

## OMOIYARI: KEIKEN X GABRIEL MASSAN OPEN SPACE

UNTIL WED 31 AUGUST 2022

*Omoiyari by Keiken X Gabriel Massan* is the first commission of Open Space – an Augmented Reality (AR) Initiative curated in collaboration with Zaiba Jabbar and developed for Soho Photography Quarter, a new public art space in the immediate surroundings of The Photographers' Gallery.

Omoiyari, the Japanese word for compassion, comprises a series of posters and an interactive AR filter. The series documents a range of otherworldly avatars, with each poster acting as a portrait encapsulating a fragment of time, capturing each avatar in a freeze frame mid-motion.

As an antidote to the busy retail-driven energy of nearby Oxford Street, the series provides a portal into the realm of the invisible. It's as if a hand reaches from one world and pulls the audience into another, and through the narratives of these avatars reminds the audience to protect their spirit, and their morphic field.

Passersby can activate the interactive AR filter by walking past a screen situated beside The Photographers' Gallery entrance on Ramillies Street, and also by scanning QR codes that are featured on some of the posters. The AR effect invites users to embody the character of Uxkme, whose poster is pasted onto the gallery windows facing Ramillies Place. Users are encouraged to shapeshift with Uxkme by shaking their head to transform between two different versions of the avatar. First the users will find themselves wearing a beautiful mask and jewellery, before revealing an altered and augmented version of themselves. The patterns of Uxkme's skin are applied to the user's face, whilst a pair of ears sprout from their head. Looking closely, users will notice that their own personal features have changed.

An Instagram account is needed to experience the AR filter via the QR codes.

Audiences will also meet avatar characters including the warrior U-Mi Water; Tolmi, the word for 'help' in the indigenous Mexican language; Téneek, an avatar with a strong exterior who reveals their soft vulnerable interior; Uxkme, the Téneek word for 'old woman', another, fragile avatar who is trapped in a thick gel of time; and Yik'wax, meaning 'dark' in Téneek, who exerts their spirit as a

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vital life force, reminding us of the balance of light and dark and that we cannot live without each other. Finally there is Xibam, meaning 'brother' in Téneek, a cute sibling spirit with eternal nurturing energy who acknowledges that sometimes their own spirit runs away from them. A trace of movement is drawn that exposes the intensity of a pure feeling at the heart of each avatar.

~ ENDS ~

### **Press Contacts**

For press information, please contact Grace Gabriele-Tighe at Margaret on [grace@margaretlondon.com](mailto:grace@margaretlondon.com)

For general information and enquiries about The Photographers' Gallery, including their archive, Print Sales Gallery or Bookshop, please contact: [press@tpg.org.uk](mailto:press@tpg.org.uk)

### **About Keiken:**

Keiken are a collaborative practice, co-founded by artists Tanya Cruz, Hana Omori and Isabel Ramos in 2015, who frequently work with multiple collaborators. Based between London and Berlin, they come from mixed diasporic backgrounds (Mexican/Japanese/European/Jewish). They are building a collective shared space of virtual worlds, a Metaverse. Keiken, the Japanese word for experience, create speculative worlds, using moving-image, CGI, gaming software, installation, virtual and augmented reality, programming and performance to merge the physical and digital. Their work simulates new structures and ways of existing, exploring how societal introjection governs the way we feel, think and perceive.

Keiken are a winner of the inaugural Chanel Next Prize. They recently became residents at Somerset House, London. Recent selected exhibitions include: 2nd Thailand Biennale, Korat (TH); House of Electronic Arts HEK, Basel (CH); Francisco Carolinum, Linz (AU); 17th Venice Architecture Biennale, Venice (IT); Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, Tokyo (JP) (2021); FACT, Liverpool (UK); HAU Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin (DE); Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt (DE); transmediale, Haus der Kulturen der Welt HKW, Berlin (DE) (2020); Institute of Contemporary Arts ICA, London (UK); Jerwood Arts, London (UK) (2019).

### **About Gabriel Massan:**

Gabriel Massan (b.1996 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) is a Berlin-based mixed-format digital artist. Combining storytelling and world-building techniques, Massan creates and narrates situations of inequality simulated by the life performances of his digital sculptures in a virtual environment. The former video artist has an interest in investigating the notions of strangeness and ignorance in the imaginary of the Third World concept. His work includes 3D animation, digital sculpting and painting, single-player games, virtual and augmented reality.

Gabriel was a 2019 resident at ETOPIA - Center for Art & Technology, invited artist of the 2020 "IMS Convida" program at Instituto Moreira Salles (IMS), selected for the Circa "Class Of 2021" program in partnership with Dazed, a 2022 commissioned artist by the "Artist World" series at Serpentine Galleries and a contributor of the "Rotten TV" online research platform supported by The British Council Digital Collaboration Fund.

### **About Zaiba Jabbar:**

Zaiba Jabbar (HERVISIONS) is a leader in augmented reality and digital art exhibitions online and offline working with clients and institutes that include Tate Modern, Tate Britain, Art Night, LUX, The London College of Fashion, Mira Festival and The Mosaic Room. She is moving image artist, award-winning director, curator, commissioner and founder of curatorial project Herversions, an investigation into how people in the margins are using technology to create art outside of traditional formats, making space for themselves through the experience of expanded moving image. Zaiba is interested in the democratisation of art and the new accessibility by how we experience art outside the white cube.

### About The Photographers' Gallery:

The Photographers' Gallery opened in 1971 in Covent Garden, London, as the UK's first independent and publicly funded gallery devoted to photography. It was the first UK gallery to exhibit many key names in international photography, including Juergen Teller, Robert Capa, Sebastiano Salgado and Andreas Gursky. The Gallery has also been instrumental in establishing contemporary British photographers, including Martin Parr and Corinne Day. In 2009 the Gallery relocated to a new multi-storey building in Ramillies Street, Soho and opened its doors to the public in 2012 after an ambitious redevelopment plan which provided the Gallery with three floors of state-of-the-art exhibition space as well as an education/events studio, a gallery for commercial sales, bookshop and cafe. The success of The Photographers' Gallery over the past four decades has helped to secure the medium's position as a vital and highly regarded art form, introducing new audiences to photography and championing its place at the heart of visual culture.

[www.thephotographersgallery.org.uk](http://www.thephotographersgallery.org.uk)

#### Visitor Information:

(please check website for latest opening information)

#### Opening times:

Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday: 10.00 – 18.00 Thursday &

Friday (Late opening): 10.00 – 20.00 Saturday: 10.00 – 18.00

Sunday: 11.00 – 18.00

Soho Photography Quarter: FREE

General Gallery Admission: £5 / £2.50 Concessions. Fridays 18.00 - 20.00 Free for everyone

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London Underground Station: Oxford Circus

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E: [info@tpg.org.uk](mailto:info@tpg.org.uk)

W: [thephotographersgallery.org.uk](http://thephotographersgallery.org.uk)

#### Social media:

Instagram: [@thephotographersgallery](https://www.instagram.com/thephotographersgallery)

Twitter: [@TPGallery](https://twitter.com/TPGallery)

Facebook: [@ThePhotographersGalleryLDN](https://www.facebook.com/ThePhotographersGalleryLDN)

The Gallery has Covid-19 Protective Measures in place.



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