

## **The Contemporary goes 'open source' for its 20th**

By Jaimey Hamilton

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With its new show "20 Going on 21," The Contemporary Museum of Honolulu is curating "open source" style. The museum asked the artists who have shown in all eight of its biennials to nominate five other artists for this show. Curator Inger Tully and deputy director Jay Jensen then asked a jury to select 20 of those artists in honor of the museum's 20th birthday. Tully and Jensen threw in one extra artist for good measure to celebrate the future. (Hence the title.)

Using local artists' knowledge and networks in this decentralized process was a way of ensuring new perspectives on who is hot in Hawai'i right now. The result is a diverse show in which half of the artists have never exhibited in any of the museum's spaces before.

This approach is fast becoming the M.O. of museums and curators who have to deal with the information glut of our globalized art world. "Cream," a popular coffee-table book, uses a similar method to collect the "cream of the crop" of contemporary art. Countless international shows, including the New York City New Museum's upcoming triennial, "Younger than Jesus," also compile lists of artists through the networking strategies of art aficionados (from curators to bloggers).

Despite its au courant selection process, the art museum's show is very intimate. The emphasis on two-dimensional works demands close attention. I found myself bending closer to get a full sense of many of the works.

Corinne Kamiya's delicate installation, situated just inside the gallery, is composed of tiny red paper boxes, which offer miniature reflections on Hawai'i's tradition of gift-giving.

Ryan Higa's acrylic paintings at the back of the gallery, though not so small, were filled with otherworldly creatures in ambiguous relationships that made me feel as if I were reading manga. I found myself standing there for at least 15 minutes, pondering their allegorical potential for speaking about our current impulses of destruction and compassion.

Vince Hazen's fantastically wry sense of humor shows through in his new collages. The pieces are constructed by transferring little faces from our newspapers and magazines to his white paper surface using cellophane tape. (He calls this kind of collage "bandage." For the full effect, say it with a French pronunciation.) One, simply called "Grumpy Faces," is a collection of diminutive frowns and scowls.

Dana Forsberg's photographic series, "A Place You Know With Your Eyes Closed," exudes a haunting sense of familiarity and absence in our domestic spaces. And Lynne Yamamoto's quiet "Sweating Bone China" deconstructs the colonization and commodification of Hawai'i in its smooth white "ceramicized" surfaces of Spam and cup-of-noodle containers, and its delicate needlepoints of sailing ships and the HNL airport code.

There are relatively few exceptions to this emphasis on a refined attention to art materials. Pieces like Mat Kubo's performative installation "Cook For You, Cook for Me," in which the artist invites participants to make and eat nabe together, is one. Like many of Kubo's recent performances, his "material" is food and friendship — the way we give each other sustenance through sharing. In this particular piece, Kubo is reworking the infamous '90s Thai cooking installations by Rirkrit Tiravanija. I admire the conceptual rigor that this young artist infuses into the Hawai'i art scene, and I wish more pieces like it were recognized by fellow artists and jury alike.

Critics always seem to complain about the lack of consistency in invitationals or biennials such as this, but I think that the strength and the potential of this show actually rest in its eclecticism. It proves that Hawai'i is culturally rich enough to sustain a diversity of artistic practices. In fact, I'm looking forward to seeing how this show compares to the Honolulu Academy of Art's upcoming "Artists of Hawaii," in which another contingent of local talent will have their hour.