

ART



COURTESY HONOLULU ACADEMY OF ARTS



COURTESY ELIZABETH CURTIS

ARTafterDARK begins its 2010 season with the usual party fixtures of DJs and cuisine. One of the specialties this month is photographic portraits by Elizabeth Curtis, artist-in-residence at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, like the one at right of Sylvia Rapoza.

BY JOLEEN OSHIRO
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It might seem like an odd fit at first. Victorian portraiture as part of the lineup at "Mad for Modern," the inaugural ARTafterDARK for 2010.

The Honolulu Academy of Arts' monthly party is themed; this time it's built around the museum's big Spring show, "From Whistler to Warhol: Modernism on Paper," and the event's other entertainment easily fits the bill: a live video installation by Joseph Pa'ahana, figure sketches by artist Lauren Roth, DJ Nicky Savage and a performance by local indie rockers Clones of the Queen. Town and Downtown restaurants will provide food and drinks.

So how and where does artist-in-residence Elizabeth Curtis' photographic project fit in?

"The idea of portraits has changed over the years," said

academy staffer Aaron Padilla, explaining how in the recent past the medium seemed outmoded. "But today, social networking sites are relying on portraits again."

Curtis will shoot portraits of attendees in the Banyan Courtyard; interested groups of up to five people can sign up at the museum entrance.

As the old adage goes, "The more things change, the more they stay the same."

BUT CURTIS didn't necessarily approach the topic from that angle.

Her intention with the project, titled "The Visitors," is to explore the conventions of portraiture and how they influence the way we look at ourselves.

"Portraits have a big effect on how people view their own identity," she said. "There are a lot of images on television and in magazines that (touch upon themes of) preferred body type, or clothing,

or attitudes.

"I want people to think about how they view themselves."

Curtis referenced Victorian portraiture with her props — velvet plush chairs and a couch, Oriental rugs and curtains — and "prescribed" poses, which call for straight faces.

It wasn't that people were more somber in Victorian times; rather, cameras were such that "if the face moved, the photo was blurry," Curtis said.

When the Kodak Brownie camera was invented, it led to the "Kodak smile."

"Now we think it's standard to smile for the camera. Popular culture has adopted this," she said.

Curtis has printed and hung a collection of her portraits at the academy, where they serve as part of the artwork on display. She also posts pictures on her Web site, www.elizabethcurtis.com, where she's created a blog for comments.

This is perhaps the closest modern version of the function photographs played in the social fiber of the Victorian era.

"It was usual for the portraits to be put in an album, and it was a form of entertainment to show visitors who was in there," she said. "Sometimes the visitors would write something inside, like a poem, as a way of communication."

Moreover, the images served as a way of connecting people, long before the advent of dating sites.

"That's how people got married," said Curtis. "A man would see a face he found attractive and pursue the woman."

SO FAR, Curtis has taken pictures of more than 40 groups of people at the academy.

"It's been busy so it's good," she said. "Some people came prepared with different outfits and had poses in mind."

Padilla, who oversees the artist-in-

residence program, said Curtis' project has been "a tremendous success — it's surpassing expectations."

The academy instituted four six-week residencies (Curtis' is the third) since being awarded a grant from the Arthur and Mae Orvis Foundation, and it requires the young artists to incorporate the community into their projects. As such, Curtis has worked with visitors to the museum every weekend this month, and she'll continue through Sunday when her residency concludes.

Padilla predicted that ARTafterDARK will almost certainly be the pinnacle of her experience with the public, now that the portrait is on everyone's radar again.

"I think it's going to be crazy," Padilla said. "It'll be interesting to put her project into that kind of atmosphere. It's a 'see and be seen' kind of crowd."

"Very interesting work will be done (this) night."

AFTER



COURTESY ELIZABETH CURTIS

Curtis can shoot up to five people at once for her project, which will continue at the academy through Sunday. The folks in this shot, taken at the museum's Asian garden, are, from left: Kang Minjung, Jan Hyo-jin, Kang Jee-hee, Lee Seung-jin and Jung Ji-young.

'ARTAFTERDARK'

- >> **Where:** Honolulu Academy of Arts, 900 S. Beretania St.
- >> **When:** 6 to 9 p.m. today
- >> **Cost:** \$10 (free for academy members)
- >> **Info:** 532-8724 or www.artafterdark.org

2010 Schedule:

- >> **March 26:** "Noruz," a celebration of Persian New Year
- >> **April 30:** "Camelot," a tribute to the iconic Kennedy Cape Cod lifestyle of yore.
- >> **May 28:** "About Face, Forward March!" — a shout-out to Memorial Day, with an ambience that evokes the Andrews Sisters and "From Here to Eternity"
- >> **June 25:** "Bali High," spotlighting the exhibition "Four Thousand Years of Southeast Asian Art"
- >> **July 30:** "Plaza del Toro," a Spanish night that pays tribute to Pamplona's running of the bulls, with focus on Sanit Khewhok's Catherine E.B. Cox Award exhibit.
- >> **Aug. 27:** "The Wonder Years," art through the eyes of a child.
- >> **Sept. 24:** "Silk Road," featuring Chinese snuff bottles and a fashion show of Tori Richard's new line.
- >> **Oct. 29:** "Seven Deadly Sins," a spotlight on Halloween

DAIRK

returns

The Honolulu Academy of Arts' monthly party kicks off 2010 with a look at modernism

PHOTO: ELIZABETH CURTIS

ART AFTER DARK: A LOOK FOR COMMENTS

BY JEFFREY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFFREY