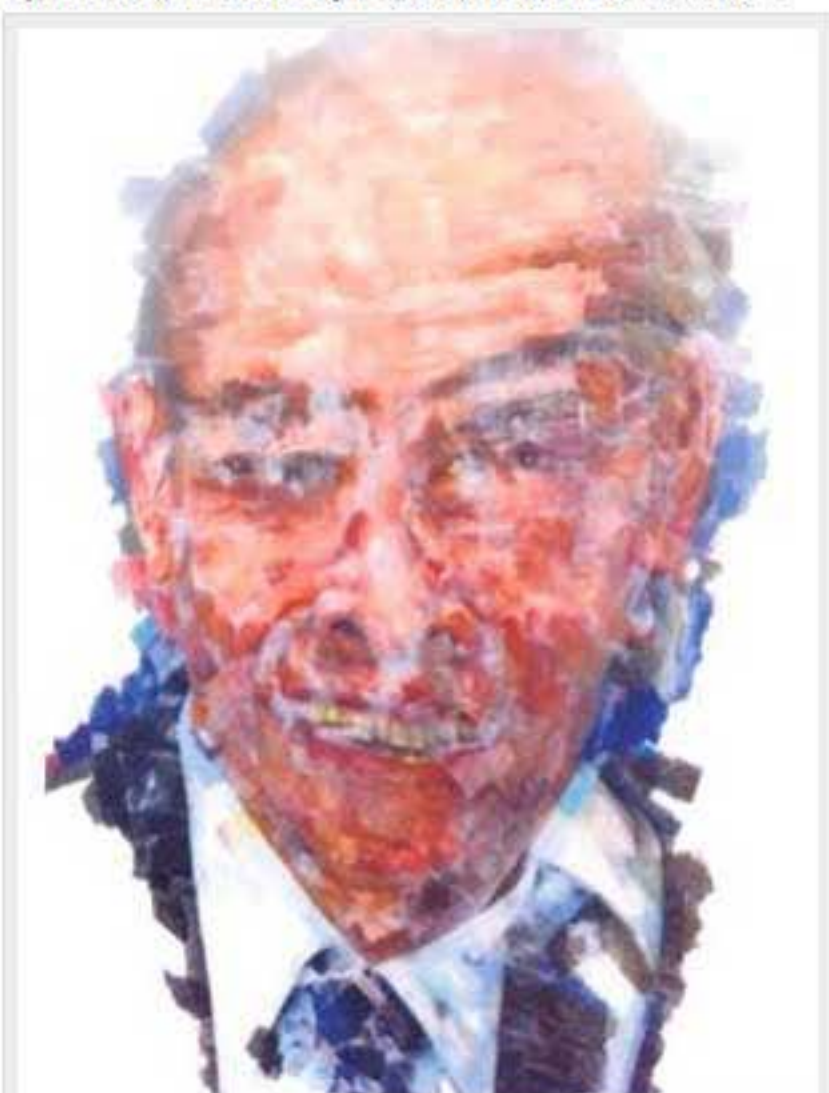


APECalypse Now?

Artists explore the effects of free trade on the land and the disenfranchised

By David A.M. Goldberg / Special to the Star-Advertiser



COURTESY DAVID A.M. GOLDBERG

Vince Hazen's "APEC Heads of State" is a portrait of all the APEC heads of state made from bits and pieces of individual portraits.



COURTESY DAVID A.M. GOLDBERG

"APEC SUCKS I" by Eating In Public.

lime-green suit printed with a repeating pattern of handshakes and blooming dollar-flowers. The construction worker in the right panel exudes confidence in a stylized safety orange jumpsuit with reflective stripes. In between the two shake hands to seal the unspecified deal for the coastline behind them.

The "Passionista! Undressing Globalization and Militarism" fashion show also address the artistic and critical role that clothing can play. APEC has a tradition of chief representatives posing for a "class photo" dressed in the traditional garb of the host economy. "Passionista!" inverts this performance by designing clothes assembled from the lives of the women who work the low-wage outsourced jobs that often emerge from free-trade agreements.

Hybrids of traditional garments from countries such as Peru, Mexico, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines invite us to unite the stories of many different women in one narrative of resistance to exploitation.

Representing Papua New Guinea, the least developed of the "member economies," painter Jeffrey Feeger addresses his country's informal economic practices.

"My Lovely Market" is a deceptively accessible portrait of a woman selling her meager stock of fruit, cigarettes and vegetables. Feeger explains that his country's government is ill equipped to deal with the multinational powers seeking access to valuable forest products, minerals and labor. By painting these women, using an innovative technique that favors the use of hands and fingers over brushes, Feeger documents a culture at the edge of trade liberalization.

We might benefit from taking a similar look at ourselves. Now that APEC is over, we might ask, What happened?

Probably before the "new nonlethal weaponry smell" in the Honolulu Police Department's updated arsenal could fade, Kollin Elderts was shot and killed by U.S. diplomatic security agent Christopher Deedy. The Elderts family suffered more than we who merely coped with desert camouflage Hummers blocking streets and onramps, and the local business owners who languished in secured zones.

President Barack Obama and hundreds of business representatives, foreign dignitaries and heads of state came and went like glass floats. The visitor industry is going over the receipts, minus some of the general excise and hotel room taxes.

The Nov. 9 edition of the Honolulu Star-Advertiser included a four-page "everything you need to know about APEC" spread: an essay, crib notes and info-graphics backed by a digital photo collage by Bryant Fukutomi. Glass fishing floats of various sizes, each one representing a "member economy," were arranged on a local beach, with the word "APEC" written in the sand.

This arrangement of baubles at the water line is a perfect visual symbol for the arrival and departure of APEC's representative groups. But the artists, activists, community members and scholars who collaborated on the "alterna-APEC" show at The ARTS at Marks Garage present a fundamentally different perspective on what APEC meant to Hawaii and the world.

The show runs noon to 4 p.m. today during special Sunday hours (the gallery is usually closed on Sundays).

Co-curated by Noelle Kahanu, Jaimey Hamilton and Rich Richardson, the exhibition is united by a strategy of presenting bold, accessible images and ideas through painting, sculpture, photography and graphic design. The works challenge the idea that APEC's goal of reducing barriers to the circulation of money, labor and resources (together called "trade liberalization") is an inherently good thing.

Keiko Bonk replaces the prayers in flags from the Tibetan and Nepalese tradition with QR codes — those patterns of dots or squares that smartphones can decode. Each is accompanied by a simple assertion, such as "corporations are not people" and "economy is not sacred." Because QR codes are part of corporate advertising tactics that link to websites, Bonk is playing with the idea that the forces we engage and worship are economic entities, not spiritual ones.

Eating in Public also uses recognizable elements to inform its work. The collective's public workshops encouraged participants to print anti-APEC slogans on old T-shirts. Two are on display here. One is a tie-dye pattern that evokes Mickey Mouse (and thereby Disney's Aulani resort) with the equation "APEC = land-theft" printed over it. The other features a blond female lifeguard obstructed by the words "welcome APEC welcome PILAU." If these sentiments seem hostile or surprising, Eating in Public's free "SAME ENEMY SAME FIGHT" booklet offers visitors a broader context than the general media.

The AGGROculture Collective relates APEC's pursuit of trade liberalization to local struggles against the profit-driven and often foreign-based use of land and resources. "The Rat and the Octopus" is a triptych of photographs featuring two allegorical characters, the land speculator and the construction worker, and their magic economic ritual that turns land into a commodity.

In the left panel, the phone-toting speculator wears a

'ALTERNA-APEC'

- » On exhibit: Noon to 4 p.m. today
- » Where: The ARTS at Marks Garage, 1159 Nuuanu Ave.
- » Call: 521-2903 or visit www.artsatmarks.com