

## Long Artist Statement

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(839 words)

As a visual artist who grew up in Hawaii, my work and worldview are inspired by the historical and current events that have affected the Pacific Islands. Through the use of non-linear video and multi-media, my work seeks to expose the destructive nature colonialism and tourism has upon the land, culture, and people of Hawaii and similar tourist-centric locales.

It is important to draw attention to the inaccuracies in Hawaii's "perceived" versus "real" reputations. There is a version of Hawaii that is promoted by tourism, which is disconnected from the culture and spirituality of the Hawaii I was raised in. Hawaii's hyperreal presentation to tourists is a cheapened version that is dramatically different from the Hawaii that exists today. This type of fragmented representation occurs worldwide and is directly affected by tourism.

By the time I turned 16 years old, I held three retail positions in Hawaii's tourist industry. My co-workers and I were overworked and underpaid. I had my share of positive and negative experiences interacting with tourist. Being "hit on" and blocked by two drunken men in a store only added to the list of bad behavior non-locals showed towards locals. And the sacred cultural icons I grew up with were now printed on products I was encouraged to sell. A self-revelation appeared to me in the form of a t-shirt, gaudily dyed in Kona coffee with the word *Humuhumunukunukuapua'a* and a small picture of a Triggerfish, which represented Hawaii's state fish. The novelty scratch-n-sniff quality of this shirt—from the over sweetened smell of the coffee beans used to dye the shirt to the mockery of the Hawaiian language—might as well have been a huge billboard with the words "Hawaii For Sale." Working in Waikiki and dealing with tourists battered my innocent view living in *paradise*.

It would be untruthful to say that I in no way contributed to promoting the Hawaiian simulacra I now criticize. When I worked in Waikiki, I encouraged visitors to visit the "must sees" that are splashed on tourist brochures and featured in Hollywood films, even though I knew they were tourist traps like Waikiki beach a once budding and clean beach which held old-time surfers and storytellers now replaced with surf board rental kiosks situated on sand imported from elsewhere. Brigham Young University (BYU) owned and operated Polynesian Cultural Center, is another example where visitors are treated to elaborate native-like performances. The impression of authenticity is achieved by its formidable size and monopoly it has in Hawaii's tourist industry.

At the core of tourism is capitalism, which is fueled by profits and steady yet cheap employment. My video vignettes explore the human element as it is alienated in this construct. Referencing Karl Marx's Theory of Alienation, I seek to engage my audience in a dialogue about the relation of labor and the laborer in the idealized Hawaii tourism industry. This discourse addresses the roles of larger conglomerate companies all the way down to smaller individual entities—the people I'm interested in recognizing in my work—and thus establishing a dialogue about the effects of colonialism in Hawaii.

I am a true believer that personal stories are a key element in creating a convincing discourse on this topic. In making the personal public, I have found oral history to be a major resource and inspiration in the development of my projects. In particular, the voices and stories from the people of Hawaii inspire and inform my creative work. As I experiment with both narrative and non-narrative storytelling, oral history becomes a central element in many of my videos.

A particular strength in my work is the ability to present complex ideas using minimal imagery. By experimenting with non-linear narratives, I am able to redefine the boundaries of documentary filmmaking by creating new spaces that embraces oral history within an uncharted fine art vocabulary. This ability to communicate intricate narratives utilizing high and lo-fidelity visual elements compliments my new media practice as I experiment with interactivity through new uses with DVDs, web design, and live audio/visual interaction using Max/MSP Jitter.

It is often remarked by my colleagues that my work easily engages its audience as it encourages them to contemplate larger social questions. Growing deeper upon multiple viewings, my work is never simple. My work maybe minimal in design, but never simple in its conception or significance, as noted by the film and video artist Bill Brand, “[Goya’s videos] are smart, funny, ironic, political, tender and beautiful. I expect nothing less from Jen Goya!”

I believe for those of us who live in a First World country, we will have the opportunity to be tourists at least once in our lives. We will leave home to live permanently or temporarily in a place that is not “home.” The role tourists’ play, as they exist in a system built upon the appropriation and exploitation of land, people, and culture, is incredible central to my work; as I continue to examine the deep seeded effects colonialism has upon sovereign nations and native cultures.