

# Big problems for a Big Island exhibit

■ BIG ISLAND ART GUILD:  
SPRING ARTS FESTIVAL 1993

Waiioa Center, Hilo. Through May 31.

Juried art exhibits are like sports contests. In a baseball game, neutral umpires decide who is safe and who is out. Most onlookers accept these necessarily subjective calls as part of the game. Over time, the best players usually rise to the top — despite the occasional bad break or missed call. Of course, the umpires' independence must be protected — in order to uphold the integrity of the game itself.

So it is with juried art exhibits. When jurors are asked to select works for a show it should be their "call and theirs alone. In effect, the entire exhibit is "signed" by the juror(s). Unfortunately, the jurying process at the Big Island Art Guild's Spring Arts Festival in Hilo went awry this year, according to jurors Garon Alexander Sarah E. Bremser and Hiroki Morinoue.

"We felt like we were being steered toward making certain decisions, says Bremser assistant curator of western art at the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

At one point, the chairman said: 'I want this in — we don't have any (of this medium). But we still rejected the piece. Somehow it's in the show, anyway. And the process itself was a problem. If a piece received just one vote it went into the exhibit — with no opportunity for discussion or input from the other two jurors.'

After we selected the first round (about 80 works), the exhibition chairman encouraged us to choose more works that were 'realistic,'" said Alexander, an artist from Volcano. At one point, the chairman told us that the Guild Board had given her the right to select two pieces herself. I think he did choose these, but they aren't labeled as her choices.

There were so many compromises with the show. The three of us were frustrated.

Morinoue, a well-known Kona artist, says: "The jurying process was set up so that we were totally separated most of the time. I wanted more discussion between the jurors. After we finished the first round, the exhibit chairperson said the show looked very abstract. She asked us for 15 more pieces. My impression was that she wanted all of them to be 'realistic. I said that there are a lot of realistic elements in the work chosen, and making a distinction (between realistic and abstract works) is not the jurors' concern anyway. At the end of the day, we found several pieces in the accepted section that we had definitely rejected. We removed them."

The chairman, Suzan Starr, said she feels that the jurying process went well and that no pressure was placed on the jurors. "We (the committee) asked that they (the jurors) select more pieces for the show (after the first 80 were chosen) and could some of them be 'realistic?," she said.

The jurors say that at least six of the works in the show were not selected by any of them.

To the outsider all this might look like a tempest in a teapot. But once the viewer loses faith in the process — whether in art or in baseball — the game is over. The Big Island Art Guild Board of Directors should have given clear guidelines to its committee. The jurors should have seen and agreed to these guidelines in advance. And the jurors should have insisted on being left alone to make their decisions.

Overall, the Hilo exhibit has works with considerable competence, but not enough magic. Even the "big names" look as if they're going through familiar motions — albeit at a high level. For example, the State Foundation on Culture and the



"Pele" by Ricci Racela

Arts gave an acquisition award to Walter Nottingham's "Spirit House" (mixed media wall construction). This excellent piece will be a fine addition to the state's art collection. AND the internationally-known Nottingham needs to make some fresh moves. He's getting dangerously close to formula.

Ira Ono, Pam Barton, Randy Takaki, Sam Rosen, Setsuko Morinoue, Lonny Tomono, among others — get in almost every exhibit they enter. They are fine artists. AND their work in this show is unadventurous, sometimes even boring. They are all far too good just to go through the motions.

On the other hand, there is some fresh-looking work in the show. Xo Openheart's oil painting "Portrait I: Coming Into Her Own" is a blue-moody nude carrying a teddy bear. The work is somewhere between Surrealism and the paintings of Eric Fischl.

Ricci Racela, who won the Best in Show award two years ago, won it again this year for her 30-by-40-foot color photograph "Pele. The State Foundation on Culture and the Arts gave an acquisition award to her second work in this show,

"Somewhere Inside. The SFCA choice is the stronger of the two, both of which are a considerable advance over her glossier work of two years ago.

Russell Sunabe's intriguing oil painting, "Rainforest Fall" is a muted, drippy painting in the manner of Pat Steir. Hans Ladislaus, whose monotype won first prize for printmaking, continues to make good progress towards his own style. Henry Bianchini's handsome wood sculpture, "Rain Woman," won first prize for sculpture.

The Big Island Art Festival is a mixed situation. There was a flawed jurying process — but the Guild states that it will ensure that these problems do not reoccur. Many of the established names need to wake up — but there are other artists showing distinct signs of liveliness. Let's look forward to 1994.

## ■ MARGARET REALICA: "INVASIONS"

Keiko Hatano Gallery.  
Through May 28. Info: 536-4899

Margaret Realica's current exhibit focuses on cell forms and their violation by malignancy — incorporating this theme into her concern with the growing presence of technology in our lives.

A number of squat sculptures, some 8 to 10 inches high, combine chunky porcelain cubes with rusty nails, hand-built porcelain screws and screenprinted porcelain. The most interesting piece is an installation of three small, pillow-like porcelain forms that are pierced and skewered onto tripods. They carry a tightly controlled undercurrent of violence. Realica's recent work is technically highly accomplished, yet visually tentative.



## ART SCENE

by Joan Rose

## OPENINGS

Art shows opening this week: "BILL SPENCE ON THE SANDWICH ISLES," oil on linen, opening today at Jake's, 1110 Bishop St. On view to June 27. Information: 528-1562.

"IMAGE XIX," The Image Foundation's annual exhibition of contemporary photography in Hawaii, opening tomorrow at the Amfac Plaza Exhibition Room. Exhibitors: Jan Becket, Eugene W. Carvalho, Bruce T. Erickson, Mark Hamasaki, Adam K. Jung, Chang-Jin Lee, Brandon Leu, Danna M. Martel, Edwin Rodriguez, Franco Salmoiraghi, Christopher John Stagnaro and Kaina Young. Juror: Duane Preble. On view to June 10. Opening reception from 5-7 p.m. tomorrow. Information: 395-6724.

**WATERCOLORIST DANIEL WANG** will exhibit his watercolors and demonstrate his favorite painting technique, tomorrow-May 31 11 a.m.-4 p.m., in the Polynesian Gifts department at Liberty House-Ala Moana. Information: 488-3511, 521-8322.

"**WATERCOLORS BY JULIE KERS SCHAPER**" on display beginning Saturday at Roy's Restaurant in Hawaii Kai. On view to July 3. Opening reception, June 1, 5-7 p.m.

The complete Artweek listing of exhibitions, events and calls to artists can be found in Friday's Advertiser Living Section. Send listings to Artweek, Advertiser Living Section, PO Box 3110, Honolulu, HI 96802.

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