

KEKAHA ARTIST FRED TANGALIN



Dennis Fujimoto / The Garden Island

Artist Fred Tangalin's perspective on art is reflected by the range of subject matter that surrounds him at the Sugar Mill Local Art Gallery in Kekaha. Tangalin just finished teaching a three-day painting workshop at the Kaua'i Museum.

Mana guides painter's hand

Dennis Fujimoto
THE GARDEN ISLAND

KEKAHA — “When I first stepped into this room, I felt it,” said Fred Tangalin, as he peered out from one of the windows in the small Kekaha cubicle, pausing to greet passersby who came up the sidewalk.

“It has plenty mana. You can see the sugar mill, the gas stations, and the old houses. It was perfect,” he said. “There is a Hawaiian school back there, and when I was here for the first time, they were doing a pule (prayer), and I told them ‘I had to have it (this place).’”

“It’s far away, but this is where I want to paint,” Tangalin said.

That was the birth of Sugar Mill Local Art Gallery, tucked away in a corner of the building that formerly housed leaders of the Kekaha Sugar Company.

Tangalin surrounds himself with a collection of art he’s produced in his 40 years of painting, the collection spanning

everything from landscapes to recognizable personalities in the community.

Raised in the Moloa’a and Wailua areas, Tangalin draws on life back then as the source of inspiration for many of his canvases, he said.

Utilizing his personal style of painting, Tangalin says, “It’s hard enough just to paint without getting caught up with all the problems.

“You’re faced with a blank canvas, and bad decisions can ruin that.

“I want people to feel the painting,” he said. “Someone told me, ‘they don’t pay you for how many leaves are there, they’ll pay for the feeling of that leaf.’”

Tangalin just finished hosting a three-day series of painting workshops at the Kaua’i Museum, but is forever the teacher.

Tangalin said he believes art belongs in everyone’s life, and his goal is to empower students through small-canvas works.

“I just try to paint,” Tangalin said. “We’re all part of this big think we no even understand. We can either be con-

nected, or disconnected.”

Inspired by Leonard Herbert, a retired art teacher from California, Tangalin said his personal paintings are a way for him to share his experiences, as well as portray the spirit of Kaua’i.

“(Everyone) gotta find their own way,” he said. “It’s like handwriting. You learn all the rules, and then, you learn how to break them.”

Tangalin said being a teacher is like being a parent, in that students are only guided. “Painting should be relaxing. Teachers should let students paint. They just guide them.

“It’s up to the students to do what they do with what they learn,” he said. “Teachers should only guide.

“The main objective is to have people come and enjoy the paintings,” Tangalin added. “The paintings are of recognizable people, and some of the elements in the pictures don’t even have to do with art, but anyone growing up in that period will

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get the feeling of what it was then.”

To view some of Tangalin’s work, folks can visit his gallery and studio at Sugar Mill Local Art Gallery, located across Kekaha Road from the old Kekaha Sugar mill.

Tangalin also shows his work at Kilohana Plantation House Artisan’s Room, the Kong Lung store in Kilauea, and the Kauai Products Store at Kukui Grove.

Or, you might get lucky and catch him at one of the local craft fairs, like the recent artisans’ fair in Hanalei, where Tangalin was perfecting his latest venture, flowers.

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