Wansolwara is a pidgin word from the Solomon Islands meaning ‘one-salt-water’. Presented in association with the Sydney Festival at the UNSW Galleries and 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art from mid-January, the exhibition ‘Wansolwara: One Salt Water’ draws on this notion of a waterscape comprised of connected yet distinct and diverse communities, by presenting artworks, performances and conversations which acknowledge the visual and material cultures of this oceanic region. It includes significant bodies of work by artists Terry Faleona, Ruha Fifita, Rebecca Ann Hobbs, Shivanjani Lal, Paula Schaafhausen and Vaimaila Urale, and critical responses will be elicited via an early-career writers program. As part of ‘Wansolwara’, curator and artist Léuli Eshrāghi is presenting O le ûa na fua mai Manu’a, a show-within-a-show exploring Indigenous conceptions of language, body and sensuality, with a title referencing a Sāmoan proverb describing incoming rains.

Five kimonos made from Sāmoan barkcloth stand side-by-side, densely and richly painted with a detailed land- and seascape. A Hokusai-like wave rolls in from the right, following a flock of seabirds towards a tropical beach. Beneath the waves a multitude of sea life thrives: a vibrant orange octopus, a green lobster, fish, eel and a turtle. But look closer and there are sinister elements among the lushness: a soft-drink can is bobbing by the shore, and a human skull nests on the seabed near a cemetery of bleached coral. Yuki Kihara’s サーモアのうた (Sāmoa no uta) A song about Sāmoa (2019) is the first iteration of a five-year project by the Samoan-Japanese artist both exploring the Pacific Ocean and the myriad connections, histories and identities it contains, and dismantling the myths which endure about it. The exhibition at Dunedin’s Milford Galleries continues until 21 January 2020. Kihara will represent New Zealand at the 59th Venice Biennale in 2021.