

# This IS Hawai`i PROGRAMS:

## THURSDAY, MAY 19, 2011

1-2 pm, NMAI's Sealaska Gallery, 2nd level  
**GALLERY TALK** with exhibition curator Isabella E. Hughes

## FRIDAY, MAY 20, 2011

1-2 pm, NMAI's Sealaska Gallery, 2nd level  
**GALLERY TALK** with artist Carl F. K. Pao in his role as "director" of the *Post-Historic Museum of the Possible Aboriginal Hawaiian*

## FRIDAY, MAY 20, 2011

4:00 – 5:30pm, NMAI Room 4018-19, 4th level  
**WHERE ART WORLDS MEET:**  
**A Conversation with Indigenous Hawaiian, Native American, and Aboriginal Contemporary Artists**  
Part of Transformer's ongoing FRAMEWORK Panel Series, creating an oral field guide on best practices within the contemporary arts.

A collaboration between Transformer and NMAI, this panel explores the dynamic growth of the global indigenous art scene over the past several years and how this rapid evolution has affected indigenous artists from different regions and cultural backgrounds. Moderated by NMAI Associate Curator Kathleen Ash-Milby with artists Puni Kukahiko, Carl F. K. Pao, Gina Matchitt (Maori), and Alan Michelson (Mohawk), artist in the current NMAI *Vantage Point* exhibition.

A light reception will immediately follow the FRAMEWORK panel on the 2nd floor overlook located outside of the gallery featuring *This IS Hawai`i*. To attend the panel and reception, RSVP by May 13 to [nmai+svp@si.edu](mailto:nmai+svp@si.edu) or 202.633.7020.

## SATURDAY, MAY 21, 2011

**OPENING DAY** of *This IS Hawai`i* at Transformer 1-7pm  
Open house/opening day of *This IS Hawai`i* at Transformer featuring artist talks with Maika`i Tubbs and Puni Kukahiko (2 - 3:30pm).

## SUNDAY, MAY 22, 2011

11:30am – 12:15pm, NMAI Welcome Plaza  
**ARTIST TALK** with Puni Kukahiko in the outdoor landscape with her *This IS Hawai`i* sculpture.

## SUNDAY, MAY 22, 2011

1:30 - 4:00pm, NMAI Rotunda  
**ARTIST TALK** with Puni Kukahiko on Hawaiian plants and the environment. Audiences are invited to ask Puni questions about the native Hawaiian plants on display and about her work with Ho`oulu `āina Nature Preserve.



Smithsonian  
National Museum of the American Indian

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Transformer is a Washington, DC-based 501 (c) 3 artist-centered non-profit visual arts organization, providing a consistent, supportive, and professional platform for emerging artists to explore and present experimental artistic concepts, build audiences for their work, and advance their careers. A critic's and advocate for contemporary artists and emergent expression in the visual arts, Transformer connects and promotes emerging visual artists within regional, national and international contexts through exhibition and program partnerships with artists, curators, commercial galleries, museums and other cultural institutions. Transformer's 2010/2011 exhibition series and programs are supported by: The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Cass/Lucas Foundation, The DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities/NEA, The Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, Hawai'i Community Foundation and The Visionary Friends of Transformer.

# This IS Hawai`i

## EXHIBITION COLLABORATION BETWEEN

Transformer and the  
Smithsonian National Museum of  
the American Indian (NMAI)



MAY 19 – JULY 4, 2011 at NMAI

MAY 21 – JUNE 25, 2011 at Transformer



Smithsonian  
National Museum of the American Indian

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# This IS Hawai`i

Over the past century, Hawai`i – as a place and people – has been aggressively marketed by Hollywood, the tourism industry, and commercial retailers as an eternally friendly and magical paradise. This saccharine-sweet notion of Hawai`i and Kanaka Maoli (indigenous Hawaiian) culture is often far from reality.

*This IS Hawai`i* challenges outdated notions of Hawaiian culture and people through engaging visual artworks by **Solomon Enos**, **Puni Kukahiko**, **Carl F. K. Pao** and **Maika`i Tubbs** - some of the most dynamic contemporary Kanaka Maoli artists working today.

Actively exploring their indigenous Hawaiian heritage and history and its intersection with contemporary society, the artists in *This IS Hawai`i* explore – through site-specific installation, artistic actions, and public programs – what it means to be “Hawaiian” in the 21st century. Developed by independent curator Isabella E. Hughes with input from cultural advisor Marques Hanalei Marzan and Transformer's Executive & Artistic Director Victoria Reis, the design and scope of this exhibition aim to challenge audiences to rethink their own understanding of Hawaiian culture and its Native people within creative formats.

Designed as a two-site exhibition, the work of **Solomon Enos** and **Carl F. K. Pao** will be presented at the NMAI's Sealaska Gallery, and the work of **Maika`i Tubbs** will be presented at Transformer, with artist **Puni Kukahiko's** site-specific outdoor sculptures presented at both sites, tying the whole exhibition together.

*This IS Hawai`i* marks the participating artists' first exhibition in the nation's capital, and an exciting moment in contemporary art practice to build an understanding of cultural production within Hawaiian indigenous culture. The exhibition will be presented in tandem with NMAI's annual Hawai`i Festival.

Highlighting both Transformer's and the NMAI's commitment to promoting the expression of contemporary art, this presentation of *This IS Hawai`i* reflects an exhibition partnership that is becoming a model for collaboration among cultural organizations across the U.S. and internationally. Seeking to grow audiences for emergent visual expression, as well as the work of contemporary indigenous artists, *This IS Hawai`i* allows both organizations to expand their missions while building synergy within the cultural infrastructure of D.C. and the larger arts community.

## Solomon Enos

Solomon Eno's *Polyfantastica*, presented at the NMAI as part of *This IS Hawai'i*, is an ongoing, ever-growing multimedia experience that encompasses 40,000 years of fictional human evolution based on Hawaiian history and folkloric traditions. Four 10,000-year epochs show humanity moving from war to a time when war



becomes obsolete then to a time when humanity weaves its destiny with the fate of the galaxy to a reuniting of life across the Multiverse. With the Kanaka Maoli serving as mediators and navigators, they help unite humanity. Vivid and fantastical imagery and accompanying text transports visitors into another world, with planets as islands, dream voyaging and shape-shifting as a form of adaptation. *Polyfantastica* explores these extrapolations, which are based within Polynesian and many other indigenous and aboriginal cultures, through drawings, action figures, a graphic novel, and an interactive website launching with the opening of *This IS Hawai'i*.

Solomon Enos is an award-winning, self-taught artist, illustrator, and cultural activist who has been creating art for almost two decades. Enos was born and raised on the Wai'anae coast of O'ahu, and his work is deeply connected to his Kanaka Maoli heritage. The inspiration for his work comes from working with youth in art and agriculture, and having grown up helping his father, Eric Enos, at the Cultural Learning Center at Ka'ala, in the back of Wai'anae Valley. Enos also has a love of science and science fiction and is greatly influenced by the works of Carl Sagan, Stephen Hawking, Phillip K. Dick, and Frank Herbert. His art has been widely exhibited locally and internationally, including at the United Nations, New York; the 6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Brisbane, Australia; the Hawai'i State Art Museum and the Bishop Museum in Honolulu.

## Puni Kukahiko

With *Coming home to our most indigenous selves*, Kukahiko has created a two-part installation, exhibited both at Transformer and in the outdoor landscape at the NMAI. Highlighting an environmental concern — the relationship between native and invasive species, which is extremely relevant to Hawai'i today — Kukahiko reflects on native and invasive species through the very materials that she used in creating this piece. For the NMAI installation, Kukahiko produced a sculpture carved of native kamani wood, while at Transformer she used wood from the highly invasive albizia tree that she is removing and repurposing in Kalihi Valley, O'ahu. The shape of her carvings at both sites reference *kalo* (taro), the plant body-form of Haloa, the cosmological elder brother of the Kanaka Maoli. The staple of the native diet, kalo has great significance as the center of culture and society, both historically and in the 21st century.

Born and raised on O'ahu, Puni Kukahiko is a graduate of the Kamehameha Schools and earned both her BFA and MFA from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Working in a variety of media, Kukahiko's prolific sculptural works often criticize the concept of the "acquisition of a paradise moment" — a product of tourism-industry marketing — and the incessant commercialization of Hawai'i. Other pervading themes in her work are her ancestry and heritage as an indigenous woman of Hawai'i, love, and the relationship between herself and the `āina (land). Residing deep in the back of O'ahu's Kalihi Valley, Kukahiko and her family are caretakers of Ho'oulu `Āina Nature Preserve, where they live malama `āina (taking care of the land) by supporting educational initiatives, promoting indigenous food and plant production, removing and repurposing invasive species, and growing Hawaiian medicinal herbs and plants. Kukahiko's work has been featured at the Anchorage Museum of Art & History, the Hawai'i State Art Museum and the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, the Museum of Arts and Design, and the United Nations, New York.



## Carl F. K. Pao

Carl F.K. Pao's fictional *Post-Historic Museum of the Possible Aboriginal Hawaiian* (PHMPAH) comes to life in the Sealaska Gallery at the NMAI in its largest incarnation to date, filled with nearly two dozen artifacts. PHMPAH directly questions the status of



and relationship between indigenous Hawaiians, museums, modes of display and the field of archeology. Working also in the mode of institutional critique, Pao will take on the guise of the PHMPAH Director at a variety of events associated with the opening. Cleverly using wit and satire to raise awareness of the "Lack of Recognition Virus," Pao contends that this virus could drive aboriginal Hawaiians (aboriginal Hawaiians predate Western contact) into extinction if they are not recognized. Pao transforms common, everyday objects into genuine artifacts of the Possible Aboriginal Hawaiian, while also highlighting larger concerns within international indigenous communities in regards to their status of recognition and modes of display within institutional and governmental contexts.

Born in Kailua, O'ahu, in 1971, Carl F. K. Pao graduated from the Kamehameha Schools in 1989. He earned his BFA at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in 1994 with an emphasis in ceramics, followed by an MFA from Elam School of Fine Arts at the University of Auckland, Aotearoa (New Zealand), in 1999. He returned to Hawai'i in 2000 to take his position as art teacher at the Kamehameha Schools — Kapālama High School Visual Arts Department. Widely exhibited throughout the islands, Pao is also the arts editor for the *Contemporary Pacific*, a journal dedicated to a wide range of disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, published with the aim of providing comprehensive coverage of contemporary developments in the Pacific Islands. Pao has exhibited both locally and abroad, including at the Bishop Museum, Honolulu; United Nations, New York; and the Hawai'i State Art Museum.

## Maika'i Tubbs

In Tubbs' *A Life of Its Own*, presented at Transformer, the artist masterfully transforms plastic spoons, forks, knives and plates into intricate, delicate sculptures in the form of the wood rose vine, a highly invasive, decorative plant species found on four of the Hawaiian Islands. When dried, the seedpods resemble wooden roses, hence the name. Growing in abundance at the bottom of Tubbs' apartment complex in Honolulu, he used to sketch the wood rose when in need of getting over an artist block. In this piece, Tubbs astutely draws a correlation between the invasive species problem that afflicts Hawai'i through the shape of his sculptures, while the medium comments on both the environmental impact of plastic and its invasive omnipotence in our everyday lives.

Maika'i Tubbs is a multi-media artist from Honolulu, O'ahu. A 1996 graduate of Kamehameha Schools, he received his BFA in painting from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in 2002. Though drawing and painting were his first loves, in recent years Tubbs has developed a newfound interest in repurposing everyday objects to expose their undiscovered potential. His penchant for collecting obsolete items has helped him focus on making the irrelevant relevant by telling new stories with objects rich in their own histories, often reflective of Tubbs' Kanaka Maoli heritage. From toy soldiers and syringes to packing tape and glue, Tubbs continues to find new ways to explore different materials by breaking down their original intent. Widely exhibited in Hawai'i, Tubbs has been shown at the Bishop Museum, at the Maui Arts and Cultural Center, and The Contemporary Museum Biennial of Hawai'i Artists IX. He has also exhibited at the United Nations, New York.



### Image Credits (this page from left to right):

Solomon Enos, Detail of *Pana ewa from the Hi'ikaikapoliopole epic*, 2009, epoxy and clay  
Puni Kukahiko at work on *Coming home to our most indigenous selves*, 2011, Kamani wood  
Carl F. K. Pao, *possible personal ceremonial god object or early developmental signs of cellular communication technologies, discovered* 2010, plastic, metal  
Maika'i Tubbs, Detail of *A Life of Its Own*, 2010, plastic forks, spoons, knives, plates

### Image Credit (front cover):

Solomon Enos, *Polyfantastica: The 'Ora'Ino*, 2008, acrylic on Bristol board