

# Starring 150 artists, the Honolulu Zoo Art Fence

by Will Hand

**What** began as a modest, almost spur-of-the-moment effort to help a schoolboy artist has become one of Hawaii's most popular and colorful cultural institutions: the Art Fence at Honolulu Zoo.

There were six original painters and sketchers, 28 years ago, who exhibited their works on the Kalakaua Avenue side of the zoo in informal Saturday afternoon shows. Now there are extensive exhibits along the zoo's Monsarrat Avenue fence on Saturdays, Sundays and Wednesdays, starring a total of 150 artists—with a long list of others waiting for one of the treasured spots.

The only one of the original six still active on the art fence is Sunao Hironaka, a versatile professional of 78 who has done just about all there is to do in the wide realm of graphic arts over 60-odd years.

As a newsboy around 1920, Hironaka was doing pencil-and-paper copies of photographs from the newspaper. Then he went to the University of Hawaii to become a dentist but switched to art and has been serious about it, in one form or another, since. Among other vocations, he has been a portrait painter, teacher, designer for an architectural firm, newspaper artist, photographer—and has earned awards for works in various media.

Hironaka recalls the start of the Art Fence, in 1954.

"A young boy up at Punahou School wanted to be an artist, and a friend asked me to give him some help. The boy's name was Roy Hedlund. I don't know what became of him, but I don't think he stuck to art.

"Anyway, I got four others and the six of us put some of our work up on the Kalakaua fence. I also did pen-and-ink drawings for a dollar. That doesn't sound like much but you could get a lunch around here for 30 cents in those days.







A portrait by Doug Moore.

"Other artists began coming around and the idea seemed to catch on."

Catch on indeed! The Saturday group grew to bursting, with every millimeter of available space on the Monsarrat fence spoken for, forcing the addition of a Sunday exhibit in 1973. Sunday gradually filled up and the Wednesday afternoon show started in 1980. Each displays the works of 50 artists and each has a list of artists waiting to get on the fence, either as a substitute or as a permanent participant. The exhibits go on in all weather, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the weekend days and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Wednesdays.

Overall, the project is under the auspices of the City and County of Honolulu's Department of Parks and Recreation, with each day under the supervision of a three-person Liaison Committee elected by fence artists. The committee, chosen annually, and a secretary and treasurer administer rules and requirements, assign spaces as available, settle on eligibility, arbitrate disagreements, and generally see that all interests are served equitably. Since all are participating artists themselves, they have the proper feel for the job.







*An example of scrimshaw.*



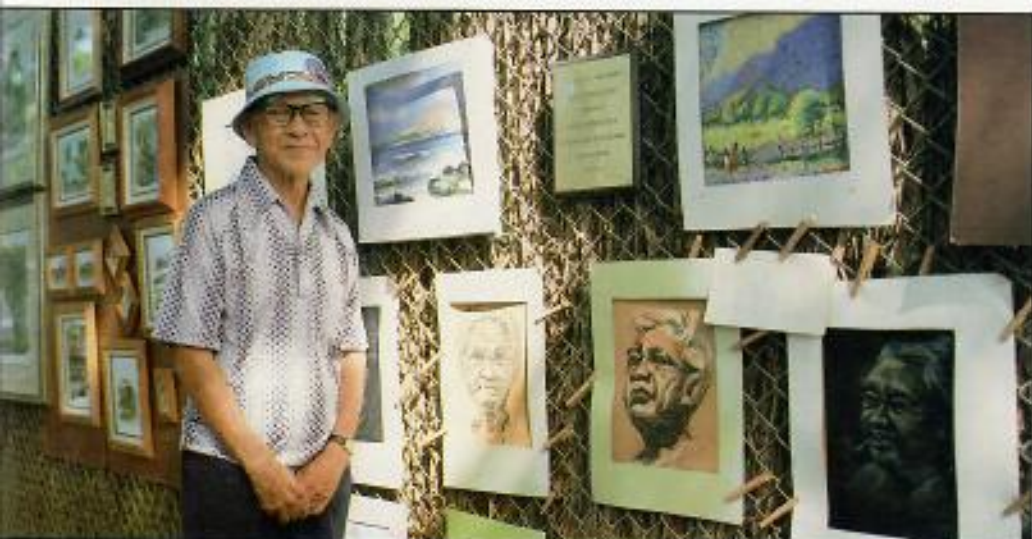


The rules, laid down by the fence artists over the years, stipulate that each piece of art must be original—not copies or prints, and that the artists must show their own work—no agents or stand-ins allowed. Also, only two-dimensional art is permitted and depictions of nudes will be allowed “only when judged unobjectionable by the Committee.” There is something of a dress code (“no bikinis”), and admonitions concerning neatness and respectable conduct. Each exhibitor pays \$3 per week dues “for insurance, some advertising and other incidentals,” according to Bob Dahlquist, chairman of

the Sunday Liaison Committee. “There aren’t any other charges, like commissions.”

For the \$3, an artist gets space on the zoo fence plus the area from the fence to the sidewalk where he may set up pegboards for displays and easels for work.

Dahlquist, who’s on the sales staff of Honolulu television station KITV, is one of the many zoo artists who are on the fence as a paying hobby—who rely on other work for their main income. Some, however, are artists full-time for whom the fence is simply another “gallery.”



*Sunao Hironaka. At the age of 78, this versatile artist is still creating, and exhibiting. He was among the six artists who began exhibiting on the zoo fence 28 years ago—and the only one still exhibiting.*

And a varied group they are, overall, expressing the widest possible ranges of style. There are works in oil, acrylic, charcoal and ink, and both color and black-and-white photographs. There are paintings in the traditional manner of the old masters and in mystical surrealism. There are delicate miniatures and huge, overpowering canvases.

There is, naturally, an abundance of Hawaiian scenics: the sea and the beaches, the sunsets and rainbows, the mountains and waterfalls—and, of course, many touches of Polynesia and the Orient. Surprisingly, you’ll also see works influenced by American Indians and some bits of the U.S. Mainland and Europe. Like Hawaii itself, there’s no end to the variety.

Traditionally, all prices are subject to negotiation in situations such as this and hard figures are difficult to come by. But Bob Dahlquist estimates the Art Fence works run a wide range, “from under \$5 to over \$3,000.”

And those works go at a reasonably fast rate. The location is prime for both locals and tourists: it’s in Waikiki, right at the beach, the zoo, and ever-popular Kapiolani Park. That means heavy foot traffic—most often, the wandering, leisurely traffic which is best for the Art Fence exhibitors.

Some of Hawaii’s noted artists were on the zoo fence in their earlier, less celebrated days: David Lee, Hiroshi Tagami and Hajimi Okida among them. Some of Hawaii’s better artists are regulars now. The aforementioned 78-year-old Sunao Hironaka won best of show in the 1982 exhibit of the Association of Honolulu Artists for his acrylic, “Thadeus and Carthaginian,” and also had an oil and a watercolor in the competition.

Then there are the hopefuls, like the young woman with the bulging portfolio who visited the fence on a recent Sunday, showing her work to the established exhibitors and putting her name on the waiting list for a space she no doubt considered the most desirable piece of real estate in Hawaii. ☺

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# Hyatt's Hawaii

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Our lead story this issue is written by Allan Seiden, who tells us the lush ferns we take for granted in our island paradise once were important items of commerce in the Hawaiian Kingdom. Hawaii today has more species of fern than any other state in the Union, and they range from our tropical forests to our newly-created lava fields.

A weekend visit to the Honolulu Zoo isn't complete without a stroll along the Art Fence. There, some of the State's most talented and most prolific artists exhibit their works for tourists and locals alike. Will Hand takes us on a tour of this popular art "gallery," and tells us how it all started. It begins on page 10.

The Honolulu Community Theatre is long in distance from the glittering lights of Broadway, but it's close in spirit—very close. This season's offerings, among others, number "Grease," "The Sunshine Boys," "First Monday in October," and "Deathtrap." Jim Hackleman writes about this 67-year-old cultural institution that is theatre in the best of traditions, and he profiles its multi-talented artistic director, Jim Hutchison.

It's probably the smallest restaurant in Hawaii, with seating for no more than 12 people, but it's where film stars and other household names can relax in perfect privacy with a menu planned in conference by host and chef. It's the Wine Room at the Hyatt Kuilima Resort on Oahu's North Shore. Read all about it on pages 20 and 21, and as a bonus we toss in a favorite recipe of executive chef Joe Lageder, bay scallops with vegetables julienne.

What happens when your basic, beer-soaked sports fan decides his life needs a little culture? That's what Dan Myers tells us in his story about life as a supernumerary in the Hawaii Opera Theatre. If you've ever wondered just who those spear carriers are, and why they're there, and what

they're really doing, you can find out in his story which begins on page 22.

Throngs of visitors to Hawaii know the west coast of Maui. It's a vacationer's dream with lovely beaches, luxury hotels, manicured golf courses and all the activities one expects in a resort area. Few of them ever suspect that just 50 miles away on Maui's rugged east coast is a virtually unexplored and almost inaccessible valley of surpassing beauty, called Kipahulu. Forever shrouded in ethereal fog and rain, bounded by sheer cliffs and cut by innumerable waterfalls, Kipahulu is the final refuge for some of Hawaii's unique and endangered plants and birds.



Aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E. Sullivan".

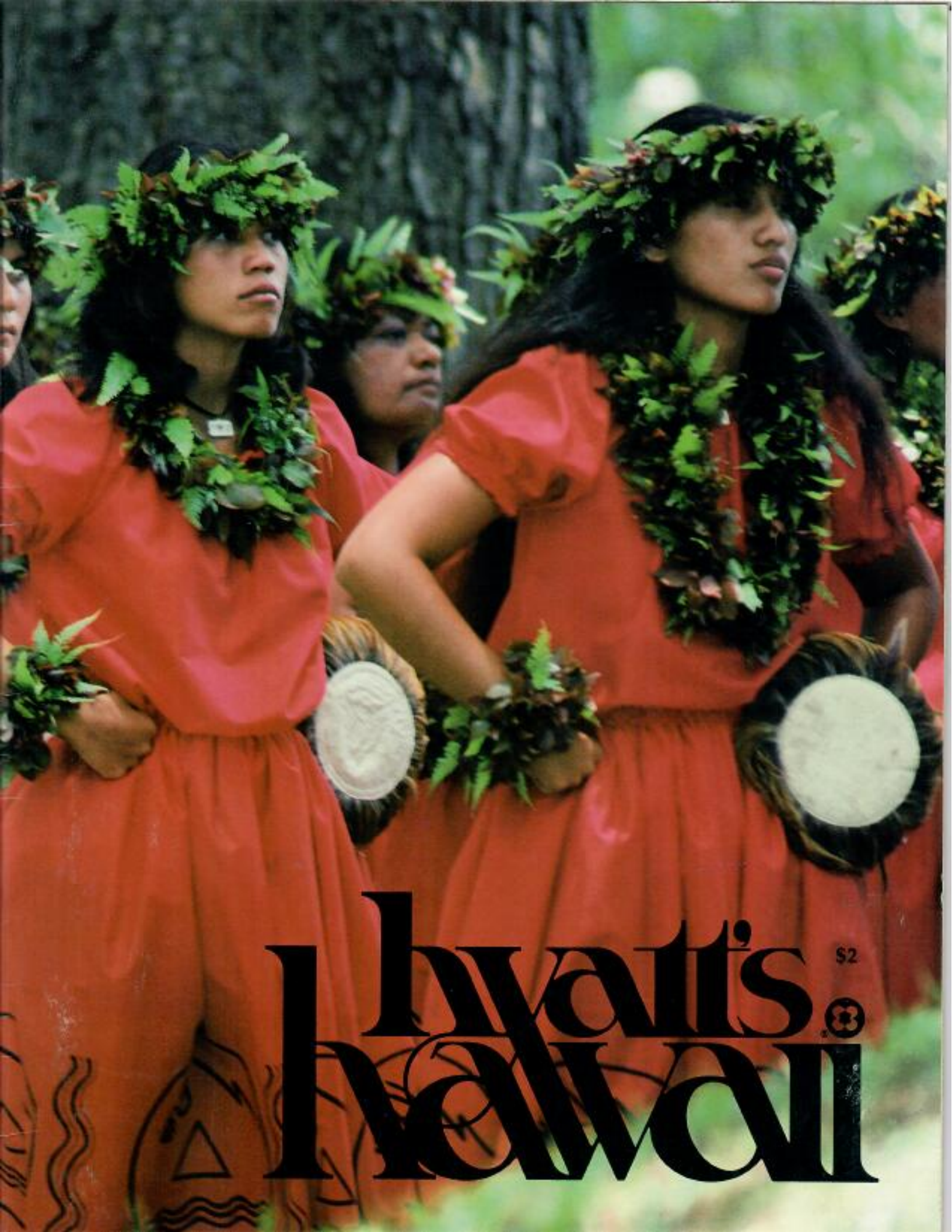
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**Hawaii**