

## twilight zone



A year ago, so the story goes, Lynne Yamamoto received an anonymous gift of several cargo trunks. They were filled with the belongings of Ayame, a Japanese woman who travelled to the United States to attend college in the 1890s. At the end of her studies, she returned to Japan with her American friend, Rose. They shared a small house, on to which they added a round sitting room. Their story ends abruptly in the 1930s, when Ayame disappeared without a trace. No record of her death exists. In the brave and lyrical installation Yamamoto created around this narrative, the Hawaiian-born minimalist offers many clues but few solutions to the mystery of Ayame. Rather, Yamamoto serenades us with the achingly erotic details of an intimate relationship between two women. There is a

haunting, timeless quality to the artifacts Yamamoto has lovingly put on display. A tête-à-tête seat curves in a languid embrace. A pair of silk baby shoes are strewn with strands of black hair. Etched water glasses lie mouth to mouth. A few yellowing pages from a Japanese dictionary are painted over with lush watercolours. Yamamoto covers the walls of the room with bamboo motif wallpaper, onto which are pinned rows of silk tissue paper dolls with small burn holes. At the slightest movement, they create a pleasant, rustling sound, like the twisting of bed sheets and bodies. Yamamoto leaves us, voyeurs in this sensual chamber, to revel in the mystery of love. It is a mystery that is infinitely simple and infinitely clear. *Lawrence Chua*