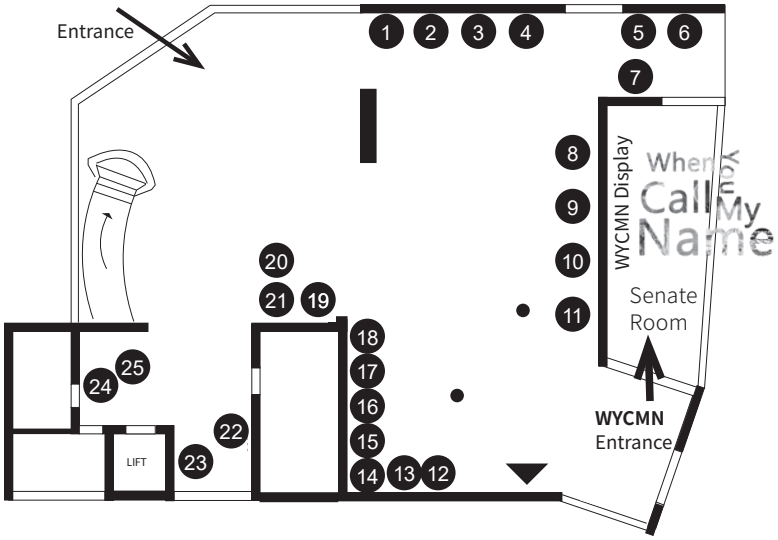
Teiju to wa Nandaro
What does it mean to settle?

Aug 2026



1 Masuda family

2008 | Rubibi | Broome

The late Akira Masuda, originally from Wakayama, was a pearl diver. In 1955, at age 21, he left a copper factory in Osaka and came to Australia to work in Broome's pearl shell industry. He soon met and married the late Evelyn Puertollano, a woman of Scottish, Filipino and Indigenous Australian heritage. This family photograph, taken at the Broome Japanese Cemetery, reflects that union.

2 Welcome to Country

2008 | Rubibi | Broome

At the opening of the performance at the Broome Japanese Cemetery, a Welcome to Country ceremony was conducted by the late Yawuru Elder Doris Edgar and her daughter Dianne Appleby. Doris Edgar's grandfather was also a Japanese pearl diver, buried here. (*In Repose, 2008*)

Dianne later said to me:

My grandmother was a Karajarri woman who was given to my grandfather, who was a Yawuru man. My grandmother was born on the southern coastline of Gourdon Bay, also known as Port Smith. Many of the pearling luggers travelled to this area for safety, water, food and diving for pearls. They would often come ashore. This is where the romance began.

My grandmother Monica Roe was conceived by a wonderful and majestic woman — the sole survivor of a fierce massacre led by Maitland Brown, with Panter, Harding and Goldwyer. A monument stands in a park in Fremantle.

Monica was so much loved by her Japanese father from the sea. He came bearing gifts for her at every opportunity to show his love. Monica was a great woman, and gave her knowledge and stories to her family, hoping that one day we will meet our extended families from across the ocean.

3 Waka-chan and Satsuki-chan

2007 | Wulgurukaba and Bindal Countries | Townsville

Japanese Australian artists Satsuki Odamura (koto) and Wakako Asano (contemporary dance) joined me in a multi-arts project at Japanese cemeteries across Australia. The purpose was to honour the Japanese migrants who came before us, and to express gratitude to those who tend these graves. (*In Repose, 2007–2010*)

4 Japanese cemetery in Broome

2008 | Rubibi | Broome

Whenever I visit Broome, I always visit this cemetery first and last. There are over 900 gravestones here. The earliest recorded date on a gravestone is 20 July 1890.

5 Lucy, Alec and Keifer

2000 | Rubibi | Broome

Bardi woman Lucy was born in Broome and is also a second-generation Japanese Australian. Her father was Japanese, from Taiji in Wakayama. Together we made a documentary about her journey searching for her father in Japan. (Heart of Journey, 2000)

6 Vincent's garden

1999 | Bardi Country | Gulan

In the "back garden" of the late Vincent Angus, we were treated to the freshest oysters taken straight from the rocks. At the time, I thought I would like to stay in Bardi Country if I were asked to.

7 Aled and Keifer

1999 | Bardi Country | Pender Bay

Aled and Keifer's Japanese grandfather was working as a pearl lugger builder in Broome. We went camping together on Dampier Peninsula.

8 First Nations and Japanese heritage

1998–2000 | Rubibi | Broome

When I first visited Broome in Western Australia in 1998, I borrowed a book from Yoshihide Hosaka — founding president of the Japan Club of Sydney (JCS). It was a love story by Fujio Nakano called Marie and Masatora — A Japanese Diver and his Aboriginal Wife (Bungeishunju, 1986). If there is one love story, there must be many, I thought — and I was right.

9 Teiju to wa nandaro

2005 | Arrernte Country | Alice Springs

It was during my visit to the centre of the Australian continent that it suddenly occurred to me: I had yet to ask the traditional custodians of this land, "Would you mind if I settled here?"

10 The Immigration Restriction Act and Qantas

2011 | Eora Nation | Sydney

Among old photographs donated to the late Noreen Jones — author of Number 2 Home: A Story of Japanese Pioneers in Australia (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2022) — from a prominent Japanese family who once lived in Broome, there was a Japanese-language copy of the Immigration Restriction Act 1901.
I arrived in Australia aboard QF21 in 1981.

11 Dictionary of Nikkei Australians

2005–2021

Nikkei Australians are a minority within a minority. Our voices are barely heard — and even less so in Japan. Yet we are here: living, loving, dying, being buried, and being born again to become part of this landscape.

▼ Film Screening — You've mistaken me for a butterfly

2021 | 30 minutes | Film by Mayu Kanamori in collaboration with composer Terumi Narushima

I set out to research the history of Japanese women in Australia, looking for a love story. I headed to the National Library in Canberra where, while tracing documents, I encountered records of Japanese acrobats and touring troupes active in the mid-19th century — and discovered a rape case and its mysterious trial that took place in the Western Australian goldfields in 1898. The story moves from the National Library in Canberra to a forgotten ghost town in Western Australia, and then to the port of Kuchinotsu in Minami-Shimabara, Nagasaki, from which many karayuki-san (people who went abroad) departed. You've Mistaken Me for a Butterfly is a tribute to the women who left their homelands to live in foreign countries.

12 Tribute to Nishioka Eki

2021 | Rubibi | Broome

Eki Nishioka was born in Nagasaki. She arrived in Cossack in 1898 with a camera. She set up a photographic studio in Broome and taught her young employee Yasukichi Murakami the art of photography. After her husband's sudden death in 1901, she took over his business — expanding into banking, rental properties, pearling finance, and a taxi service — while continuing to photograph. (*Yasukichi Murakami: Through a Distant Lens, 2014*)
No one seems to know where her grave is. This is my next project. I intend to find her final resting place.

13 Tribute to Kusano Masu

2021 | Waiben, Kaurareg | Thursday Island, Queensland

Masu Kusano was born in Shimabara in Japan. She arrived in Darwin in 1901, then moved to Thursday Island. She worked as a sex worker at first, then as a housekeeper in a boarding house for workers in the pearl shell industry. When the Pacific War broke out, she was arrested as an 'enemy alien' and interned in Tatura Internment Camp in Victoria where she died. (*Cowra Voices, 2019 & When You Call My Name, 2025*)

14 Rika-chan

2022 | Bulanaming, Eora Nation | Marrickville, Sydney

Rika Hamaguchi's paternal grandfather was a Japanese pearl diver, and her grandmother's grandmother was a Japanese woman from Kyushu. She also identifies with her First Nations Australian, European and other Asian heritages. When I photographed Rika, she had moved from Broome to Sydney and was a principal dancer with Bangarra Dance Theatre. I was a very proud Aunty.

15 Reiko-san and Lily-chan

2001 | Gunbalanya | Oenpelli

Reiko Kawai organised a special permit for me to visit her in Gunbalanya in West Arnhem Land so I could show her my work with Indigenous Australian and Japanese peoples. I photographed Reiko, who livedReiko, who lived in the community, and Lily, along with their beloved dogs.

16 Yumi-chan

2006 | Eora Nation | Sydney

Yumi Umiumare, originally from Hyogo, Japan, is now based in Melbourne, where she works as a choreographer, dancer, and director with her own distinctive style, performing on stages around the world.

When You Call My Name

When You Call My Name (WYCMN)

collaborative collage
in the adjoining
Senate Room

17 Waka-chan at the former POW camp site

2009 | Wiradjuri Country | Cowra

I visited Japanese cemeteries and grave sites around the country around the country with dancer Wakako Asano through the In Repose project. These performances were carried out sometimes for living audiences and sometimes just for the spirits. Wakako danced even when no one was seemingly watching. (*In Repose, 2007–2010*)

18 Yumi-chan

2004 | Jardwadjali and Wotjobaluk Countries | Natimuk

Yumi Umiumare and I have worked together for many years. She played the part of Eki Nishioka in my play and she expressed, through dance, the emotions of Chika Honda, a Japanese tourist who was wrongfully convicted, in my documentary performance. (*Yasukichi Murakami: Through a Distant Lens, 2014 & Chika: A Documentary Performance, 2005*)

19 You are on stolen land

2021 | Bulanaming, Eora Nation | Marrickville, Sydney

People once fished and lived here, but now the river is so polluted that fishing and swimming are impossible. This walking path by the river near the house where I lived — all of it was where First Nations people lived for over 60,000 years. It was stolen just 250 years ago. A piece of graffiti reminds me of that. In buying my house, I am complicit.

20 I'm falling from the sky

2021 | Bulanaming, Eora Nation | Marrickville, Sydney

During Covid lockdowns, watching aircraft in the sky, perhaps carrying freight. I wondered if I would ever see Japan and my family again.

21 I'm stuck in the mangroves

2021 | Bulanaming, Eora Nation | Marrickville, Sydney

During the pandemic, I walked within the allowed 5 km radius of my home, which defined the borders of where I had settled.

22 Dictionary of my meteorology

2005 | Arrernte Country | Alice Springs

Dictionary of Atmospheres: De Quincey Co, Alice Springs Festival 2005
I spent ten days in Alice Springs, in the heart of the Australian continent, with dancers working in the Body Weather method developed by Japanese butoh dancer and farmer Min Tanaka. It opened my eyes and made me wonder: from whom should I seek permission to photograph here?

23 Ablution block

2009 | Wiradjuri Country | Cowra

Following the Japanese POW breakout, Cowra has a Japanese cemetery as well as a Japanese garden — and a World Peace Bell stands in front of the town hall. Cowra has now come to be called a "spiritual home" for Japanese Australians and has become a leading site for post-war Japanese-Australian reconciliation and friendship. (*Cowra Voices, 2019*)

24 Japanese cemetery in Cossack

2008 | Ngarluma Country | Cossack

Cossack was the birthplace of Western Australia's pearl industry before the pearl shell fishing industry moved to Broome. It was also one of the first places that the Japanese people settled in Western Australia. Old photographs by Japanese Australian photographer Yasukichi Murakami show many more graves in this cemetery, some of which belonged to Japanese women — like his mother-in-law Araki Chiyo — but they are no longer visible. (*Yasukichi Murakami: Through a Distant Lens, 2014*)

25 Yasukichi's grave at Cowra

2013 | Wiradjuri Country | Cowra

The grave of Yasukichi Murakami — a pioneering Japanese Australian photographer — in the Cowra Japanese War Cemetery. He was interned during the war and died while interned. I tracked down photographs he took and created a theatre work telling the story of his life. (*Yasukichi Murakami: Through a Distant Lens, 2014*)

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.
CERTIFICATE EXEMPTING FROM DICTATION TEST.

About Mayu Kanamori

I am an independent artist.

My performative works include *The Heart of the Journey, CHIKA: A Documentary Performance, In Repose, Yasukichi Murakami: Through a Distant Lens and You've mistaken me for a butterfly. My photographic series include Unseen Faces of Japan, Sugao no Australia and Teiju to wa Nandaro.*

I am a founding member of *Nikkei Australia*. I have collaborated on *the Cowra Japanese Cemetery Online Database* and initiated *Cowra Voices, Untitled.Showa* and *When You Call My Name*.

https://mayu.com.au

An exhibition by Mayu Kanamori

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