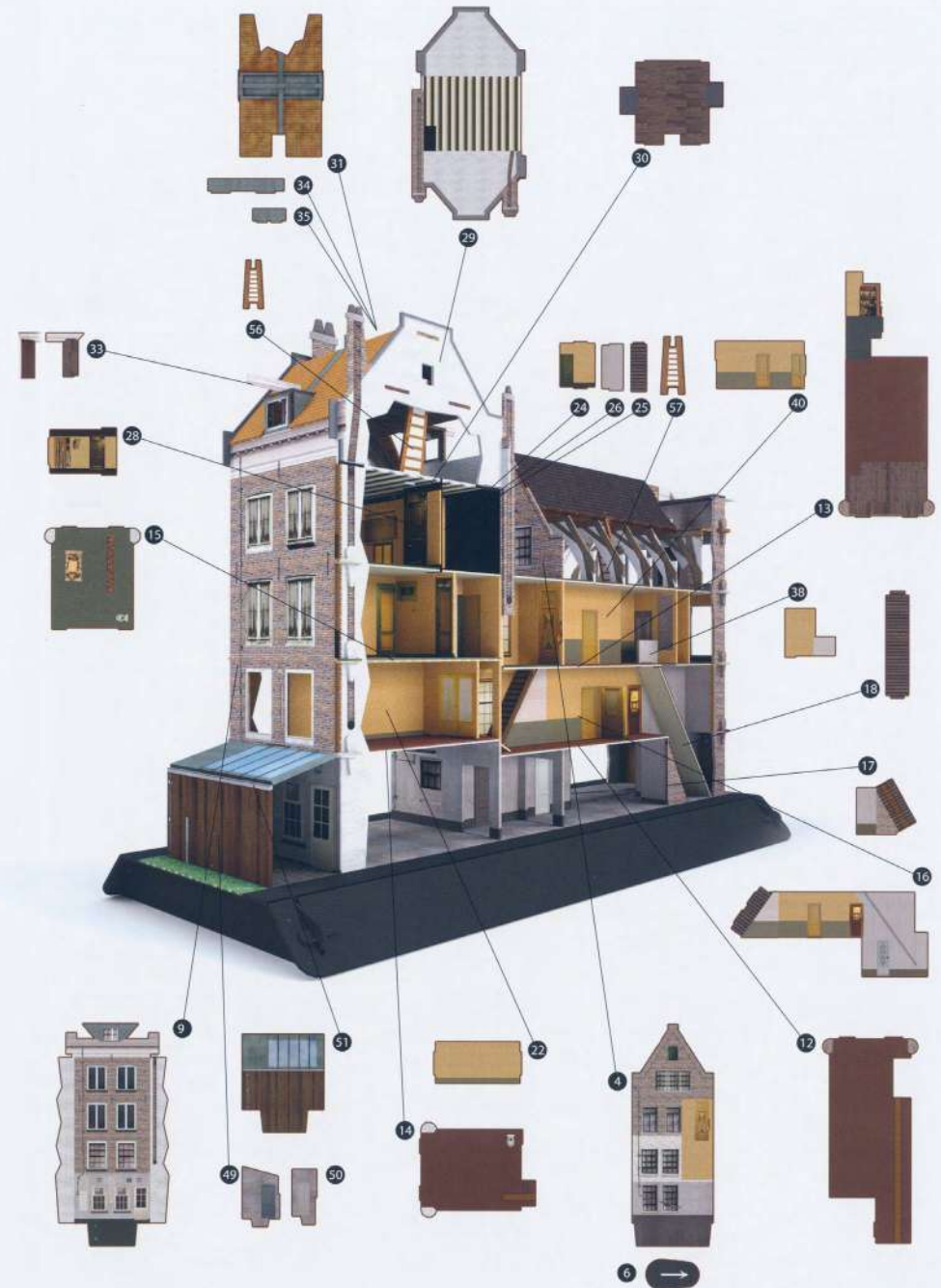
**'I still believe, in spite of everything,
that people are truly good at heart.'**
– Anne Frank

Simon Fujiwara often visits tourist sites, landmarks and memorials to explore why certain people and places hold special meaning. He closely observes how facts, stories, emotions and commercial interests shape what society chooses to value and represent.

Since 2017, the artist has explored how the legacy of Anne Frank – the young Jewish diarist killed by the Nazis during the Holocaust who became well-known after her death. The project *Hope House* is the result of several years of research and its format has been adapted to various exhibitions over recent years.

After visiting the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, Fujiwara purchased a 1:60 cardboard model of the building at the museum shop. Surprised that the real-world historical site had been turned into a consumer object, Fujiwara started to consider Anne Frank not only as a Holocaust victim, but also as a global figure whose story has inspired films, plays and merchandise, creating a wide cultural industry.

The cardboard model was originally conceived by the Anne Frank House as an educational tool, helping visitors understand the story of Anne Frank through a physically engaging product. Fujiwara used the model as his guide, enlarging sections of the miniature Anne Frank House to full scale. These fragmented architectural elements form a 'museum within a museum'. The objects in *Hope House* ask viewers to consider how societies, institutions and industries construct, preserve and sometimes commercialise stories and histories.



Anne Frank's Bedroom Wall

Although much of the original features in the Anne Frank House have been lost, a portion of the original wallpaper in Anne Frank's bedroom remains one of the few physical traces of her life in the Secret Annex. The images she collected and pasted on the wall reveal a young girl fascinated by celebrities, royalty, nature and art.

Since opening to the public in 1960, the house attracts over a million visitors annually. Every year several famous figures visit the house and reflect on their visit by posting on social media, amplifying global interest in the story of Anne Frank. Among them were Emma Thompson, Yasser Arafat, Whoopi Goldberg, Steven Spielberg, Justin Bieber, Hillary Clinton, Natalie Portman and Tim Cook.

What Beyoncé Wore to the Anne Frank House

For her visit to the Anne Frank House in 2014, singer Beyoncé Knowles wore a Fray Trouser Suit from Top Shop – a low-cost British clothing company. Her visit was largely praised by the media as sensitive and empathetic. Within forty minutes of her posting an image of herself at the museum online, the outfit was sold out internationally. The item was reproduced by the artist as a material symbol of the combined forces of mass media, celebrity and historical memorialisation.



The Diary

Anne Frank's diary continues to be read in schools around the world yet as reading declines among young people in general, new media forms have emerged to keep the story of Anne Frank relevant. A graphic novel released in 2017 presents her story through simple, cartoonified visuals. In 2020, a YouTube video version of her book was released in which she speaks directly to the camera in a video diary. It asks audiences: What if Anne Frank had a camera?

Encouraging participation, the Anne Frank House sells a 'write your own' diary containing sixteen pages about Anne Frank's life and 192 blank pages. The diary, which features a red-checkered cover, references the original design of her diary and is sold exclusively in the museum shop and on their website.



Likeness

During his research on Anne Frank, Simon Fujiwara encountered a wax figure of her at Madame Tussauds Berlin. Unable to find a matching source image, he concluded that the figure had been newly designed. Observing visitors posing and photographing it, he realised the figure's pose and eye line were optimised for cameras held at the height of an average adult. Disturbed by this, he created *Likeness* (2018), his own wax version of Anne Frank, highlighting how the act of looking can be intrusive and politically loaded. Using a robotic camera, visitors experience an intimate encounter with Anne Frank not as the human she was, but as the image we have come to know – constructed and circulated in culture.



Syphilis: A Conquest



Fujiwara's work often blends personal experiences with fantasy and imagination, opening up new possibilities for what the Self can be. In *Syphilis: A Conquest* (2020–23), he turns his own contraction and recovery from syphilis into a fantastical adventure.

The sexually transmitted disease has a long, complex history. Thought to have reached Europe via the ships of coloniser Christopher Columbus returning from the American conti-

nent in the fifteenth century, it entered the cultural imagination and was romanticised by artists and writers as a mark of genius.

Fujiwara embraces this history, treating the disease as a kind of 'badge of honour', linking him to a longer legacy of creative minds. Through vivid colours and fantastical imagery, he transforms illness from a source of shame into an exuberant display. In a rationalised world obsessed with health, he suggests that physical vulnerability can open unexpected connections across places and eras, revealing new forms of wonder.



Syphilis - A Personal Tale

1492 The New World
 Christopher Columbus discovered the Americas in 1492. The Spanish conquistadors brought the disease to the Americas. It spread rapidly among the indigenous population, causing a massive die-off. The disease was also brought to Europe by sailors returning from the Americas.

Experience Syphilis!

A few thousand years
 Syphilis is a bacterial infection caused by the bacterium *Treponema pallidum*. It is spread through direct contact with a sore on the skin of an infected person. The disease can affect any part of the body and can be fatal if left untreated.

1495 NAPLES
 The first recorded case of syphilis in Europe was in Naples in 1495. It was brought there by a French soldier who had been in the Americas. The disease spread rapidly through the city, causing a massive die-off.

Around 1800 - 1800 a Paris
 The disease spread to Paris in 1800. It was brought there by a French soldier who had been in the Americas. The disease spread rapidly through the city, causing a massive die-off.

1920 LONDON
 The disease spread to London in 1920. It was brought there by a British soldier who had been in the Americas. The disease spread rapidly through the city, causing a massive die-off.

World War II
 Although it is now possible to treat syphilis, it is still a major health problem in many parts of the world. It is spread through direct contact with a sore on the skin of an infected person.

BRITAIN
 The disease spread to Britain in 1917. It was brought there by a British soldier who had been in the Americas. The disease spread rapidly through the country, causing a massive die-off.

The Way

This installation is a tribute to Japanese porn actor Koh Masaki, who died in 2013 aged 29. The artist conceived the work after seeing online posts featuring intimate images of Masaki being nursed by his boyfriend in hospital. The artist realised he had viewed Masaki only as a consumable image rather than a real person. Masaki's death provoked deep grief and a reckoning with that detachment from the human behind the screen.

Fujiwara pays homage to Masaki by locating the actor's final scene in the last porn film he starred in before passing away. Focusing on the ejaculation shot, Fujiwara extracted several still images of the sequence and zooms into them. Eight of the enlarged images are presented in *The Way* (2015–26). These ghostly, abstract images capture a fleeting, ecstatic moment suspended between motion and stillness, presence and absence, life and death.



The artist

At the core of Simon Fujiwara's work is a question: What does it mean to be a 'Self' in the twenty-first century? With humour, inventiveness, delight and rigour, his works reflect on existential quandaries such as: How should one construct a self today? How has technology altered our identities? Is there such thing as an authentic 'Me'?

From performative lectures, video installations and paintings to the creation of entire themed 'worlds', his two-decade-long practice employs a range of artistic strategies that hold up a distorted mirror to a runaway world mediated through technology and images. His work creates spaces in which disconcerting aspects of life under twenty-first-century capitalism can be examined in a playful and even pleasurable way.

Fujiwara is the recipient of the 2010 Baloise Prize at Art Basel and the 2010 Frieze Cartier Award. He was shortlisted for the Preis der Nationalgalerie in 2019.

Selected solo exhibitions of his work have been held at Kiasma, Helsinki (2024); LagoAlgo, Mexico City (2023–24); Kunstinstituut Melly, Rotterdam (2021); Fondazione Prada, Milan (2021); Arken Museum of Modern Art (2019); Lafayette Anticipations – Fondation d'entreprise Galeries Lafayette, Paris (2018); Tate St Ives (2011). He has been in group exhibitions at Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, Centre Pompidou, Paris, Guggenheim Museum, New York and MoMA, New York, among others.

Fujiwara's work is represented in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Tate, London; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo; Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg; Sammlung Verbund, Vienna; Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Fondazione Prada, Milan; University of Leeds and the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main.



Credits

Images

Cover, 18

SS Delirium, 2020
Installation view *It's a Small World*,
Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki, 2024
Courtesy of the artist; Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art,
Helsinki; Giò Marconi, Milano; TARO NASU;
Dvir Gallery and Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul
Photo: Andrea Rossetti

Inside cover (front)

Portrait of Simon Fujiwara, 2022
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Jörg von Bruchhausen

1

Mudamland, 2026
Courtesy of the artist

2

Installation view *It's a Small World*,
Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki, 2024
Courtesy of the artist; Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki;
Giò Marconi, Milano; TARO NASU; Dvir Gallery
and Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul
Photo: Andrea Rossetti

3, Inside cover (back)

Hello Who?, 2022 (detail)
Courtesy of the artist
and Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul
Photo: Jörg von Bruchhausen

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A Whole New World for Who?, 2025
Courtesy of the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul
Photo: Chroma

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Whodam – A Whoseum of Art for Who?, 2026 (detail)
Courtesy of the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul

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Joanne, 2016/18 (video still)
Commissioned by FVU, The Photographers' Gallery
and Ishikawa Foundation
Supported by the Arts Council England

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The Mirror Stage, 2009–12
Performance view, *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*,
Hebbel am Ufer, HAU1, Berlin, 2011

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Production image, *Fabulous Beasts*, 2015
Courtesy of the artist

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Van Gogh, 2018
Installation view *Revolution*,
Lafayette Anticipations, Paris, 2018
Courtesy of the artist; Esther Schipper,
Berlin/Paris/Seoul; Collection Lafayette
Anticipations – Fonds de dotation
Famille Moulin, Paris
Photo: Andrea Rossetti

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Fifty Shades Archive, 2017–ongoing
Installation view *Preis der Nationalgalerie*,
Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, 2019
Courtesy of the artist and Esther Schipper Berlin/Paris/Seoul
Photo: Andrea Rossetti

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It's a Small World (Memorial), 2021
Courtesy of the artist
and Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul
Photo: Jörg von Bruchhausen

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Production image, *It's a Small World*, Istanbul, 2019
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Maria Bartau Madariaga

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Excerpt from instruction manual for Anne Frank
House kit model
Courtesy of Anne Frank Stichting, Amsterdam

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Anne Frank's Bedroom Wall, 2018
Installation view *Hope House*, Kunsthau Bregenz, 2018
Photo: Andrea Rossetti

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What Beyoncé Wore to the Anne Frank House, 2018
Courtesy of the artist, Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul
and Dvir Gallery
Photo: Andrea Rossetti

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Diary, 2017
Installation view, *Hope House*, Kunsthau Bregenz, 2018
Photo: Andrea Rossetti

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Production image, *Likeness*, 2018
Courtesy of the artist and Collection Lafayette
Anticipations – Fonds de dotation Famille Moulin, Paris
Photo: Marc Domage

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Syphilis: A Conquest, 2020
Courtesy of the artist and Dvir Gallery

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The artist in treatment for syphilis, Berlin, 2019
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Maria Bartau Madariaga

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SS Contagion, 2020
Courtesy of the artist and Dvir Gallery

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SS Salvation, 2020
Courtesy of the artist and Dvir Gallery

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Syphilitic Comrades (Goya), (Lautrec), (Van Gogh), (Gauguin), 2020
Installation view *It's a Small World*,
Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki, 2024
Courtesy of the artist; Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki;
Giò Marconi, Milano; TARO NASU; Dvir Gallery
and Esther Schipper, Berlin/Paris/Seoul
Photo: Andrea Rossetti

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Installation view *The Way, Yu-Un*, Obayashi Collection, Tokyo, 2015
Courtesy of TARO NASU
Photo: Kenji Takahashi

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Exhibition view *The Way, Yu-Un*, Obayashi Collection, Tokyo, 2015
Courtesy of TARO NASU
Photo: Kenji Takahashi

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The artist in his studio, 2019
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Maria Bartau Madariaga

Public programme

Artist's and Curator's Tour with Simon Fujiwara and Léon Kruijswijk

20.03.2026 | 12:00 – 13:00 | EN

Mudamini Workshop *Magic Puppets*

26.03.2026 | 14:30 – 16:30
6 – 12 years

Curator's Guided Tour

01.04.2026 | 18:00 – 19:00 | DE
29.04.2026 | 18:00 – 19:00 | DE
with Nicole Wittmann

03.06.2026 | 18:00 – 19:00 | EN
01.07.2026 | 18:00 – 19:00 | EN
with Léon Kruijswijk

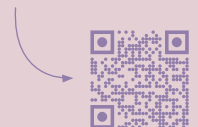
Drop-in with Dadafonic

16 + 17.05.2026 | 10:00 – 18:00
23 – 31.05.2026 | 10:00 – 18:00

Lunchtime at Mudam

03.04.2026 | 12:30 – 13:30
29.05.2026 | 12:30 – 13:30

Find Mudam's full programme
of events, workshops, lectures
and more on mudam.com



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Acknowledgements

Under the patronage and with the support of the Ministry of Culture



Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean extends its thanks to the members of Cercle des collectionneurs, all donors and patrons, and in particular for their exceptional support:

Henry J. & Erna D. Leir Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Norbert Becker-Dennewald, Cargolux, Luxembourg High Security Hub, A&O Shearman, Indosuez Wealth Management, Clearstream, JTI

and also

Uniqlo, Arendt, Baloise Holding AG, Banque de Luxembourg, Elvinger Hoss Prussen, PwC Luxembourg, Swissquote Bank Europe, Loo & Lou Foundation, Atoz, Bank Pictet & Cie (Europe) AG, Succursale de Luxembourg, Soludec, Bonn & Schmitt, Dussmann, Luxembourg Friends of Museums et American Friends of Mudam

Thanks to

Studio Simon Fujiwara; TARO NASU; Giò Marconi Gallery, Milan; Dvir Gallery; Lafayette Anticipations – Fonds de dotation Famille Moulin, Paris and the Mudam team

With the support of

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