

The economy is more than a system of production, distribution and consumption – it is a living, breathing entity. It blossoms, it withers; it gets sick. The recent collective American experience suggests it is more than a little depressed.

The economy needs therapy.

In response to the current economic gloom, UH-Mānoa's Commons Gallery will offer a small, symbolic art economy in "Art Work: a National Conversation about Art, Labor and Economics," March 22 through April 2.

This interactive exhibition will harness the creative energies of students and visitors to propel the show. Art created by visitors in the gallery will be synthesized into a growing and evolving display.

"Visitors (will) learn that art isn't always exclusive, that it can be done and shared by everyone," said student-organizer Calvin Bagaoisan.

"Art Work" is a cooperative effort between UH-M studio art and art history students, and the art collective with Chicago-based art organization, Temporary Services.

Temporary Services organized the printing and nationwide distribution of a 40-page newspaper written by and for artists about art's part in the current economic picture. This newspaper, also called "*Art Work*," features personal accounts, artful anecdotes and calls to action. The full version is available free at [temporarieservices.org](http://temporarieservices.org).

Excerpts from the Temporary Services' newspaper are the basis for the exhibition and are central to the creative pieces that will be made during the show. According to student organizers,

the gallery will become both the working assembly line of art production and the organic, cooperative system of a beehive.

“The point is that the work, the actual labor of art-making, becomes visible,” said Bronson Shimabukuro, graphic design student and member of the exhibition team.

“I’m so impressed with the way the students have come up with a playful interpretation of the restrictive nature of our economy,” said Jaimey Hamilton, assistant professor working with the students planning the project. “It’s emphasis on efficient production and passive consumption. What they offer is the opportunity to be creative and collaborative, build an image together, even with the most limited materials or means.

“What they’ve created is an ‘art’ economy, which grifts a capitalist one and offers some pleasurable ‘nonproductive’ time in the gallery to simply communicate with each other. Hopefully about art, time, labor, and the economy.”

Like all economies, however, the venture is both elegant in simplicity and fraught with complications.

Due to the difficulties of the economic recession, campus-closures during Spring Break will halt the miniature economy for first week the exhibition is “open.”

“Art Work” will pick up production again on March 29 to April 2, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Look for performances and a special event on Thursday, April 1, from 12 to 1:15 p.m., when the gallery’s 100 copies of Temporary Services’ newspaper will be distributed.

In case you don't want to wait, here are some excerpts from the newspaper “*Art Work*.”

Excerpt from “THIS IS OUR REAL JOB” by Temporary Services

We can see how the collapse of the economy is affecting everyone. Something must be done. Let’s talk. No, it can’t wait. Things are bad. We have to work things out. We can only do it together. What do we know? What have others tried? What is possible? How do we talk about it? What are the wildest possibilities? What are the pragmatic steps? What can you do? What can we do?

We know that larger numbers of people find themselves increasingly shut out of the American “promise” of wealth and security. The majority of committed and practicing artists have long given up these expectations in favor of having the freedom to pursue their work. We’ve all made sacrifices for our time, our work, and our own dreams. Let’s face it – being an artist in the United States is difficult. Hell, just keeping your head above water is harder for an increasing number of Americans, artists or not.

The official number hovers around 10%. We’re being told to get used to it, but we would rather explore ideas for reworking the economy to benefit everyone. Where is the discussion about how to sustain our entire country and not just our banks, corporations, and those who are privileged enough to be in the top 10% of our “earners”? (More on page 3, *Art Work*, available for download at [temporarieservices.org](http://temporarieservices.org))

Excerpt from “PERSONAL ECONOMY” by Tim Kerr

If you are doing any sort of self-expression solely to make money, I think you will be disappointed. Don’t get me wrong. I am not going to turn down money, but that is not why I do

what I do. I, for one, do not want to have money be a factor in why or why not I choose to do something. Yes, I have been paid for music and art but it has never paid my bills... (More on page 23, *Art Work*)

Excerpt from “MICRO GRANTING FROM THE BOTTOM UP” by InCUBATE

InCUBATE stands for the Institute for Community Understanding Between Art and the Everyday. We’re dedicated to exploring and documenting experimental approaches to arts administration and arts funding. InCUBATE is an open platform where we can openly question how the art world actually works and what possible directions it could conceivably take. Our main focus has been to address the lack of resources for artists operating outside the boundaries of institutional and market support and experiment with possible solutions. We are a research group. We produce exhibitions... (More on page 21, *Art Work*)