From army to arty

Former military compound Gillman Barracks is now home to some of the world’s top gallery brands. Berwin Song rounds up the exhibitions to catch as the art cluster opens this month.

Expect exclusive new works from superstar artist Yayoi Kusama

A key undertaking in Singapore’s plan to become a global arts destination has been the $10 million transformation of the historic Gillman Barracks – originally built in 1936 as a military encampment for the British Army – into a major art hub, complete with international gallery brands, a sculpture park and a new arts institution, tentatively named the Centre for Contemporary Arts. The project was announced earlier this year, and after a sneak peak of the building site during the second Art Stage Singapore (another major element in the city’s art development), Gillman Barracks is finally ready for its official unveiling on 14 September. Over ten galleries will open across five buildings in the compound, with more to follow; here we round up the inaugural exhibitions, arranged by building then by closing date.

BLOCK 1
Untitled (Singapura #90)
14 Sep – 28 Oct
Titled in homage to the late Cuban-American artist Félix González-Torres (who named all of his works ‘Untitled’, followed by a parenthetical subtitle), as well as referencing Singapore’s ranking on 2012’s Happy Planet Index, this exhibition from local gallery director Stephanie Fong – moving to Gillman Barracks from FOST’s former shophouse space on Kim Yam Road – features seven local artists including Heman Chong, Anthony Chu, Joo Choon Lin and Tang Da Wei.

BLOCK 5
Untitled
14 Sep – 24 Oct
Since 1994, Manila gallery The Drawing Room has discovered and represented young Filipino artists, such as Alfredo Aquilizan and Jose Legaspi, who have gone on to feature in international biennales. This opening exhibition features both artists, as well as 12 others from Manila, each with their own unique method and view of the Philippines.

BLOCK 22
Hyung Koo Kang: Crossing Gazes
14 Sep – 18 Nov
Singapore has already seen a major survey of this South Korean artist’s work at SAM in the final quarter of 2011 (awarded a five-star review in our November 2011 issue, featuring wall-sized hyper-realistic portraits of the artist himself and other famous figures such as Warhol and van Gogh). It’s an interesting selection for the Mizuma Gallery, whose gallery roster features a number of prominent Japanese artists.

Mizuma Gallery
14 Sep – 22 Lock Rd
(www.mizuma-art.co.jp).

BLOCK 47
Christian Thompson: We Bury Our Own
14 Sep – 14 Oct
Offering a showcase of Australian art, Singapore art platform Future Perfect has already been active on the local scene. Co-founded by David Teh, formerly at NUS, the gallery opened last month with a show of work by the late Archibald Prize-winning artist Adam Cullen. For Gillman’s official grand opening, it’s presenting works from Thompson’s self-portrait series ‘We Bury Our Own’, which references elements of his Aboriginal heritage (posing in a manner similar to archival photos), with his eyes covered with flowers.

Future Perfect
14 Sep – 22, 47 Malan Rd
(98301744, futureperfect.asia).

Luis Lorenzoza: Beautiful Pain
14 Sep – 14 Oct
Specialising in contemporary art from the Philippines, Silverlens is based in Makati City and also runs a foundation offering grants and workshops to emerging photographers and artists. Its opening exhibition at Gillman Barracks is a solo show from award-winning Filipino artist Lorenzoza, whose works are populated with surreal, hauntingly expressive characters.

Silverlens
14 Sep – 25, 47 Malan Rd
(www.silverlensphoto.com, skb.silverlensphoto.com).

COMING SOON

Also look out for branches of notable Chinese galleries ShanghART (www.shanghart.com) and Pearl Lam Galleries (www.pearlamgallery.com), as well as Kaikai Kiki (gallery-kakibiki.com), the workshop/gallery of famed Japanese superflat artist Takashi Murakami.

Gillman Barracks Malan and Lock Rds (www.gillmanbarracks.com).

Labrador Park, Tue Sat 11am-8pm; Sun 10am-6pm Free entry.