

Museums

Provincial and big-city influences converge in Honolulu to New York

Island hopping

MARCIA MORSE

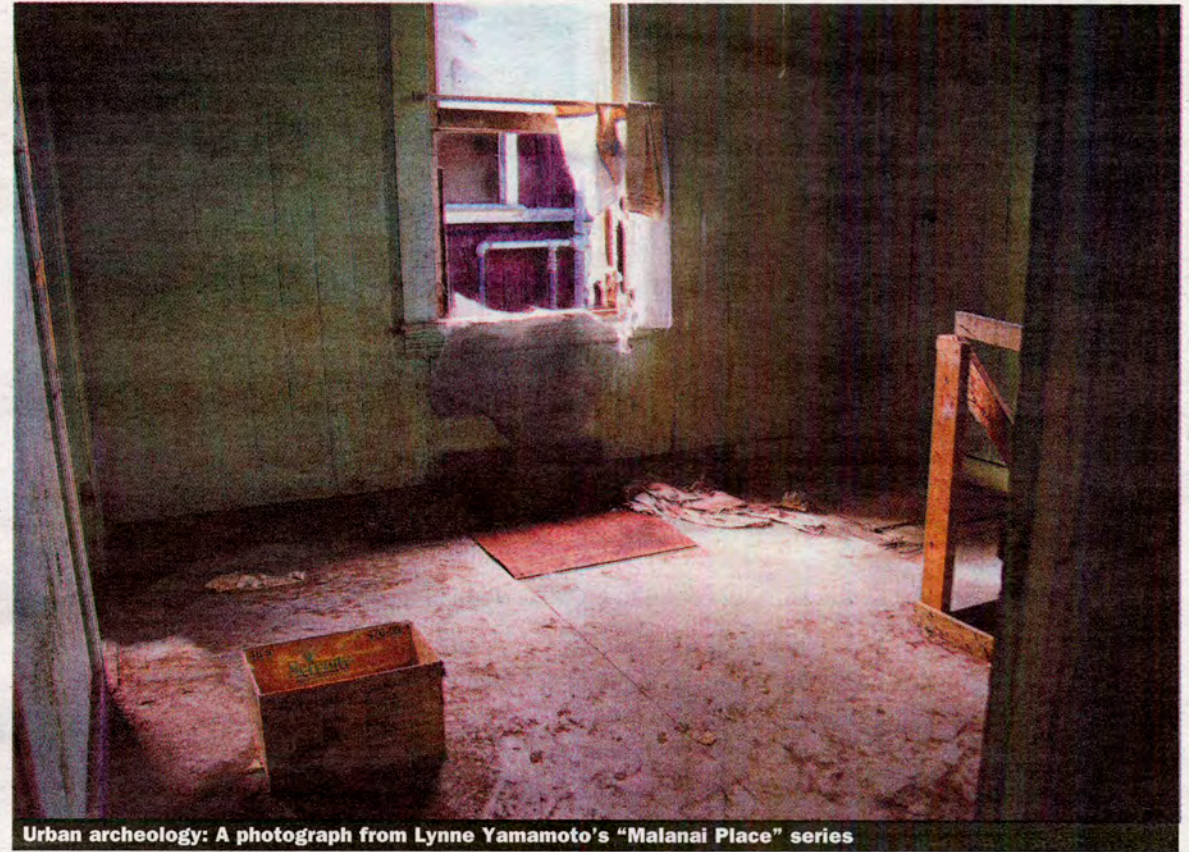
The distance between Honolulu and New York is more than a matter of miles or time zones. While art flourishes in many places, New York remains an international artist magnet. Since the mid-20th century, the city has exerted a powerful pull as a major center (some would say *the* center) of art—it's where people make and exhibit it, write about it, buy and sell it. Some artists have left the islands for New York, and then returned. For others, like the 15 artists featured in the Contemporary Museum's *Honolulu to New York*, it's been more like a one-way ticket—from pineapples to the Big Apple.

Among the works that evoke local culture or environment, those of Willa Cox, Allen Maertz and Lynne Yamamoto do so most notably.

Cox's abstract works on paper develop through the layered use of several media, including painting and monotype, collage and other surface treatments. Often inspired by the tidal pools remembered from childhood visits to Kihei Beach, Cox's enigmatic, sensual works are a distillation of a rich organic microcosm.

"Encyclopedia" is the ongoing project of photographer Allen Takichi Maertz, who has documented landscapes and museums in New York, Hawai'i and Japan as part of an extended exploration of the ways in which knowledge is systematized and distributed. Images with a local resonance like "Mountain," "Crater" and "Temple" provide a fresh perspective on familiar landmarks and institutions.

Installation artist Lynne Yamamoto, whose work was featured in a solo exhibition at the Contemporary Museum in 1996, utilizes the medium of photography in the



Urban archeology: A photograph from Lynne Yamamoto's "Malanai Place" series

"Malanai Place" series, a more personal sort of epistemic excavation in which she revisited abandoned homes where her father grew up in Honolulu. The forlorn interiors are inhabited by the ghosts of memory and experience.

Also of note are sculptural works by Robert Kobayashi and Gordon M. Sasaki. Kobayashi uses sections of raw and painted tin, nailed to two- and three-dimensional armatures, to create forms in which intricately-positioned fragments of metal are akin to brush strokes on canvas. The

works blend a faux-naive sensibility with a touch of sophisticated humor. Sasaki's work shares something of the same wry sensibility, particularly in "Knot," a work that makes a literal connection between Hawai'i and New York. Sasaki braided a month's worth of the *New York Times*, wili style, and formed it into a large knot. The implications of text are also present in "The Kiss" series, in which dried roses are stitched onto layers of printed paper, creating love letters of a covert sort.

Other artists included in the exhi-

bition are painters Brent Berger, Chris Churchill, Ralph Iwamoto, Sheila Fletcher Kriemelman, Kimberely Rector, Lawrence Seward, Robert Yasuda and Charles Yuen, sculptor Dennis Oppenheim and multimedia artist Paul Pfeiffer. Each artist, the beneficiary of an urban environment that fuels careers, embodies a unique configuration of personal history and creative work. ■

The Contemporary Museum at First Hawaiian Center, through 9/27