

WING LUKE MUSEUM

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CHamoru Queer Trans Art Collective Unveils New Exhibit at Wing Luke Museum

Seattle, WA: Wing Luke Museum is excited to announce a new art exhibit opening Friday, June 9th. Featuring work by **Guma' Gela'**, a CHamoru art collective of queer and trans members from the Mariana Islands and larger Pacific Islander diaspora, the exhibit explores the motto "part land, part sea, all ancestry" through various art forms. The work crosses a broad spectrum of media, including sculpture, soundscape, writing, printmaking, weaving, costume design, adornments, and more, to build a connection with CHamoru life, history, and traditions.

Guma' Gela': Part Land, Part Sea, All Ancestry spotlights and uplifts stories of underrepresented Pacific Islanders and Micronesians, bringing visibility to communities often invisible by predominant East Asian perspectives within broader AAPI conversations. CHamoros comprise the third largest Pacific Islander population in the US, after Native Hawaiians and Samoans, but their stories are seldom represented.

Roldy Ablao, a featured artist in the Guma' Gela' exhibit, says that this exhibit represents long-needed inclusion in AAPI storytelling which tends to favor East Asian voices. "Historically, Pacific Islander stories have been overshadowed by Asian American narratives through broader oppressive systems of settler colonialism that seek to erase us as Indigenous peoples. Having a CHamoru exhibit reaffirms our existence, stories, and experiences within the broader AAPI community." For Ablao, the artwork is a way to honor and share indigenous culture through the lens of queerness in a way that promotes healing and spiritual wellness. "This exhibit centers on the works of Transgender and Queer CHamoru artists. This exhibit celebrates our stories and existences as Gela's members of our community. Many of the pieces embody our collective practices of CHamoru Trans and Queer grief, joy, intimacy, kinship, futurity, and healing," he says. "We bring the entirety of our hearts, souls, and community into this work, hoping that it helps to heal the wounds that colonization has left our community through our indigenous ways of being. Through the inafa'maolek and agofli'e, we have for our Transgender and Queer CHamoru relatives and ancestors." In

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the CHamoru language, *inafa'maolek* describes the concept of restoring harmony and order, while *agofli'e* refers to the value of seeing another person's value and importance.

This exhibit features artwork from 13 artists from the Pacific Northwest and Guåhan including Lourdez Velasco, Santino Camacho, Roldy Ablao, Roquin Siongco, So'le Celestial, Nancy Mariano, Monaeka Flores, Clay Afleje, Edward Acfalle Jr., Dakota Alcantara-Camacho, Jessica Vergel, Robert Patrick S. Palomo, and Elyse-Noelle Bais.

Given recent events in America and the world, the exhibit comes at a critical time and is a symbolic act of resistance to this pressure. "We believe that this exhibit comes at a time of heavy grief for many of the communities we hold genealogical and spiritual connections to," says Ablao. "Political attacks on the Transgender and larger Queer community are becoming more frequent, prominent, and visible. The Mariana Islands were just hit by Category 4 Super Typhoon Mawar, destroying lands and displacement of CHamoru people in Guåhan and Luta. Our islands continue to suffer from trauma perpetuated by ongoing settler colonialism. Our peoples continue to resist US Militarism and imperialism. This exhibit represents our resistance and resilience to these forces that seek to erase us as Indigenous Pacific peoples."

A special opening ceremony on Saturday, June 10th, kicked off the exhibit with a fashion show, speaking program, and live performances by the Guma' Gela' band. The exhibit will be on display in Wing Luke Museum's George Tsutakawa Art Gallery **through May 2024.**

More information about this exhibit is available online at www.wingluke.org/gumagela. Prime exhibit support from the Hugh and Jane Ferguson Foundation.

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The **Wing Luke Museum's** mission is to connect everyone to the rich history, dynamic cultures and art of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders through vivid storytelling and inspiring experiences to advance racial and social equity. As a Smithsonian Affiliate, National Park Service Affiliated Area, and the only pan-Asian American museum in the nation, The Wing Luke Museum is a national treasure, preserving and sharing the personal stories of the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities. www.wingluke.org