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Transformer is proud to co-present *This IS Hawai`i* with the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI)

This IS Hawai`i
May 19 – July 4, 2011 at NMAI
May 21 – June 25, 2011 at Transformer



Transformer, in collaboration with the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), presents *This IS Hawai`i* – a comprehensive two-site exhibition of new and experimental art works by a diverse group of Hawai`i's leading contemporary artists, **Solomon Enos**, **Puni Kukahiko**, **Carl F. K. Pao** and **Maika'i Tubbs**. *This IS Hawai`i* marks the participating artists' first exhibition in the nation's capital.

Actively exploring their indigenous Hawaiian history and its intersection with contemporary society, *This IS Hawai`i* artists explore – through site-specific installation, artistic actions, and public programs – what it means to be "Hawaiian" in the 21st century. Designed as a two-site exhibition, the work of Solomon Enos and Carl F. K. Pao are presented at the NMAI's Sealaska Gallery, and the work of Maika`i Tubbs is presented at Transformer, with artist Puni Kukahiko's site-specific outdoor sculptures presented at both locations, tying the whole exhibition together. The exhibition will be presented in tandem with NMAI's annual Hawai`i Festival.

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 by highlighting some of Hawai`i's most dynamic contemporary artistic talents. 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.

Interested in generating dialogue with a broad spectrum of audience in Washington, DC – both local communities and tourists – Transformer and NMAI will present a variety of public programs and events to better allow for diverse audience participation and discussion on the multifaceted topic of contemporary indigenous Hawaiian identity and culture. All programs are free; some reservations are required.

EXHIBITION HOURS – TRANSFORMER: Wednesday – Saturday, 1 – 7 pm & by appointment.

EXHIBITION HOURS – NMAI: Daily, 10 am – 5:30 pm.

Image: Solomon Enos, detail of *Kuu era: Polyfantastica the beginning*, gouche on bristol board, 2008.

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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-rsvp@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

Talk with artist 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 `Aina Nature Preserve.

ARTIST & CURATOR BIOGRAPHIES:

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 is widely exhibited locally and internationally, including the United Nations, New York; the 6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Brisbane, Australia; and the Hawai`i State Art Museum and the Bishop Museum in Honolulu.

Born and raised on O`ahu, **Puni Kuahiko** 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

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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 the 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 has been featured at the Anchorage Museum of Art & History, the Hawai`i State Art Museum and the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, and the Museum of Arts and Design and the United Nations in New York City.

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 – Kapalama 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 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 Bishop Museum, at the Maui Arts and Cultural Center, and The Contemporary Museum Biennial of Hawai`i of Artists IX. He has also exhibited at the United Nations, New York.

Isabella E. Hughes is a curator, critic, art and cultural projects consultant with international experience in both the commercial and nonprofit art world. Hughes specializes in contemporary art with an academic interest in the rise of transculturalism and art from the Middle East, Asia, the Pacific and their diasporas. Hughes has a Bachelor of Arts in Art History from Boston University and a Master of Arts in Museum Studies from Johns Hopkins University.



Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian

The National Museum of the American Indian is committed to advancing knowledge and understanding of the Native cultures of the Western Hemisphere, past, present and future, through partnership with Native people and others. The museum works to support the continuance of culture, traditional values, and transitions in contemporary Native life. The museum's contemporary arts initiative supports a wide range of exhibitions and activities with the goal of increasing the appreciation of contemporary Native American arts. www.nmai.si.edu.

t r a n s f o r m e r 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 catalyst 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 programs 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 CrossCurrents Foundation, The DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities/NEA, The Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts' Access to Artistic Excellence award, Hawai'i Community Foundation, and The Visionary Friends of Transformer.