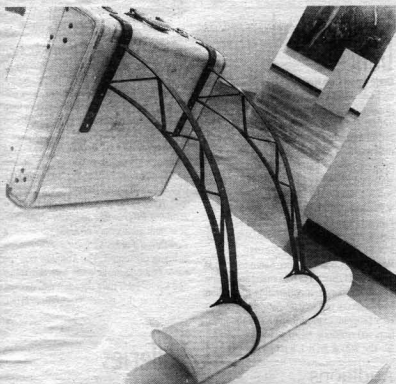


Artists of Hawai'i '97 is equal parts haute salon and dumpster dive.

# Dump Run



Wayne Zebzda, "Outrigger Suitcase."

## MARCIA MORSE

**C**ast bronze and carved salt. Stoneware, wire, bullet casings and bolts. Neon, plastic, coral, marbles and modeling paste. Bicycle and typewriter. Suitcase and fiberglass tubing. Tin tub and video. What's going on here?

If you think oil paint and carved marble are the right stuff of art, prepare to have your consciousness raised. If, on the other hand, you are thinking "been there, done that" at the prospect of yet another *Artists of Hawai'i* exhibition, prepare to look again.

What makes this year's exhibition different — and better? Serendipity, perhaps. Invited artists Gaye Chan and Roy Venters, who raise the aesthetics of opportunism to new heights, help to set the tone and forge a stronger link to the juried exhibition.

Another reason for this year's qual-

paintings into "Isle of the Living: Universal Sense of Place" — a sculptural construction that conjures up a wry and ominous pre-millennial vision. The black-painted bicycle and typewriter (mounted on the handlebars) comprise "Amnesia," the result of a collaboration between M. Suzuki and L.T. Takayesu. These and other strong works by artists including Ka'ili Chun, Jianjie Ji, Linda Kane, Nicole W. K. Seu, Pat Wood and **Wayne Zebzda** establish one of the strongest currents of the exhibition. The distinct but allied strategies of assemblage, collage and mixed-media result in combinations of objects and/or materials in which meaning (or meanings) might emerge not simply from the sum of otherwise disparate parts, but from their mutual chemistry, their silent conversations, the spaces between.

Another significant strategy visible in this exhibition is that of the sectioned or the multiplied work. The rationale for a dintvch format is evi-

If reading the preponderance of constructed works provides a good conceptual workout, so will the substantial number of works situated clearly in the traditions of expressive or geometric abstraction. How different the linear order of Akira Iha's "Open" works, Paul Levitt's loopy arabesques, Timothy P. Ojile's pictographic implications of text! How differently crossed lines are read in Alan Leitner's elemental "Circle with Cross" and William Bartlett's darkly glowing "Stations of the Cross-I"! Here too, the astute installation is critical: the exploration of nature and landscape, evident in works by Kimberly M. Chai, Takeo Miji, Linda Kane, Karen Lucas, Aiko Kameya and Noreen Naughton, is enriched by their grouping.

Gaye Chan's new body of work, "Long Time Coming," is identified as a "suite of portraits," where each work is one "real or collaged life." For those who came to Hawai'i with various quests, Chan's work intends to create "alternative visual narratives ... that do not place 'success in the new world' at their center," examining instead what is gained and lost, bought and sold in the process. So the remnants of lives and markers of cultures are brought together to somehow make meaning through proximity. Chan is an uncanny hunter-gatherer, and gifted in the alchemy of her raw materials, yet this body of work does not have the nuance or coherence of work seen earlier in The Contemporary Museum's second Biennial.

Roy Venters has taken the phrase "gilding the lily" to heart in "Painted Forest," an installation of natural and fabricated forms. Where Chan explores a culture-to-culture interface, Venters has focused on that of nature-to-culture, painting virtually every surface in sight and juxtaposing natural found forms with constructed elements and fabric embellishments. "Painted Forest" has a statement to make about what is "un-natural," but ironically, it may be that Venters (definitely of the "more is more" school) hasn't gone far enough. Many of the individual elements hold their own, but the installation as a whole doesn't achieve critical mass.

*Artists of Hawai'i 1997* is part sophisticated salon, part scavenger hunt. The energy it exudes and in turn expects of the viewer is such that ultimately one yearns for something simple. For that, one might come to rest on a graphite drawing — Yida Wang's elegant "The Wind Moves Above the