

Maya Jeffereis: Land of Eternal Summer

An exhibition addressing Japanese diasporic histories in Brazil

October 28, 2025–February 20, 2026

Opening Reception:
October 28, 2025
6–8pm

Gallery Hours:
Monday–Friday
10:30am–5:30pm

The International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP) debuts a new video and installation by Maya Jeffereis that reframes an overlooked history of Japanese migration to Brazil in the early 20th century, which formed the largest Japanese diaspora in the world. Blending archival documentation, experimental film techniques, and firsthand accounts, Jeffereis captures transnational entanglements of migration, labor, and cultural inheritance in her fluid, dreamlike compositions.



Maya Jeffereis, *Verses Sown in Bitter Earth*, 2025, 16mm film and digital video (color, black and white, sound), 12 min.

Jeffereis's art focuses on counter-narratives of diasporic Asian communities, including her own family's experience working as contract laborers on Hawaiian sugar plantations after immigrating from Japan and later, their forced removal and incarceration in the United States during World War II. Starting from personal archives, her work expands outward, tracing shared struggles and legacies of resistance across geographies. Jeffereis finds inspiration from Pacific scholar Epeli Hau'ofa's vision of Oceania as a unified "sea of islands," and imagines the ocean not as a barrier, but as a site of ancestral continuity.

For this exhibition, Jeffereis turns her attention to the wave of Japanese laborers that immigrated to Brazil to work on coffee plantations, a movement that began in 1908, in the wake of slavery's abolition and shifting global immigration policies. Resisting conventional methods of presenting historical footage on this subject, she transfers images from Japanese Brazilian archives to 16mm film and uses a phytogram process—a cameraless technique in which plants develop the photograph or moving image. Plants from both Brazil and Japan, including açai, coffee, hibiscus and chamomile flowers, kariyasu (Japanese silver grass) and kihada (Amur cork tree bark), give visual form to the hazy images on screen, interrupting the documentary gaze. Jeffereis extends this practice in the gallery with an installation composed of naturally dyed fabric and anthotypes—prints made from plant extracts.

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Throughout the video, fragmented images of passenger ships, families, and migrants in fields flicker alongside translated excerpts of tanka poems written by Japanese laborers in Brazil. Beneath these expressions of longing and resilience is an inquiry into the complex dynamics of national identity during Brazil's Estado Novo dictatorship in the 1930s and '40s, when Japanese Brazilians endured oppression and cultural erasure while still maintaining ties to imperial Japan. Jeffereis emphasizes the land—not only as a site of occupation, extraction, and destruction, but also as a place for reimagining belonging. Across her practice, Jeffereis asks what it means to reclaim the archive and envision new ways of seeing rooted in the environment, solidarity, and forms of community beyond the nation-state.

Maya Jeffereis is a New York-based artist and filmmaker working with video installation and experimental film. Jeffereis's work has been presented in the United States and internationally, including at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Brooklyn Museum, New York; The Noguchi Museum, New York; and Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Connecticut, among other institutions. Her work has screened in international film festivals including Images Festival, Canada; Third Horizon Film Festival, Miami, Florida; Cosmic Rays, Chapel Hill, North Carolina; and Alchemy Film and Moving Image Festival, United Kingdom.

This exhibition is curated by Melinda Lang, Director of Programs and Exhibitions. It is supported by Alice and Lawrence Weiner; Danna and Ed Ruscha; Hartfield Foundation; Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation; Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation; New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council; Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso; New York City Council District 34; New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature; James Rosenquist Foundation; and William Talbott Hillman Foundation.

About ISCP:

Founded in 1994, ISCP is the fourth-largest visual arts residency program in the world and a global leader in the field of visual arts residency programs. ISCP supports the creative development of artists and curators, and promotes exchange through residencies and public programs. Housed in a former factory in Brooklyn, with 35 light-filled work studios and two galleries, ISCP organizes exhibitions, events and offsite projects, which are free and open to all, sustaining a vibrant community of contemporary art practitioners and diverse audiences. Over 2,000 artists and curators from more than 100 countries, including the United States have undertaken residencies at ISCP.

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