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September 13th, 2011

Perpetual Reflections: Upcoming Exhibition at GOHA

A Gallery of Hawai'i Artists group show examining the theme of "identity" opens this Friday, September 16. Images by John Hook.



Kirsten Rae Simonsen, one of the eight exhibiting artists at GOHA's upcoming group show *Perpetual Reflections*.

Despite the jarringly skimpy state of Hawai'i's economy, where art is booming but funds aren't necessarily, there are a few brave artists who are comfortable steering away from the whole and making work in any space available.

Opening September 16 is "Perpetual Reflections," a group art show featuring Vincent Ricafort, Oliver Coloma, Kirsten Rae Simonsen, Boz Schurr, Abigail Romanchak, Kamea Hadar, John Hook and Elizabeth C. Curtis at The Gallery of Hawaii Artists (GOHA) in the Waikiki Landmark building.

The theme is "Identity." The space is ... an office? "Outside of a few established institutions, there exists very few exhibition alternatives, namely independent and under-the-radar entities dedicated to the young up-and-comings that are so crucial to cultivating a sustainable art scene here in Hawai'i," says 22-year-old GOHA director Carolyn Mirante, who is also double majoring in art history and philosophy at the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa.



Above: Elizabeth C. Curtis holds a photograph from Perpetual Reflections. Below: Oliver Coloma, a tattooist and teacher featured in the show.



After assembling a shared office space for her for-profit business at 19 (a co-op space that provides an office for businesses that don't want to involve themselves in the overhead costs of a physical space), Mirante found herself interested in dual use. She wanted to show art. She wanted to curate.

Mirante is an investigator. When questioned, she can recall a large slew of viewing experiences in different kinds of spaces throughout O'ahu, everywhere from coffee shops to tattoo parlors, museums to lawns. She refers to it as "research." For Mirante, the investment of time, energy and resources seems obvious.

"The current group of people around art in Hawai'i is amazing," she says. "We're so lucky to be involved in art during a time when so many people are committed to it. ... It's really a privilege to engage so many different types of personalities and experiences."

For her part, artist Boz Schurr is aiming to assemble the self in this new environment, not intending to assume that one exists in a static sense. Mirante met Schurr at Schurr's exhibition for her Master of Fine Arts thesis, titled "100,000 Sidekicks," which featured 100,000 portraits of Schurr's face reading journal entries in a timelapse video.

"In my current body of work I use the visible color spectrum as a means of expressing the wide range of possible inner personalities," says Schurr. "I believe this arbitrary classification – yellow, orange, blue, etc. – is very similar to how we catalog personalities and personality disorders. While the spectrum is one band of ever-shifting, ever-transitioning hues, so are our personal multiples continuous and overlapping, yet discreet."

Kirsten Rae Simonsen, who studied at the University of Chicago after spending time with traditional painting and drawing in Bali, Indonesia, uses phrases from her past (things written in yearbooks or vapid proclamations through social media) to amplify the gravity of an experience that speaks to American affluence and the vapid interjections that were casually passed between young people in an attempt to look assimilated to the then-prevalent style of Americans.

"The hollow commands 'Party On' and 'Stay Sweet' hang pathetically, as if they have become somewhat anemic over time," says Simonsen. "A wrong move, an offhand comment that gets misinterpreted, and you're out. Social networks create cliques and alliances sometimes similar to those in high school.

"My work reflects my mixed feelings about my own Midwestern suburban past," Simonsen goes on. "Most of the life-changing experiences I had growing up in the suburbs occurred in a cul-de-sac, at the Denny's, in the shopping mall, at suburban birthday parties, or in cars."

As much as Simonsen's ideas of identity are culled from the everyday, so too are Elizabeth C. Curtis' images. Curtis, who is in the MFA program for photography at UH Mānoa, tries to encapsulate the performative quality of an individual's identity in different environments, showing that awkwardness can prevail despite contextual comfort.

"The widespread use of photography in the last century has led to an anxiety surrounding the documentation and preservation of life's fleeting moments and has served as a catalyst for the cultural phenomenons of visual identity and image construction and comparison," says Curtis. "Creating memories, and thereby identities, whether by doing or by documenting, is an intrinsic part of contemporary life."

Perpetual Reflections runs from September 19 to December 26. For more info visit galleryofhawaiiartists.com. (<http://galleryofhawaiiartists.com/>)

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