

FRONT PAGE

NEWS

ENTERTAINMENT

FOOD

CLASSIFIEDS

ADVERTISE

CONTACT US

## ENTERTAINMENT

### ART

# Class creations

*Diverse University of Hawai'i graduate exhibit gives a glimpse of what's to come in local art*

MARCIA MORSE

JAN 27, 2010 |



"Madonna Della Sedia de Plastica," oil on linen, by Jessica Beck

IMAGE: PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII ART GALLERY

Through  
Fri  
Feb  
5

**32ND ANNUAL  
GRADUATE STUDENT  
EXHIBITION / You**

wouldn't necessarily know, walking into the University of Hawai'i's Art Gallery, that this is an exhibition of student work. That is both an advantage and a liability for the 32nd Annual Graduate Student Exhibition. On the one hand, the work, in

**HUNGRY EAR RECORDS**

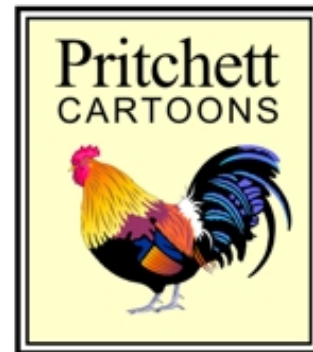
**We Buy & Sell  
used Records,  
CD's & DVD's**

**418 Kuulei Road - 262-2175**

**Advertise with  
the Weekly**



**Weekly Cartoons  
brought to you  
by:**





general, exhibits a high level of coherence, both technical and conceptual. On the other hand, it also manifests a kind of tidiness, even conservatism—a very professional dress-rehearsal. We might think of graduate school as a time to explore, to be a bit radical and unafraid to make mistakes; but this exhibition is sort of the equivalent of “shovel-ready” for artists contemplating entry into the art world.

That said, this is definitely an exhibition to see, for what you see here today will be more visible tomorrow, as these artists move from the enclaves of academia to the open arenas of the local art scene and beyond. Seen in the context of past graduate exhibitions, as well as those of the faculty who are their mentors, this exhibition also reveals some interesting trends in terms of both ideas and materials.

First, the strategy of the one vs. the many—do you make a singular, bold statement or develop a critical mass through the accumulation of small elements? A large-scale painting like Emily McIlroy’s semi-surreal landscape “The Vanishing” is a good example of the former, with its foreground screen of foliage providing a point of entry to a suggestive environment of shoreline and hills beyond. Jason Lowe’s mixed-media sculpture “At a Low Ebb” also cultivates a sense of vicarious engagement—could one possibly sit on that impossible chair, elevated on a mud-encased platform, ready to be borne aloft by unseen bearers?

Roxanne Chasle’s “Afterswarm”—a suspended cloud of screenprinted larger-than-life bees—and Chad Steve’s “XXX”—a cluster of headless ceramic fowl—take the latter path, depending on aggregation to create a whole that is larger than the sum of its parts. The suspended elements in Shannon Leitch’s “Keepsakes”—like a field of asteroids—could potentially be expanded into a larger array, although the connection to the series of miniature prints with which they are combined seems a bit tenuous.

Similarly, the gathering of photographic images in Chen Carmi’s “Austerlitz — Chapter 1,” though tied to a compelling central text, does not

fully achieve coherence.

Second, the strategy of minimal vs. maximal—something as lean as Satoshi Takahira's subtly colored woodblock prints "space in space," that seem to come alive the longer one ponders them, provide a quiet counterpoint to works like J. Robert Reed's "Amber Alert: Who Stole The Baby Jesus From The Manger?" an over-the-top mixed-media riff on the dark side of fairy tales and the childhood experiences they feed.

Third, the engagement of bounded space—most evident in installation works that both use space, but also create a kind of psychic space within which the viewer can reside. Alyssa Olivier's "Breathing Room" makes use of a kind of gentle pun to create an actual "room"—defined by floating panels of gauze-like material—within which the sound of human breaths also seem to float down and envelope the viewer; as they are heard through the gallery, they engage that larger space as well.

Boz Schurr's "Exist in Abundance," which also uses the strategy of aggregation with small teardrop-shaped elements of printed paper, claims an alcove of space to orchestrate a series of complex transitions from black/white to color, moving off the canvas onto the wall.

Kumi Nakajima's "Meat/Meet" joins the seemingly disparate elements of glass, paper and light in a response to some of the ceremonial motifs of the Japanese wedding ceremony. While the lighting is not fully effective in creating the shadow-play on the walls that define the installation space, Nakajima's sense of detail—the elongated tubular shapes of glass, some encased in sheaths of white paper, suspended from hooks attached to a central chain—creates a potent metaphor for the intimate bonds of matrimony.

Fourth—and the debate goes on—is gender visible in artmaking? This is definitely an exhibition in which the women rock, and the women rule. Some, like Elizabeth R. Curtis in a series of photographic prints, do it with quiet observance of the magic of the everyday. Some, like Jessica Beck in

her oil painting “Madonna Della Sedia de Plastica,” take a more ironic view in interrogating the conventions of representation—a timely reminder that being a student of art, as of all things, means learning how to ask the right questions.

**32ND ANNUAL GRADUATE STUDENT EXHIBITION, THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII ART GALLERY, FREE, MON–FRI 10:30AM–5PM, SUN NOON–5PM, THROUGH FEB. 5.**

All original content copyright 2009 Honolulu Weekly.