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Honolulu Biennial Morphs to New Name, Format and Introduces February 2021 Symposium

(Honolulu, HI, May 5, 2020) – Earlier this year, the Honolulu Biennial Foundation, following an international trend, announced the transition from a biennial to a triennial format. Today, the organization announced a new name, **Hawai‘i Contemporary**, and its commitment to bringing together a symposium in February 2021 as the lead up to Hawaii’s largest international arts event, the Honolulu Triennial in 2022.

Hawai‘i Contemporary’s mission remains the same: to coordinate ongoing educational and community engagement programs, capsule exhibitions and artist development initiatives that affirm its commitment to a global, sustainable and accessible hub for contemporary art in Hawai‘i nei. Its signature multi-site contemporary art exhibition connects artists from across the Hawaiian islands and waterways with the nations and territories united by the blue continent, the Pacific Ocean.

“Throughout major crises, across millennia, artists have the ability to help us reflect, connect, heal, and inspire. The power of art in response to historic moments, such as this COVID-19 pandemic, is a defining characteristic of culture and the shared human experience,” said Katherine (Kat) Don, Hawai‘i Contemporary’s acting executive director and long-time board member.

The inaugural Honolulu Triennial 2022 will address legacies of an American 20th century while turning towards a very different 21st century, one that is dominated by Pacific political and cultural powers and concerns. The triennial’s curatorial team is led by Dr. Melissa Chiu, renowned international curator who serves as the director of the Smithsonian Hirshhorn Museum.

During the COVID pandemic crisis and beyond, Hawai‘i Contemporary is committed to supporting artists in and around the Pacific, including native Hawaiian artists, and presenting contemporary art programming relevant on a local, national, and international level. Immediate goals include recognizing Hawaii-based artists through virtual studio visits on our social media, assisting with access to resources for artists, and partnering with Kaimuki’s Art Explorium to donate art supplies to public school students in Honolulu.

Through this transition Katherine Tuijder resigned as executive director to pursue a new venture at the intersection of the arts and accessibility. Over her six years with the organization she led the Biennial through its most recent successful HB19 iteration solidifying its place as Hawaii’s largest contemporary art event. Don stepped in to lead the organization as it searches for an executive director.

Born and raised on Maui, Don has two decades of international experience in contemporary arts from studying art history and studio arts at Barnard, Columbia University in New York and obtaining an MBA at the University of Los Angeles, to establishing a career as a specialist of contemporary Asian art in Beijing and Hong Kong. Her leadership draws upon a unique blend of curatorial management and appreciation for global art with a local perspective.

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