

# Pacific Arts

Journal of the Pacific Arts Association



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**Pacific Arts**

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**Cover Image:** Kaili Chun, *Muliwai*, 2022, detail. Plywood and copper, installation, Waikīkī Market, Honolulu, Hawai'i. Photograph courtesy of the artist

# Pacific Arts

## Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

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**CHRISTIAN KAUFMANN**

## **Obituary: Roger Boulay (1943–2024)**

### **Abstract**

*Roger Boulay (1943–2024) devoted the majority of his professional life to building an inventory of Kanak material culture from New Caledonia. In 1979, Jean-Marie Tjibaou had passed the idea for this project on to Boulay, who immediately set to work in New Caledonia and in European museums. In 1982, he became a part-time curator at the National Museum of the Arts of Africa and Oceania in Paris, and began reorganizing that museum collection and its displays. In subsequent years he created or co-commissioned an amazing variety of exhibitions, in Paris, Nouméa, and elsewhere. He often looked at objects from unexpected angles, preferring the critical eye of the craftsman he had been. From 1993 to 1998, Boulay worked in Nouméa as a member of the team that was key to bringing the Centre Culturel Tjibaou to functioning. Roger Boulay passed away on July 2, 2024.*

**Keywords:** Roger Boulay, Kanak architecture, Kanak art, New Caledonia, Tjibaou Cultural Centre, Nouméa



Figure 1. Roger Boulay at home, working on drawings of Kanak art works, 2022. Photograph courtesy of Mathieu Harel-Vivier

Before being attracted to anthropological subject matters, Roger Boulay had learned how to forge steel (see his first publication, from 1972, in the selected bibliography that follows). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, he taught unemployed youth at a Marseilles institution engaged in social work, encouraging them to enlist for professional training. In addition, he observed sculptors and learned from them how to work one's way around and into a piece of wood. He was also a gifted draughtsman and therefore a keen observer. He later joined Animation Jeunesse in Paris—an association created by the French Catholic scout movement that sponsored nationwide projects like the one he worked at in Marseilles. In the long run, engaging with people as individuals in their social context combined very well with Boulay's mindset, which focused on knowledge about technical practices. He eventually became an expert on the arts of the South Pacific and also a rather unconventional and productive museum curator, as the list of his publications, especially those linked to exhibitions, shows.

Boulay obtained his first university degree in sociology at the Free Catholic Faculty in Angers before moving to Marseilles. A decade later, in the mid-1970s, he trained as a potential future curator in the history of art across periods and continents at the École du Louvre. It is by chance that the founder of Animation Jeunesse, George Dobbelaere, and one of his friends, Philippe Missotte, had assisted Jean-Marie Tjibaou in 1975 with the organizing of the "Melanesia 2000" festival in Nouméa, New Caledonia. In 1979, Missotte helped Boulay establish contact with Tjibaou, who in turn asked Boulay to establish the first inventory of Kanak material culture in European museums—one in which objects were properly identified and photographed. The volume *Objets kanak*, produced in 1982 by the newly created Office Culturel, Scientifique et Technique Canaque, was the result of his work. It included objects from the comprehensive Fritz Sarasin collection in the Basel Ethnographical Museum (now Museum der Kulturen Basel). The volume was meant to be used by Kanak communities and schools.

In 1980, Boulay enrolled in the Study of Religions program at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, supervised by Professor Jean Guiart. In 1982, Guiart recruited Boulay as a part-time "chargé de collection" for the Oceania section at the Musée des Arts Africains et Océaniens in Paris. While spending part of his time in New Caledonia in the years to follow, Boulay carried out fieldwork for his doctoral thesis on Kanak sculpture and architecture. By a sad coincidence, Boulay was in Hienghène, a commune in the North Province of New Caledonia, on December 5, 1984, when Jean-Marie Tjibaou's brother Louis and nine other independence supporters were murdered. Boulay was performing a detailed study of the building

techniques of new chiefly round houses at the time, while Louis mounted the spire on a newly thatched roof earlier that day.

Likely recommended again by Guiart, Boulay was asked to teach at the École du Louvre. He inspired his students to look for the details of technical achievement within individual artworks and was, therefore, greatly appreciated. Moreover, he encouraged his students to find the function of the object within the local society at the time of collection, and to determine under what circumstances the object changed hands. Boulay also accompanied his students on visits to museums and their study of collections outside of France.

For the fourth Festival of Pacific Arts, planned to be held in Nouméa in 1984, Boulay assisted in turning one of J. M. Tjibaou's cherished ideas into reality: bringing together an exhibition called *Musée imaginaire des arts de l'Océanie* by soliciting loans from museums in Europe and beyond. Following growing social unrest around the movement for Kanak independence, both events were eventually cancelled. Boulay was nevertheless able to oversee the installation of this very exhibition in 1985 at the Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie (MNAAO) in Paris.

After this major event, Boulay began to reorganize the permanent display of the galleries devoted to Oceania at the MNAAO, while Denis Guillemard adjusted the museum's storage setup and professionalized the care for the objects. Thus, the arts of Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, and Aboriginal Australia came into focus. Boulay initiated a number of new acquisitions. In 1986 he defended his thesis, entitled "La grande case kanak: les rapports entre architecture et sculpture en Nouvelle-Calédonie," at the Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University. The Direction des Musées de France (DMF), the organization coordinating museums in France, put in place a long-term project aimed at establishing inventories of collections from Oceania in provincial museums. Boulay served as its coordinator until 1993, encouraging a large group of former and current students as well as local curators to consider the individual objects and their history as key elements for contextualizing collections. Indeed, Boulay and a few assistants put together a detailed list of people from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century—such as navy personnel, doctors, administrators, and scientists—who had travelled to the Pacific for all sorts of reasons and had potentially been collectors.

Political turbulence and the death of Jean-Marie Tjibaou rendered Boulay's quiet and solid work even more meaningful. Together with Emmanuel Kasarhérou, director of the Musée Territorial in Nouméa, Roger brought the exhibition *De jade et de nacre. Patrimoine artistique kanak* to life in 1990, first in Nouméa and then in Paris.

In 1989, exciting news about new Aboriginal Australian painters and their dedicated work reached Paris. In 1991, Boulay asked the Réunion des Musées Nationaux to provide funds to acquire paintings from Central Australia. Accompanying the anthropologist Françoise Dussart, he visited the community of Yuendumu. With these acquisitions a second Aboriginal art collection was created at the MNAAO, complementing the one brought back from Arnhem Land by Karel Kupka in 1963. Boulay and Dussart mounted a well-received exhibition at the Musée de la Porte Dorée (where the MNAAO was housed) in 1993.

From 1993 onward, Boulay was based in New Caledonia, being contracted via the DMF by the Agence de Développement de la Culture Kanak, founded and directed by Octave Togna. In preparing the ground for the future Centre Culturel Tjibaou, exhibitions had to be organized and potential local Kanak audiences had to be found; there was a need to determine what they preferred to see and how they would experience what was presented. Two projects should be mentioned. In 1995, in preparation for the future Centre Culturel in Nouméa, Boulay and his team, including Marie-Claude Tjibaou, Emmanuel Kasarhérou, and others, reached out to Kanak individuals from all parts of New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands to solicit their cooperation. Boulay's team solicited comments on the historical portrait photographs of Kanak individuals taken in 1911 and 1912 by Fritz Sarasin and Jean Roux from Basel. For the exhibition, the portraits were printed slightly over life-size on fine cotton sails and presented alongside the collected comments projected via slides. The slides ran in a loop in the dark part of the exhibition, which created a very specific atmosphere. Thanks to Boulay's thoughtful exhibition layout and design, empathy and respect, and critique of the scientists' attitudes and actions in 1911, the meaningful way in which Kanak individuals deal with the power of these portraits all came together. The exhibition travelled the following year to Basel and then to Paris.

Of quite a different character was Boulay's involvement with the exhibition *Spirit blong bubu i kam bak*, which opened on June 27, 1996, at the then newly built Vanuatu Cultural Centre in Port Vila, the capital of Vanuatu. Boulay served as a particularly efficient member of the curatorial team, along with Ralph Regenvanu, presenting this very special selection of loans from European museums—see the catalogue *Vanuatu, Océanie: Arts des îles de cendre et de corail* or *Arts of Vanuatu*. Boulay added to this touring exhibition a highly relevant section with historical photographs. Later, accompanied by Kirk Huffman, he travelled with the exhibition to its next venue at the Musée Territorial of Nouméa.

During his years in Nouméa, Boulay was part of Emmanuel Kasarhérou's team for the upcoming Centre Culturel. He was involved in planning what to

present of Kanak culture and its links to societies in Oceania. He took joy in both physically and conceptually mounting a permanent exhibition with new elements commissioned specifically from artists like Edward and Matthew Salle, the *malagan* carvers based far away on Tataou Island in Papua New Guinea. Boulay avidly supported contemporary artists from the Pacific, such as Micheline Néporon, a Kanak person, who created a non-text-based system of signs and sign posts for the Centre Culturel; and Michael Mel, an artist from the Papua New Guinea Highlands, who advised on how to perform art for a new public audience.

After the inauguration of the Centre Culturel Tjibaou, Boulay returned to Paris. The DMF enlisted him to advise three museums outside of Paris holding important collections from Oceania on how to improve their inventories and redevelop their exhibitions. For the museums of Angoulême, La Rochelle, and Rochefort, this project also facilitated the transfer of their data to the online database Joconde.

In 2001, Boulay tried once more to answer Jean-Marie Tjibaou's initial question, which was, in Boulay's words, "What are museums telling [their public] about the Kanak?" The exhibition *Kannibals et vahinés*, on view in Nouméa in 2000 and in Paris in 2001, was Boulay's explicit answer—and it proved to be a rather provocative one. Dealing foremost with European clichés expressed in ideas, pictures, objects, drawings, and more, it intended to confront the European imagination of the exotic with some aspects of real Kanak life. The inherent irony was, at times, not easy to grasp.

Boulay's involvement with Kanak art and society was crowned in 2013 with the exhibition *Kanak. L'art est une parole* at two venues: the Museum of New Caledonia in Nouméa and the Musée du quai Branly in Paris. In the meantime, he also completed the inventory of the "Patrimoine kanak dispersé."

Roger Boulay was born on August 6, 1943, in Parigné-le-Pölin to parents living in Sillé-en-Guillaume in the area of the Sarthe, a tributary of the Loire. Upon retirement he and his wife Nadia preferred to settle again in his natal country. There, he developed with pen and brushes a new oeuvre celebrating the work of Kanak artists (Fig. 1). Samples from the *Carnets kanak (Kanak Notebooks)*, Boulay's watercolour sketches of Kanak objects documented earlier, were shown at the Musée Hèber, Rochefort, in 2020; at the Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac in 2022; and at the Centre Culturel Tjibaou in October 2023. Roger Boulay passed away on July 2, 2024 and is buried at the cemetery of Torcé-en-Vallée.<sup>1</sup>

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*Christian Kaufmann, PhD, is a former curator at the Museum der Kulturen Basel (1970–2005) and a freelance anthropologist who is working on projects initiated after field studies in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu. In 2015, he collaborated with Philipp Peltier and Markus Schindlbeck on an exhibition of Sepik art that was seen in Berlin, Zurich, and Paris. Dr. Kaufmann is a founding member of the Pacific Arts Association.*

## Notes

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NICOLE WADE

## Partnership, Collaboration, and Community Engagement: Reflections on Applied Repatriation in a Small Museum

### Abstract

*The Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia is the only museum outside of Australia dedicated to the exhibition and study of Indigenous Australian arts and cultures. From 2019 to 2021, Kluge-Ruhe partnered with the Return of Cultural Heritage program of the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies to facilitate the return of cultural heritage items to Arrernte, Warlpiri, and Warumungu communities in Australia. Through such collaborative partnership with larger organizations, small museums like Kluge-Ruhe can plan, document, and implement large-scale, long-range projects like unconditional repatriation to Indigenous Australian communities. Such endeavors also help prepare smaller institutions for future projects, including internal policy writing and continued community engagement.*

**Keywords:** *Indigenous Australians, repatriation, unconditional return, cultural heritage items, AIATSIS, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, Arrernte, Warlpiri, Warumungu*

### Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection: Small Museum Challenges in Repatriation

In 2019, the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia (Kluge-Ruhe) embarked on the unconditional return of seventeen sensitive cultural heritage items to Arrernte, Warlpiri, and Warumungu communities in Australia. As a relatively small collecting institution—with a staff of five and no funds specifically earmarked for the expense of returning cultural heritage materials and supporting their receipt by Indigenous Australian communities—the museum partnered with the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), Australia’s only national institution focused exclusively on the diverse histories, cultures, and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in order to make these returns possible.<sup>1</sup> The AIATSIS Return of Cultural

Heritage (RoCH) program is dedicated to the return of Indigenous Australian items held in overseas institutions.

While there are excellent examples of how larger collecting institutions proceed with incredibly impactful repatriation work,<sup>2</sup> these ventures often feel unclear and unwieldy to small museums. The stumbling blocks around repatriation vary between institutions, but for many small museums the common refrain is often that staff bandwidth for research and community engagement is limited, there are budgetary concerns, and they have little experience forging new relationships with communities with whom they have had limited or no contact in the past. My hope is that the repatriation project presented here may serve as an example for other small cultural institutions that are interested in pursuing the unconditional return of cultural heritage materials to Indigenous communities, especially those that are not sure where to start or feel they must have the process completely defined before taking the first step.

In observance with cultural protocols and out of the utmost respect for the privacy of the Arrernte, Warlpiri, and Warumungu communities, there will be no discussion, description, or images herein of the sensitive cultural heritage materials that were returned. Rather, these absences can serve as a reminder that oftentimes the most important work that cultural institutions can undertake involves cultural heritage items that are restricted to access outside of a select group of people and have few to no public-facing outcomes.

### **Kluge & Ruhe: Private Collections, Public Museum**

Kluge-Ruhe is the only museum outside of Australia dedicated to the exhibition and study of Indigenous Australian art.<sup>3</sup> The permanent collection currently includes more than 3,600 works spanning the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, representing the arts and cultures of Indigenous communities across Australia.

The museum was founded in 1997 through a monumental gift from John W. Kluge (1914–2010) and opened its doors in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 1999 as the second of two museums at the University of Virginia. Kluge, who emigrated to the United States from Germany in 1922, became keenly interested in Australian Aboriginal art in 1988 after viewing the exhibition *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia* at the Asia Society Galleries in New York City. In 1989, shortly after experiencing this remarkable introduction to Australian Aboriginal art, Kluge became invested in building his own private collection through substantial commissions with community-based art centers and purchases from dealers and galleries

in the secondary art market. Under the guidance of curatorial advisors, Kluge began acquiring artwork and visited Australia, eventually amassing a collection of more than 1,600 items between 1989 and 1997.<sup>4</sup>

Kluge's largest individual acquisition came in 1993, with the purchase of Edward L. Ruhe's private collection, including Ruhe's personal library and archive. Born in Allentown, Pennsylvania, Ed Ruhe (1923–1989) was a professor of English at the University of Kansas who traveled to Australia in 1965 as a Fulbright visiting professor.<sup>5</sup> While in Australia, Ruhe became deeply interested in Australian Aboriginal arts and cultures and began collecting bark paintings, sculpture, and items of cultural heritage directly from artists, community-run art centers, and dealers. Until his death in June 1989, Ruhe continued his scholarly endeavors, researching and corresponding widely with others who were also studying and exhibiting Indigenous Australian art.

While perhaps it can be said that Kluge's collection pursuits were driven largely by aesthetics and the visual majesty of Indigenous Australian art, it is clear from Ruhe's collecting habits and research interests that his pursuits were more scholarly in nature.<sup>6</sup> At the time of his passing, Ruhe had assembled a collection of nearly one thousand works of art, a comprehensive library of books, and an extensive archive of ephemera and personal correspondence that spanned nearly twenty-five years of research, study, and vigorous promotion of Australian Aboriginal art.

### **Partnering for Unconditional Return: AIATSIS & the Return of Cultural Heritage Program**

Kluge-Ruhe began partnering with AIATSIS in 2019 to facilitate the return of restricted cultural heritage items through their RoCH program.<sup>7</sup> Originally launched in 2018, with two years of funding provided by the Australian government, the RoCH program was established to locate and aid in the return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage materials (not ancestral remains) from private and institutional collections outside of Australia. The RoCH program demonstrates the Australian government's commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>8</sup> As the agent for the RoCH program, AIATSIS acts to support communities as they assert their custodianship over cultural heritage materials held off Country.<sup>9</sup> After its initial success, the RoCH program was subsequently funded for an additional four years beginning in July 2020. This second phase of funding allowed the program to continue fostering

relationships between collecting institutions outside of Australia and Indigenous Australian communities, as well as aiding in the unconditional return of cultural heritage items to Country.<sup>10</sup>

Initial conversations between Kluge-Ruhe and AIATSIS began in April 2019, when staff of the RoCH program contacted the museum during their research into collections of Indigenous Australian cultural heritage in overseas institutions. Despite John Kluge's desire "to build a comprehensive and 'complete' collection of Aboriginal Art,"<sup>11</sup> the foundational gift to the University of Virginia in December 1997 reflects the collecting practices of two white men, each of whom focused on the art and culture of communities of the Northern Territory across four decades of collecting. While it appears that neither Ruhe nor Kluge had a strong desire to acquire items of a sacred, secret nature, both held small numbers of restricted ceremonial men's items in their respective collections. These sensitive cultural heritage items were included in the donation that established Kluge-Ruhe.

The museum had previously identified items with secret, sacred, or restricted designations from Ruhe and Kluge's collections and housed them separately from general collections storage in observance of cultural protocols that might restrict the items from being viewed or handled by women or uninitiated men. While Kluge-Ruhe had long been interested in the return of these items to their respective traditional owners and cultural custodians, there were many instances in which the original acquisition records of Ruhe and Kluge did not include cultural information. As with many small cultural institutions, the museum did not have the staff or budget to pursue a large-scale, long-range project that could research and identify the traditional owners to which these restricted cultural heritage items belonged, nor could they carry out sensitive and necessary consultation with Senior members of the identified stakeholder communities.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the lack of experience around cultural returns, the unconditional repatriation of restricted or sensitive cultural heritage items closely aligns with Kluge-Ruhe's mission "to expand knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Australian arts and cultures to cultivate greater appreciation of human diversity and creation."<sup>13</sup> Working with RoCH to return restricted cultural heritage items to communities and to Country offered an opportunity for the museum to fulfill its mission by respecting Indigenous peoples as the authorities on their respective arts and cultures and its commitment to supporting Indigenous Australian communities in keeping culture strong.

Of the cultural heritage items that Kluge-Ruhe staff had flagged as restricted men's items, seventeen had clear or likely cultural affiliations with one of three communities: the Arrernte people, whose Country is the Central Desert

region of the Northern Territory; the Warlpiri people, whose Country is northwest of Alice Springs in the Tanami Desert of Central Australia; and the Warumungu people, whose Country is an expansive area of land in the northern part of central Australia that includes Tennant Creek. With the hope of having an impactful first round of proactive returns to communities and under the guidance of RoCH staff, the museum sought to return to the Arrernte, Warlpiri, and Warumungu communities their respective cultural heritage materials.

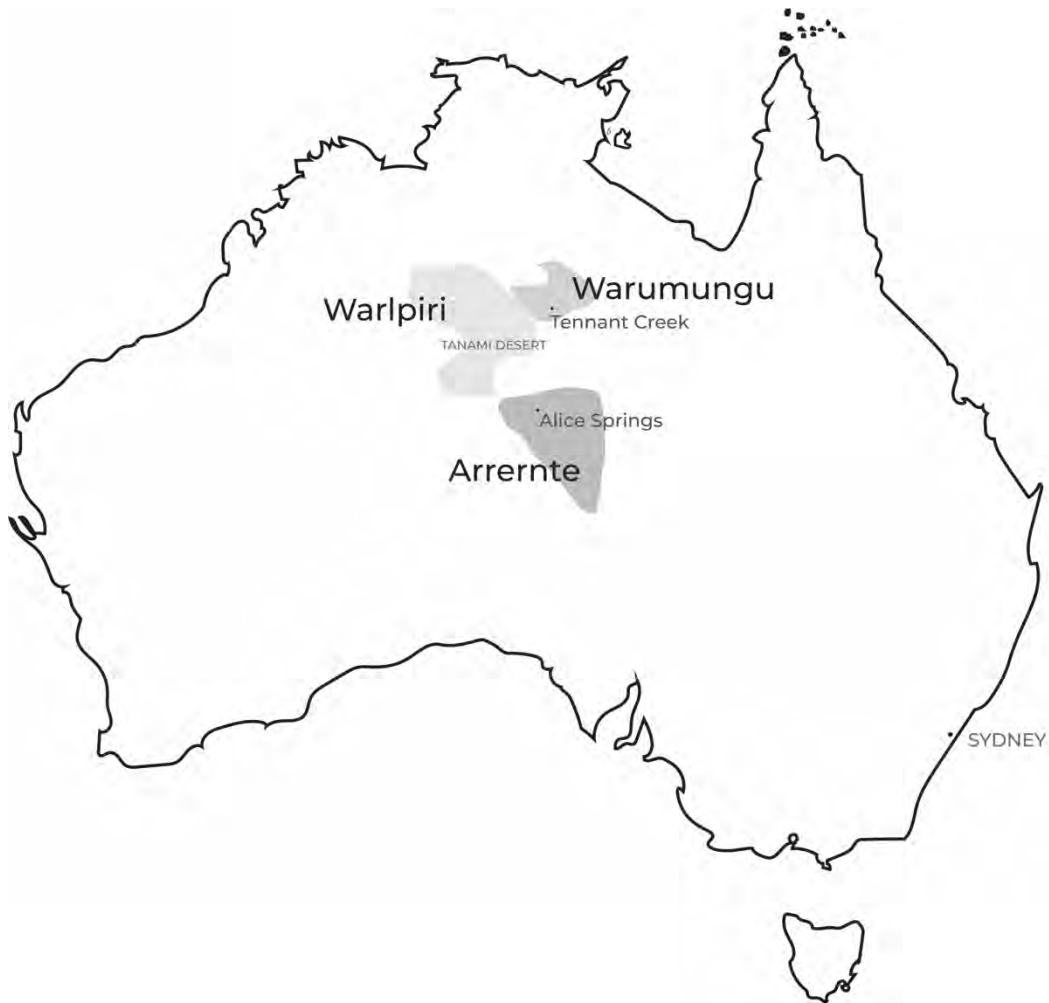


Figure 1. Map of Arrernte, Warlpiri, and Warumungu homelands. Courtesy of Laura Snyder, Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection

## **Process & Progress: Many Steps on the Way Forward**

After introductory conversations with RoCH program staff in spring 2019, the project commenced in May 2019 with a deep dive into the Edward L. Ruhe archives aimed at firmly establishing the cultural provenance of the selected restricted men's items. Ruhe's personal archive of correspondence, acquisition records, and extensive inventories was part of the foundational gift to the museum. Kluge-Ruhe staff were able to locate archival documentation in the form of inventories and Western Union telegrams that effectively confirmed cultural affiliations with the Arrernte, Warlpiri, and Warumungu communities and established shipment import dates into the United States.

During this initial phase of the project, it became clear that Kluge-Ruhe would need to provide high-resolution images of the selected cultural heritage items to AIATSIS to support RoCH program staff during the upcoming community-engagement phase of the project. For the cultural heritage items selected for this return, cultural knowledge is held by and restricted to initiated male members within each community. Due to the restricted nature of these items and Kluge-Ruhe's continued desire to adhere to cultural protocols, the museum engaged a male photographer to work with the museum's male curator to unpack, photograph, and rehouse each item. To avoid exposing the images to any female participants on the project team, the images were delivered directly to male colleagues at RoCH, who then shared them with Senior men in the relevant communities.

As archival research and imaging were nearing completion, the COVID-19 pandemic began, stalling the outset of community engagement. While American and Australian governmental responses to the pandemic were different, Kluge-Ruhe and RoCH staff were in strong agreement that in-person community engagement would need to be paused until such time when it could be realized without health or safety risks to the Senior knowledge holders in each community. Fortunately, discussions between Kluge-Ruhe and RoCH staff continued largely unfazed given that online meetings had already been established necessary to bridge the enormous geographical distance and many time zones between the two organizations. When community engagement began in the latter half of 2020, partially online, the first phase of engagement was to introduce representatives of the Senior men in each community to the project and support their review of collection materials and a Collection Research report prepared by RoCH staff. This period provided the Arrernte, Warlpiri, and Warumungu communities with the opportunity to express whether they were currently able to explore a partnership with

Kluge-Ruhe and AIATSIS with the explicit goal of returning cultural heritage materials.

The second phase of community engagement was conducted with Senior men from each community on their respective Country. This stage was extensive, involving Senior cultural authorities and relevant custodians who will become future authorities, and included close examination of photographs and historical documentation provided by Kluge-Ruhe. This phase of engagement was of particular significance as it addressed whether each community would like to have these items returned to them (or to a nearby keeping place at another cultural institution) and verified their desire to partner with AIATSIS to submit a formal repatriation request to Kluge-Ruhe.

In February 2021, RoCH staff submitted a formal letter of Request for Repatriation and a confidential Repatriation Research Report to Kluge-Ruhe and the Vice President and Provost of the University of Virginia. Throughout the community engagement process, the Senior men within each community chose carefully what information to share with institutional participants to not only safeguard their sacred knowledge, but also demonstrate their deep connection to the items being considered for return and the importance of returning these items to their custodianship. In the Repatriation Research Report, Senior representatives from the Arrernte, Warlpiri, and Warumungu advised that the objects requested for return to their respective communities were of high cultural importance and significant to their people, culture, and traditions.

The RoCH letter of request and accompanying report triggered the museum's formal internal deaccession process. While the museum's collections management policy defined and governed the deaccessioning process for the purpose of unconditional repatriation, Kluge-Ruhe had never exercised the procedure and needed to further investigate the requisite steps involved in transferring custody and legal title while continuing to move the project forward. As a museum at a state-funded university, it was necessary for Kluge-Ruhe to obtain additional University of Virginia (University) approvals to execute the transfer of physical custody of these items back to the Arrernte, Warlpiri, and Warumungu communities. Within weeks of receiving the letter of request and research report, the museum's collections committee convened to vote on the deaccessioning of these designated cultural heritage materials from the permanent collection.

Concurrently, Kluge-Ruhe staff consulted with the University's Office of General Counsel to determine the approvals process and what administrative paperwork would be required to formally transfer the legal rights to the cultural heritage materials back to their respective communities. Between March and May

2021, Quit Claim Deeds were drafted for each group of cultural heritage items. These Quit Claim Deeds were circulated to the Arrernte, Warlpiri, and Warumungu communities by RoCH staff, with Senior men from each acting as signatories. This particular phase of the project was incredibly important for two reasons: it signaled that these long-absent cultural heritage materials were officially going home to Country and it also signaled the restoration of each community's cultural authority.<sup>14</sup>

In July and August 2021, Kluge-Ruhe worked with a reputable fine art shipper and an international customs broker to begin the process of packing, crating, and transporting the Arrernte, Warlpiri, and Warumungu cultural heritage items back to Country. Out of an abundance of respect for cultural protocols, male art handlers were hired to pack and crate these sensitive cultural heritage items for their journey home to their communities. The return passage home began "early" for the Arrernte and Warlpiri cultural heritage materials as their export out of the United States only required a simple electronic declaration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declaring the species of plant and animal materials involved in their creation. The Warumungu community's return was a more protracted process as the export of their cultural heritage items required a Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) permit due to the presence of component parts from specific protected species.

Drafted in 1963, CITES is now observed by 184 nations with the aim of protecting endangered plants and animals from the many threats associated with international trade.<sup>15</sup> In the case of the United States, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services acts as the permit-granting body for CITES applications. The application process for a CITES permit is rigorous, requiring extensive documentation around provenance and possession, descriptive information, and whenever possible, photographic documentation. In an effort to continue carrying out careful observance of cultural protocols, Kluge-Ruhe declined to provide the usually requisite images. Instead, the museum detailed the process of unconditional returns to community, described the importance of observing cultural protocols, and offered archival documentation including Ed Ruhe's personal correspondence, inventories with detailed provenance information, and Western Union telegrams highlighting the movement of the items out of Australia in the 1960s. In September 2021, after a relatively short wait considering the disorder that the COVID-19 pandemic created in many federal agencies, Kluge-Ruhe received the mandatory permit and by November 2021, the Warumungu cultural heritage items were finally homeward bound.

Under normal circumstances, AIATSIS would have sought to support two Senior leaders from each community to travel to the United States to collect their respective cultural heritage items and conduct culturally appropriate ceremonies in preparation for their return to Country. Unfortunately, the ever-lingering COVID-19 pandemic prevented this. Instead, despite the staggered shipping dates, AIATSIS was able to receive all three crates and store them at community approved locations until such time as they could be stored and cared for on Country in accordance with the traditions and customs of the Arrernte, Warlpiri, and Warumungu peoples.

### **Looking to the Future: Thoughts on Repatriation and Relationship Building**

Casual observation of public opinion on repatriation often reveals the belief that the unconditional return of cultural heritage items, whether to countries or communities, is reductive in nature. Negative perspectives around repatriation rarely engage more than the notion that cultural heritage returns remove items from museum collections and therefore public view. Reviewing comment sections on social media posts and newspaper articles exposes concerns that repatriated items will return to communities and the public will no longer have access to the items they feel entitled to view, regardless of the context in which they are presented.

It is critical that these sentiments are understood and reframed by museum professionals, be they collections managers, curators, or educators. It is the continued responsibility of cultural institutions, regardless of size, to highlight that the foundation of all cultural return projects (and ideally all collections-based and curatorial projects) is relationship building.<sup>16</sup> Repatriation, regardless of its scale or scope, creates the opportunity for collecting institutions to recontextualize and reinterpret existing collections in the absence of returned cultural heritage items and build new collections with contemporary work acquired from those same communities. This recontextualization and reinterpretation of collections paves the way for institutions to amplify Indigenous voices as the experts on their own cultures and practices, creating the space necessary for the public to engage with artists, makers, and traditional knowledge holders on relevant collections still held in storage rooms and exhibition spaces around the globe.

Cultural heritage returns offer vital opportunities for museums to recognize, or continue to recognize, that cultural heritage items are not static in nature. Rather, these items are as alive and dynamic as the communities to which they

belong. Their meanings and inherent cultural values are fluid—what was once secular, may become sacred or restricted and vice versa. As generations of Indigenous peoples continue to grow and lead the way into the future and traditional knowledge stays strong and interwoven into the lives of younger generations of cultural practitioners and knowledge holders, so too will the meaning, power, and use of cultural heritage items shift, change, and grow.

All the while, it is imperative to acknowledge that communities may not have the time, resources, or cultural practitioners available to consider the return of their cultural heritage items. It is the responsibility of collecting institutions to continue holding these items in care and esteem until such time that a community may become ready to receive their cultural patrimony without undue burden. In projects as sensitive and significant as repatriation, institutional timelines must take a backseat to the fact that the most important outcome in museum work should always be relationship building. In the words of cultural leader and community engagement specialist Jade Lillie, “Keep adapting. Keep shifting but always come back to knowing that the relationship is the project.”<sup>17</sup>

For small museums that find themselves unsure how to begin, know that it is possible to undertake museum projects involving community engagement without complete certainty of the process. Small museums should reconsider this vulnerable position as an opportunity to be better collaborators with potential partner organizations and better partners to the stakeholder communities they seek to engage. An institutional openness to starting a project without a rigid or defined framework creates space for communities to determine project parameters more clearly for themselves and to consider how they themselves will feel most comfortable building trust-based relationships with institutional partners that for too long have not been deserving of that brand of faith. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to any project or program with relationship building at its heart. Just as community engagement and a focus on relationship building are indispensable to cultural return projects, it is also important to note that relationship building between small museums and larger cultural institutions can result in vibrant synergies that lead to inspired avenues for partnering with communities. Collaborative partnerships with larger organizations can offer smaller institutions the opportunity to expand their reach and expertise without sacrificing their own strengths.

This first successful return of cultural heritage items to Country has given Kluge-Ruhe the incredible opportunity to connect to communities it had little contact with before. Working with AIATSIS from 2019 to 2021 allowed the museum to build the foundation for a new path forward with Arrernte, Warlpiri, and

Warumungu communities, fostering trust and mutual understanding around the importance of returning sacred cultural items. The Arrernte, Warlpiri, and Warumungu communities placed their trust in the staff at Kluge-Ruhe and AIATSIS to care for and steward their cultural heritage with the utmost respect, to follow cultural protocols, and to communicate with transparency around the process of return.

As a central tenant of the collections and curatorial work undertaken at Kluge-Ruhe, there are levels of knowledge and meaning that are secular and can be known by staff and visitors alike, and there are still other deeper and more profound layers of knowledge and meaning that are specific to knowledge holders within community. The position of not knowing, especially for museum professionals that are non-Indigenous, should never diminish the care, respect, or esteem the cultural heritage materials receive while in the custody of cultural institutions. Rather, this state of “not knowing” that outsiders experience is to be expected and honored while cultural heritage items are held in museum collections away from their cultural custodians.

As Kluge-Ruhe continues to work toward the complete repatriation of the sensitive cultural heritage items it intends to proactively return, it faces the new challenge of drafting policies that allow for the careful and transparent evaluation of future cultural return projects, especially unsolicited requests initiated directly by Indigenous Australian communities. As with any policy writing endeavor, the museum aspires to create flexible strategies that allow enough latitude to acknowledge that each appeal will be unique and that not all requests will arrive with the same types of documentation, cultural information, and forward planning.

*Nicole Wade is the senior collections manager and registrar at the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia. She has spent sixteen years stewarding museum collections at the University of Virginia, the last twelve of which have been focused on providing ethical care and stewardship for the cultural heritage items of Indigenous Australian communities held at the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection.*

*The Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection stands on the traditional homelands of the Monacan Nation.<sup>18</sup> We acknowledge the Monacan People as the Indigenous custodians of the land in and around Charlottesville and pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging.*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For additional information about the Australia Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies see, <https://aiatsis.gov.au/about-aiatsis>.

<sup>2</sup> For an example of applied repatriation in a large cultural institution, see Michael Pickering, “Despatches from the Front Line? Museum Experiences in Applied Repatriation,” in *The Long Way Home: The Meaning and Values of Repatriation*, ed. Paul Turnbull and Michael Pickering (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 163–74.

<sup>3</sup> For more information about the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia, see <https://kluge-ruhe.org/about/mission-vision-values/>.

<sup>4</sup> For more information about the history of the Kluge-Ruhe Collection, see <https://kluge-ruhe.org/about/history-of-kluge-ruhe/>.

<sup>5</sup> For more information about the Fulbright Program and its role in raising the visibility of Indigenous Australian art in the US, see Caroline Jordan and Diane Kirkby, “‘No One Here . . . Understands the Problem of Aboriginal Art’: The Fulbright Program, Aboriginal Studies and Aboriginal Art, 1950–65,” *Australian Historical Studies* 53:1 (2022): 119–45, DOI: [10.1080/1031461X.2020.1856899](https://doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2020.1856899).

<sup>6</sup> For more information on the collections of John W. Kluge and Edward L. Ruhe, and the founding of the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, see Margo Smith, “Aesthete and Scholar: Two Complementary Influences on the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia,” in *The Makers and the Making of Indigenous Australian Museum Collections*, ed. Nicolas Peterson, Lindy Allen and Louise Hamby (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008), 556–89.

<sup>7</sup> For additional information about the Return of Cultural Heritage program and their return projects, see <https://aiatsis.gov.au/about/what-we-do/return-cultural-heritage>.

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, see [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> The term “Country,” as used here, refers to the ways in which Indigenous Australian peoples relate to the land, seas and waterways, sky, and everything held therein. The term speaks to the constellation of connections between Indigenous Australians and their homelands that include place, cultural practices, customs and law, identity, and more. See <https://kluge-ruhe.org/aboriginal-art-101/>.

<sup>10</sup> For additional information about the success of the Return of Cultural Heritage program, see <https://aiatsis.gov.au/about/what-we-do/return-cultural-heritage/about-roch>.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, “Aesthete and Scholar,” 574.

<sup>12</sup> I use the term “Senior” to refer to those individuals within a community who are recognized for their cultural knowledge, wisdom, leadership, and authority.

Senior men and women within a community keep culture strong by providing mentorship and guidance to younger generations, protecting Country, and stewarding cultural knowledge. How or when an individual is considered Senior is dependent upon the community and can be unrelated to one's age. The term "Elder" is used in the same manner and is the preferred term in some communities.

<sup>13</sup> For more information about the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection's vision, mission, and values, see <https://kluge-ruhe.org/about/mission-vision-values/>.

<sup>14</sup> Pickering, "Despatches," 171.

<sup>15</sup> For additional information about CITES, see <https://cites.org/eng/disc/what.php>.

<sup>16</sup> For a resource on engaging with Indigenous communities, see *The Relationship is the Project: Working with Communities*, ed. Jade Lillie, Kate Larsen, Cara Kirkwood, and Jax Jacki Brown (Australia: Brow Books, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> Jade Lillie, "The Relationship is The Project," in *The Relationship is the Project: Working with Communities*, ed. Jade Lillie, Kate Larsen, Cara Kirkwood, and Jax Jacki Brown (Australia: Brow Books, 2020), 159–64.

<sup>18</sup> For more information about the Monacan Nation, see <https://www.monacannation.com/>.

**ANITA WEN-SHIN CHANG**

## **Creative Practice and Pedagogy with the Marshall Islands: Navigating a Critical Call-and- Response**

### **Abstract**

*This essay brings together creative practice and pedagogy centered on the Marshall Islands to examine how poetry and politics, used together as a critical call-and-response strategy, can contribute to the achievement of climate and nuclear justice for that country. The first part of the essay discusses my work-in-progress documentary film, Her Excellency, which focuses on the stories of women who are heads of state—in particular, the women I met and interviewed in the Marshall Islands in August 2018. The second part describes how I incorporated the film’s stories from the Marshall Islands into an ecomedia film course I taught in spring 2022. While the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily halted the film’s production, I continued my creative practice and research in the remote-learning classroom, where I established a spirit of co-inspiration with my ecomedia students. In the first half of a semester focused on the Marshall Islands, students critically and creatively considered what steps we can take to mobilize our support for the Marshallese people and for ourselves in the face of rising sea levels. Through their ecomedia projects on the Marshall Islands the students steered their audiences to navigate our entangled and problematic world, visualize our place in this world, understand the importance of feeling with islanders, and situate our lives in relation to the Marshallese. These connective relations matter to our mutual survival and mutual healing from the brutal acts of history so that we may forge paths toward livable presents and futures for all.*

**Keywords:** *Marshall Islands, nuclear justice, climate justice, creative pedagogy, critical empathy, ecomedia, women leaders, feminist studies*

### **Introduction**

In her poem “Tell Them,” Marshallese poet Kathy Jetnñil-Kijiner instructs friends who live elsewhere, to whom she has sent special gifts, that when others ask them about the items, they should say, “They’re from the Marshall Islands.”<sup>1</sup> Jetnñil-

Kijiner then indicates that she wants her friends to tell others about her atoll home and its people, so that the world may know more about them:

*Tell them we are descendants of  
the finest navigators  
in the world  
Tell them our islands were dropped  
from a basket  
carried by a giant*

Near the poem's end, she writes:

*But most importantly you tell them  
we don't want to leave  
we've never wanted to leave  
and that we  
are nothing  
without our islands.<sup>2</sup>*

Gifts allow us to hold a memory of the gift-giver. They also provide us with a springboard to tell a story or to pass the word. This poem reminds me of the gifts presented to me during my visit to the Marshall Islands in August 2018, while filming my current documentary project *Her Excellency*. The film tells the stories of women who are currently or have been heads of state in various countries around the world. For it, I interviewed President Hilda Heine, who served as president of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) from 2016 to 2020. Heine was the first woman president of any Pacific Island nation, and in November 2023, she was elected president a second time. I also met with and interviewed women who were involved with the women's movement in the RMI since the 1980s and those who were familiar with President Heine's educational and political advocacy work.<sup>3</sup> As is their custom, these women gave me intricately hand-spun earrings and necklaces made from the gifts of land and ocean—exquisite and magical, a portal to another cosmology. I was awed and humbled as the receiver. Likewise, through the art and craft of gift-giving I begin to share these women's stories; via editing digital images and sound recordings of them, I wove a reciprocal gift that will be remembered and can be shared. What story would I tell those who have not yet visited, or may never have a chance to visit, the Marshall Islands?

As an artist-scholar, my work examines the ways in which (post)colonial, diasporic, and multicultural societies represent themselves in various visual media. I focus on retelling, reviving, and reimagining their stories and histories, and

the impact these works have on their respective communities and nations. My films are often collaboratively produced with the aim of complicating discourses of (post)colonialism, decolonization, ethnography, diaspora, race, gender, and cross-cultural representation. In pushing the boundaries of the moving image as a medium, I experiment with the interplay between content and form, to inspire different kinds of viewing experiences, alongside thinking with the medium (e.g., its time-based, sonic, color, lighting, and/or framing aspects). In making *Her Excellency*, I challenge myself to find new aesthetic forms for the political-interview format, which is typically talking-head style. My current approach is to understand the uniqueness of each woman—how could doing so lead to formal innovations that go beyond the standard political interview? Before meeting with each woman, I conducted extensive research into their time in office and prepared guided questions directed at their political philosophy, social theory, and engagement with issues they are known for addressing. I asked each of them, including President Heine, where and how they would like to be interviewed, and what images they wanted included in the film. Collaborating with each interviewee on how she wants to be made visible engages these leaders on their own terms. Along with deep listening, in order to understand what the interviewees want to communicate to audiences, my work in the Marshall Islands included observing and connecting the environment to the women’s concerns poetically and symbolically.

The first time I shared *Her Excellency* as a work in progress was in January 2022, when I incorporated the Marshall Islands into a film studies course on ecocinema and ecomedia I was teaching at California State University, East Bay.<sup>4</sup> While the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily halted film production, I continued my research in the classroom, where I established a spirit of mutual inspiration with my students. Working at a teaching university where more than sixty percent of students are the first in their family to attend college offers rich spaces for a creative pedagogy; I shared my research with my students as they learned about, and critically and creatively engaged with, real-life environmental issues including the pandemic and the climate crisis.<sup>5</sup> I first introduced the students to a range of ecomedia works and readings on the Marshall Islands so that they could develop an awareness of the idea or myth of the “remoteness” of islands from a continental perspective. I encouraged them to undergo a personal geospatial reorientation in order to think about how they, in fact, do have ties to these “remote” territories; how we orient ourselves in the world; and how we find our place and role within the world.

In this essay, I bring together creative practice and pedagogy centered on the Marshall Islands to examine how poetry and politics, used together as a critical

call-and-response strategy, can contribute to the achievement of climate and nuclear justice for the Marshall Islands. I first describe how the content and form of *Her Excellency* attunes viewers to the challenges confronting women leaders in the RMI, especially given the country's long history of colonial violence through foreign militarization and the impacts of global climate change. My role as a filmmaker allows me to respond to and amplify the critical calls of these women's voices. I share their voices with my students, who learn and practice what it means to empathize with the Marshallese. Together, we consider what steps we can take to mobilize our support for the Marshallese people and for ourselves in the face of rising sea levels. This essay demonstrates how media ecologies of practice, viewing, and pedagogy can participate in maintaining a faculty for "long-distance empathy" and "critical empathy,"<sup>6</sup> and how media ecologies do so amidst ongoing disruptions due to the climate crisis, a global pandemic, and calls to address colonial legacies and neoimperial structures.

### ***Her Excellency* in the Marshall Islands**

*Her Excellency* is a documentary film that focuses on several women political leaders. In it, I use a comparative and transnational approach to women's leadership experiences in order to offer a prismatic and interconnected view, as well as speculative possibilities for women leaders in the US. Over the past ten years, women have made up only six to seven percent of the world's national leaders. A 2022 UN report on sustainable development goals determined that at the current pace, "it [will] take another 40 years for women and men to be represented equally in national political leadership."<sup>7</sup> *Her Excellency* takes an intimate look at the rare perspectives of women presidents and prime ministers and what it means to occupy the highest office in their respective nations as they grapple with climate crises, migration crises, the COVID-19 pandemic, nuclear justice, peace and conflict, decolonization, gender equity, and their relationships with superpower neighbors. At this writing, *Her Excellency* includes interviews with Tarja Halonen (president of Finland, 2000–12), Mary McAleese (president of Ireland, 1997–2011), and Torild Skard (president of the Norwegian Upper Chamber, 1973–77). The following discussion centers on my interviews with President Hilda Heine of the RMI.

In 2017, I was introduced to Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL), a non-profit organization whose mission is to collaborate with "schools and school systems, families, community organizations, and government agencies to

transform education and promote dynamic reciprocal learning communities built on strong social and cultural capital.”<sup>8</sup> PREL has offices in Hawai‘i, American Sāmoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, the RMI, the Republic of Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap). A colleague who was working at PREL asked if I would be interested in interviewing then the RMI President Hilda Heine. Heine was the program director of PREL in Majuro, the capital of the Marshall Islands, from 2006 to 2011. Given the opportunity to interview President Heine, I continued my inquiry for *Her Excellency*: Does gender matter in how presidents lead their countries and negotiate with other countries? What does female leadership bring to the table that male leadership does not? In preparation for my interview with President Heine, I also considered what it means to enter a country’s history from the vantage point of its female leader.



Figure 1. Still from *Her Excellency* (work in progress), dir. Anita Chang. RMI President Hilda Heine giving her State of the Nation Address before the Marshall Islands Nitijela (parliament) in Majuro, August 6, 2018. Courtesy of the director

When cinematographer Tosh Tanaka and I arrived in the RMI, we collaborated with President Heine’s office to reach additional people to interview. We conducted interviews with Minister of Internal Affairs Amenta Matthew; Marie Maddison, director of Women United Together Marshall Islands; First Gentleman Thomas Kijiner; and Evelyn Joseph, the family and community engagement

specialist for PREL. As suggested by Heine's office, we first attended and recorded President Heine's State of the Nation Address at the Nitijela (parliament) in Majuro, the capital of the RMI. One static camera captured a wide shot of the proceedings, and also showed the male-dominated space of the Nitijela (Fig. 1). I personally operated another camera to capture medium- to close-up images of attendees in order to document their responses to Heine's address. The chamber was filled with religious leaders, members of the House of Chiefs, cabinet members, senators, mayors, diplomatic ambassadors, private and NGO sector representatives, youth representatives, and family members. In attendance were also choirs from Rongrong atoll, Aur atoll (where President Heine is from), and the Uliga district of Majuro. Her speech gave attendees an idea of the range of successes she and the government had had, issues they were addressing, and their goals to "improve livelihoods and advance RMI into the twenty-first century."<sup>9</sup> Some of these included economic growth, international financial assistance, the US Compact Trust Fund that would end in September 2023, school truancy and drop-out rates, higher education opportunities and achievements, climate-change adaptations including renewable energy and sea wall projects, tourism development, support for vulnerable groups (children, women, disabled persons, and outer island communities), empowerment of women and girls, human trafficking, strengthening compliance to RMI laws, solid waste management, conservation and recycling, and water security.

In our interview, President Heine began by telling us that the RMI is

an island country that's located in the central western Pacific. We have twenty-nine islands, twenty-four of which have communities and have people settling on these islands. Currently, the population is about 53,000. That was [from] the last census. I believe that it's more than that [now], around perhaps 60,000 in the Marshall Islands.<sup>10</sup>

Of note, these islands of coral rings span 180,000 miles of the Pacific and are about 6.5 feet above sea level. Walking along the atolls, I am reminded how close the shorelines on either side are to one another. President Heine also acknowledged the diaspora: "We have about 20,000 to 30,000 Marshallese, who also live in the [continental] United States in various states, and also Hawai'i and Guam."<sup>11</sup> The out-migration of Marshallese is a result of complicated factors arising from, but not limited to, the US nuclear testing of sixty-seven bombs in the RMI from 1946 to 1958, resulting in the destruction of ecosystems and the health of the

Marshallese.<sup>12</sup> In addition to the impacts of nuclear testing, the climate crisis is another driving force behind the out-migration.

During our sit-down interview, held in the meeting room where she wanted to be filmed, I framed President Heine in a medium close-up shot that is intimate and not too distant. In the editing process, I allowed for longer shots of her speaking and reacting, thereby pushing the envelope of political interviews, which usually aim for informational sound bites and quick cuts of footage. These approaches engage my attempt to discover an alternative aesthetic for the political-interview format. As President Heine stressed in her State of the Nation Address, “an educated and healthy nation continues to challenge this government.” In our interview, she explained that she comes to political work with a commitment to education; she was an educator for thirty-six years, beginning as a classroom teacher before rising through the ranks to become a school administrator and then secretary of education. She realized that in order to make a difference in educational policies, and to put more resources into education, she needed “to be at the table where the resources are divided up.”<sup>13</sup> She was also the first Marshallese to receive a doctoral degree—she has a PhD in education from the University of Southern California. She was then elected minister of education, serving for four years before being elected president.



Figure 2. Still from *Her Excellency* (work in progress), dir. Anita Chang. President Hilda Heine hosts President Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan as they attend the “One Island One Product” handicrafts exhibit, Majuro, RMI, October 31, 2017. Courtesy of the director

Internationally, President Heine mainly speaks out on women’s empowerment issues and the climate crisis. Her lifelong emphases on education and health are interwoven with women’s empowerment, health, and safety. Listening to her and the other interviewees will bring into focus for the film the important roles of the RMI and Pacific Islander women regarding their social and political work—locally, nationally, and internationally—with gender equity and equality embedded in their efforts. A recent example is President Heine’s partnership with Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen to create the RMI 50:50 Innovation Fund to provide “sustainable change for women and girls in the Marshall Islands through transformative project loans.”<sup>14</sup> The project began in 2019 and aims to help women improve their family’s livelihoods; Presidents Heine and Tsai consider the fund groundbreaking. To illustrate this, I included footage of President Heine hosting President Tsai as they attend the “One Island One Product” handicrafts exhibit in Majuro on October 31, 2017 provided by President Tsai’s press office (Fig. 2). The image of two women heads of state in negotiation and cooperation, especially on gender-responsive actions to address gender inequities, stoked my imagination for a future of gender parity in national leadership. I hope my film’s viewers are similarly inspired.



Figure 3. Still from *Her Excellency* (work in progress), dir. Anita Chang. Marie Maddison introduces the Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI) logo in the WUTMI office, Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands, August 6, 2018. Courtesy of the director

Our interview with Marie Maddison, director of Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI), gave additional context to Heine's commitment to gender equality and equity. Maddison was a co-founder with Heine and others—including Carmen Bigler, the only woman elected to the congress of Micronesia, and Evelyn Kono, RMI legislator (1993 to 1997)—of WUTMI, a culmination of long-term grassroots activism not only for fair and equal treatment of women, but for socioeconomic and political issues leading up to Marshallese independence in 1979. These women earned bachelor's degrees from US academic institutions, rare at that time, and worked in education in the Marshall Islands. They were also active in the territory's political and economic future, particularly with political education—educating people about governance and voting, and advocating for women's work and involvement in politics.

In the film, I follow Maddison through the WUTMI office as she introduces the space where banners and posters from past projects are displayed, along with the radio broadcast station imparting important information to women and youth in Majuro. As she introduces us to the WUTMI logo, she explains that “the lady's wearing our traditional skirt and she's pounding on a pandanus leaf, which is used for handicraft to weave the society” (Fig. 3).<sup>15</sup> A running theme through our interviews was re-defining the roles of women in political life as the RMI transitioned from a series of foreign occupations (Spain, Germany, Japan, and the US) to forming its own independent nation. As expressed by President Heine:

it's not expected [for] a woman to climb trees in the Marshall Islands. That's not something that is allowed in the culture. And so that's based on gender expectation here. But sitting in a parliament . . . the role of women and men in the parliament has not been something that's part of the culture. For that reason, I think we can make our way in terms of what is expected and who can do what in that institution.<sup>16</sup>

What would it mean for women in the RMI to “weave a society” in the twenty-first century? Getting more women into top government positions has certainly been a challenge. At the legislative level during the time of filming, only three of the thirty-three elected members were women, with usually one woman each term. President Heine believes that women, comprising fifty percent of the population, need to be part of the conversation. In her interview, she emphasized that women “have a very important stake in the development of this country. They

should likewise have the same voice in the development and policymaking of the country.”<sup>17</sup>

Meeting Amenta Matthews in August 2018, at that time the RMI’s minister of internal affairs, provided me with additional insight as to what female leadership brings to the table that male leadership does not. When Minister Matthews was elected to parliament in 2007, she was the first woman to serve as a minister in twelve years. She noted that President Heine made a concerted effort to appoint at least one or two women to cabinet boards. She also observed that President Heine demonstrates “more caring . . . for issues like education, issues for women and girls, domestic violence, the elderly . . . [She] sees the country as a whole” and “wants to improve the life of the people and the outer islands.”<sup>18</sup> Other initiatives President Heine accomplished included the organization of the first Micronesian Women’s Conference—held in 2017 in the RMI—bringing together traditional and government women leaders from the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, and the Republics of Kiribati, Nauru, and Palau. The purpose of the conference was to build strong alliances toward gender equality with a focus on five areas: ending violence against women and girls, realizing women’s economic empowerment, the empowerment of women in politics and decision-making, addressing the effects of climate change on women, and improving women’s access to health services.<sup>19</sup> These types of alliances are also critical for international relations with larger organizations and nations.

Reflecting upon my question about what it means to be the only woman in parliament, Minister Matthews admitted that it can be difficult to be taken seriously and to get what you want. Despite this, she recalled that being a woman can be a key attribute when resolving disputes and conflict because respect toward women is embedded in Marshallese custom. According to Matthews and all my interviewees, in traditional Marshallese society, women are central figures in conflict resolution. They explained that in Marshallese, the phrase *lejmaanjuri* refers to women stamping on aggression in order to diffuse it. Minister Matthews said, “I always felt that when there’s a conflict, and physical conflict, that I will be the one to stand up and say ‘That’s enough.’ And men always listen. I didn’t think that I was not respected at all as the only woman in the parliament.”<sup>20</sup>

The support of Marshallese women for women leaders was something all the interviewees emphasized as key to women getting into political office. This support from women is vividly recalled in “Campaigning in Aur” by Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, a poem about when President Heine—Jetñil-Kijiner’s mother—was campaigning for the senate in 2011:

*After six hours on a ship, women  
spill from the fiberglass mouth  
of bubbling speedboats, women  
in popsicle colored baseball caps and silk  
guams, faded muumuus, and flowered  
pohnpeian skirts, whooping, hollering, laughing  
in the Aur water.*

*My mother is running for the Aur Atoll senator's seat.  
Throughout all the elections, 32 senators elected  
were men.  
Throughout all the elections, only 1 senator elected  
was a woman.*

*My mother knows the stakes  
She knows the odds are slim  
So she disembarks on her motherisland flanked  
by a campaign army  
of women.<sup>21</sup>*



Figure 4. Still from *Her Excellency* (work in progress), dir. Anita Chang. President Hilda Heine's opening remarks for the Climate Vulnerable Forum, November 22, 2018. Courtesy of the director

In our interviews in Taiwan conducted in 2017 before those in the RMI, some of the women legislators mentioned that many women pursue political

careers as single women because in Taiwan you rarely find men who would support their wives or partners through their political careers. Hearing the legislators' comments, I was interested in including the voice of a supportive spouse of a woman president. My meeting with First Gentleman Thomas Kijiner Jr. provided a contrast to the sentiments I had heard from the women. He emphasized the support he and President Heine gave each other while they both pursued and held political offices. Having grown up on an outer island of the RMI, in a community of fewer than 100 people, Kijiner stressed the importance of learning to live together, as every single person is important to the survival of the whole group and island. He conveys this reality of interconnectedness among island populations when discussing global warming and the climate crisis internationally. In our interview, Kijiner reminded us, "Despite our size, [the RMI has] been kind of punching way over our head globally, on the issue of climate change. We've been leaders in that forum."<sup>22</sup>

While in office, President Heine led the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) in 2018 and convened the first fully online forum that year (Fig. 4). The forum restated the commitments of and garnered additional support from fifty-eight nations toward climate action focused on the most vulnerable groups for the period 2018–2020.<sup>23</sup> For my documentary, I selected a clip of President Heine's opening address from the CVF informational video to emphasize the various forms of a president's highly mediated life in general. In it she states, "If warming goes above 1.5 degrees Celsius, our fate is sealed. But it's not too late if every nation steps up and does more by 2020. The Marshall Islands feels the grave weight of responsibility to assume the leadership of the Climate Vulnerable Forum at this crucial time."<sup>24</sup> And in her closing remarks, she pointedly asks, "If not us, who? If not now, when?"

In their individual interviews, President Heine and Minister Matthews discussed the "double whammies" that the Marshallese have dealt with and continue to deal with: the climate crisis and nuclear legacy. President Heine gently reminds us that these are "two threats that are not of our own making."<sup>25</sup> Due to the US detonation of sixty-seven nuclear weapons from 1946 to 1958, yielding as much radiation as 1.6 Hiroshima bombings occurring every day for twelve years, the Marshallese Islanders experienced direct and indirect health consequences such as reproductive, breast, lung, stomach, liver, and thyroid cancers; leukemia; diabetes; and women giving birth to "jellyfish babies"—babies born without bones and with transparent skin.<sup>26</sup> The twelve years of nuclear tests also destroyed island ecosystems, prompting an out-migration of the Marshall Islanders as many islands became uninhabitable. Ensuing health issues and access to adequate

treatment continue to be a multi-generational challenge for the Marshallese. In the late 1970s, the US government built a 350-foot-wide structure on Runit Island in Enewetok Atoll to contain “over 100,000 cubic yards of radioactively contaminated soil and debris [transported from other RMI locations] that were encapsulated in concrete (waste pile) inside an unlined nuclear test crater.”<sup>27</sup> While Runit Dome was originally intended to be a temporary containment measure, it seems, quite bleakly, to now be a permanent island fixture; it is referred to locally as “the tomb.” Residents are worried about Runit Dome, particularly as visible cracks have formed on the dome’s 358 concrete panels. With rising waters and intensifying storm surges, these fractures could expand, resulting in radioactive release and catastrophic damage. While the US Department of Energy has done periodic tests, the most recent report, in June 2020, concluded that

there are not data to suggest that the dome, or more specifically, the radioactive material encapsulated within the containment structure, is currently having a measurable adverse effect on the surrounding environment, or is expected to have any adverse effect on the environment in 5, 10, or 20 years.<sup>28</sup>

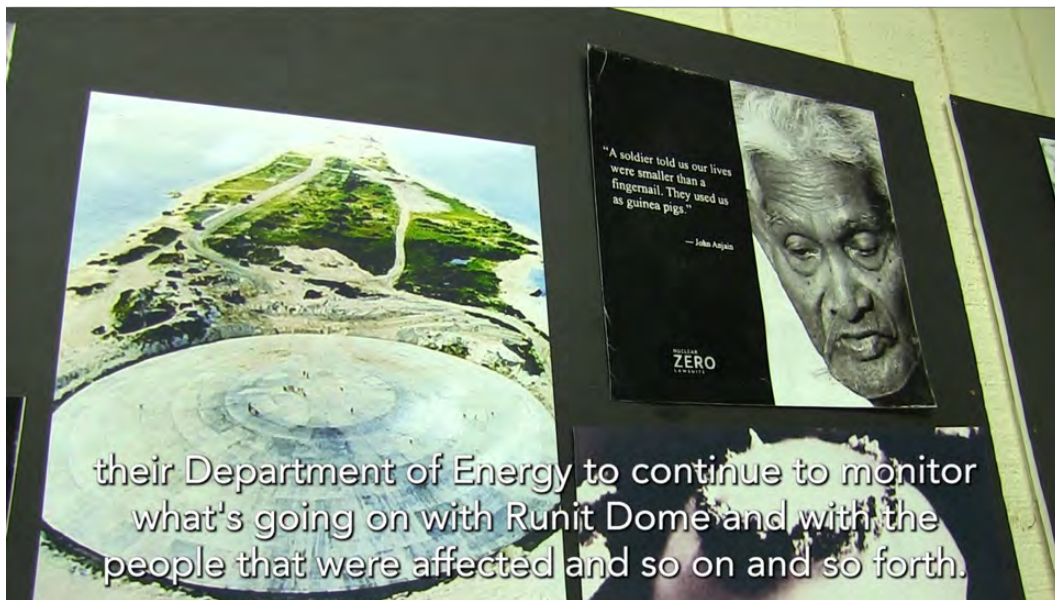


Figure 5. Still from *Her Excellency* (work in progress), dir. Anita Chang. Exhibits at the Alele Museum, Majuro, RMI, August 6, 2018. Courtesy of the director

The report also acknowledges the need to conduct a groundwater radiochemical analysis in order to determine if “forcing events” such as storm surges will affect the groundwater quality. In *Her Excellency*, the viewer hears President Heine discussing the US Department of Energy’s ongoing responsibility to monitor and deal with Runit Dome, as on the screen appears a display from the Alele Museum, Majuro, featuring an image of the dome alongside a quote by John Anjain, a survivor of the Bravo test and an anti-nuclear activist: “A soldier told us our lives were smaller than a fingernail. They used us as guinea pigs” (Fig. 5). The combination of these images and Heine’s interview segment emphasizes the enormous ethical responsibilities the US shoulders for generations to come.

Nuclear justice was an important platform for President Heine’s administration, which formed a National Nuclear Commission. It produced a report outlining a strategy for nuclear justice comprising of five pillars:

- (1) Full payment of all past and future awards of the Nuclear Claims Tribunal (Compensation);
- (2) Quality health care for all Marshallese (Health);
- (3) Reducing the risks of exposure to radiation and other toxins in the environment (Environment);
- (4) Building national capacity to monitor and understand radiation impacts (National Capacity);
- and (5) Education and awareness of our nuclear legacy (Education and Awareness).<sup>29</sup>

Minister Matthews stressed the importance of this report to provide continuity of information for many years to come, as US lawmakers come and go while the nuclear legacy continues to be felt in the Marshall Islands and beyond.

The 1986 Compacts of Free Association are agreements between the US and the RMI, Federated States of Micronesia, and Republic of Palau that grant the US a military presence and activities in these areas in return for US security, economic assistance, and other provisions.<sup>30</sup> The Compact of Free Association between the US and RMI was set to expire at the end of 2023. Regarding the negotiation for its renewal, President Heine stated, “In order for us to move forward with anything, we have to get the support of the United States public behind anything that we want to do in this regard.”<sup>31</sup>

This sentiment was an important part of our interview with President Heine and was, for me, a critical call for support. I intercut this section of the interview with historical images of the nuclear tests exhibited at the Alele Museum in Majuro, along with their accompanying texts (Fig. 6). By doing so, I emphasize the importance of historical education for future paths and actions. The US Senate

Energy Committee Hearing on the Compact of Free Association Amendments Act took place on July 13, 2023, as I was writing this essay. Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia had signed new Compacts of Free Association with the US, while the RMI had yet to sign until a “‘dignified’ settlement of nuclear claims” was met in the new compact.<sup>32</sup> This included many important questions of safety in the geographical areas affected by nuclear test contamination and waste. While monetary compensation was one component of negotiations, the Marshallese Senate Committee Statement delivered by Foreign Minister Jack Ading demanded timely, responsive, and just actions from the US to directly address the Marshall Islanders’ concerns.

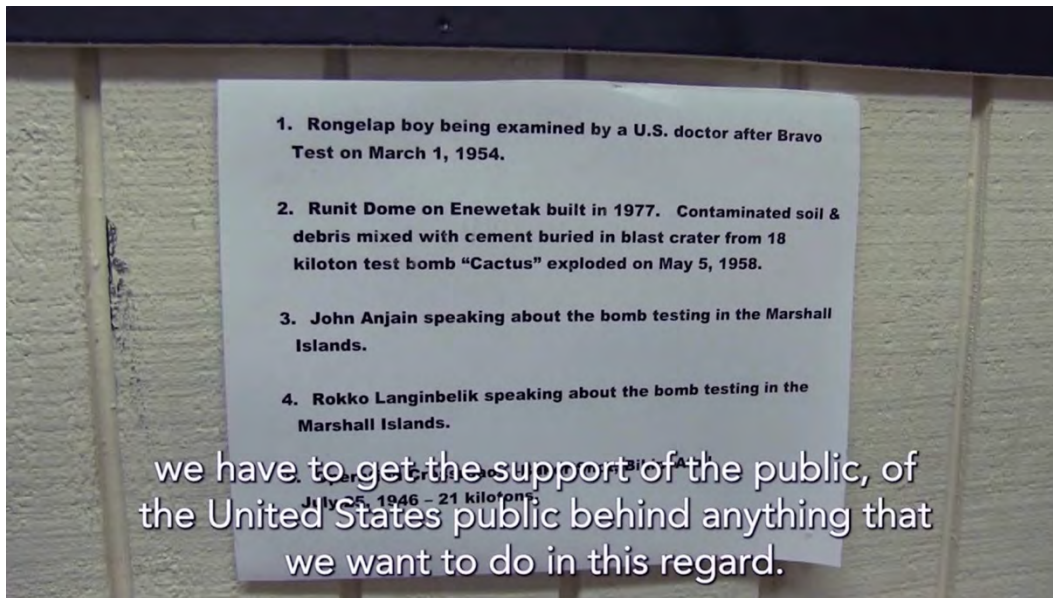


Figure 6. Still from *Her Excellency* (work in progress), dir. Anita Chang. Courtesy of the director

While the RMI signed the revised “compromised” compact on October 16, 2023, the struggle for nuclear justice continues. Depending on funding and scheduling, my film production could take me back to the RMI to interview President Heine in her second term and resume our conversation on the ongoing issues of nuclear justice and the climate crisis. Across spans of time and space, *Her Excellency* aims to capture moments in the lives of women leaders that present historical insights for the present. Interviews with each woman leader also offer creative and formal opportunities for the film. My research and interviews specific to

President Heine and the RMI context revealed a critical call-and-response not only for *Her Excellency* but also for my pedagogical practice.

### **Creative Pedagogy: A Critical Call-and-Response**

While the COVID-19 pandemic put a temporary halt to the production of *Her Excellency*, and prior to producing a proof-of-concept video for *Her Excellency*, I brought my research into the classroom via an undergraduate ecomedia course I was teaching online at California State University, East Bay. In it, I shared my experiences visiting the RMI as well as the main concerns of the people I interviewed, particularly President Heine's emphasis on the critical importance of education and support from Americans needed in order for both the RMI and the US to move forward on issues of climate and nuclear justice. In response to her call for educating Americans, I designed the course so that its first half would focus on the Marshall Islands.

My ecomedia course focuses on the increasingly interdisciplinary discourse and multimedia production of film and video that address current ecological issues. Students also learn about the development of ecocinema theory, the legacies of earlier film and video that documented ecological issues, and the creative and critical ways they can engage with real-life environmental issues.<sup>33</sup> The course explores the following questions: What discursive, aesthetic, and technical strategies and interventions do these works engage in to raise awareness and inspire action on the issues they address? What enhancements to our senses can ecocinema and ecomedia offer? What can they show that we don't already know? What can they contribute to our knowledge? How can they make us better agents of change?

In spring 2022, my students and I explored a range of ecomedia works (i.e., multimedia journalism, documentaries, films, video poems, and poetry) on the Marshall Islands as a way to explore how different media forms visualize and tell the story of the Marshall Islands' fraught history with US nuclear weapons testing and, more recently, the climate crisis—both of which pose ongoing environmental challenges for the Marshallese. In addition to presentations of paired film and readings, students kept a weekly journal in which they reflected on and wrote about one of the films they had viewed, connecting it to one of the readings assigned with the film. Their journals helped them develop critiques about these representations and enabled me to guide in-class discussion.

In his nuanced book-length essay *Fear of Small Numbers*, globalization scholar Arjun Appadurai notes that the “growth in grassroots coalitions for change, equity, and health on a worldwide basis suggests that the human faculty for long-distance empathy has not yet been depleted.”<sup>34</sup> This idea prompted me to become interested in how media ecologies of practice, viewing, and pedagogy can participate in maintaining this faculty for long-distance empathy, and how they do so amidst ongoing disruptions due to the climate crisis, global pandemic, and calls to address colonial legacies and neoimperial structures. This online classroom was therefore designed as a creative laboratory for exploring “critical empathy,” debunking the myth of “isolation” and “remoteness” of islands, problematizing the term “Anthropocene,” and witnessing the reach of settler environmentalism and salvage environmentalism. Students learn to empathize with islanders who articulate how they feel with(in) the Anthropocene, question how they orient themselves in the world, and find their place and role within it despite and beyond virtual geographies.<sup>35</sup>

For the course’s midterm assignment, I asked the students—working in small groups—to respond in a call-and-response fashion to the following prompt:

In a globalized world and living in the US, a country [that] arguably has committed crimes against humanity—here, in the case of nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands—how can we understand that our existences are bound together with the peoples of the Marshall Islands? This midterm will involve the Marshall Islands, and you may approach your project in one or more of the following ways: 1) Every March 1st is Nuclear Victims Remembrance Day for the peoples of the Marshall Islands. It was formally known as Nuclear Victims’ Day and Nuclear Survivors’ Day. Last year, the National Nuclear Commission, Republic of the Marshall Islands put out a call for short videos: “Show your solidarity and remind us Marshallese that we are not alone in our pursuit of nuclear justice. Reflect on our shared efforts to uplift and provide comfort to one another”; 2) A strategic campaign for awareness and action; 3) A personal reflection of the nuclear and climate crises that the Marshallese have and continue to endure.

For their response, I asked students to use concepts and themes they had learned in the course to produce an ecomedia work or sketch taking the form of a short video, music, soundscape, rap, photography, poetry, performance, meme, drawing, poster, and/or painting. In an accompanying essay, they were required to include concept(s) introduced in the course readings—such as decolonizing the

Anthropocene, occupation as trusteeship, and settler environmentalism—that addressed critical decolonial approaches to climate change, colonialism, and global capitalism.<sup>36</sup> They were instructed to also include concept(s), themes, and aesthetic strategies they had learned from their study of videos, films, and course readings, and explain how these informed and inspired their creative and communication approach to their ecomedia work.

The students demonstrated their critical understanding of course material and engaged in a call-and-response through the creative process to explore and put into practice not only long-distance empathy, but what it means to empathize or feel *with* the Marshallese as eloquently expressed by Salma Monani:

Sympathy, as primarily a concern *for*, is motivated not necessarily by a sense of sharing but instead by a sense of charity. While altruistic, charity signals a sense of concern that is hierarchical in nature, and inherently patronizing. In contrast, empathy, which is tied to sharing feelings, hints at an altruism that is more grounded in a sense of equality. When acting from empathy, I do what I do because I've taken on your perspective; your pain is my pain; your joy is my joy. Because I find myself suffering and/or experiencing as I think you do, I have put myself on a similar plane as you.<sup>37</sup>

Each student presented a unique engagement of feeling with the Marshallese and the pursuit of nuclear justice. Some points of identification were factors that shaped student empathy, such as being Pacific Islanders themselves or having a US-military affiliation. In the end, the reverberating effects from Heine's critical call on the importance of education—needed in order for both the RMI and the US to move forward on issues of climate and nuclear justice—could be felt and heard in our ecomedia classroom, my students' works, and my film.

The student works were powerful and I, along with my two research assistants, selected some for an online public exhibition titled *An Evening of Poetry and Politics: The Marshall Islands and Her Excellency Hilda Heine*.<sup>38</sup> The event included two discussants: Ariana Tibon from the RMI National Nuclear Commission and Dr. Maria Ortuoste, a professor of political science at California State University, East Bay. Some questions we wanted to explore in the event were how can poetry, visual art, and politics contribute to the achievement of climate and nuclear justice for the Marshall Islands, and what steps can we take to mobilize our life support for the Marshallese people and for ourselves in the face of rising sea levels?

Along with *Her Excellency*, my work-in-progress video, the exhibition showcased student poetry including "To the People of the Marshall Islands" by

Brooklyn Aguilar, Alexandria Sepulveda, and Adriana Fimbres; “I am a Journalist and I am Here” by Alexis Peck; and the trilogy “A Need For Change” by Francisco Cortez Mendoza, “At the End” by David Oronos, and “Plucked from the Soil” by Lyanne Nisperos. The exhibition also included *Tell Them: A Video Poem* by Nang Hlaing, as well as two memes about Runit Dome created by Cindy Kim. In the following section, I will focus on three of these exemplary works: the video poem *Tell Them*, the Runit Dome memes, and the poem “At the End.”

### ***Tell Them***

Nang Hlaing co-produced the three-minute video *Tell Them* with classmates TJ Luke and Gladys Gonzales, and directed the video herself. Hlaing, originally from Myanmar, was then a senior majoring in communication. Taking its title from Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner’s poem of the same name, *Tell Them* is divided into two contrasting parts. The first is a montage of slow-motion, black-and-white, archival images sourced from YouTube of the US military’s 1946 Operation Crossroads nuclear testing on Bikini Atoll of the Marshall Islands. The aerial and ground-level footage shows silent blasts, with billowing, emanating, and falling plumes filling the frame, at times looking like spectacular clouds of cotton balls that belie the unimaginable debris of death left in their wake (Fig. 7). These images accompany Hlaing’s softly-spoken narration:

These cluster of dots on the map lies a nation, the Marshall Islands. On these islands live the strong and tough Marshallese. Even after decades of injustice and exploitation by our American government, they remain resilient. Their home displaced. The elders battle with cancers. Their babies born with defects. They remain. That is their home. That is their land. That is their history. We had destroyed all that was dear to them with our nuclear testing. Yet, our government remains in denial, denying responsibilities and assistance while the majority of Americans remain ignorant. For that, we are truly sorry. To all the Americans. Let’s spread this message. Tell your friends and families. Tell them about the nuclear testings. Tell them about the beautiful shores of the Marshall Islands. Tell them about the strength of the Marshallese. Tell them to stand for injustice. Tell them to push congress to take responsibility. Tell them we could do better. Let us stand together with the Marshallese. Let us stand against injustice.<sup>39</sup>

As the narration concludes, soft instrumental music is heard along with the sounds of rushing water. This leads into the second part: a color montage of contemporary aerial images of the shore and atolls, including Marshallese children and youth walking to school, youth learning about fishing nets from teachers, island street life, and a woman sitting in front of a United States Postal Service office. The images are overlaid with string-band music with sung lyrics listing the names of islands within the RMI.



Figure 7. Still from *Tell Them: A Video Poem*, dir. Nang Hlaing, 2022. Courtesy of the directors

In her accompanying essay, Hlaing explained that she was personally inspired by Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner’s poem in the video *Anointed* (2018, directed by Dan Lin), Ursula Biemann’s soft voiceover delivery in her video-essay *Deep Weather* (2013), and Bruce Conner’s visual style in his short film *Crossroads* (1976). By slowing down the explosions, she believed it would “imprint the message into viewers’ minds” and “show remorse and empathy toward the Marshallese.” For the contrasting second part, Hlaing writes that she and her peers did not want to “emphasize solely the devastation of nuclear testing, [rather] the emphasis is to turn to the vibrancy and continuation of life in the Marshall Islands.” She used found footage from the internet, inspired by Cauleen Smith’s film *Song for Earth and Folk* (2013). Here, the cheerful music was left on its own, without narration, to emphasize “joy and optimism.”<sup>40</sup>

During the event's discussion, Hlaing explained that she made this video to shed light on this part of US and Marshallese history, of which she had not previously been aware, and she believes more people should be made aware of through the education system. She said, "I'm not American by birth, but even though my husband [was] born in America and he worked in the US Department of Defense, he didn't even know the extent of the [damage] that was done in the Marshall Islands." For discussant Maria Ortuoste, *Tell Them* showed that "this dire thing might be happening, but we're living. And it's not just an existence, and we are doing our best to live our culture and have fun, have fun while going through it, and which is, I guess, the essence of thriving for a group of people." Discussant Ariana Tibon added that every March 1 is Remembrance Day, a national holiday in the RMI to remember and honor the survivors and victims of the US nuclear tests, and that the use of the words "survivors" or "victims" in its name continues to be debated even at the level of parliament.

As she depicted in *Tell Them* in the second half of the video, Hlaing agreed that a show of strength is also important; she thought about her Myanmar homeland after the military coup and how people there are fighting and not just surviving. Ortuoste added that even if "one is not on the frontlines of a revolution, just surviving day-to-day and having that sort of spirit is strength in itself."<sup>41</sup> The discussion reminded me of the discursive nuances in survivorship and victimhood depending on the nature of violent event(s), the duration of a conflict, ensuing trauma, the haunting effects of violence, and, ultimately, the needs of articulating these experiences for those who survived such horrors.

### **Runit Dome Memes**

A daily reminder of the US nuclear weapons tests on the Marshall Islands is the Runit Dome, a concrete dome described above that contains more than 3.1 million cubic feet of radioactive material from past nuclear tests—the equivalent of thirty-three Olympic-sized swimming pools.<sup>42</sup> While the 2020 US Department of Energy inspection report quoted above noted that there were no "measurable adverse effects" in the foreseeable five to twenty years, many Marshallese would like an independent review as part of their nuclear justice platform. To address the magnitude of the Runit Dome and the multitude of environmental issues it poses, Cindy Kim, a graduate student in communication at the time of the event, created two memes that pointedly reflect on the dome (Figs. 8–9). They remind viewers of the war machine's unfathomably destructive impact on the environment and

stress the importance of both holding accountable those who were and are responsible for the Runit Dome's existence and mitigating its ongoing dangers. In her memes, Kim used phrases and statistics from the 2020 report to make sure they were "grounded in reality [rather] than just an aesthetic artifact." Kim's main aim was to "make information more accessible and consumable to different audiences online as an entry point [for] those who might not know anything at all about the US history of nuclear detonation in the Marshall Islands."<sup>43</sup>

US government: \*slaps roof of Runit Dome\* this bad  
boy can fit so much more than 3.1 million cubic feet of U.S.-produced radioactive soil and debris, including lethal amounts of plutonium in it



Figure 8. Cindy Sung Yun Kim, *Runit Dome Meme 1*, 2022. Courtesy of the artist

In *Runit Dome Meme 1*, two graphically illustrated government officials and/or contractors stand in the foreground of an iconic aerial photograph of the Runit Dome (Fig. 8). The man in a suit is positioned so that his right hand is hovering over the top of the Dome in a casual matter-of-fact gesture. This symbolizes the US government's attitude of disavowal toward the gravity of the nuclear and biological weapons waste contained within, particularly since the US has no apparent plans for permanent clean-up of the waste.



Figure 9. Cindy Sung Yun Kim, *Runit Dome Meme 2*, 2022. Courtesy of the artist

This skirting of responsibility is further commented on in *Runit Dome 2*, which emphasizes the fact that the nuclear waste in Runit Dome was created by the US (Fig. 9). The skidding of the car indicates how quickly and obviously the US does not want to face the challenges of its responsibilities. The skillful humor embedded in both of these memes opens up space for critical reflection. Both are searing commentary on the enormity of the devastation and the lack of true will on part of the US government to bear the full consequences of radiological damages that extend beyond the temporary containment site. Participants in the event’s online discussion responded favorably to the memes; Maria Ortuoste noted that artistic expressions “are usually more powerful than just political speeches . . . because [they evoke] the humanity of people and that’s what gets people to change.”<sup>44</sup>

### “At the End”

Globally, the legacy of nuclear testing haunts everyone, and none more than the Marshallese. David Oronos’s poem “At the End” bespeaks the rippling effects of

its violence and the resulting trauma felt on the Marshall Islands and other island communities whose identities and sustenance come from their ocean worlds. Oronos is of Chamoru and Filipino descent, and was a senior majoring in communication at the time of the event. Introducing his poem, he explained, “When I wrote it, I imagined an island by itself, alone, left behind, stripped of its people.” In his accompanying essay, he expressed that his sources of inspiration were the stories of survivors from the nuclear testing’s fallout in the documentary *Nuclear Savage: The Islands of Secret Project 4.1* (2011) and Jetñil-Kijiner’s poems.<sup>45</sup> Of the latter he wrote, “She invokes the voice of her people, their anger, their pride, and their way of life. I didn’t want to copy her style of poetry, but I tried to capture the same urgency and emotional connection.”<sup>46</sup> Oronos stated that his creative work also responded to how the 2017 essay “On the Importance of a Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene” by Heather Davis and Zoe Todd brings attention to the violence of the Anthropocene when explicitly linked to the beginnings of British colonization in 1610. Davis and Todd state that

linking the Anthropocene with colonization . . . draws attention to the violence at its core, and calls for the consideration of Indigenous philosophies and processes of Indigenous self-governance as a necessary political corrective, alongside the self-determination of other communities and societies violently impacted by the white supremacist, colonial, and capitalist logics instantiated in the origins of the Anthropocene.<sup>47</sup>

Oronos’s poem “At the End” refers to the “poison”—a reality as much as it is a symbol of ongoing violence—that will not go away, and yet despite this “poison,” the island in his poem continues to call for the reader to yearn to “come home” and to “not lose the way.” “The way” metaphorically refers to Indigenous philosophies and perhaps “processes of Indigenous self-governance.”

Finally, Oronos’s poem practiced what Craig Santos Perez writes about in his article “Thinking (and feeling) with Anthropocene (Pacific) islands.”<sup>48</sup> In his accompanying essay, Oronos writes, “Santos Perez comments about how it is not enough to just think about the Anthropocene from the island perspective, but we need to feel as well. Pacific Islanders are not just victims and not entirely innocent either. More importantly, they have stories to tell the world and that was a concept I wanted to portray.”<sup>49</sup>

"At the End"

*Come home, my children.  
Come home, before I slip away,  
Into the dark.*

*Come closer, my children.  
Come be with me  
At the end.*

*Each day, I lose more  
Each day, I sink further  
Into the deep.*

*The tides rise.  
The tides will wash away  
All the scars.*

*The poison remains.  
The poison they tried to forget  
In waters.*

*Why do they persist?  
Why do they pursue the end  
Of the world?*

*Here we were family.  
Here we told our children's stories  
Of the past.*

*Will they have a future?  
Will they touch their feet  
To the sand?*

*Do not cry for me.  
Do not mourn the fate  
Of the lost.*

*Remember my story.  
Remember so that you may  
Tell the world.*

*Come home, my children.*

*Come home and promise not to  
Lose the way.*

*Come closer, my children.  
Come be with me  
At the end.<sup>50</sup>*

After Oronos's reading, Ariana Ribon imagined that the jellyfish babies (among the many victims of the nuclear weapons tests) who have passed away are "wanting to be near the[ir] mother[s]." <sup>51</sup> Tibon also reminded the event's participants and audience that Marshallese women led the nuclear justice efforts from the very beginning; they were early activists who criticized the nuclear weapons tests because they were giving birth to jellyfish babies due to the radioactive contamination in the water. One of President Hilda Heine's five pillars of nuclear justice described above is "Education and Awareness." A member of the National Nuclear Commission, Tibon explained that the nuclear legacy in the Marshall Islands is now part of their K-12 educational curriculum after seventy-three years of omission.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout her work in education and politics, President Hilda Heine has promoted women's organizations, women's rights, and the importance of women being active in the community and in the government. In interviews for my documentary, Marie Maddison spoke of the need for an education system that is relevant for the Marshall Islands today, and Evelyn Joseph spoke of the significance of place-based education, as well as what it means to be a global citizen. Indeed, the women featured in *Her Excellency* advocate for a critical pedagogy—one that is relevant to where one is located and that builds relationships across distance, a factor critical to mutual survivability. Along with being a filmmaker who responds to and amplifies the critical calls of these women, I also share them with my students in the classroom.

Although my ecomedia course of spring 2022 was held virtually, the class gathered like a think tank and, amidst the climate crisis and global pandemic, critically navigated the media ecologies of practice, viewing, and pedagogy. We mediated histories and stories from the Marshall Islands, which served as our guides.

Our creative pedagogy involved a critical call-and-response approach to specific ecomedia representations of Marshallese life, and the written words and voices of Marshallese educators, feminists, politicians, community activists, and poets. Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner's poems were a steady inspiration for my students. In her words, the Marshallese are "descendants of the finest navigators in the world" and their stories—told through the sights and sounds of poetry, music, video poems, memes, experimental films, and documentaries—enable critical awareness and long-distance empathy for continued dialogue, knowledge-building, and action toward achieving nuclear and climate justice for the Marshallese.<sup>52</sup> Undoubtedly, ecomedia representations of the Marshall Islands steer their audiences to navigate our entangled and problematic world and to visualize our place in this world. They present opportunities for audiences to understand the importance of empathizing and feeling with islanders, and of situating our lives in relation to the Marshallese. Knowing that these connective relations matter to our mutual survival and mutual healing from the brutal acts of history, we are able to forge paths toward livable presents and futures for all.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, *Iep Jāltok: Poems from a Marshallese Daughter* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2017), 64–5. See also [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9D88ST9qbw&t=15s&ab\\_channel=StudioRevolt](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9D88ST9qbw&t=15s&ab_channel=StudioRevolt).

<sup>2</sup> Jetñil-Kijiner, 66–7.

<sup>3</sup> Anono Liem Loek and Marie Madison, “Women’s Organizations,” in *Life in the Republic of the Marshall Islands*, eds. Anono Liem Loek, Veronica C. Kiluwe, and Linda Crowl (Majuro, Marshall Islands: University of the South Pacific, 2004), 82–100.

<sup>4</sup> The course focused on the growing discourse about and production of ecocinema and ecomedia—increasingly interdisciplinary and created across multiple media platforms—as well the legacies of film and video to document, construct, and present themes that address (both directly and indirectly) the ecological issues of their times.

<sup>5</sup> The course was taught online with twenty-five undergraduate students. Most were majoring in communication, with others majoring in art, biological sciences, human development, and English.

<sup>6</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Salma Monani, “Evoking Sympathy and Empathy: The Ecological Indian and Indigenous Eco-activism,” in *Moving Environments: Affect, Emotion, Ecology, and Film*, ed. Alexa Weik von Mossner (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014), 225–47.

<sup>7</sup> “Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls,” United Nations, July 7, 2022, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/Goal-05/>.

<sup>8</sup> “About Us: Our Mission & Vision,” Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, accessed August 5, 2023, <https://prel.org/about/>.

<sup>9</sup> President Hilda Heine, “State of the Nation Address,” August 6, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> President Hilda Heine, in-person interview with author, August 7, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Heine, interview.

<sup>12</sup> Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner and Hilda Heine, “Displacement and Out-Migration: The Marshall Islands Experience,” Wilson Center, September 30, 2020, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/displacement-and-out-migration-marshall-islands-experience>.

<sup>13</sup> Heine, interview.

<sup>14</sup> Heine, “State of the Nation Address.”

<sup>15</sup> Marie Maddison, in-person interview with author, August 6, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Heine, interview.

<sup>17</sup> Heine, interview.

<sup>18</sup> Amenta Matthews, in-person interview with author, August 7, 2018.

<sup>19</sup> “Micronesia Women’s Conference: It’s Time for Substantive Action,” Pacific Community/Communauté du Pacifique, August 11, 2017, <https://www.spc.int/updates/news/2017/08/micronesian-womens-conference-its-time-for-substantive-action>.

<sup>20</sup> Matthews, interview.

<sup>21</sup> Jetñil-Kijiner, *Iep Jāltok*, 60.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Kijiner, in-person interview with author, August 7, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> “Members,” Climate Vulnerable Forum, accessed August 5, 2023, <https://thecvf.org/members>.

<sup>24</sup> “CVF Summit Announcement,” Climate Vulnerable Forum, June 24, 2018, <https://youtu.be/YBOM2hCFvpl>.

<sup>25</sup> Heine, interview.

<sup>26</sup> See <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/world/hiroshima-anniversary-nuclear-testing>; Lijon Eknilang, “Learning from Rongelap's Pain,” *Seattle Journal for Social Justice* 2, no. 1 (2003): 317–8; Neal A. Palafox, David B. Johnson, Alan R. Katz, Jill S. Minami, and Kennar Briand, “Site specific cancer incidence in the Republic of the Marshall Islands,” *Cancer* 83 (1998): 1821–4, [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1097-0142\(19981015\)83:8+<1821::AID-CNCR30>3.0.CO;2-5](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-0142(19981015)83:8+<1821::AID-CNCR30>3.0.CO;2-5).

<sup>27</sup> “Report on the Status of the Runit Dome in the Marshall Islands,” United States Department of Energy, June 2020, 2, <https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2020/06/f76/DOE-Runit-Dome-Report-to-Congress.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> “Report on Runit Dome,” iii.

<sup>29</sup> “Nuclear Justice for the Marshall Islands: A Strategy for Coordinated Action FY2020-FY2023,” Marshall Islands National Nuclear Commission, 2019, 3, <https://rmi-data.sprep.org/system/files/RMI%20NNC%20Strategy%202019.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> “The Compacts of Free Association,” Congressional Research Service, accessed August 5, 2023, <https://crsreports.congress.gov>.

<sup>31</sup> Heine, interview.

<sup>32</sup> Jack Ading, “Statement of the Honorable Jack Ading, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Republic of the Marshall Islands, Before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources,” July 13, 2023, <https://www.energy.senate.gov/services/files/D364FEFC-C2F2-4CE1-94A3-057BDE98A584>.

<sup>33</sup> Kiu-Wai Chu aptly describes ecocinema as an “interplay among film, ecology, and the human mind.” Kiu-wai Chu, “Ecocinema,” in *Oxford Bibliographies: Cinema and Media Studies*, accessed January 30, 2024, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199791286/obo-9780199791286-0252.xml>.

<sup>34</sup> Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers*, 41.

<sup>35</sup> The following are part of the course reading list containing the main concepts students learned in the class: Aimee Bahng, “The Pacific Proving Grounds and the Proliferation of Settler Environmentalism,” *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 11, no. 2 (2020): 45–73; Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, “On the Importance of a Date, or, Decolonizing the Anthropocene,” *ACME, an international e-journal for critical geographies* 16, no. 4 (2017): 761–80; Elizabeth DeLoughrey, “The Sea is Rising: Visualising Climate Change in the Pacific Islands,” *Pacific Dynamics*:

*Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* 2, no. 2 (2018): 185–97; Jaimey Hamilton Faris, “Sisters of Ocean and Ice: On the Hydro-Feminism of Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner and Aka Niviâna’s *Rise: From One Island to Another*,” *Shima Journal* 13, no. 2 (2019): 76–99; Epeli Hau’ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” in *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008), 27–40; Monani, “Evoking Sympathy and Empathy”; Craig Santos Perez, “Thinking (and feeling) with Anthropocene (Pacific) islands,” *Dialogues in Human Geography* 11, no. 3 (2021): 1–5.

<sup>36</sup> Other concepts engaged were: ecocinema, ecocritical perspective, ecology as ideology, immersive filmmaking, model of cinema (film-earth relationship, film world, film experience), the Anthropocene, the Capitalocene, the Plantationocene, the Chthulucene, decolonizing nature, Anthropocene islands, green/blue-washing, environmental debilitation, occupation as trusteeship, settler environmentalism, mapping abundance, myth of isolates, salvage environmentalism, and feminist hydro-ontological imaginary.

<sup>37</sup> Monani, “Evoking Sympathy and Empathy,” 277.

<sup>38</sup> “An Evening of Poetry and Politics,” Anita Chang Works (website), accessed June 6, 2024, <https://anitachangworks.com/2022/05/21/an-evening-of-poetry-and-politics/>. As of the writing of this essay, these works are part of a window installation, “Thinking and Feeling with the Marshall Islands,” for the Manifest Differently Project, Artist Television Access, San Francisco, California.

<sup>39</sup> Nang Hlaing, *Tell Them: A Video Poem*, 2022.

<sup>40</sup> Nang Hlaing, “Midterm Paper Analysis on Video Poem ‘Tell Them’” (California State University, East Bay, 2022), 4–5.

<sup>41</sup> “An Evening of Poetry and Politics.”

<sup>42</sup> Susanne Rust, “How the US Betrayed the Marshall Islands, Kindling the Next Nuclear Disaster,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 10, 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/projects/marshall-islands-nuclear-testing-sea-level-rise/>.

<sup>43</sup> “An Evening of Poetry and Politics.”

<sup>44</sup> “An Evening of Poetry and Politics.”

<sup>45</sup> *Nuclear Savage: The Island Experiments of Secret Project 4.1*, directed by Adam Jonas Horovitz (San Francisco, CA: Video Project, 2011) DVD.

<sup>46</sup> David Oronos, “‘At the End’ Paper” (California State University, East Bay, 2022), 2.

<sup>47</sup> Davis and Todd, “On the Importance of a Date,” 763.

<sup>48</sup> Perez, Craig Santos, “Thinking (and feeling),” 1–5.

<sup>49</sup> Oronos, 3.

<sup>50</sup> Oronos, “At the End,” 2022, <https://anitachangworks.com/2022/05/21/an-evening-of-poetry-and-politics/>.

<sup>51</sup> “An Evening of Poetry and Politics.”

<sup>52</sup> Jetñil-Kijiner, 64.

EMILY CORNISH

## Photographing Matrilineal Power and Prestige in the Hawaiian Kingdom

### Abstract

*This article analyzes three portrait photographs from the 1850s that visually emphasize the importance of kinship and genealogy for the ali'i (chiefly class), through their representation of two high-ranking women: Queen Kalama and Princess Victoria Kamāmalu. It argues that during this period, portrait photographs became a new way of displaying and manifesting meaningful matrilineal connections that had political consequences for elite Hawaiians, particularly the connection between ali'i wahine (chiefly women) and political power in Hawai'i. This research indicates that ali'i engagement with photography, rather than merely copying Euro-American visual forms, used Hawaiian ontologies and epistemologies as its crucial starting points.*

**Keywords:** *nineteenth-century photography, portrait photography, gender, Hawai'i, genealogy, nineteenth-century photography*

When photography arrived in the Kingdom of Hawai'i circa 1845, the ali'i (chiefly class) demonstrated a desire to meaningfully engage with this novel technology, as evidenced by the abundance of portrait photographs of Hawaiian elites from the late 1840s to 1850s.<sup>1</sup> Ali'i eagerly embraced photography as a way to materialize their genealogies, which were foundational to their power.<sup>2</sup> Visual culture, like photography, “enacts” and “shapes” social, cultural, and political entanglements, especially in borderlands spaces like Hawai'i.<sup>3</sup> We can therefore view nineteenth-century photography as a facet of visual culture that contributes to Hawaiian processes of world-making. In other words, “images and objects give form to a community's values and social relations, embodying ways of thinking about and being in the world.”<sup>4</sup>

For centuries, kinship connections and genealogy played a pivotal role in Hawaiian worlding.<sup>5</sup> During the nineteenth century, these connections became intimately tied to the creation of the monarchy. By 1795, Kamehameha I had united all of the Hawaiian Islands save for Kaua'i, which only recognized his authority and became a tributary state in 1810. The Hawaiian Kingdom and monarchy was

established during this fifteen-year period. Kamehameha I's successful conquest of the inhabited Hawaiian archipelago and his ability to maintain a firm grip over all the islands was due in no small part to the connections he made through marriage to high-ranking ali'i women including Keōpūolani, Ka'ahumanu, and Kalākua Kaheiheimālie. These relationships impacted his political power and elevated his lineage, paving the way for his dynastic control over all of Hawai'i.<sup>6</sup>

In this article, I analyze three portrait photographs from the 1850s that visually emphasize the importance of kinship and genealogy for the ali'i, through their representation of two high-ranking women: Queen Kalama and Princess Victoria Kamāmalu. I argue that portrait photographs became a new way of displaying and manifesting meaningful matrilineal connections that had political consequences for elite Hawaiians, in particular the connection between ali'i wahine (chiefly women) and political power in Hawai'i. In the nineteenth century, Hawaiian ontologies and epistemologies were crucial starting points for ali'i engagement with and understanding of new ideas, forms, and technologies like photography.

Art and photography historians have paid significant attention to the ways photography in Hawai'i assisted in the colonization and the illegal occupation of the island nation.<sup>7</sup> However, analyzing photography from the 1850s, a period during which Hawaiian sovereignty was more secure than toward the end of the century, reveals Native Hawaiians' complex cultural, social, and political engagements with this media.<sup>8</sup> I focus on photographs that visualize Hawaiian women's power and prestige through their bodily representation as a means to generate, pass on, and document expressions of kinship and chiefly power in the nineteenth century. As such, these photographs foreground the impact of Hawaiian women's agency within the politics of the period and highlight the fact that both male and female elements—if not always in harmony—were necessary to display group mana, or power.

### **Matrilineal Power and Prestige in a Portrait of the Kamehameha Royal Family (1853)**

In 1853, the daguerreotypists Hugo Stangenwald and Stephen Goodfellow arrived in Hilo on the island of Hawai'i, intending to briefly stop there before continuing to Australia.<sup>9</sup> However, Native Hawaiians and the growing community of American Protestant missionaries were so eager for daguerreotypes that the two

photographers extended their stay in the kingdom, going from Hilo on Hawai'i island to Honolulu on O'ahu. Missionary Titus Coan suggested that Kauikeaouli, who reigned as Kamehameha III, become the photographers' patron in order to keep the price of these photographs accessible to as many of his subjects as possible.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, Kauikeaouli, along with many other members of the ali'i, flocked to Stangenwald and Goodfellow's studio to have their photographs made, as evidenced by at least sixteen extant portrait photographs of Hawaiian ali'i produced by the studio.<sup>11</sup> Among these was a portrait of prominent members of Hawaiian royal family (Fig. 1).<sup>12</sup> This photograph is ideal for exploring genealogically complicated representations of royal Hawaiian women, which helped to facilitate political maneuvering by Hawaiian elites.



Figure 1: Hugo Stangenwald and Stephen Goodfellow, the Kamehameha royal family, 1853, daguerreotype. Courtesy of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Archive

The group portrait depicts the king, Kauikeaouli (Kamehameha III, center); his wife, Queen Kalama Hakaleleponi Kapakuhaili (front, right); Princess Victoria

Kamāmalu (front, left); Prince Alexander Liholiho (back, right), and Prince Lot Kapuāiwa (back, left). Siblings Victoria Kamāmalu, Lot Kapuāiwa, and Alexander Liholiho were Kauikeaouli's niece and nephews. Alexander Liholiho (Alexander) was also Kauikeaouli and Kalama's adoptive son and heir, despite Lot Kapuāiwa (Lot) being his older brother and Kauikeaouli having one living biological child at the time. Alexander and Lot would eventually rule the Hawaiian Kingdom as Kings Kamehameha IV and V, respectively. Victoria would hold an equally important role in the government as the kuhina nui (also referred to as premier) from 1854 until Alexander's premature death in 1863.<sup>13</sup> The inclusion of these specific relatives in this photograph points to the fact that kinship in Hawai'i is based on connections that extend beyond direct blood descent and indicates the importance of materializing these connections via photography and other forms of visual culture.<sup>14</sup>

The studio portrait of the Kamehameha royal family depicts some of the highest-ranking members of that dynasty in the 1850s. Kauikeaouli was the son of Kamehameha I, the founder of the united Hawaiian Kingdom, and his most sacred wife, Keōpūolani. Alexander, Lot, and Victoria were also of considerably high rank because of the distinguished genealogy of their mother, Elizabeth Kīna'u, a child of Kamehameha I by his wife Kalākua Kaheiheimālie, a member of the ruling family of Maui. Queen Kalama was the daughter of I'ahu'ula and Naihekukui. She was adopted by her uncle Charles Kana'ina and Miriam Kekāulohi, another daughter of Kalākua Kaheiheimālie (Kalākua).<sup>15</sup> The complexities of the sitters' genealogies influenced the context and structure of this photograph, in particular the mana (power) of the sitters derived from Kamehameha I's wives, more so than from Kamehameha I himself.

Genealogy is crucial to how the Hawaiian monarchy understood and approached nineteenth-century photography. It connects specific people, places, plants, and animals, stretching back in time to the very creation of the earth as told in cosmogonic chants like the Kumulipo, in which Pō, a feminized primordial night gives birth to herself and two children, Kumulipo and Pō'ele.<sup>16</sup> Notably, it is from Kumulipo and Pō'ele that the world is born, rooting the creation of the universe within this sacred female ancestry. Noenoe Silva states that kinship and genealogy provided order to the very space Hawaiians occupied and formed the basis for "legitimate rule."<sup>17</sup> The bedrock of Silva's argument is in the words and writings of nineteenth-century Hawaiians, such as native historian Samuel Kamakau, whose scholarship drew heavily from mele (poetic texts) and mo'okū'auhau (genealogy).<sup>18</sup> In doing so, Kamakau demonstrated that genealogies were active in shaping Native Hawaiian thought and action during the

nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> This is evident, for example, in how Kamakau frames the arrival of James Cook in Hawai'i as one story within a larger genealogical chronicle of travel and voyaging to the archipelago, rather than centering this event as unique and remarkable outside of that prior context.<sup>20</sup> Given that genealogical reckoning gives structure to Hawaiian society, it also shapes visual and material culture, including photographs like the Kamehameha royal family.

Kauikeaouli, Alexander Liholiho, and Lot Kapuāiwa all derived their genealogical status in large part from their high-ranking mothers, Keōpūolani and Elizabeth Kīna'u. Keōpūolani was Kamehameha I's highest-ranking wife and one of the most sacred women in all Hawai'i from the late eighteenth century until her death in 1823.<sup>21</sup> According to Kamakau, she was ni'aupio (meaning "of the same stalk" as it relates to her genealogy) and a naha chiefess (one who is the product of a union between close relatives) with links to the chiefly lines of O'ahu, Maui, and Hawai'i island.<sup>22</sup> Keōpūolani's status was so lofty that Kamehameha I could not consistently be in her presence and visited her only for the purpose of producing royal offspring who would be heirs to their father's throne.<sup>23</sup> Due to the fact that Kamehameha I's genealogy was not as lofty, the political authority of his sons Liholiho (Kamehameha II) and Kauikeaouli (Kamehameha III) stemmed from the genealogical standing of their high-ranking mother.<sup>24</sup>

Elizabeth Kīna'u was the daughter of Kalākua, whose sister Ka'ahumanu is often described as Kamehameha I's favorite and most politically savvy wife.<sup>25</sup> These two women were descended from the ruling chiefs of Maui through their mother Namāhāna'i Kaleleokalani. Kalākua possessed double paternity which enhanced her status and rank.<sup>26</sup> Kamakau describes her extraordinary genealogy as "descended from families of very high rank, tabu rank, thrice tabu, four times tabu" and claims Kalākua considered her own genealogy as possessing "a root [her lineage] firmly established."<sup>27</sup> This rank passed to her daughters Elizabeth Kīna'u, Kamāmalu, Miriam Kekāuluohi, and her grandchildren, including Alexander, Lot, and Victoria, who are depicted in the portrait of the Kamehameha royal family. The genealogies of these women cannot be disentangled from the trajectory of politics within the Hawaiian Kingdom after Kamehameha I's death, specifically in the struggles for power between these chiefly lines via the descendants of Keōpūolani and Kalākua.

Despite their mother's rank and genealogy, the power of Keōpūolani's sons became entangled, and at times challenged, by the powerful chiefly family of Kalākua and her sister Ka'ahumanu. After the death of Kamehameha I, Ka'ahumanu sought power for herself and the elevation of her family line through several

channels including by embracing Christianity and creating the role of the kuhina nui or premier.<sup>28</sup> Historian Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa notes that this power in particular was passed on to Ka‘ahumanu’s female kin.<sup>29</sup> Ka‘ahumanu’s conversion brought with it political, social, and economic benefits, especially as it related to reasserting Hawaiian sovereignty within a rapidly changing Pacific world.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the role of the kuhina nui effectively allowed Ka‘ahumanu to become co-ruler alongside Liholiho (Kamehameha II) and regent for Kauikeaouli at the start of his reign as Kamehameha III. In acknowledgment of the genealogical potency of Keōpūolani’s and Kalākua’s lines, there were unsuccessful attempts to unite them through marriage—for instance by marrying Kalākua’s three daughters to Liholiho and proposing marriage between Elizabeth Kīna‘u and Kauikeaouli, which never materialized. With Liholiho dying childless in 1824, and the death of his sister Nāhi‘ena‘ena in 1836, competition between these two branches—and attempts to control and appropriate the mana of both lineages—continued into the 1850s.<sup>31</sup>

The composition and context surrounding the portrait of the Kamehameha royal family demonstrate how such genealogical complexities were expressed in photography from the 1850s. Queen Kalama and Victoria’s placement in the portrait reflects matrilineal power and the ways Hawaiian genealogy and adoption practices allow that power to flow to different individuals in strategic sociopolitical ways. All five individuals are seated and direct their attention to the camera. In the foreground, Queen Kalama and Princess Victoria occupy prominent positions on either side of Kauikeaouli while Alexander and Lot sit behind them. While there is the potential to read this configuration from the top down, doing so does not accord with ali‘i modes of reckoning status in which matrilineal descent lines frequently enable various individuals to outrank others regardless of gender. By sitting in the front row, these two royal women are afforded positions of prominence over the two future kings.

Queen Kalama adopted Alexander through hānai, a practice that enabled children to be raised by close relatives and friends, rather than their biological parents. One translation of the term means to foster or adopt; however, this is an oversimplification that excludes other important connotations, including “to raise, rear, feed, nourish, or sustain.”<sup>32</sup> Women were central to this practice, which entailed the “transmission of spiritual property.”<sup>33</sup> Hānai relationships were another form of kinship materialized within photographic media.<sup>34</sup> As such, Stangenwald and Goodfellow’s photograph of the Kamehameha royal family is also an image of the power that adoptive mothers bestow upon their children.

Hānai relationships provide insights into Queen Kalama’s placement in the Kamehameha royal family, which speaks to the importance of women in continuing dynastic lines as mothers (not only biologically but through adoption and care for children other than their own), determining rank and transmitting kinship connections.<sup>35</sup> Upon her marriage to Kauikeaouli, whose status was considered sacred, determining who his successor would be rested heavily on her shoulders. This became especially true when their union produced no surviving children and the heir to the throne would be determined through hānai. Kalama and Elizabeth were essential to the success of this relationship and all it portended for the monarchy’s long-term strength and survival. As ali’i women, they had a significant amount of power to decide when to give or withhold their children in adoption and how those children would be treated and raised once adopted. For example, Elizabeth notably refused to give up Victoria in hānai. Kamakau’s writing about Elizabeth implies that her refusal to part with her daughter may have stemmed from a desire to guard her own lineage, despite the fact that the child was proclaimed chiefess of Hawai’i Island at birth.<sup>36</sup> Photographic depictions of hānai relationships and the women who made the practice possible—by giving birth to children, consenting to adoptions, and taking on critical roles as guardians and mentors—should not be downplayed but allowed to stand alongside other formations of family units.

Writing in the late 1830s and 1850s, David Malo indicates there was a particular emphasis in Hawaiian society on separating the children of high-ranking ali’i from those of lower rank to ensure the status of a particular family line. Further, Malo’s writing indicates that Hawaiian elites were preoccupied with ensuring that high-ranking men, like Kauikeaouli, had children with women of equally high status.<sup>37</sup> Malo implies that a high-ranking woman could marry a man of lower rank and instill her status upon their offspring.<sup>38</sup> In the reverse situation, where a man married a woman of lower rank, their children would not be elevated quite so highly.<sup>39</sup> Elizabeth Kīna’u’s three children pictured in the Kamehameha royal family are a critical example of how ali’i women can confer status on their offspring. Royal seniority was not determined by a straightforward accounting of age or gender but by rank conceived through the higher genealogical branch.<sup>40</sup>

Another example of how kinship connections influenced the photograph’s formal aspects can be seen in the creation of two pyramidal formations created by the sitters. In “Genealogy and Disrespect: A Study of Symbolism in Hawaiian Images,” Adrienne Kaeppler argues that the triangle or chevron designs found in barkcloth, feather cloaks, and tattoo patterns broadly reference the spinal

column, a visual allusion to genealogy.<sup>41</sup> The visual effect of these triangle forms in the Kamehameha royal family is that Lot and Alexander appear to be held up (sustained, even) between Kauikeaouli, Kalama (Alexander's adoptive mother), and their high-ranking sister. While it is not known to what degree the sitters dictated their own placement in this photograph, the formation of two triangles in the portrait might serve as a genealogical metaphor. If this is the case, then the sitters in the bottom register could be read as providing physical and genealogical support to those at the top.

In the portrait, Alexander is seated in the back row on the right between his adoptive parents, Kauikeaouli and Queen Kalama, visually evoking the metaphor of the backbone within genealogy. The metaphor relates to the specific anatomy of lizards (or mo'o), particularly their spines and tails. The ability of lizards to regrow their tails was interpreted as a metaphor for genealogical continuity and succession. As Marie Alohalani Brown explains, lizards native to Hawai'i likely inspired the various meanings and metaphorical uses of the term mo'o.<sup>42</sup> She states, "mo'o refers to that which is part of a larger whole or series, such as a grandchild or great-grandchild (mo'o), or offspring of an animal (mo'o); a smaller piece of bark cloth (mo'o) that will be joined to a larger piece; and a smaller land division (mo'o) within a larger land division."<sup>43</sup> The metaphor of the mo'o or lizard's body as one of genealogy and succession became transposed into Hawaiian visual culture as the triangle motif. The specific triangle grouping of Alexander Liholiho between Kauikeaouli and Kalama in the photograph can be read in terms of genealogical continuity, with Alexander being the smaller piece joined to the larger whole through his adoption, thereby ensuring the continuation of the Kamehameha dynasty. Alexander's adoption by the royal couple could also be interpreted as an attempt to appropriate the mana of Elizabeth Kīna'u's line.

The second triangle in the composition, on the left of the photograph, includes Lot (at the apex of the triangle), Victoria (bottom left), and Kauikeaouli (bottom right). This triangle configuration along with the one on the right provides a broader view of the interconnections and power dynamics of these two genealogical lines. At the time this photograph was made, Lot followed his brother Alexander in eligibility for the throne.<sup>44</sup> Each positioned at the apex of a triangle, Alexander and Lot are those who follow Kauikeaouli in this dynastic sequence, derived largely from the power of their mothers' genealogies. Victoria's position at the base of the left triangle foreshadows her role as future kuhina nui, a position that was foundational within the government, especially in its relationship to the sovereign. The appearance of two triangle forms within this photograph aligns

with other Hawaiian visual culture related to the ali'i, such as the designs found on 'ahu'ula (feather cloaks) and kapa (barkcloth). The use of triangular forms in this photograph is indicative of the period's experimentation and replication of older forms and traditions within a new medium.

The Kamehameha royal family conforms to anthropologist Jocelyn Linnekin's observation that the introduction of Euro-American concepts of gender roles, which relegated women to the domestic sphere and subordinated them to their male kin, did not diminish the "symbolic and structural importance" of Hawaiian women to the larger kin group.<sup>45</sup> In effect, royal Hawaiian women wielded significant political, social, and economic power and were a key vector from which their male relatives could draw power.<sup>46</sup> This perspective is further evident in Victoria's representation within this studio portrait of the Kamehameha royal family.

Before her death in 1839, Elizabeth Kīna'u named Victoria Kamāmalu as her successor to the office of the kuhina nui. It is crucial to understand the role of the kuhina nui within nineteenth-century Hawaiian monarchical structures because of its connection to Hawaiian women's agency and power in the early contact period. Four of the seven people who held the office, from its inception in 1819 until it was abolished in 1864, were women. Additionally, this role was inherited by the women of Ka'ahumanu's family line for quite some time, suggesting that genealogical links to this family played an important part in determining who held the office.<sup>47</sup> The authority of the kuhina nui was considered second only to that of the monarch, even at times forming a rival to the king.<sup>48</sup> Ke Kumukānāwai o ka Makahiki 1840—the 1840 constitution co-authored by Kauikeaouli and Miriam Kekāuluohi, the kuhina nui at the time—is illustrative of this point.<sup>49</sup> More than once, the constitution stresses the equivalence between the king and the kuhina nui. Article 22b of the constitution entitled "No ke Kuhina Nui o ke Aupuni" or "Respecting the Premier of the Kingdom" concludes by stating that:

'A'ole ho'i e hana wale ke Ali'i me ka lohe 'ole o ke Kuhina, 'a'ole ho'ie hana wale ke Kuhina me ka lohe 'ole o ke Ali'i; a inā hō'ole ke Ali'i i kāna, 'o ka 'ole nō ia. A 'o nā hana nui a pau a ke Ali'i e mana'o ai nāna pono'i e hana, e hana nō 'o ia, me ka lohe na'e o ke Kuhina.

The King shall not act without knowledge of the Premier, nor shall the Premier act without knowledge of the King, and the veto of the King on the acts of the Premier should arrest the business. All important business of the kingdom which the King chooses to

transact in person, he may do it but not without the approbation of the Premier.<sup>50</sup>

Miriam Kekāuluohi served as a female justice of the Supreme Court under this founding constitution.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, at this time, five ali'i women were included in the Hale 'Aha 'Ōlelo Ali'i, or House of Nobles, indicating that Hawaiian women continued to wield significant power within the government.<sup>52</sup>

Victoria Kamāmalu was also the senior-ranking female royal, even outranking Queen Kalama at the time of the photograph. As such, she sits on the same level as the monarchical couple, perhaps hinting at her future as the kuhina nui, whose power is aligned with that of the monarch. Her placement is neither lower nor higher than Queen Kalama's, indicating their equivalence or perhaps even tension regarding their rank. Her inclusion suggests that when this portrait was made, she and her two brothers were the three most important youth of the next generation.<sup>53</sup>

Victoria was still a minor when the photograph was made, and her brothers were less senior in rank than the king. This suggests an unwillingness to completely upend Indigenous hierarchies created by complex genealogies in favor of Euro-American gender norms and is but one of the ways the sitters are in possession of themselves. By this, I mean they have their own reasons for having their likeness taken and they are in control of many elements of the image's staging and composition.<sup>54</sup> Sara Ahmed argues that such moves by women, along with the events and the objects associated with them, constitute political acts.<sup>55</sup> This point is essential as the actions and thoughts of women are under-acknowledged in the historical record. The following section addresses two other photo portraits—of Victoria Kamāmalu with her father, Mataio Kekūanāo'a (Figs. 4 and 5)—that further support my reading of these photographs as potent visualizations of kinship connections to Hawaiian women with far-reaching social and political consequence.

### **Elevating Personal Status through Photographic Representations of Victoria Kamāmalu with Mataio Kekūanāo'a**

In 1827, Elizabeth Kīna'u married Mataio Kekūanāo'a (Mataio), a union that would significantly impact power dynamics within the Kamehameha dynasty. It was Elizabeth's third marriage, and she defied custom by marrying Mataio, a man of

lower rank. Elizabeth's marriage also effectively blocked her potential marriage to her half-brother Kauikeaouli, an ideal union among the ali'i as it would have linked the family lines from two of Kamehameha I's wives and produced children of exceptionally high rank.<sup>56</sup> When Mataio married Elizabeth, he was socially and genealogically marrying up. Kamakau implies that Mataio, similar to Kamehameha I, understood the political advantages to marrying a woman of high rank.<sup>57</sup> Their children, Alexander, Lot, and Victoria, inherited their high rank from their mother rather than from their father. By merit of her rank, Victoria would go on to hold the office of kuhina nui. Victoria's rank, her family's political aspirations, and the fact that she was the only child not given up by Elizabeth for adoption provide insights into two photographs of this Hawaiian princess with her father.



Figure 2. Photographer unknown, Victoria Kamāmalu and Mataio Kekūānō'a, circa 1850, daguerreotype. Courtesy of the Hawai'i State Archives



Figure 3. Victoria Kamāmalu and Mataio Kekūanāʻōa, circa 1855. Carte de visite, associated with H.L. Chase. Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum and Archive. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

The first portrait, Victoria Kamāmalu and Mataio Kekūanāʻōa, circa 1850 (Fig. 2), was taken by an unidentified daguerreotypist. In this photograph, seventeen-year-old Victoria Kamāmalu, in an elegantly tailored dress, is seated beside her father. She holds what appears to be a small book in her left hand indicating her educated and refined nature. Hawaiian elites placed great emphasis on educating the next generation of Hawaiian rulers, including Victoria Kamāmalu, who was enrolled at the Chiefs' Children's School during the 1840s.<sup>58</sup> In this photograph, Mataio is dressed in a jacket and a vest, with the chain of his pocket watch standing out against the dark material of his clothing. The sitters have placed their hands in their laps in nearly identical positions.

The second portrait, Victoria Kamāmalu and Mataio Kekūanāʻōa, circa 1855 (Fig. 3), survives to the present as a carte de visite purportedly made by H.L. Chase.<sup>59</sup> Victoria Kamāmalu is more elaborately dressed in this image, wearing earrings, a gold chain, and a brooch. The sartorial shift speaks to Victoria Kamāmalu's maturation and greater control over her self-presentation. Her father's dress is similar in both photographs save for his buttoned double-breasted coat and royal order. The physical posture and pose of the sitters in the later portrait are almost identical to those in the first, except that Mataio rests one arm on

his daughter's back. In both photographs, the sitters' posture and poses are stiff, evincing excess formality more so than familial warmth.

In addition to the formal elements, we must consider the fact that Mataio Kekūanāo'a was not photographed with his other royal offspring. While there are numerous photographs of Ruth Ke'elikolani, Alexander Liholiho, and Lot Kapuāiwa, including individual portraits and group photographs with various relations and advisors, to the best of my knowledge, there are no extant photographs of them with Mataio.<sup>60</sup> This information suggests that there was something particularly meaningful about Mataio appearing in photographs with Victoria. These father-daughter portraits emphasize Victoria Kamāmalu's genealogy and status as the kuhina nui and the highest-ranking woman of her day and thus reflect positively on her father.

The images are about empowering Mataio Kekūanāo'a through proximity to his daughter, a direct descendant of Elizabeth Kīna'u of the ruling Maui line. The photographs are the visual embodiment of Mataio aligning himself with the sacred Maui genealogy and the Kamehameha dynasty, the primary vectors of power in Hawai'i during the 1850s and 1860s. Given that Mataio was of a lower rank, appearing in a portrait with Victoria Kamāmalu effectively draws on her status to enhance his own position and prestige. The photographs were used to materialize meaningful matrilineal relationships that emphasize the power of royal women and demonstrate how ali'i of both genders might draw strategically on this power.

## Conclusion

Photographic portraits of the Hawaiian ali'i from the 1850s do more than provide likenesses (realistic or idealized) of their sitters. Photographs from this period present us with images in which Hawaiian women's presence in and engagement with the spectacle of this new technology can and should be understood as one mode of showcasing their cultural and political authority.<sup>61</sup> This authority was deeply intertwined with the genealogies of ali'i women, which had been crucial to the successful founding of the Hawaiian Kingdom in the preceding decades.

Complex genealogical connections materialize through analyses of the identity of the royal sitters and each photograph's specific composition. Many of these genealogies and kinship connections draw heavily on matrilineal descent as a potent form of familial and individual power. Visual metaphors for genealogy,

the photographic portraits of Victoria Kamāmalu with Mataio Kekūanāoʻa and of the Kamehameha royal family display men’s connections to high-ranking women in order for the sitters to strategically align themselves with prominent sources of power in 1850s Hawaiʻi.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For a general history of photography in Hawaiʻi during the nineteenth century, see Lynn Davis, *Na Paʻi Kīʻi: The Photographers in the Hawaiian Islands, 1845–1900* (Honolulu: Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Press, 1980). Davis notes that the earliest advertisement for daguerreotype photography in Hawaiʻi appeared in 1845, providing a rough date for when that process was available in the Hawaiian Kingdom. Over the course of my dissertation research, I encountered no fewer than forty-eight portrait photographs of Hawaiian aliʻi that date to the 1840s and 1850s. This number is a rough estimate and only includes photographs from the period in which the sitters have been identified. While the number of photographs from these decades is smaller than from the 1870s to 1880s, it does constitute significant and repeated engagement with this medium during a period when the production of photographs was more expensive, time-consuming, and technologically complex. It should also be noted that there are numerous photographs of the aliʻi dated as having been taken after the 1840s and 1850s that may be reproductions of earlier case photographs (daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, tintypes, etc). I discuss one possible example of this, the portrait of Victoria Kamāmalu and Mataio Kekūanāoʻa, circa 1855, in this article. In order to

reproduce case photographs, the originals would need to be literally rephotographed in order to make a negative that could be reproduced on paper.

<sup>2</sup> Maya L. Kānāwaiokewaiki Saffery, “He Ala Nihinihi Ia Hiki I Ka Mole: A Precarious Yet Worthwhile Path to Kuleana Through Place-Based Education,” in *Kanaka Ōiwi Methodologies: Mo’olelo and Metaphor* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2015), 112; Noenoe Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004), 87–122.

<sup>3</sup> Joshua Bell and Haidy Geismar, “Materialising Oceania: New Ethnographies of Things in Melanesia and Polynesia,” *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 20, no. 1 (2009): 3–27; Stacy Kamehiro, “Worlding the Kingdom of Hawai’i: The Art of International Relations,” in *Ho’oulu Hawai’i: The King Kalākaua Era* (Honolulu: Honolulu Museum of Art, 2018), 80; Rob Wilson and Christopher Leigh Connary, eds., *The Worlding Project: Doing Cultural Studies in the Era of Globalization* (Santa Cruz, California: New Pacific Press, 2007). The term “borderlands” arises in the writing of Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012). Anzaldúa prompted a reevaluation of how borders are defined within historical narratives, especially those of colonial encounter. As a term, “borderlands” became used to denote peripheries, crossroads, boundaries, and frontiers not as endpoints of settlement master narratives but as spaces that are unsettled, ambiguous, and unpredictable, with the potential to be central places and homelands as much as they have been characterized as the cutoff points for empire.

<sup>4</sup> Kamehiro, “Worlding the Kingdom of Hawai’i,” 80.

<sup>5</sup> Marie Alohalani Brown, “Forward,” in *The Past before Us: Mo’okū’auhau as Methodology*, ed. Nālani Wilson-Hokowhitu (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2019), vii–viii.

<sup>6</sup> Jennifer Thigpen, *Island Queens and Missionary Wives: How Gender and Empire Remade Hawai’i’s Pacific World*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 13–14. For more on the specifics of Kamehameha I’s genealogy—in particular, the tracing of his lineage to Līloa and his son ‘Umi—see Stacy Kamehiro, *The Arts of Kingship: Hawaiian Art and National Culture of the Kalākaua Era* (Honolulu: The University of Hawai’i Press, 2009), 89, 199n.62, 200n.67; and Davida Malo, *The Mo’olelo of Davida Malo, Vol. 2: Hawaiian Text and Translation* (Honolulu: Hawai’i University Press, 2020), 319–50. For a longer discussion about the connections between sexual and political power in Hawai’i, see Lilikalā Kame’eleihiwa, *Nā Wāhine Kapu: Divine Hawaiian Women* (Honolulu: Pa’i Hou, 2023).

<sup>7</sup> For example, see Jane Desmond, “Picturing Hawai‘i: The ‘Ideal’ Native and the Origins of Tourism, 1880–1915,” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 7, no. 2 (1999): 459–501; Patricia Johnston, “Advertising Paradise: Hawai‘i in Art, Anthropology, and Commercial Photography,” in *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 188–225; and Joyce D. Hammond, “Photography, Tourism and the Kodak Hula Show,” *Visual Anthropology* 14, no. 1 (2001): 1–32.

<sup>8</sup> During the 1840s and 1850s, Native Hawaiians had more control over the government than after the passage of the 1887 constitution, also known as the “Bayonet Constitution.” While there were foreigners who served in advisory and government positions, there remained a significant number of Hawaiians who occupied roles in the government, including members of the privy council, judges, and governors of the various islands. Additionally, Britain and France officially recognized Hawaiian independence in 1843, following the Paulet Affair, in which Lord George Paulet temporarily seized control of the Hawaiian islands. The US did so in 1849.

<sup>9</sup> For more on nineteenth-century photographers and technicians in Hawai‘i see Davis, *Na Pa‘i Ki‘i*. Daguerreotypist is a term used to indicate someone who makes daguerreotypes.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Titus Coan to Richard Armstrong from February 10, 1853, quoted in Davis, *Na Pa‘i Ki‘i*, 10; Anne Maxwell, “Colonial Photography and Indigenous Resistance in Hawai‘i: the Case of the Last Royal Family,” in *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions: Representations of the ‘Native’ and the Making of European Identities* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), 192–223. Maxwell, likewise, mentions Kamehameha III’s patronage of Stangenwald.

<sup>11</sup> This number is based on photographs in which the sitters and Stangenwald have been identified. Most of these images are housed in the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, the Hawai‘i State Archives, and the Hawaiian Mission Houses Archives. Sixteen might seem like a small number but it does constitute a fairly large corpus of ali‘i portraits by a single photographer, compared to the overall number of portraits of ali‘i with known photographers from this period. Often there are only one or two images with definitive attribution. Some examples include the portrait of Bernice Pauahi Bishop by Senor Le Bleu, or the daguerreotype of Alexander Liholiho by B. Jay Antrim. I also suspect that this number is smaller than Stangenwald’s actual output from the 1850s.

Additionally, Stangenwald’s known corpus of photographs of the ali‘i includes multiple photographs of Kauikeaouli, Kalama, and Victoria Kamāmalu, indicating repeat visits or sittings to his studio. There are at least four extant copies

of the Kamehameha royal family portrait, indicating both demand and a favorable view of Stangenwald's work. Beyond this, Lynn Davis indicates that Stangenwald's clientele included Native Hawaiians and that advertisements in both the Hawaiian language and English press from the 1850s are indicative of the fact that the widespread interest in photography in Hawai'i was not limited to foreign settlers. Davis, *Na Pa'i Ki'i*, 10–11.

<sup>12</sup> There is no official title attributed to this photograph. Metadata and online descriptions of the image refer to it as "the Kamehameha Royal Family" or "Kamehameha III and Queen Kalama with his niece and nephews," but the original title remains uncertain.

<sup>13</sup> Malo, *Mo'olelo of Davida Malo*, 270. Malo describes the kuhina nui as a counselor, but the term is also translated as premier, prime minister, regent, advisor, and ambassador.

<sup>14</sup> Nālani Wilson-Hokowhitu and Manulani Aluli Meyer, "Introduction: I Ka Wā Mamua, The Past before Us," in *The Past before Us: Mo'okū'auhau as Methodology*, ed. Nālani Wilson-Hokowhitu (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019), 171.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Kamakau, *The Ruling Chiefs of Hawaii* (Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools Press, 1992), 391–95. Miriam Kekāulohi was the first-born child of Kaheheimālie and Kamehameha I's half-brother. Kamakau relates that she was born on a kapu day related to Kāne and that, as the first-born grandchild, she was beloved by her parents and grandparents. She was referred to as a lei hulu mamo (a lei comprised of mamo feathers). After the death of Ka'ahumanu, Miriam Kekāulohi used her considerable power and authority to support her sister Elizabeth Kīna'u as kuhina nui.

<sup>16</sup> Lili'uokalani, *An Account of the Creation of the World According to Hawaiian Tradition*, (Honolulu: Pueo Press, 1978); Kame'eleihiwa, *Nā Wahine Kapu*, 2–3; Lilikalā Kame'eleihiwa emphasizes Pō's life giving capacity as "without any male impregnating element."

<sup>17</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 93.

<sup>18</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 17–21.

<sup>20</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 21.

<sup>21</sup> Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs*, 260–63. According to Kamakau, one of Keōpūolani's aunts was so incensed that her niece would have to sleep with Kamehameha I, a man of inferior birth, that she purportedly committed suicide in 1808 over the matter.

<sup>22</sup> Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs*, 260–63; Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom, Volume 1: 1784–1854 Foundation and Transformation* (Honolulu: The University of Hawai‘i Press, 1938), 35; Kame‘eleihiwa, *Nā Wahine Kapu*, 2. Ni‘aupio similarly indicates offspring of two high chiefs. See Kame‘eleihiwa, *Nā Wahine Kapu*, 2, for the connection between incestuous relationships and divinity.

<sup>23</sup> Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs*, 260–63.

<sup>24</sup> Kuykendall, *Hawaiian Kingdom*, 62–64. Kuykendall emphasizes that Keōpūolani and her children were significant in preventing the Hawaiian Kingdom from falling apart in the wake of Kamehameha I’s death and that Kamehameha himself recognized this during his lifetime. To prevent the kingdom from falling apart, Kamehameha I named Liholiho heir to the throne and entrusted him with the kapu of the heiau (temples) to prevent rebellion in the aftermath of his death.

<sup>25</sup> Samuel Kamakau, *Ke Kumu Aupuni: The Foundation of Hawaiian Nationhood* (Honolulu: Awaiaulu, 2022), 318–24, “The Death of Ke‘eaumoko,” discusses why Ka‘ahumanu, unlike Kamehameha I’s other wives, was prohibited from having intimate relations with other partners besides the king. In this way, putting restrictions around intimate relations was a means of restraining Ka‘ahumanu’s power and influence.

<sup>26</sup> Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs*, 385–86; Kame‘eleihiwa, *Nā Wahine Kapu*, 5–6; Mary Kawena Pukui and E. S. Craighill Handy, *The Polynesian Family System in Ka‘u Hawai‘i*, Polynesian Society Reprint No. 6 (Wellington, New Zealand: The Polynesian Society, 1958), 41. Double paternity is a specific concept stemming from Hawaiian genealogy whereby a child can claim multiple fathers as a means of strengthening their lineage. Mary Kawena Pukui provides a definition of this based on the ‘ōlelo term po‘o lua, “double headed”, saying that it “refers to double parenthood among the ali‘i.” She also notes that Kamehameha I famously claimed double paternity.

<sup>27</sup> Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs*, 385–86.

<sup>28</sup> Jocelynn Linnekin, *Sacred Queens and Women of Consequence: Rank, Gender and Colonialism in the Hawaiian Islands* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1990), 71–73.

<sup>29</sup> Kame‘eleihiwa, *Nā Wahine Kapu*, 12.

<sup>30</sup> Thigpen, *Island Queens*.

<sup>31</sup> Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs*, 346.

<sup>32</sup> “Hānai,” *Hawaiian Language Dictionary*, accessed December 8, 2022, <https://wehewehe.org/gsd12.85/cgi-bin/hdict?l=en>.

<sup>33</sup> Linnekin, *Sacred Queens*, 5–6.

<sup>34</sup> For another example, see E. F. Howland's portrait photograph of Bernice Pauahi Bishop and Lili'uokalani in the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Archive, <https://www.bishopmuseum.org/library-and-archives/>.

<sup>35</sup> Noelani Arista, "Hawaiian Women, Kapu, and the Emergence of Kānāwai," in *The Kingdom and the Republic: Sovereign Hawai'i and the Early United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 143, 151–55.

<sup>36</sup> Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs*, 348. Kamakau's article in *Ke Au 'Oko'a*, January 28, 1869, implies that Victoria would have been given in hānai to ali'i from Hawai'i Island but does not state who specifically.

<sup>37</sup> Malo, *Mo'olelo of Davida Malo*, 129–30.

<sup>38</sup> Malo, *Mo'olelo of Davida Malo*, 130.

<sup>39</sup> Malo, *Mo'olelo of Davida Malo*, 128–30. In Chapter 16, sections 19 and 20, Malo discusses the rank of children whose parents were of mixed-rank. A child of an ali'i nui mother and a non-ali'i father was considered ali'i nui because of the rank of his/her mother. If a child's father was of higher rank than the mother but both were ali'i, then the child was an ali'i of lower rank. However, if only the father was an ali'i, then the child was called kulu (a drop), iki (small shower), or kūkae pōpolo (excrement containing greens), which Malo says meant the child was not considered to be of ali'i status. Malo does not say so directly, but this section of his work implies that a particular emphasis was placed on rank conferred through the matrilineal line.

<sup>40</sup> Pukui and Handy, *The Polynesian Family System in Ka'u Hawai'i*, 41.

<sup>41</sup> Adrienne Kaeppler, "Genealogy and Disrespect: A Study of Symbolism in Hawaiian Images," *RES Anthropology and Aesthetics* 3 (1982): 96. Triangle patterns are also found on pahu drums, buildings, and other visual and material forms associated with the Hawaiian elite.

<sup>42</sup> Brown, "Forward," in *The Past Before Us*, viii.

<sup>43</sup> Brown, "Forward," in *The Past Before Us*, ix; Kame'eleihiwa, *Nā Wahine Kapu*, 5–6.

<sup>44</sup> Attorney General's Office, "Order in Council of His Hawaiian Majesty Prescribing a Code of Etiquette: June 29th 1844," *The Polynesian*, July 20, 1844. This article provides a list of those in line for the throne in both 'olelo Hawai'i and English. The section entitled "Calendar" in English and "Papa Inoa" in Hawaiian lists Alexander Liholiho, Lot Kapuāiwa, and Victoria Kamāmalu among those eligible to rule. Lot was preceded only by his brothers Alexander Liholiho and Moses Kekūāiwa. By the time Stangenwald's photograph was made, Moses Kekūāiwa was deceased, meaning Lot would have followed Alexander in eligibility to rule. Victoria

Kamāmalu was further down the list after her brothers, her cousin William Lunailo, and chiefess Jane Loeau, daughter of high chiefess Liliha.

<sup>45</sup> Linnekin, *Sacred Queens*, 5–6, 13, 16, 75.

<sup>46</sup> Ali'i women also became significant landholders during the nineteenth century. For example, Ruth Ke'elikolani at one point owned more than 300,000 acres of land in the kingdom. Portions of these lands were inherited by Bernice Pauahi Bishop and Princess Ka'iulani. The lands encompass parts of present-day downtown Honolulu and form part of the endowment for the Kamehameha Schools. For analyses of Hawaiian women as key landholders in Hawai'i after the Māhele, see Linnekin, *Sacred Queens*.

<sup>47</sup> Kamakau, *The Ruling Chiefs*, 356. The role of the kuhina nui passed first to Ka'ahumanu's nieces Elizabeth Kīna'u and Miriam Kekāuluohi and then to her grandniece Victoria Kamāmalu. According to Kamakau, after the death of Elizabeth Kīna'u, Kauikeaouli looked for someone from Ka'ahumanu's line to take on the role of kuhina nui, as Victoria Kamāmalu was still an infant at the time. Miriam Kekāuluohi was selected as the best candidate to hold the office on the basis of her genealogy.

<sup>48</sup> Though this may be too hierarchical/lateral a conception of power within a system in which social and political action is sanctioned via conceptions of kinship and relationships that validate one's actions. Only three men—Keoni Ana, Mataio Kekūanāo'a, and Lot Kapuāiwa—ever held the office of kuhina nui.

<sup>49</sup> *Ke Kumu Kānāwai, A Me Nā Kānāwai O Ko Hawai'i Pae 'Āina, Ua kauia I ke kau ia Kamehameha III*, Honolulu, 1841,

<https://lmc.com/OpenAccess/docDisplay5.aspx?textid=18155442>.

<sup>50</sup> Hawaii and Jason Kapena Achiu, "Ke Kumukanawai o ka Makahiki 1840" (The 1840 Constitution," *Ka Ho'oilina/The Legacy* 1, no. 1 (2002): 34–59. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/kah.2003.0003>. 'Ilohe 'ole' literally translates to "without hearing" or "without obeying" but seems to convey the idea that neither the king nor the kuhina could act on government business without first consulting the other.

<sup>51</sup> This was 150 years before Sandra Day O'Connor was appointed as the first female Supreme Court Justice of the United States.

<sup>52</sup> Later in the nineteenth century, female members of the ali'i continued to serve as key advisors to the king and as diplomats. In 1874, Emma Rooke vied with David Kalākaua to be elected to the throne and during that period it was certainly not a foregone conclusion that Kalākaua would win. Finally, Lili'uokalani ascended the throne as queen in 1891.

<sup>53</sup> Julie Crooks, “Exerting and Cultivating Selves: Nineteenth Century Photography and the Black Subject in Ontario,” *Towards an African Canadian Art History: Art, Memory, and Resistance* (Concord, Ontario: Captus Press, 2019), 69; Elizabeth Edwards, “Photographs as Objects of Memory,” *Material Memories: Design and Evocation* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1999), 225–26. See Crooks for a discussion of the relationship between photography and self-possession. See Edwards for a discussion of photographs and self-construction.

<sup>54</sup> Crooks, “Exerting and Cultivating Selves,” 69; Edwards, “Photographs as Objects of Memory,” 225–26.

<sup>55</sup> Sara Ahmed, “Orientations Matter,” in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, (Durham North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010), 252–54.

<sup>56</sup> Pukui and Handy, “The Polynesian Family System,” 52–53.

<sup>57</sup> Kamakau, *Ruling Chiefs*, 346–47. Kamakau specifically refers to the marriages Mataio Kekūanā‘ō sought out as “that treasure which endures without end.”

<sup>58</sup> Attorney General’s Office, “Order in Council of His Hawaiian Majesty Prescribing a Code of Etiquette: June 29th 1844,” *The Polynesian*, July 20, 1844. This article provides a list of those in line for the throne in both ‘olelo Hawai‘i and English. The Chief’s Children’s School, later renamed the Royal School, was a boarding school established by Kauikeaouli in 1839 to educate the next generation of ali‘i children. The pupils were all drawn from families established as part of the succession in the 1840 constitution. These included Elizabeth Kīna‘u’s children mentioned in this article.

<sup>59</sup> However, Victoria Kamāmalu’s apparent age in the image and dates provided by the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum Archive suggest that Chase’s carte is potentially a rephotographed daguerreotype, possibly one produced initially by Stangenwald.

<sup>60</sup> This is based on extensive research of photographs of the Hawaiian monarchy in the following institutions: The Bishop Museum Archives, The Hawai‘i State Archives, The Hawaiian Mission Houses Museum and Archives, The Lyman Museum, The Library of Congress, The New York Public Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Huntington Library, the British Museum, The National Portrait Gallery–London, The National Maritime Museum–London, The Royal Collection Trust, the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology–Cambridge, and the National Museum of Scotland, Museums and Special Collections–The University of Aberdeen.

<sup>61</sup> Kamehiro, “Worlding the Kingdom of Hawai‘i,” 90.

**INGRID AHLGREN, SYLVIA COCKBURN, HELENA  
KAPUNI-REYNOLDS, AND MAGGIE WANDER**

## **Curating Pacific Art in the United States: A Roundtable Discussion**

### **Abstract**

*On February 16, 2024, the North American chapter of the Pacific Arts Association hosted a panel at the 112th College Art Association (CAA) Annual Conference in Chicago. Chaired by Sylvia Cockburn (Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow) and Maggie Wander (senior research associate) from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, this roundtable invited Helena Kapuni-Reynolds, associate curator of Native Hawaiian history and culture at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), and Ingrid Ahlgren, curator for Oceanic collections at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University, to share updates on their current projects and discuss critical issues in Oceanic art curation. The discussion centered on community engagement and critical methodologies grounded in Pacific epistemologies, the ethical and sociopolitical issues around museum collection and display, how to engage with different audiences (especially in the settler colonial context of North America), and how to collaborate across institutions.*

**Keywords:** *Pacific Arts Association, Pacific Arts Association–North America, Oceanic art, Pacific art, curation, museum, museology, collections, community engagement, anthropology, art history, Harvard Peabody Museum, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, Metropolitan Museum of Art*

On February 16, 2024, the Pacific Arts Association—North America hosted a panel at the 112th College Art Association (CAA) Annual Conference in Chicago.<sup>1</sup> Chaired by Sylvia Cockburn (Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow) and Maggie Wander (senior research associate) from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where the permanent Oceania galleries are under redevelopment, this roundtable discussion invited Helena Kapuni-Reynolds, associate curator of Native Hawaiian history and culture at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), and Ingrid Ahlgren, curator for Oceanic collections at

the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University, to discuss critical issues in Oceanic art curation and their current projects. The four panelists reflected on community engagement and critical methodologies grounded in Pacific epistemologies, the ethical and sociopolitical issues around museum collection and display, approaches to engaging with different audiences (especially in the settler colonial context of North America), and collaborating across institutions. The following is an adaptation of that conversation for *Pacific Arts*.

**Sylvia Cockburn (SC):** *To start us off, can you share what your work entails and what projects you are currently working on?*

**Halena Kapuni-Reynolds (HKR):** When you pose that question, the first thing that comes to mind is “What *aren’t* I working on?” As curators, we’re constantly pulled into multiple projects within and beyond our institutions. I have been learning over the past year how to manage these responsibilities and expectations as I continue learning about the role of the Smithsonian in diffusing knowledge regarding Native Hawaiian history and culture to the broader public. Overall, my position can be broken down into four areas: research and publishing, preparing exhibits and public programs, supporting individuals and external organizations through public service, and working with NMAI leadership to determine future collecting priorities around Hawaiian material culture and contemporary art.

Although there are numerous projects in which I am currently involved, there are two in particular that I would like to discuss today. These are not “new” projects that I have started but are outstanding commitments that the NMAI is working to fulfill. The first is the return of Kānepō—an accretionary lava ball that was brought to Washington, DC, in 2004 from the island of Hawai‘i to serve as one of the Cardinal Direction Markers located on the grounds of NMAI. These stones are colloquially referred to by some as the “Grandfather Rocks.” They were selected by Native communities and brought to the museum to represent our hemispheric scope, while recognizing the pivotal role that cardinal directions play in numerous Indigenous communities. The Northern Cardinal Marker is from Acasta Lake in Canada’s Northwest Territories and was selected in conversation with Tł̓ch̓q̓ community members in Behchok̓. The Eastern Cardinal Marker is from Sugarloaf Mountain in Maryland; representatives from the Maryland Commission on Indian affairs and the Virginia Council on Indians assisted in its selection. The Southern Cardinal Marker is from Tierra del Fuego and was selected

by Yagán community members. Given Hawai‘i’s special inclusion within NMAI’s founding legislation, Kānepō was selected to serve as the museum’s Western Cardinal Marker. Kānepō is from the district of Ka‘ū on the island of Hawai‘i, and was chosen by the Kūpuna (Elders) consultation group of Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park. Unlike the other three Cardinal Direction Markers, which were gifted to the museum, Kānepō was loaned to NMAI for twenty years, with the promise of their eventual return to Hawai‘i.<sup>2</sup> Over the last two decades, many Kanaka ‘Ōiwi (Native Hawaiians) who live in or travel to DC have made special trips to NMAI specifically to greet Kānepō with pule (prayers), oli (chants), and ho‘okupu (offerings), making them the most visited of the Cardinal Direction Markers (Fig. 1). The year 2024 marks the end of the long-term loan agreement. We are honoring Kānepō at this year’s Smithsonian Folklife Festival (June 26–July 1), which celebrates the 20th anniversary of the opening of NMAI’s Washington, DC, location. The stone will be return to Hawai‘i soon after.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 1. Halena Kapuni-Reynolds and Kānepō, the Western Cardinal Marker of the National Museum of the American Indian, following an ‘aha kīho‘iho‘i (return ceremony) that was designed and led by Kekuhi Keali‘ikanaka‘ole and Hālau ‘Ōhi‘a, July 1, 2024. Braided ‘aha (coconut sennit) was wrapped around Kānepō and cut to symbolically end their obligation to NMAI as a Cardinal Marker. Ho‘okupu (offerings) of lei adorn Kānepō in celebration of their return to Hawai‘i. Photograph courtesy of Halena Kapuni-Reynolds

While Kānepō isn’t necessarily a work of art, the activities surrounding Kānepō’s return reflect ongoing shifts in curatorial practice to work more closely

with individuals and communities regarding the return of ancestors and belongings to their source and descendant communities. I would add that the cultural protocols that are being planned to facilitate Kānepō's return will highlight the vitality and ongoing innovative practice of Hawaiian performing and ceremonial arts. In the meantime, I am working to ensure that all NMAI staff members who need to be involved in this project are receiving up-to-date information as we confirm our plans. I am also working with the Kūpuna consultation group and their designated representatives to determine how best to proceed with bringing Kānepō back to Hawai'i in a pono (just, right) way, and whether or not a new stone will be sent to replace Kānepō. A significant factor in moving this project forward is that I work remotely from Hilo, Hawai'i, which gives me the ability to meet face to face with the Kūpuna consultation group at their monthly meeting, as well as other stakeholders involved in this project.

The second major project I am working on is a traveling show on Hawaiian sovereignty based on the NMAI's exhibit *E Mau Ke Ea: The Sovereign Hawaiian Nation* (January 17, 2016–January 2, 2017). I inherited this project when I was hired, and it has been delayed for some time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that the original exhibition is [more than] seven years old, I am updating the texts and images before it travels in Hawai'i and the continental US. It is a slow process to familiarize myself with the exhibition's history, and to revise the show to reflect recent scholarship on Hawaiian history and politics. By doing this work, my hope is that the final product can become a resource and catalyst for community conversations and programs regarding Hawai'i's unique history.

**Ingrid Ahlgren (IA):** I completely agree that [our jobs] can feel like being pulled in a million different directions. When I first started at the Peabody Museum in 2018, I thought that in my position as curator I would be doing collections research on a regular basis. But it became clear early on that there were greater responsibilities. Prior to my arrival, there had not been a curator for the Oceanic collection since Douglas Oliver, who left in the early 1960s. So, while this is one of the largest historic Oceanic collections in the United States (going as far back as the 1780s), it is not widely known outside of academia and the museum world. Many Pasifika communities are unaware of its existence—even Harvard students. Select individual cultural heritage items have been extensively researched and documented, however a holistic understanding of the collections was lacking and community engagement was primarily opportunistic and ad hoc. So, for my first task at the Peabody, I spent more than six months walking the aisles in storage, greeting the collections, and becoming familiar with them. This way, I had a

collections-based starting point for designing and prioritizing projects, rather than individual research interests. As a non-Indigenous person who was born and raised in Oceania (Marshall Islands), I think this approach as a starting point has served me well. As we all know, the role of curation has shifted in many museums, particularly at anthropology museums like the Peabody, where collection, research, and exhibition practices have been built upon fraught, problematic histories. My time at the Peabody has coincided with some major institutional changes, and I've been proud to be a part of shifting practices. With a focus on what we are calling "ethical stewardship," a lot of "normal" museum work has changed or even stopped.<sup>4</sup> And through the museum's growing pains, my own curatorial duties have shifted, from research, publishing, and physical exhibitions to outreach and engagement.

And so, how do we connect the collections to communities when awareness of the collection's existence is limited and without a large local diaspora to draw upon? After many conversations with other museums in Oceania, I proposed and piloted several ideas aimed at increasing awareness and raising Pasifika voices. I'll highlight just a couple. One is the creation of the Harvard Oceanic Collections Engagement Fellowship (or HOCEF), which was inspired by conversations with Moana Palelei HoChing, a Sāmoan Harvard employee and former student. After spending more than four years at Harvard, she did not know there were Sāmoan collections on campus. This disappointing but not uncommon feedback became a kind of call to action. Together, we developed a pilot program to fund Pacific Islanders to engage with the collections in any way they wanted, whether a historic research project or an artistic, ephemeral endeavor. It was important to us that the program wasn't based on a final product that had to benefit the museum but was really about asking "how do these collections speak to you today?" As a pilot program, and due to Moana's own familial ties, we decided very explicitly to offer the fellowship first to the Pasifika communities in Utah, which has a large diaspora but limited access to historic collections like those at Harvard. Partnering with a local Pasifika advisory board and the University of Utah's School for Cultural and Social Transformation, two groups were awarded the fellowships (Fig. 2).

One multigenerational group used the collections to inform the re-creation of a nineteenth-century Sāmoan 'ula lei (whale ivory necklace) using historic materials, tools, and techniques. The other cross-cultural group was inspired by the dozens of headrests from across the region, using them as a stepping off point to create a multimedia project exploring the concept of rest in Oceanic communities today. It was really interesting work and we learned a lot in the

process. I'm pleased to share that it is going to become a regular fellowship, hopefully every two to three years.<sup>5</sup>



Figure 2. Two recipient groups of the inaugural Harvard Oceanic Collections Engagement Fellowship, awarded 2021–2022 by the Peabody Museum. At left, Laneta Fitisemanu wears an 'ula lei at a community event in Salt Lake City, recreated as part of the group's project entitled "Restoring Samoan Galuēga Taulima: Bringing the 'Ula Lei Back to Life." At right, fellowship awardees view and discuss headrests from across the region for the project entitled "Asösö: Resting Collectively and Rising Collectively." Photographs courtesy of Ingrid Ahlgren

One of the other things I've been working on most recently underscores how collections and communities guide my curatorial practice—in this case, those from the Philippines. A year ago, a museum studies student named Katte Geneta was writing about the cultural erasure of the Philippine peoples in museums, which led us to look more closely at the Peabody Museum's historic practices of collecting and documenting in association with the Philippine-American War (1899–1902). Around the same time, I was asked to contribute to the *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* on the topic of "forgotten conflicts" and "civil society." The invitation provided me and Katte the impetus to highlight how, as an institution, we [Harvard Peabody] continue to perpetuate cultural erasure through the war-time acquisition and biased cataloging of Filipino cultural heritage. We wrote about a brass betel nut box that is likely a war trophy (Fig. 3), and called out the inaccurate, racialized, and offensive terminology for dozens of diverse communities and traditions still employed in the museum's database. Of course, it is one thing to write an academic paper and criticize the museum, and another to enact change. This past year, I curated an online exhibition featuring Filipino and Filipino-American voices.<sup>6</sup> Thirteen individuals—academics, makers, activists, community leaders, and artists—were invited to choose anything from

the collections and respond to them in whichever way they wanted. So, if I think about what my work entails right now, there is a theme: providing platforms for Indigenous voices and critically responding to institutional histories.



Figure 3. A brass betel nut box from Mindanao, Philippines, acquired by an American army officer in 1905 upon the death of Dato Mustapha. Gift of W. Cameron Forbes, 1912. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 12-61-70/84487

**Maggie Wander (MW):** *This question intersects with what you were just talking about, but what are the challenges you foresee for the curation of these collections in the United States? Perhaps you can discuss these in terms of funding, restitution, community engagement, or engaging audience interest in (and awareness of) the region.*

**HKR:** In Hawai'i, I continue to collaborate with organizations and programs aimed at providing training and resources to Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander museum professionals interested in pursuing careers in museums, libraries, archives, and related institutions. One of the challenges that we face is the need to broaden US funding programs earmarked for Native Hawaiians, American Indians, and Alaska Natives to include other Pacific Islanders, namely those from

US territories (American Sāmoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) and Freely Associated States (Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and Palau). Today, there are a lot of opportunities for Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian heritage professionals in North America.

Native Hawaiians are oftentimes included in Native American fellowships given our special inclusion in federal legislation like the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). However, the result of this inclusion oftentimes excludes other Pacific Islanders who would otherwise benefit from receiving the same opportunities or protections. This leads to the question, “Where are these other Pacific Islanders living in US-affiliated territories and states supposed to go to get their training?” Oftentimes, they must travel to Australia or New Zealand, but how can we be better at creating inclusive opportunities to train more Pacific Islanders in this work? In a time where the Native Hawaiian and larger Pacific diasporas on the continental US are anticipated to continue growing, we need to start thinking about how we can better serve not only those who will return to their home islands, but those who will become the future stewards of Pacific collections in North America.

The other challenge that I would like to discuss is the issue of access, scholarship, and awareness of Pacific art exhibitions and programs that take place in grassroots settings and smaller, regional institutions. Like Ingrid, I have a background in anthropology, but I’ve been preparing myself recently to begin venturing more into the realms of contemporary art and art history specifically in relation to ‘Ōiwi (Native Hawaiian) art. I like to think that my anthropology training, as well as my background in Hawaiian studies, has prepared me to develop my own methods of looking and thinking critically about ‘Ōiwi art. In order to further develop this skill set, I have been writing reviews of shows and events taking place in Hawai‘i’s institutions.

Many of my reviews are of projects taking place on Hawai‘i Island, with the exception of a few reviews for exhibitions in Honolulu, O‘ahu. I do this intentionally because when most people think of museology in Hawai‘i, they think of institutions like the Honolulu Museum of Art and the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum. But elsewhere in the islands, we have smaller institutions doing incredibly innovative, grassroots work, bringing community into their spaces to cultivate cross-cultural dialogue.<sup>7</sup> One of the institutions that I’ve reviewed and have supported over the years is the Donkey Mill Art Center in the town of Hōlualoa, South Kona. Through the efforts of its curator, Mina Elison, it has brought in Pacific artists through their exhibits and programs, and they are

working to create a community space where Pacific Islanders and non-Pacific Islanders are coming together to learn from each other, while having a representational space for Pacific art in a rural community. These smaller institutions are the places that I find really exciting and fascinating; they teach me about the need for more access in rural contexts, as well as the need for more opportunities for artists to exhibit within these locations.

**IA:** I'm glad that you brought that up because the way I am going to answer is so specific to Harvard, but I appreciate you broadening it out. I think a core issue, of course, is funding to link communities and collections, whether in person or through alternative curation projects, commissioned works, and fairly compensating expertise and consultation on an ongoing basis (rather than being project-based). Aside from the perennial need for funding, the other major challenges for curating Oceanic collections outside of the region right now include audience awareness and interest, the scale of the collections, and the relational responsibilities implicated as a result. The East Coast is remarkably devoid of knowledge regarding the Pacific Islands and the extensive history of interaction with and exploitation by the United States, particularly amongst recent generations. Here in Massachusetts, that history is particularly salient as its coastline was the launching pad for thousands of voyages to the region since the 1770s, whether in association with the China trade, Christian missionaries, whaling, or anthropological study. Without this knowledge, it can be difficult to garner interest and attention in the region. At Harvard, I've developed a course called "New England and the South Seas: Studying Exploration and Exploitation through Museum Collections," which casts light on that past. I often like to argue that if it wasn't for its interaction with Pacific Islands and Islanders, and the exploitation of those people and resources, the United States wouldn't have been able to develop as an economically independent country. So, I think the lack of awareness is a huge issue.

There are so many other challenges, but it has recently become clear to me that the scope of my responsibilities for these large and diverse cultural heritage holdings is immense. The sheer number of people, things, and relationships that are represented can be intimidating. They each deserve care, attention, and dialogue. When I was an anthropologist before I became a curator, I had several important relationships with people that I would foster regularly. And now, as a curator for these collections, I feel like I have a responsibility to forge relationships with the *entire* Pacific community, and that's really intimidating. How do I maintain those relationships in a meaningful and fruitful way? Or, do I

choose a few places and peoples and collections to prioritize? I mean, it's really daunting at times, and so it's just hard being a one-woman show. That is perhaps more of a personal challenge, but I think it will resonate with other museum and gallery settings where there is simply not enough representation.

***SC: You have both already addressed this in different ways but perhaps you could further reflect on how you approach community engagement in your work, from your respective positions geographically but also the scope of the collections you are caring for?***

**HKR:** I'm somebody who enters the curatorial space with a background in organizing in Hawaiian community and higher education. I haven't worked in many fine-art spaces, and because of that, I tend to learn from and listen to grassroots Hawaiian artists and makers about their experiences in perpetuating their art forms while pushing back on canonical thinking in art history. I am still in the process of learning more about contemporary Native Hawaiian art and Native Hawaiian artists, but recently in Hawai'i, we've been seeing more and more exhibitions that are working to transform the ways our institutions collaborate with our artists. As an example, Drew Kahu'āina Broderick, Josh Tengan, and Noelle M.K.Y. Kahanu co-curated *'Ai Pōhaku, Stone Eaters*, a multi-site exhibition on contemporary Native Hawaiian art that took place across six University of Hawai'i galleries on O'ahu.<sup>8</sup> In conjunction with the exhibition, I collaborated with a few of my colleagues to circulate a petition demanding the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa to create a tenure-track position in Hawaiian visual art. We were successful in this effort, and as we speak, they are in the process of hiring someone.

When I think of community engagement, I remember my younger, graduate-student days, when I first learned that the word "curation" is rooted in the Latin word "curare"—to care. For me, care—not just for collections but for people—is central to my community engagement practice. The project with Kānepō is a great example of how I am trying to move carefully as I work to bring this stone back to Hawai'i. I was not there twenty years ago when Kānepō first came to NMAI, but I have been doing my best to reconnect with those who were involved, to learn about their experiences with this project, and to inform them of what is happening. Throughout this process, there have been a lot of negotiations between the NMAI and Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park to determine what needs to happen in Washington, DC, and Hawai'i to facilitate this return, who needs to

be there, and how best to proceed. Although the process can be cumbersome at times, I think the final outcome will be something worthwhile.

Lastly, I think of good community engagement work as a process of translation. In *Pacific Arts*, I published an event review for the launch of the Edith Kanaka'ole US quarter that came out last year. The event was held at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, and involved an array of performances, pop-up exhibitions, staged areas, and a mural that highlighted the vibrancy of Native Hawaiian performing arts.<sup>9</sup> A lot of that academic work also tries to develop a vocabulary around Hawaiian aesthetics that can be, hopefully, useful for students in the future. I always think about how, when I was in undergrad, we would have to constantly read the anthropological sources—which provide information and are a great start, but they also never necessarily gave me the language to write about what my aunts were doing and translate it in a way that would make sense to other people. So, *translation* is something that I see my engagements focusing on.

**IA:** Translation is interesting. That's what I kept thinking as you spoke: you're negotiating between these different parties. For me, I think my community engagement work is about forging relationships. So, some of my outreach is not about having a research project in mind. It's just about going out to Sāmoa [for example] and saying hi, giving lots of presentations, meeting with lots of different community members and sectors, and saying "these collections are here, this is your cultural heritage," and giving the opportunity to let people have their say in their future. But, honestly, it's just about relationships. Anthropologists, in particular, have a reputation for working in a product-oriented way, often traveling to work with communities, extracting knowledge, maybe giving back in some ways, and returning to their home institutions to carry on. Alternatively, I try to be proactive in increasing knowledge of and access to collections through relationships and then let the collections and the conversations that emerge become the guiding inspiration.

Whenever I'm in DC or New York, I always stop by the embassies and leave print-outs of works in the museum's collections along with my business card. In fact, this Sāmoa visit came about because about five years ago, I stopped in and met with the Sāmoan ambassador at the time. I called two or three years later to say "I'm thinking about this." So, I'm making sure people know. And then I also let the collections speak. I think the Philippines collections were an example of that. I had no expertise there, but they were calling out; there were a lot of signs that were saying, "You can't ignore these collections." And I think that happens in

collections, sometimes they just speak out and need to be dealt with. I think that's one way [to do community engagement]: to just be receptive to those moments.

**SC:** We can also share a little bit about the way that we are approaching community engagement at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Met has a precedent of engaging with Pacific communities, particularly through a project like the *Te Māori* exhibition in 1984—which is just celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. This was the first real case where the Met engaged with Māori community members as co-curators, who really led the development of the exhibition and engaged in customary protocol in the opening. This exhibition toured around the US and then went back to tour Aotearoa New Zealand.

But, today, in terms of what we're doing (for the redevelopment of the Oceania galleries in the Michael C. Rockefeller Wing), one of the challenges that we face is that the Pacific is very far from New York. Compared to working with collections in communities in Australia, which is where I'm from, we don't have diaspora communities on our doorstep who become our audience and our guides in how we are developing the content for this exhibition. So, a lot of what we do is online. Also, much of the way we are presenting our community engagement content [in the galleries] is through our digital formats. Over the last two years, we've been having conversations with artists, knowledge holders, and creative practitioners from across the region to record their stories about works in the collection, which we are editing down into short-format audio guides and other written and audio outputs on our website. And these are creating new relationships with the Met, new ways of thinking about the collection.

**MW:** As Sylvia mentioned, we don't have an Indigenous community on our doorstep. We work alongside our colleagues who oversee the ancient Americas collection, for instance, and they're really engaged with the Latinx community and ambassadors to Guatemala, Honduras, and many other countries. Without as robust of a network, we're having to be very creative with the kinds of communities we reach out to, or are *trying* to reach out to. An example is the Asmat region in the southwest of New Guinea; it's very remote, but we are in touch with a photojournalist named Joshua Irwandi who is able to travel to the region and we are going to include some of his work in an audio-visual feature that will be on the gallery wall. So, while we have to ask what it means that we're just using Joshua's work rather than going out ourselves, we can still connect Asmat artists, the Met's collection, and audiences in New York. It's not perfect, but it's our way of engaging with the Asmat community via Joshua's more established

networks, which he has been building for over a decade. And then we're hoping it sets the stage for further connections into the future.

**IA:** Cost is just a massive issue for the Pacific. Even within the region, for instance going from Hawai'i to Majuro in the Marshall Islands is a \$2,000 ticket, and that's tiny compared to \$6,000 to then get to Sāmoa or other Pacific Islands. When you present numbers to the museum leadership, their eyes get pretty big.

**SC:** And you can also have an "engagement" budget around an exhibition or a fixed-term research project, but what we are all trying to do is build long-term reciprocal relationships with community. How do you factor five, ten, twenty years of relationships into your planning and, particularly, your budgets, if it's requiring people to visit in both directions over many, many years?

**HKR:** I wish I had budgets. For both of the projects I mentioned earlier, I don't have budgets for community engagement or programming. With Kānepō, we have the budget for shipping, but nobody accounted for the people we need to bring. Luckily, I was able to find funding internally to do that. But the challenges of being tasked with the work without having the adequate resources to do it are not unique to the Smithsonian.

We've been talking a little about digital technologies as an opportunity, and I think we're going to see that grow even more as these technologies become more refined and more accessible to people. With my work at the NMAI, I've been trying to work more closely with our social media department (i.e., the one person who manages our social media) and hopefully getting the museum to understand that it is a powerful platform for us to tell the stories of our collections—but also to invest in that resource, because one manager for our social media is not enough. Especially if we want to contact a broader community and to make content that community wants to engage with. February is Hawaiian language month back home in Hawai'i, and so one of the small projects that I've been helping with is writing a few posts highlighting objects in our collections in Hawaiian language. I also made a short video introducing myself and showing where I live. Those were just small opportunities to hopefully get a few more people in Hawai'i to follow our pages, to know that the NMAI has a Native Hawaiian history and culture curator, but also to show that we're trying to do this work on different platforms.

**MW:** *We are having this discussion at a conference dedicated to art history, but given the historical occlusion of Pacific visual and material culture in the field of art history, we often draw on anthropological sources and methodologies in our work with Pacific collections. How, then, do you see your work in conversation with art history?*

**HKR:** I really see myself as somebody trying to learn about Hawaiian art history while figuring out ways to create vocabulary to describe said art with the background that I have. I have worked in an interdisciplinary space for a long time: anthropology, Hawaiian studies, geography, museum studies. I'm quite used to doing work that tries to bridge those different conversations and fields. Now that I'm at the NMAI, I'm really trying to develop more relationships with contemporary Hawaiian artists and trying to learn more about their process, how to talk about it, and also to highlight certain symbols or metaphors or motifs they're working with and how it relates back to earlier histories and themes that reflect specific Hawaiian viewpoints on art and art making. At the same time, I am also trying to figure out ways to describe Hawaiian art that doesn't necessarily have a space yet in academic discourse, but which is performing some kind of visual labor.

**IA:** This is a difficult question to answer in some ways. As an anthropologist, there is a specific language and approach that is employed, which can be dismissive of other disciplines at times. But I've learned a lot just in the past few days being here [at the College Art Association conference], so I'm grateful for what I've seen and witnessed. Harvard has several museums across disciplines (including three art museums), and I am fascinated by the decision-making process of how something arrives in one facility and not another, and—as a result—how it gets interpreted and presented to the public.

I have been reflecting on recent labeling trends and the recognition of individual versus collective authorship. Labels often say “maker unknown,” or “maker once known,” ascribing that there is an artist or there is an individual behind each of these pieces. Historically, there has been a tendency in anthropology museums to have “type” and “duplicate” “specimens” that represent peoples and times, often ignoring individual artistic choices and trends. And even though there's been a huge turn in anthropology and museology for many decades now, I think some aspects of the art historical approach offer one way of thinking through that in a different way. We anthropologists do not commonly talk about the individual influence of one known artist on an entire

aesthetic movement of historic creations. Meanwhile, in Western art traditions, movements and schools like Cubism and Impressionism credit these aesthetic changes and choices to specific individuals. Considering the importance of apprenticeship in many parts of Pacific traditions, why don't we talk about schools of art, and the idea of an artist creating something and then having a school of artists around them? I think that's what art history can offer, giving back the creative agency of individuals that anthropology doesn't always give.

**SC:** I think one of the reasons that we posed that question was from our own positioning at an *art* museum—and the history of the Oceanic collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art was that they were originally from the collection of Nelson Rockefeller and the Museum of Primitive Art, and were transferred to the Met in 1969. Our wing opened in 1982, but the premise of that gift was based on Nelson Rockefeller's desire to elevate the arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas to a fine-art level, equivalent with a Euro-American canon. There's obviously been problematic elements in the way that it's been done, because you turn something into an aesthetic fine-art object and you diminish its cultural context. We're grappling with that now, and are bringing in an anthropological method in the way that we are approaching art historical curatorship at the Met. So, we were interested in exploring some of these crossovers and interdisciplinary boundaries that we are all navigating in different ways.

**HKR:** I'm glad you mentioned the *Te Māori* exhibition because I think it's a great example of how, in Pacific art history, Aotearoa is far more "advanced" than other Pacific Islands because they have the resources and *Te Māori* was such an important exhibit for them—not just for international recognition but also internally within Aotearoa New Zealand's museum culture to inspire a generation of folks to do this work. It speaks a lot to the international work that we have to do as well; to look outside of the canons within the US and to look elsewhere to see how folks have been intervening in the field. And when we talk about museums in the Pacific, Aotearoa was always the shining beacon for where we would love to be.

I also want to mention Sarah Kuaiwa [who isn't here but who was originally invited to participate in this panel] because Sarah is a kapa [Hawaiian barkcloth] historian and curator of Hawai'i and Pacific cultural resources at the Bishop Museum in Honolulu. In her research on kapa, she is helping to re-write that canon of work to incorporate Hawaiian primary voices. In Hawai'i, we actually have quite a substantial archive of Hawaiian language source materials that hasn't necessarily

been utilized heavily in most fields.<sup>10</sup> A lot of her research, especially in the nineteenth century, is trying to fill that gap on Hawaiian kapa production. Oftentimes, the assumption is that it stopped a little bit after contact, or only certain forms existed. In reality, there are many different types of objects that incorporated kapa over that period. I see her as an important person—trying to have a voice at the table, but also writing back to a very anthropologically-driven approach to Hawaiian bark cloth.

**SC and MW: Thank you both so much for sharing your work and your thoughts with us!**

*Dr. Ingrid Ahlgren is the curator of Oceania at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology at Harvard University. Her interests include the intersections of Pacific identity, environment, sacred beliefs, and material culture. She has written articles on the history of collections, climate change, cultural erasure in museums, and has a book in development about the traditions of taboo in the Marshall Islands. Ingrid was born and raised in the Marshall Islands, where she returned as an adult to work for the country's Historic Preservation Office and Alele National Museum. She also worked on funded grants to record and digitize the country's songs and chants, as well as a review for revising the country's historic preservation laws. After receiving her doctorate in anthropology at The Australian National University, Ingrid received a fellowship to conduct research at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History, investigating the large collection of Marshallese woven mats and bringing a group of weavers to the museum to study them together. She also led an assessment of the impact of the museum's Recovering Voices Community Research Program, which enables Indigenous communities to conduct museum-based research to save, document, and enliven their languages, cultures, and knowledge systems. Most recently at Harvard, Ingrid started the first fellowship of its kind at the Peabody Museum—the Harvard Oceanic Collections Engagement Fellowship—which provides funding for Pacific Islanders to visit the collections in person.*

*Dr. Sylvia Cockburn is a curator and art historian specializing in contemporary Pacific art, community engagement, and collaborative practice in museums. In 2020, she completed her PhD at the University of East Anglia, where her research focused on collaborations between contemporary Pacific artists and ethnographic museums in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. She has previously held curatorial roles working with Pacific collections at Queensland Museum and Museums Victoria. Most recently, she has worked as curator of art*

*at the Australian War Memorial. She is currently the Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow at The Met, where she is working on the redevelopment of the Oceania galleries in the Michael C. Rockefeller Wing.*

*Dr. Halena Kapuni-Reynolds is the associate curator of Native Hawaiian history and culture at the National Museum of the American Indian. He works remotely from Hawai'i on projects related to content development, exhibitions, acquisitions, education, public service, and collaborations between Smithsonian units and various external partners. He received his PhD from the Department of American Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and his scholarly interests center around Native Hawaiian art and music, place-based research, and Hawaiian museology. Most recently, he co-authored, with Noelle M.K.Y. Kahanu, a chapter titled "Native Hawaiians and the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum: Historical Reckoning, Truth-telling, and Healing" in the 2024 volume U.S. Museum Histories and the Politics of Interpretation: Never Neutral. In addition to his professional and scholarly work, he recently joined the board of the Hawai'i Council for the Humanities. There he is supporting the development of the NEH-funded Pacific Islands Humanities Network, which aims to cultivate further conversation and collaboration between humanities organizations in Hawai'i, American Sāmoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands.*

*Dr. Maggie Wander is assistant professor of art history at Santa Clara University. She researches the visual and material cultures of Oceania (the Pacific Islands, Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Papua New Guinea) with a particular focus on contemporary art, Indigenous sovereignty, environmental justice, and critical heritage. From 2022 to 2024, she was senior research associate for Oceanic arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art where she worked on the reinstallation of the permanent Oceania collection in the Michael C. Rockefeller Wing. Maggie received her PhD in visual studies from the University of California Santa Cruz in 2024 and is the co-executive editor of Pacific Arts, the journal of the Pacific Arts Association. Her writing has appeared in publications including the Journal of New Zealand and Pacific Studies, The Contemporary Pacific, and Media Fields Journal. Her research has been supported by the Luce Foundation/American Council of Learned Societies, the Social Science Research Council, and UC Santa Cruz.*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Pacific Arts Association is made up of three chapters: North America, Europe, and the Pacific.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the Cardinal Directions Markers, see James Pepper Henry and Kristine Brumley, "Cardinal Direction Markers: Bringing The Four

Directions To NMAI,” in *The Land Has Memory: Indigenous Knowledge, Native Landscapes, and the National Museum of the American Indian*, ed. Duane Blue Spruce and Tanya Thrasher (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press in association with the National Museum of the American Indian, 2008), 33–47.

<sup>3</sup> Smithsonian Folklife Festival, accessed April 22, 2024, <https://festival.si.edu/>.

<sup>4</sup> “Ethical Stewardship,” Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, Harvard University, accessed April 29, 2024, <https://peabody.harvard.edu/ethical-stewardship>.

<sup>5</sup> “The Harvard Oceanic Collections Engagement Fellowship (HOCEF),” Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, Harvard University, accessed April 29, 2024, <https://peabody.harvard.edu/harvard-oceanic-collections-engagement-fellowship-hocef>.

<sup>6</sup> “Balikbayan | Homecoming: Filipino Perspectives on the Philippine Collections,” Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, Harvard University, May 30, 2024, [https://peabody.harvard.edu/balikbayan\\_homecoming](https://peabody.harvard.edu/balikbayan_homecoming).

<sup>7</sup> Halena Kapuni-Reynolds, “Exhibition Review: Nā Māla: Layered Landscapes of Kona Coffee Heritage, curated by Mina Elison,” *Pacific Arts* 20, no. 1 (2020): 153–58; Halena Kapuni-Reynolds, “Exhibition Review: *Project Banaba* Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum,” *Pacific Arts* 24, no. 1 (2024): 118–26.

<sup>8</sup> The exhibition was shown in the following venues: The Art Gallery, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (January 22–March 26, 2023); Koa Gallery, Kapi‘olani Community College (February 19–August 13, 2023); Commons Gallery, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (March 5–April 2, 2023); Gallery ‘Iolani, Windard Community College (March 31–May 5, 2023); Hō‘ikeākea, Leeward Community College (April 29–August 25, 2023); and East-West Center Gallery (April 30–August 13, 2023). For more information on the exhibition, see Drew Kahu‘āina Broderick and Josh Tengan, “‘*Ai Pōhaku, Stone Eaters*: Affirmation, Defiance, and Kānaka ‘Ōiwi Visual Culture Today,” *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 23, no. 2, 146–65.

<sup>9</sup> Halena Kapuni-Reynolds, “Event Review: E Hō Mai Ka ‘Ike: Celebrating the Launch of the Edith Kanaka‘ole Quarter, Hilo, Hawai‘i, May 5–6, 2023,” *Pacific Arts* 23, no. 1 (2023): 155–64.

<sup>10</sup> Sarah Kuaiwa, “Transformations in Homespun: Power and Creativity in Early Nineteenth-century Hawaiian Cloth Manufacturing,” *Critical Studies in Fashion & Beauty* 12 (2021): 49–66.

**KAILI CHUN**

## **The Āpuakehau Stream, its Role in Waikīkī, and *Muliwai* (2022)**

### **Abstract**

*Artist Kaili Chun discusses her sculptural installation Muliwai (2022), located in Waikīkī Market, Honolulu, O’ahu, Hawai’i. A muliwai is an estuary formed at the intersection where the wai (fresh water of the mountains) meets the kai (salt water of the sea). Chun reflects on the importance of the muliwai ecosystem that sustains plant, animal, and human life; how urban development has impacted this rich environment; and the need for people to recognize the interconnectedness of all things and their responsibility of environmental stewardship. The site-specific sculpture connects viewers to the memory of this place in Waikīkī and invites us to reflect on our relationship with nature and appreciate the delicate balance that sustains life.*

**Keywords:** *Kaili Chun, Hawai’i, contemporary art, sculpture, environmental stewardship, environmental ecosystems, Waikīkī, site-specific art, water, food systems*

Famous is the Āpuakehau stream, an essential lifeline that once flowed through the ahupua’a (land division) of Waikīkī, from the verdant mountains to the thriving ocean. This stream was not merely a body of water but a vital force that breathed life into the land and its people. As it traversed from the heights of the mountains, it gathered strength and vitality, eventually giving birth to the abundant muliwai (estuary). This estuary, laden with gifts of life-giving food, filled the ōpū (stomachs) of our people. We offer our deepest gratitude, or mahalo, to Āpuakehau for sharing its many treasures, sustaining the land, and nourishing the community.

### **The Importance of the Muliwai**

The intersection where the wai (fresh water of the mountains) meets the kai (salt water of the sea) is where one finds the muliwai. The muliwai’s unique, brackish water is a critical habitat that sustains a rich and nutritious ecosystem, vital for

fish, sea creatures, and limu (seaweed) and provides these essential aquatic resources to the people of the land for sustenance. The muliwai is more than a mere ecological niche; it is a cornerstone of the ahupuaʻa system. This ancient Hawaiian system of land management connected every aspect of nature into a cohesive whole, embodying a harmonious balance between land and sea, people and nature.

### **The Ahupuaʻa System and Environmental Harmony**

The genius of the ahupuaʻa system lays in its ability to create a sustainable and self-sufficient environment. Prior to the privatization of Hawaiian lands in the mid-nineteenth century, Native Hawaiians designed each ahupuaʻa, a division of land that stretched from the mountains to the sea, to be self-sustaining. The ʻĀpuakehau stream, flowing through the ahupuaʻa of Waikīkī, was a perfect example of this system in action. It connected the upland forests, agricultural fields, and coastal waters, creating a continuous flow of resources and energy. This interconnectedness ensured that every part of the ahupuaʻa worked in harmony, supporting the needs of the people while preserving the natural environment.

In this system, the muliwai played a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance. By filtering the fresh water before it reached the ocean, the muliwai purified the stream and prevented pollutants from entering the marine environment. This process ensured that the waters reaching the ocean were clean and supportive of marine life, therefore protecting the delicate coral reefs and other marine ecosystems that were, and still are, vital to the ocean's health. Moreover, the muliwai served as a nursery for fish, birds, limu, and plants, allowing all to flourish by ensuring a continuous and robust supply of fish and other resources for the community. The careful management of these resources reflected the wisdom and ingenuity of the kanaka maoli (Native Hawaiian people), who understood the importance of living in harmony with nature.

### **Artistic Reflections of the Muliwai and Ahupuaʻa**

In tribute to the rhythmic flow of the muliwai, my artwork titled *Muliwai* (2022), located in Waikīkī Market, Honolulu, Oʻahu, Hawaiʻi, has undulations that highlight the ebb and flow of lunar and tidal connections. The interplay of light and shadow

in the artwork captures the dynamic nature of the muliwai, mirroring the constant movement and change inherent in this vital ecosystem.

Located adjacent to stairs leading from the ground level of the residential tower housing the Waikīkī Market to the second-floor market itself (Fig. 1–2), *Muliwai* is integrated into the space rather than just hung on the wall. The ‘Āpuakehau stream ran through this site and the muliwai formed where it met the ocean near the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. In this work, I refer to the stream’s connection and relationship to the muliwai. While planning the piece, I thought about the flow of water in the ‘Āpuakehau stream and the subtle undulations of that water, as well as those of the ocean and surf. The reflection of light upon water changes throughout the day and night; similarly, the piece’s appearance changes from one vantage point to another. This effect is partially captured in the reflection of light on the hammered copper pieces (Figs. 3–4). Through their movement up and down the staircase, people can connect to the movement of water as their visual perception of the artwork shifts. When I stand on the stairway looking toward the street, I see the piece reflecting light one way, and when I look from the street toward the staircase, I see a very different view. It is similar to looking toward the source of the stream, the po‘owai (the channel of the stream), and then looking toward the place where it opens up to the ocean, the muliwai. The work also does this physically, where the wider height of *Muliwai* opens toward the ocean.

The natural world no longer exists in Waikīkī as it once did. Waikīkī was originally a highly prized region with rich resources of food, water, and pleasure (surfing), but is now predominantly “reclaimed” land that was filled in with the dredged material removed when building the Ala Wai Canal. All the fish ponds that used to exist in Waikīkī are gone. The three major rivers and streams that used to flow through the area—Pi‘inaio, ‘Āpuakehau, and Ku‘ekauanahi—have been diverted underground. These rivers once created the muliwai that served the region, but do not have the same impact on the environment as they once did. Additionally, the sand on the beaches of Waikīkī is mechanically replenished every few years—via large pipes that pump sand in from deeper waters offshore—to accommodate the tourist economy on which Hawai‘i is heavily dependent.

Waikīkī Market, where *Muliwai* is located, is a busy grocery store that represents Hawai‘i’s diverse food cultures. I connect Waikīkī Market as a source of food. Of course, it is not an agricultural or fishing entity, per se, but it does serve and provide food for residents and visitors alike. It is, perhaps, the new “muliwai” of our time, where people find sustenance. There is irony in this function, in that it is not a traditional reciprocal entity that works with the land, but I hope the

artwork will stimulate awareness of the transformation of this area by conjuring the undulations of the original muliwai, both literally and metaphorically.

*Muliwai* serves as a reminder of the interconnectedness of all things. Just as the ahupua'a system connected the mountains to the sea, the artwork connects the viewer to the memory of this specific site in Waikīkī and invites us to reflect on our relationship with nature and to appreciate the delicate balance that sustained life in the ahupua'a. The artwork's flowing lines and organic shapes echo the natural forms found in the muliwai, reinforcing the idea that art and nature are deeply intertwined. I desire that both residents and visitors alike pause and consider the transformation of these lands from food-providing resources to a highly developed touristic environment that has displaced most Native Hawaiians and has changed the climate and environment of Waikīkī forever. Waikīkī was once populated by Native Hawaiians, who now make up only 21% of the total population of Hawai'i. I hope this artwork will help keep the memory of this once-thriving environment alive in some fashion, perhaps inspiring curiosity about the history and genealogy of the place.

### **Celebrating the Legacy of 'Āpuakehau**

Through the careful stewardship of the land and water, Hawaiians created a sustainable system that supported both the people and the environment. Today, as we reflect on this legacy, we are reminded of the importance of living in harmony with nature and of the enduring value of the ahupua'a system. By honoring the gifts of the 'Āpuakehau and the muliwai, we celebrate a rich cultural lineage and a vision of sustainability that continues to inspire us. Mahalo e 'Āpuakehau, for your many treasures and for teaching us the true meaning of interconnectedness and stewardship.

*Kaili Chun is a sculptor and installation artist based in Hawai'i. Her works address ideas of containment and exposure, agency and restraint. Her processes and materials transform physical spaces into unique environments that comment on contemporary issues. She often constructs narratives through symbols and objects that address the impact of historical events on the present day. Chun's diverse training includes a BA in architecture from Princeton University, where she also studied ceramics with Toshiko Takaezu; an MFA from the University of Hawai'i–Mānoa (UHM); and an apprenticeship with master canoe-builder and woodworker*

*Wright Elemakule Bowman Sr. She is currently in the Doctor of Architecture program at UHM and a faculty member in the Art Department at UHM.*



Figure 1. Kaili Chun, *Muliwai*, 2022. Plywood and copper installation, Waikiki Market, Honolulu, Hawai'i. Photograph courtesy of Stacy Kamehiro



Figure 2. Kaili Chun, *Muliwai*, 2022. Plywood and copper installation, Waikīkī Market, Honolulu, Hawai'i. Photograph courtesy of Sean Marrs



Figure 3. Kaili Chun, *Muliwai* (detail), 2022. Plywood and copper installation, Waikīkī Market, Honolulu, Hawai'i. Photograph courtesy of the artist

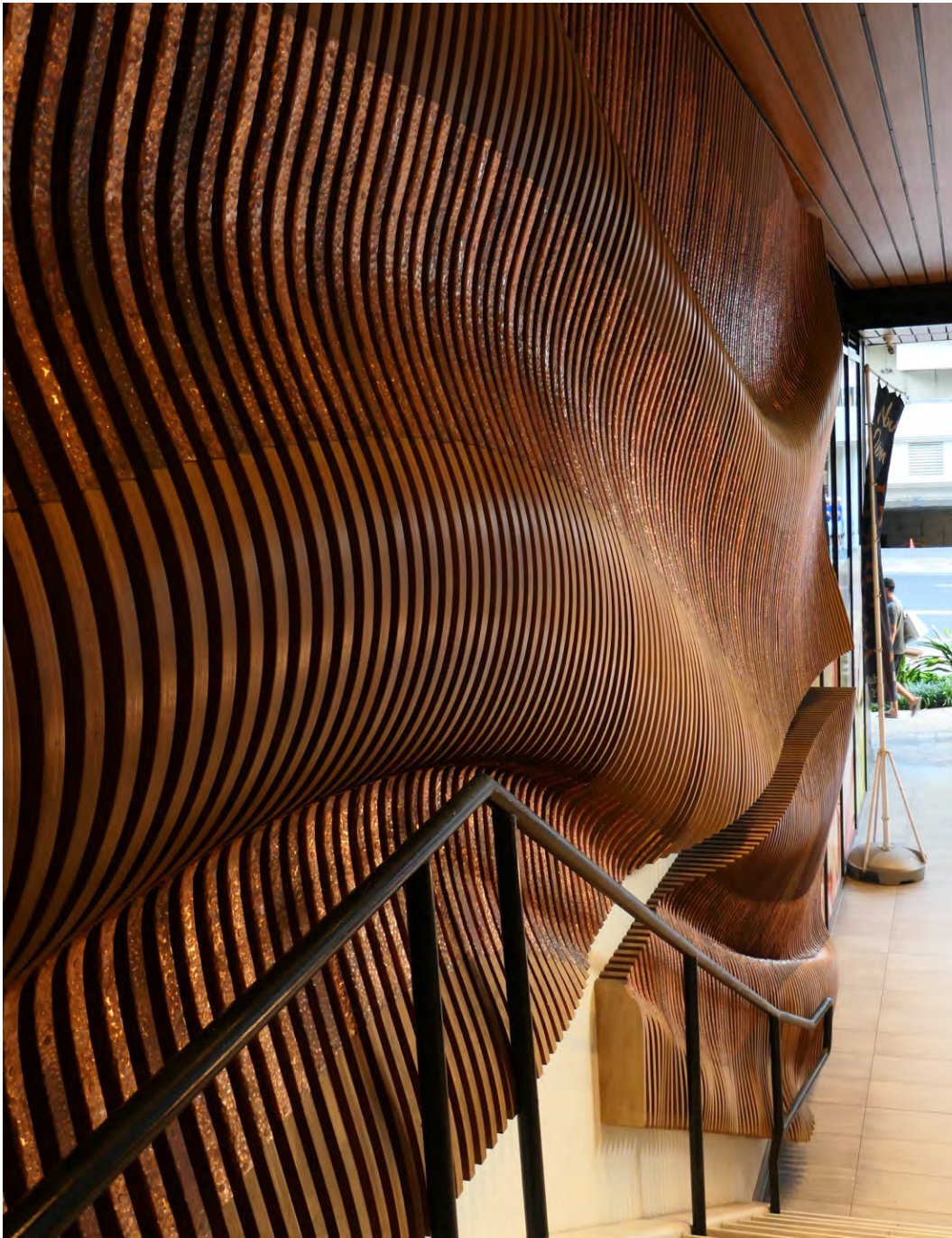


Figure 4. Kaili Chun, *Muliwai* (detail), 2022. Plywood and copper installation, Waikīkī Market, Honolulu, Hawai'i. Photograph courtesy of Stacy Kamehiro

**NICHOLAS THOMAS**

## **Pacific Presences: A Retrospect**

### **Abstract**

*This essay is a reflection on the five-year research project “Pacific Presences: Oceanic Art and European Museums,” which was supported by the European Research Council from 2013 to 2018. It highlights the very rich and still largely under-researched potential of Oceanic collections across smaller and larger European museums, as well as the benefits of collaborative, collections-based research for communities and source nations across the Pacific.*

**Keywords:** *Museums, collections, Pacific art, collaboration, Pacific Presences, Oceania, European voyages, critical heritage studies*

Toward the end of 2012, I was delighted to receive an email from the European Research Council (ERC) confirming that an application for an “advanced grant” that colleagues and I had submitted earlier in the year had been successful. The project, entitled “Pacific Presences: Oceanic Art and European Museums,” received just under €2.5 million to support a wide-ranging programme of work based at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge over five years.<sup>1</sup> The moment was fortuitous, for the project built on others that were just coming to fruition. From Cambridge, Amiria Salmond had led an application around “Artefacts of Encounter,” an exploration of Polynesian collections across Europe; I took over as this project’s convenor when she moved to Germany and then Brazil (but remained involved). The project initiated links with museum curators in Germany, Italy, France, and Spain and arranged joint study visits by Māori colleagues to their collections. Lissant Bolton from the British Museum and I had co-directed a five-year investigation of its Melanesian collections that extended or initiated relationships with many curators, researchers, and community members from across Melanesian nations. A north-south group of scholars and curators from the UK and New Zealand, convened by Peter Brunt, completed the publication, *Art in Oceania: A New History* (2012).<sup>2</sup> Most importantly, an outstanding group of researchers, including Julie Adams, Lucie Carreau, Alison Clark, and Maia Nuku signed up to take on postdoctoral roles with Pacific Presences; Alana Jelinek and Mark Adams were affiliated artists; and Erna Lilje joined later. Other

researchers, artists, and students later participated in Pacific Presences on one basis or another.

Most fortuitously, after we submitted the ERC application, but before we learned of its success, I was approached by the Royal Academy of Arts, which had for many years aspired to mount a major Oceania exhibition, and in due course Peter Brunt and I agreed to co-curate such a show. Research for Pacific Presences informed and stimulated our curatorial work over five years, and the exhibition *Oceania* (2018) became one of the major outcomes of the ERC project.<sup>3</sup> In strictly academic terms, the core outcome of Pacific Presences was a book series, published open-access by Sidestone Press in the Netherlands. Nine titles, including a summative two-volume book with the same title as the project, totalled nearly 3,000 pages.<sup>4</sup> The project also generated what we called “community books” in local languages; smaller exhibitions in Cambridge and pop-up exhibitions in the Pacific, including pop-up exhibitions in New Caledonia and elsewhere; and many other publications, events, residencies, art projects, and acquisitions.<sup>5</sup>

The second volume of our summative book concluded with reflections by members of the core project team. Having had my say through an extended introduction, I did not contribute to that section. Now, more than five years later, it seems timely to say something about the project’s strengths and limitations, what it revealed, and what future priorities and opportunities it points towards. By way of context, Pacific Presences was motivated by several large questions. We were aware that museums across Europe, from Spain to Russia, held collections brought to that part of the world from the Pacific from the eighteenth century onwards. We knew that the collections were cumulatively vast, especially in Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Switzerland, and that they also included notable holdings in many other countries including Ireland and Estonia. We asked: What was collected? What significance, values, and uses did artefacts have in their communities of origin? How and why were artefacts gifted, traded, or appropriated? What lives had they had in Europe? How could their salience be understood now?

One implication of investigating these questions should be noted at the outset: the project aimed not only to be documentary and analytical but also generative. We hoped to make collections—which in some cases had been neglected in museum stores for generations—better known and accessible, in particular to the Islanders who were our research partners. We shared images and discussed works via email or otherwise online. But we prioritised having in-person contact with things, and visited collections with co-researchers from many communities. Rather than merely analyse connections, we aimed to create them.



Figure 1. Mark Adams, 31 October 2013. Julie Adams, Teikitevaamanihi Robert Huukena, Philippe Peltier, Maia Nuku, Marie-Noëlle Ottino-Garanger. Musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac. Paris. France. Digital photograph, from the series published in Mark Adams and Nicholas Thomas, *Photo-Museology: the Presence of Absence and the Absence of Presence* (Pacific Presences 7, Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2022). Courtesy of the artist



Figure 2. Mark Adams, 25 September 2016. Suurgildi Hoone. Great Guild Hall. Nicholas Thomas, Anne Ruusaar, journalist, cameraman. Estonian History Museum. Tallinn. Estonia. Digital photograph, from the series published in Mark Adams and Nicholas Thomas, *Photo-Museology* (Pacific Presences 7, Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2022). Courtesy of the artist



Figure 3. Mark Adams, 9 June 2016. At Nessakoéa, Djeine, Daniel Bonwé, Brenda, Kapoipa Kasarhérou, Julie Adams, Joel Nei, Edmond Saumé, François Wadra, Lucien, Yamel Euritein. Houailou Valley. Grande Terre. Kanaky New Caledonia. Digital scan from 8 x 10 in. colour negative film, from the series published in Mark Adams and Nicholas Thomas, *Photo-Museology* (Pacific Presences 7, Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2022). Courtesy of the artist



Figure 4. Mark Adams, 20 July 2015. Noelle Kahanu. An 'ahu'ula of Kamehameha II. Bevan Workroom. Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. University of Cambridge. United Kingdom. Digital photograph, from the series published in Mark Adams and Nicholas Thomas, *Photo-Museology* (Pacific Presences 7, Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2022). Courtesy of the artist

The ERC bid identified cultures and regions that were proposed foci—including the Marquesas, the Solomon Islands, and the Sepik—and a number of partner institutions with whom we made agreements regarding access to collections. But as the project got underway, these foci and partnerships were superseded by new opportunities and discoveries. Although we did do a good deal of work with most partner institutions, Julie Adams and I made just one visit to the *Kunstkamera* in St. Petersburg, which was difficult but rewarding. We addressed Kanak collections from New Caledonia (among others) that had not been among our identified foci, but never had the capacity to address the Sepik.

Aside from the range of standard methodologies of artefact analysis, ethnography, and historical research, the project extended the practice of Amiria Salmond's "Artefacts of Encounter" group, which had foregrounded collective engagement with collections (without ever quite deliberately planning to do so, or announcing that as our particular approach). That is, we visited museum holdings not as individual scholars engaged in an object version of library research, but as a community. This often meant that a small group might include one or more members of the project team, one or more Islander visitors, an affiliated artist, and collections staff members from the institution we were visiting. Some of the local curators were Oceania specialists, while others had collection-wide responsibilities, but knew institutional histories and the aspects of provenance that the styles or handwriting on labels evidenced. Our visits were thus dialogical encounters in multiple directions: we met remarkable creations by Islanders' ancestors and shared and debated cultural expertise. We also began to understand the bewilderingly complex journeys that particular works had undertaken. In some cases, objects had passed between many hands as travellers presented works to scientific societies that later merged or disbanded, or collections were transferred to museums that had, in turn, been renamed and/or amalgamated with others. We shared versions of these encounters when we visited various Pacific communities and took advantage of cross-cultural gatherings such as the Festival of Pacific Arts in Guam in 2017, where we set up stalls at artists' fairs.

Pacific Presences was stimulated by a sea change happening in work around Oceanic art; it aimed to accelerate it, and indeed render it irreversible. Collections have long been, and still are, studied without much regard for the voices and perspectives of Islanders. Even now—in the context of the tribal art market, rather than curatorship or research—there is a discourse of Oceanic art that presumes that the scene of interpretation and valuation is one of European or North American connoisseurs or curators, rather than a conversation in which Islanders' voices are prominent. At a time when the academic humanities and

social sciences have long embraced postcolonial perspectives, it should be unnecessary, indeed old-hat, to insist that the best scholarship can only be based in collaboration, and that projects can only be responsive to local perspectives and agendas. But the challenges and costs of long-distance international travel; the widely distributed nature of collections; the fragmented, complex, and multilingual archival record; and the relatively fragile nature of training and capacity-building in Pacific studies and art studies make sustaining and nurturing Islands-based and collaborative scholarship around art collections and histories at once important and fertile in principle, but also challenging—and often simply difficult to get funded—in practice. Support from the ERC enabled us to undertake and facilitate a good deal of work over the period 2013 to 2018, but left us painfully conscious of how many collections were unexamined and how many Pacific communities still had little or no access to relevant collections.

As project lead, I was, and still am, too interested to usefully assess Pacific Presences' successes and failures—critical adjudications can only come from elsewhere. But the project experience did highlight issues for the future that I would like to point to here.

Above all, the project revealed both the extraordinary importance of collections as expressions of heritage and research resources, and the manifold complexities and obstacles to genuinely unlocking their potential, for ourselves as researchers, and for wider constituencies in the Pacific and elsewhere.

We responded, as I have noted, to a sense that vast and extraordinarily significant collections were held in institutions in many countries. Both Islanders and interested people located in formerly British colonies often assumed that the bulk of important artefacts were in the major metropolitan institutions, in particular the British Museum. While it and equivalent national institutions in France and Germany hold highly important collections, we were struck by the extent and importance of holdings at less prominent institutions; while numerically smaller, they frequently included exceptionally significant artefacts and collections, often associated with particular individual voyagers, missionaries, or colonists. They were sometimes well-provenanced or had the potential to be richly documented on the basis of further research into scientific, evangelical, naval, and sometimes punitive military missions. An underlying point is that material culture ethnologists had studied artefacts through a lens of "types" and "specimens." Over recent decades scholars in the field have moved on, to recognise that, beyond minor variations, objects in museums were often more appropriately conceived as individual works of art. They are not interchangeable and there is much to be gained from close, in-person examination of, for example, Marquesan 'u'u (war clubs), which

exhibit rich nuance and individual variation—every example is, in fact, a singular work. What could be discovered, through visits to smaller, out-of-the-way institutions, was thus much more than “more of the same.”

In five years—notwithstanding revelatory, exciting, and often emotionally moving encounters with artefacts across dozens of museums in many countries—Pacific Presences did no more than scrape the surface and selectively sample the extraordinary collections that have long been all but inaccessible to everyone but the curators responsible for them and occasional specialist researchers. Because of issues with museum infrastructure, some stored collections have been, quite literally, physically inaccessible even to the staff of their own institutions for many years; others have been hard to understand and/or access in the absence of online catalogues or publications; some have been difficult to access because staff have lacked capacity or (thankfully now only occasionally) been obstructive. In other words, the collections in reserves are still largely under-researched resources. Digitisation has progressed a great deal from when the project started; in 2013, certain collections that we could only explore by walking around stores and opening boxes can now be searched, at least partially, online (though online catalogues rarely encompass all relevant accession records, documents, or images). It is encouraging that funding agencies and universities are increasingly recognising that collections have been intellectually and institutionally marginalised for too long, that they demand dedicated investment, and that databases and portals to cultural and natural collections, such as Europeana<sup>6</sup> and national equivalents are becoming more inclusive of material, and functional, for users. Yet at the same time, the funding environment across universities and museums in many countries is unpromising, and support for collections care and documentation is fragile.

Pacific Presences pointed to the importance of cross-institutional, international, and comparative research, not only because it is critical that we connect Islanders (in French Polynesia, for example) with collections in Europe, but because European collections were, through scientific and museum exchanges among other processes, often divided across a number of countries. One of our methodologies, reassembling collections, was vital to documenting the artefacts from the Krusenstern expedition in the Marquesas, which had ended up in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Tallinn, Tartu, Munich, Leipzig, Zurich, and Leiden.<sup>7</sup> Dispersed collections of this kind cannot be researched effectively through work bound by institutions, as relevant archives, print publications, and visual images can be, and in this case were, distributed even more widely—in North America, as well as Europe—than the artefacts themselves. One of the strengths of the project was that several research strands—not only on the Marquesas but on the collections

associated with the d'Entrecasteaux and *Royalist* voyages, among others—were reassembled as comprehensively as possible.<sup>8</sup> But there is, to some extent, a mismatch between the distribution of material culture over space and time and the parameters of even a well-funded research project: the work just cannot be done by individuals, or by a small team, over three or even five years. It can only be sustained and advanced collectively. The second issue to consider for the future is to recognise how the political context changed over the life of the project. In so far as longstanding commitments on the part of the Pacific art research community—to consultation, engagement, and the co-production of research—were scrutinised and given greater urgency, this change was positive. In so far as reductive and unambiguously negative characterisations of collections and museums became more prevalent, the decolonial turn was potentially more negative. A stereotypical view—that any ethnographic or colonial-era collection had been looted from its Pacific origins—has come to be widely enunciated in the media and by academics less aware of the messy actualities of collection histories. At the same time, “source” communities’ perspectives were presumed rather than investigated, and often presumed to be homogeneous. Giving collections greater prominence in public debate was, on the one hand, positive—they had been sidelined for so long—but their stigmatisation risked diminishing their potential as a resource.

The 2018 Sarr-Savoy report on the restitution of African cultural heritage was published during the run of the *Oceania* exhibition and the renewed debate about restitution surfaced in reports relating to the show.<sup>9</sup> A prominent newspaper ran an exposé-style story which “revealed” that the spectacular Solomon Islands food trough in the British Museum’s collection had been looted; the journalist was in fact aware of the provenance because it had been stated and discussed in the media pack, the catalogue, and on the label in the show itself.

While the exhibition, like the Pacific Presences project more generally, was premised on collaboration and dialogue, its narrative regarding encounter was always susceptible to challenge. One perspective might be that colonial violence and dispossession, and acts of resistance, received insufficient emphasis. Similarly, consultation and collaboration were always uneven. Members of the research group had prior connections and indeed friendships that were enormously valuable over the course of the project and informed aspects of the exhibition. We made new relationships or initiated specific consultations when we could, but some engagements were more limited than others and the exhibition included artefacts from communities with whom no dialogue had taken place.

Pacific Presences was a pre-Covid project. Given that so much of the work depended on travel, in-person study visits to collections, and interaction with groups of people, we were extremely fortunate that the programme was not disrupted, as so many were just a couple of years later. A project such as Pacific Presences could not have relied on online communication to initiate or develop relationships with community members with whom we had not yet worked. Now there is, rightly, pressure to limit air travel for environmental reasons, but research dealing with cross-cultural artefacts cannot be undertaken without “going the distance.” Multiple visits, a preparedness to engage in proper familiarisation, and the capacity and willingness to bring individuals and community representatives to collections, museums, and the European milieu in which they are situated are all essential if work is to be seriously undertaken. Yet the capacity we now have, to meet online, does enable more continuous dialogue, even as it throws distance into relief, highlighting the very differences between the island environments that artefacts are from, and the European institutions and milieu in which they are now found.

At the time of writing, Pacific nations have gained visibility in the global media due to events such as the landslide in Enga, Papua New Guinea, and civil turbulence in New Caledonia. In the context of such crises, research on historic artefacts may appear antiquarian. Yet evidence mounts for the broad and positive socioeconomic impact of heritage and culture. Just one research project can enable skills development, training, access, the creation of new artwork, and new international partnerships and opportunities. In the Pacific, the connection with living heritage and cultural energy are palpable. Collections, conceived generatively, are vital not only for advanced academic inquiry, but in more challenging and exciting ways for the future of the region and its communities.

*Nicholas Thomas is the director of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA) at Cambridge University. He is the author and editor of nearly fifty influential books and exhibition catalogues, including Entangled Objects (1991), Possessions: Indigenous Art/Colonial Culture (1999), Islanders: the Pacific in the Age of Empire (2012), and Gauguin and Polynesia (2024). Thomas has also written extensively about contemporary art, museums, and related issues for the Financial Times, The Art Newspaper, Apollo, Artlink, and Art Asia Pacific, among other magazines and journals. The exhibition Oceania (2018–19), which he co-curated with Peter Brunt for the Royal Academy of Arts in London and the Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac in Paris, was acclaimed as a landmark exhibition by critics in the UK, France, Germany, and the United States, as well as in Pacific nations themselves. Thomas has curated or co-curated many other exhibitions at MAA and elsewhere, often in collaboration with contemporary artists.*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> It is a pleasure, again, to acknowledge the ERC's support under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7, 2007-2013), grant agreement 324146.

<sup>2</sup> The main outcomes of these initiatives were the books *Artefacts of Encounter: Cook's Voyages, Colonial Collecting and Museum Histories*, ed. Nicholas Thomas, Julie Adams, Billie Lythberg, Maia Nuku, and Amiria Salmond (Dunedin: Otago University Press / Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016 [completed with support from the Pacific Presences project]); *Melanesia: Art and Encounter*, ed. Lissant Bolton, Nicholas Thomas, Elizabeth Bonshek, Julie Adams, and Ben Burt (London: British Museum Press / Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013); and Peter Brunt, Nicholas Thomas, Sean Mallon, Lissant Bolton, Deidre Brown, Damian Skinner and Susanne Küchler, *Art in Oceania: A New History* (London: Thames and Hudson / New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> The exhibition was held at the Royal Academy from September to December 2018 and at the Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac from March to July 2019. The catalogue was *Oceania*, ed. Peter Brunt and Nicholas Thomas (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2018). For reflections and responses, see Nicholas Thomas, Adrian Locke, Noelle M. K. Y. Kahanu, Simon Jean, and Lagi-Maama, "Reviewing *Oceania*," *Museum Worlds: Advances in Research* 7, no. 1 (2019): 262–91.

<sup>4</sup> The book series can be accessed and downloaded via <https://www.sidestone.com/books/?q=pacific+presences>.

<sup>5</sup> Community books relating to collections from Kiribati, New Caledonia, and the Solomon Islands were produced, in part, in local languages. Exhibitions at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge University included *Magic and Memory* (September 2014–March 2015), *Sounding Out the Morning Star: Music and West Papua* (March–November 2015), and *Swish: Carved Belts and Fibre Skirts of Papua New Guinea* (2017).

<sup>6</sup> See [www.europeana.eu](http://www.europeana.eu).

<sup>7</sup> Elena Govor and Nicholas Thomas (eds.), *Tiki: Marquesan Art and the Krusenstern Expedition* (Pacific Presences 5; Leiden: Sidestone, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Bronwen Douglas, Fanny Wonu Veys, and Billie Lythberg (eds.), *Collecting in the South Sea: The Voyage of Bruni d'Entrecasteaux 1791–1794* (Pacific Presences 3; Leiden: Sidestone, 2018); Alison Clark, with Eve Haddow and Christopher Wright, *Resonant Histories: Pacific Artefacts and the Voyages of HMS Royalist 1890–1893* (Pacific Presences 6; Leiden: Sidestone, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, "The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics," trans. Drew S. Burk (Paris: Ministère de la Culture; Université Paris Nanterre, 2018).

**DAN TAULAPAPA McMULLIN**

## ***The Healer's Wound* (Exhibition and Artist's Book)**

### **Abstract**

*The Healer's Wound is an exhibition of new work by Dan Taulapapa McMullin curated by Mariquita ("Micki") Davis and held at Pilele Projects in Los Angeles, California, June 29–July 27, 2024. The exhibition coincided with the publication of the second edition of Taulapapa's artist's book, *The Healer's Wound: A Queer Theirstory of Polynesia*, edited by Marika Emi and curated by Drew Kahu'āina Broderick (Honolulu: Tropic Editions and Pu'uhonua Society, 2024).*

**Keywords:** *Dan Taulapapa McMullin, Micki Davis, Pilele Projects, Samoan art, gender, contemporary art, artist's book, exhibition, Oceania, queer cultures, colonialism, fa'afafine, fa'atane, mahu.*

*The Healer's Wound* refers to the conflict between colonization and Indigenous queer cultures of the Pacific Islands. In language or queer language or language that exists between languages, interpretation provides a space for engagement. This is the core work of my research, manifested in an installation curated by Mariquita ("Micki") Davis at Pilele Projects in Los Angeles, California (June 29–July 27, 2024).

The exhibition consists of new works that comment on the research and creative work I did for the second edition (2024) of my artist's book, *The Healer's Wound: A Queer Theirstory of Polynesia*.<sup>1</sup> The book is a postcolonial queering of the archive through a collage of texts and images from the peoples of the Polynesian archipelagoes—from the northeast in Hawai'i to the southwest in Aotearoa, including Sāmoa, Manu'a, Tonga, Viti (Fiji), Tahiti, Rarotonga, Rapa Nui, and others. The second edition reimagines much of the material presented in the first edition, with new research, and includes a new collection of poems with painting marks.

Recovered images are colorized in the book and collaged with Indigenous and colonial texts in many Indigenous and colonial languages (Figs. 1–6). Visually and thematically, the work is influenced by Samoan *suifefiloi*, the weaving of many

garlands into one, or of many narratives into one story, a process influenced by contemporary conversations on contingency, speculative realism and Indigenous futurism.

The exhibition included two aluŋa embroideries—*Aluŋa I: Fa'atane* (2024, Fig. 7) and *Aluŋa II: Fa'afafine* (2024, Fig. 8). These revisit a postcolonial religious practice of missionary embroidery. Aluŋa are pillows that were embroidered with Bible verses in Samoan, which I remember from my childhood. My approach critiques the homophobia and transphobia of the missionaries and of monotheism itself. Fa'atane is a traditional social category of Sāmoa, cognate throughout Polynesia, which means the way (fa'a) of a man and husband (tane), referring to a person born as a woman who is living as a man. Fa'afafine means the way of a woman and wife (fafine). These are terms of gender transition and mixed gender identity—identities that were condemned by the explorers, colonialists, missionaries and anthropologists of the West. My artworks are part of my attempt to heal my community, or at least myself.

*Loŋoloŋo I* (2024, Fig. 6) and *Loŋoloŋo II* (2024, Fig. 8) are about Polynesian symbol-making and are presented with collage prints that sample Samoan siapo barkcloth patterns. Like the aluŋa pillows, these siapo making practices were part of my upbringing in traditional Samoan arts with my grandmother Sisipeni and great grandmother Fa'asapa in Malaeloa village, Tutuila Island, Sāmoa 'i Sasa'e.

*'O 'Upu: Words* (2024, Fig. 9) is a print that surveys the first printed queer words of Polynesia, as they were first interpreted by missionaries and anthropologists based on interviews with Polynesian speakers. Many of these words passed out of usage in the economy of words influenced by postcolonial missionaries and the military, as colonialism sought to assign an abject value to their meanings.

The paintings that accompany these text-based works are expressions of my feelings about the people in the photographs that have become a part of my archive of queer Polynesia—images from photographic archives that do not identify the persons as queer in any language, but to my eye are queer in my own emotional response or reading. In their visual expressions of living, and in my imagination, they live still, even as they give me life.

*Dan Taulapapa McMullin is a fa'afafine artist and poet from Sāmoa i Sasa'e (American Sāmoa). Their artist's book, The Healer's Wound: A Queer Theirstory of Polynesia (2022, 2024), was originally published by Pu'uhonua Society and Tropic Editions of Honolulu for the 2022 Hawai'i Triennial. Their book of poems, Coconut*

*Milk* (2013), was in the top ten of the American Library Association's 2014 *Over the Rainbow List of Books of the Year*. Their work has been shown at the Museum of Modern Art, the Museum of Contemporary Native Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the de Young Museum, the Honolulu Museum, and the Honolulu Triennial. Their film *Sinalela* won the 2002 Honolulu Rainbow Film Festival Best Short Film Award, and their film *100 Tikis* was the opening-night film of *Présence Autochtone 2016* in *Tiohti:áke Montréal*. Taulapapa's studio is in the Muhheaconneck lands now known as Hudson, New York.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Dan Taulapapa McMullin, *The Healer's Wound: A Queer Theirstory of Polynesia*, 2nd edition (Honolulu: Tropic Editions and Pu'uhonua Society, 2024).



Figure 1. Dan Taulapapa McMullin, *The Healer's Wound: A Queer Theirstory of Polynesia*, 2nd ed., 2024, pp. 14–15. Courtesy of the artist



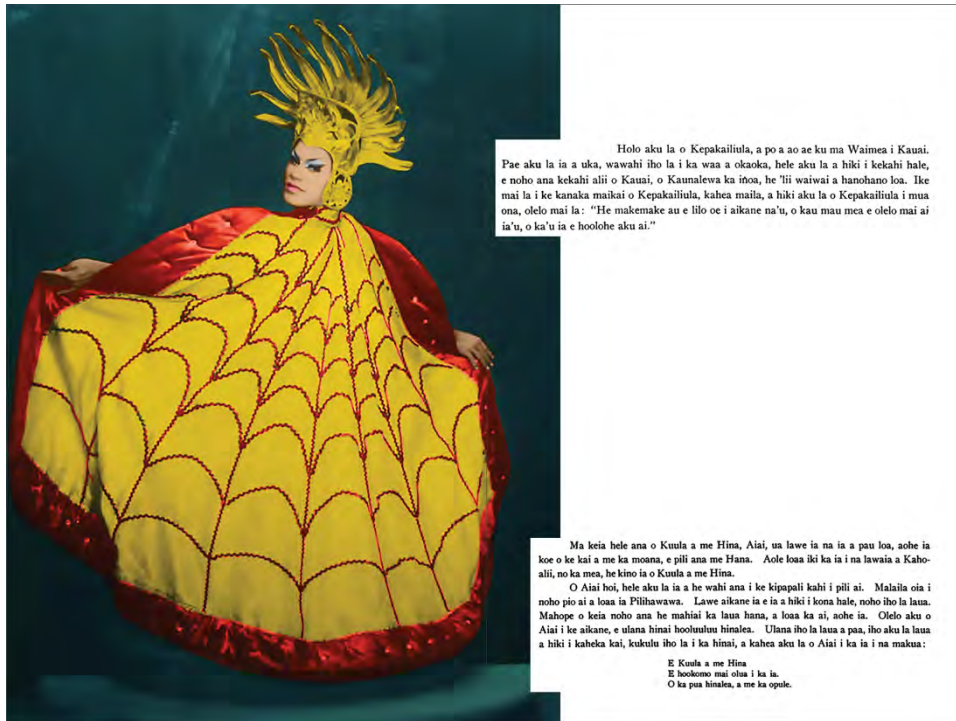
Figure 2. Dan Taulapapa McMullin, *The Healer's Wound: A Queer Theirstory of Polynesia*, 2nd ed., 2024, pp. 48–9. Courtesy of the artist

November 21st.—Took our leave. Passed on to Anuhe : spoke three times to 65 in all. At one place, a woman was present, who, they told us, was inspired by their god Mahoo. She spoke several times, asking, “Where were there any saved through our *parrou* or speech : Pomarre is dead, and we are all dying with your diseases, brought here by the English? When will you give over? We will hear our own gods : they will kill you !”

Ahipihepihe, *s.* a remarkable remedy to cure languor or weakness, frequently used by Tahitian women, who have lately lien-in, and by persons of both sexes in chronic disorders ; perspiration excited by the steam of plants, such as the *mapua* or wild mint, and hot stones, and when the perspiration is most copious, the person comes out and plunges into a river to bathe



Figure 3. Dan Taulapapa McMullin, *The Healer's Wound: A Queer Theirstory of Polynesia*, 2nd ed., 2024, pp. 66–7. Courtesy of the artist



Holo aku la o Kepakailula, a po a ao ae ku ma Waimea i Kauai. Pae aku la ia a uka, wawahi iho la i ka waa a okaoka, hele aku la a hiki i kekahi hale, e noho ana kekahi alii o Kauai, o Kaumaleva ka ihoia, he 'i'i waiwai a hanohano loa. Ike mai la i ke kanaka maikai o Kepakailula, kahea maia, a hiki aku la o Kepakailula i mua ona, o'lelo mai la: "He makemake au e lilo oe i aikane na'u, o kau mau mea e otelo mai ai ia'u, o ka'u ia e hoolohe aku ai."

Ma keia hele ana o Kuula a me Hina, Aia'i, ua lawe ia na ia a pau loa, aohē ia koe o le kai a me ka moana, e pili ana me Hina. Aole loa iki ka ia i na lawaia a Kahalo'i, no ka mea, he kino ia o Kuula a me Hina.  
O Aia'i hoi, hele aku la ia a he wahi ana i ke kipa'ali kahi i pili ai. Malaila oia i noho pō ai a loaia i Pilihawa. Lawe aikane ia e ia a hiki i kona hale, noho iho la laua. Mahope o keia noho ana he mahiai ka laua hana, a loa ka ai, aohē ia. O'lelo aku o Aia'i i ke aikane, e ulana hīnai hoolu'ulu hīnaia. Uana iho la laua a paa, iho aku la laua a hiki i kaheka kai, kuku'ulu iho la i ka hīnai, a kahea aku la o Aia'i i ka ia i na makua:

E Kuula a me Hina  
E hoolohe mai oua i ka ia.  
O ka pua hīnaia, a me ka opole.

Figure 4. Dan Taulapapa McMullin, *The Healer's Wound: A Queer Theirstory of Polynesia*, 2nd ed., 2024, pp. 92–3. Courtesy of the artist



HE WHAI MO TE TANGATA WERA I TE AHI, KIA MAHU AI.  
Te whai korukuru matahi,  
Kurukuru matahi,  
He ro ki uta,  
He ro ki tai,  
Tikina mai whakaorangia,  
Hei mahi kai mau mataua e Tiki-matakahurangi,  
Ka mahu, te mahu, e'i,  
Pera hōki ra ho ahi tahu mahu ki runga o Hawai'i,  
Kia pakia mai hōtupe, hōtupe,  
Hōtupe, hōtupe,  
Lo koe kei tauwhakaitia e koe te kiri o teneti mata,  
O teneti mahaki,  
Tūia mate te wera, kia tūia mate ka,  
Kia tūia, mate te anini,  
Kia tūia, mate te hūa,  
Kia tūia, mate te whewhe,  
Kia tūia, mate te ahi ana, i Hawai'i,  
Ka pakia, ka pakia,  
Rana te kiri, rana te kiri, rana te kiri to,  
Whai ana, whai ana te puna,  
Nga puna i runga e ho mai ki to kiri,  
Te uia a whaiti e, ho mai ki to kiri,  
Te ua nganga e, ho mai ki to kiri,  
Nga puna i runga e, ho mai ki to kiri,  
Te pupu, me te hōma e, ho mai ki to kiri,  
Nga puna i nari e, ho mai ki to kiri,  
Nga puna i Hawai'i e, ho mai ki to kiri,  
Nga puna i Rarotonga e, ho mai ki to kiri,  
Whai ana, whai ana te puna to,  
Nga puna i Aotearoa e, ho mai ki to kiri,  
Hoi whakawai ana mo te kiri,  
Hei whakatao mo te kiri o teneti mahaki,  
Hei whakane mo to kiri,  
Hei whakamahu mo to kiri,  
Hei whakareka mo to kiri,  
Hei whakara mo to kiri,  
Miri miri ana, e toto ana,  
E whakara ana, e whakane ana i to kiri,  
Te kiri, to-to-to-to—

HE WHAI MO TE WERA, KIA MAHU AI.  
Te whai a te kuku,  
Ko te whai a te kaka,  
Mahomahu akumaei,  
Mahomahu apopo,  
Tahatahe mai te kiri toto ki to mata niho,  
Mahu,  
Mahu rika,  
Koi uta;  
Koi tai;  
Ka ahi i te whai a te punapu,  
Te whai a ana mata,  
Whakareka te kiri,  
Whaiti te whai kia aniwaiwa,  
Whaiti te whai kia rekareka,  
Te whai a ana mata,  
Whakareka te kiri,  
He toto tuia,  
He toto utomutu,  
He toto ngutu,  
Ka tahu ki wha,  
Ka tahu ki te wai au,  
Ka tahu ki te wai rau;  
Ei te wai takanga,  
Tahanga murewa,  
Tena te wera ka hohiti,  
Kia mahu,  
Mahomahu akumaei,  
Mahomahu apopo,  
Tahatahe mai te kiri toto,  
Ki to mata niho,  
Mahu,  
Mahu rika,  
Ko tahu kiri,  
Ko toto kiri,  
Hui ake,  
Ki te wewewene i runga,  
Hui ake.

**WHAKA-MAHU**, to cease to heal; a remedy: *Hei whakamahu mo te kiri*—G. P., 480.  
**Samoan**—*mahu*, to heal up (of an ulcer): *O le pua o le tino as i ai se pupu, a ua mahu*; *The flesh in which there was a boil, which is healed.* Tahitian—*mahu*, to cease or stop; to be quenched, as thirst; satisfied, as desire. *Māngatan*—*mahu*, to be healed: *Mou ana hōe i te mau a Rongo*; *Be healed with the healing of Rongo.* Hawaiian—*mahu*, a man who assimilates his manners and dresses his person like a woman; a hermaphrodite; an eunuch. Cf. *maha*, convalescence; to begin to recover from sickness; *mahani*, to heal up, to granulate, as a wound, so as to disappear.

**MAHU**, cicatrized; healed: *Ki roto ki te whare whaiti-kakahu ra tahatahe ai ka mahu tangata ra*—A. H. M., B. 7. Cf. *mahutu*, quite healed.  
**MAHUTU** (*mahuti*), quite healed. Cf. *mahu*, healed. [For comparatives, see *MAHU*.]

healed mahu, raupapa, tumahu.

Figure 5. Dan Taulapapa McMullin, *The Healer's Wound: A Queer Theirstory of Polynesia*, 2nd ed., 2024, pp. 50–51. Courtesy of the artist



Figure 6. Dan Taulapapa McMullin, *The Healer's Wound: A Queer Theirstory of Polynesia*, 2nd ed., 2024, pp. 132–33. Courtesy of the artist



Figure 6. Dan Taulapapa McMullin. Left: *Loŋoloŋo I*, 2024. Collage print on paper, 40 x 43.75 in. Right: *Aluŋa I: Fa'atane*, 2024. Embroidery thread on a pillowcase containing a pillow, 28 x 22 x 10 in. Courtesy of the artist



Figure 7. Dan Taulapapa McMullin, *Aluŋa I: Fa'afafine*, 2024, installation view. Embroidery thread on a pillowcase containing a pillow, 36 x 20 x 12 in. Courtesy of the artist



Figure 8. Dan Taulapapa McMullin. Left: *The Fishers*, 2024. Acrylic on panel, 24 x 18 in. Center: *Lonjoloŋo II*, 2024. Collage print on paper, 44 x 45.5 in. Right: *The Farmers*, 2024. Acrylic on panel, 18 x 24 in. Courtesy of the artist

**Agafakafefine, s.** Womanishness, effeminacy.

**Agafakafefine, a.** Womanlike, effeminate.

**Ai, v. a.** [ahi] to copulate, applied to both sexes

**ai Sa, n.** a companion, mate, fellow; hence, a rafter of a house; a similar one; also the opposite, or contrary of, as, a lekaleka, a kenai sa na balavu, balavu is the opp. of lekaleka. See Sasana.

**Sa-na, v.** to put the rafters on a house: Sani, pass. v. or a, having the rafters on. Sasana.

**AI-KA-NE, v.** Ai, No. S, and kane, male.  
1. To cohabit, as male with male, or female with female.  
2. To commit sodomy; hence

**AI-KA-NE, s.** An intimate friend of the same sex; a friend or companion of the same sex.

2. Those who mutually give and receive presents, being of the same sex.  
3. Sodomy; dissoluteness of habit.

**Aipai, s.** sodomy.

—v. a. to commit sodomy; see puia and mahū.

**'akātāne, incho. tāne.** Act like a man, have manly qualities; be a tomboy. Meī tōna tamariki 'anga mai tēnā tamā'ine i te 'akātāne 'aere'anga mai. That girl has been a tomboy ever since she was a child.

**'akava'ine, caus. va'ine.** Behave like a woman. Te 'akava'ine i ā koe! How womanish you are!

**ala.neo.** 1. nvs. Clear, calm, serene, unclouded, free from impediment; clearness, calm, stillness, emptiness, nothing; desolate (ter. 30.3). 'Alaneo ke uka, 'a'ole ao, clear were the uplands, without clouds. E Lono i ka pō la'ila'i, ku'ua mai ka 'alaneo (Malo 183). O Lono of the clear night, let down clear skies. Hōhā nā lima i kahi e iae'a ai, a ho'oku'i me ke 'alaneo (Kel. 136), the hands grope at places to find things and collide with nothing at all. 2. vs. Of a single color or texture, especially of a leather cloak without design and made of feathers of a single kind and color. 3. N. Swelling disease, dropsy, generalized edema, kidney disease. 4. n. Name of a class of 12 male supernatural beings called *papa* *por mahū*, said to be hermaphrodite healers from Kahiki. One at least was according to legend turned to stone and has been moved to Kūhiō Park, Wai-kiki, O'ahu. See *Pae-māhā* in Pukui, Elbert, and Mookini, 1974.

**Companion, s.** Hoa; takapui; tapui; whakauru.

*companion hoa. My wife is my constant companion. Ko tōku hoa wahine tōku hoa pūmau. close-takapui. David and Jonathan were close companions.*

*Coitus contra naturam per Ay ā to cauja anum*

*Coitus fictus inter mulieres Mahēra.*

**Disaster, mala.**

**EFFEMINATE, amio fa'afafine.**

**Efféminé.** —pepeke, reherehe.

**Fafine, s.** a woman.

**fa'afā-fine n.** Effeminate man or youth.  
'O lo'o iā'a'ato fa'afasi teine ma ~: The girls and ~ youths are playing together.

**Fakafafine, à la manière des femmes.**

**Fakafafine, s.** A monster.

**Fakafefine, a.** Effeminate, womanish.

**Fakafefine, v.** To act like a woman.

**FA'ATANE, v.** to be masculine, of a woman.

**Haávehine, manière des femmes.**

**HERMAPHRODITE, s. faafafine.**

**homosexual adj.** (~act): s. tauūāne.

**homosexuel, raerae (néologisme)** pā'i'a. Voir aussi mahū

**HOO-WA-HINE, v.** See WAHINE, woman. To make special friendship with a woman; applied only to men.

2. To imitate, as a man, the manners of a woman.

**Huahumatos, s. an hermaphroditite.**

love aroha, kuata. kuuwata. maariri. ngariri. pohane.

**Mahu, fertilité, abondance.**

**MA-HU, v.** To blow out steam or smoke; to smoke, as a smothered fire; to throw out hot vapor, as from a volcano.

**MA-HU, s.** Steam; hot vapor; smoke.

**MA-HU, s.** A man who assimilates his manners and dresses his person like a woman.

2. A hermaphrodite; a eunuch.  
**MA-HU, adj.** Silent; indisposed to conversation; silent, as a deserted place.

**MAHU (II) [? ← mahu (I)]**  
S. A deaf and dumb, mute-person. VHI  
| ma.mahu (I)  
To strike dumb with -fear, -awe, -terror; to terrify; || mamahue. VHI  
| mā.mahu  
Taciturn, silent. ANA  
Retiring, not given to conversation.  
Morose, sullen; given to sudden anger.

**MĀHU || \*hu (III)**

**MĀHU**  
S. An hermaphrodite; a man or woman of the loosely termed "intermediate sex"; usually a man having the social preclivities of a woman.  
ANA  
A dolt, simpleton; lit, one partially unlearned, ignorant; not wholly unlearned, not wholly ignorant.  
A term of derision; dumb; || mahu (II).

**MAHU-ARIKI**  
S. The name of a god. HAO

**MAHU, cicatrized; healed: Ki roto ki te whare wharu-kakahu ra tahutahu at ka mahu tangata ra—A. H. M., II 7. Cf. mahutu, quite healed.**

**Māhū, s.** être efféminé qui a choisi de vivre parmi les femmes et de partager leurs occupations.

**Mahumahu, a. pn.** negligent, vilain, sale.

**MAHUTU (mahuti), quite healed. Cf. mahu, healed. [For comparatives, see MAHU.]**

**MAMAIĀ**  
S. A religious sect; the people in it persisted in the worship of the ancient gods, practised spells and incantations, eschewed the society of their fellows, and did not marry; elsewhere they were said to be only women.  
ANA

M. Belonging to the mamaiā sect.

**Misfortune, mala. Mishap, mala.**

**Monster, s.** Faahikehe, fakafafine.

Mijer ti homines vestido del sexo contrario= Bae tui

Paia, a. slippery; smooth.

Paiu, s. sodomy; see aipai.

**POHANE, sodomy; to practise sodomy. Whaka-POHANE, to present the buttocks, as for pohane. A singular use of the word is to be found A. H. M., III. 11, Maori part.**

sālewalewa, hermaphrodite. Syn. vaka-sālewalewa.

**Sodomie, — piri, piri mai piri atu, — gatū mai gatū atu.**

sodomy karipapa, moe whakaeneene sodomy, practise pohane.

Tāka, s. A fall; a change from one point to another: name of a person. v. n. Falling; as, "E tāka āna te tūngata kiriro; The man is falling down." "E tāka tonu te āi; The wind changes to a certain point." "Tāka tāka; Falling, changing, &c. repeatedly."—Causative, "Waka tāka tāka; Causing to fall or change."

**TAKAHOA, a companion. Cf. hoo, a friend, a companion; takotepi, an intimate companion of the same sex; takahore, a widow or widower.**

**TAKAHORE, a widow; a widower. Cf. takahoa, a companion of the same sex; hore, nok. 2. A naked person. Cf. tahanga, naked. Tahitian—cf. ta, single, unmarried, separate; taanos, naked; tahaa, naked. Hawaiian—cf. kaala, a widow; a widower. Tongan—cf. takabo, unmarried, single; destitute of clothing.**

**TAKATAPUI (takatapui), a close friend belonging to the same sex: Kō tonu hōi takatapui, hō Tiki—P. M., 128. Cf. takahoa, a friend, a companion; takapui, going about in company; tapui, an intimate companion.**

Tāne, s. a man, a male.

**TAUĀTANE, v. i.** to have dancing with men only. 2. To engage in fight with men, i.e., brave men.

**TAUĀTANE, s.** a species of sodomy, sed non introiens.

**Tipai, s.** the sin of sodomy; see aipai.

**Ufaufamsori, s.** a barren woman, a hermaphrodite.

**Ufaufamatoa, s.** the same as ufaufamaori.

Mrs. Pukui recalls that the usual term for male homosexual activity was *tipi laho* or *tipilaho*, "testicle pressing" or "scrotum bumping."

Vakaalewa, or Vakayalewa, a. womanlike, feminine: of, or pertaining to, women: ad. in a womanlike manner.

**vakanācukura, sodomy. Syn. vei-vutu.**

100 1. to pound, with pebble and mortar; trans. 100-100 ut-100 (100000) / 1000 1000 for thousand. Recip. 100-100, 100000, 10, 1000000000 (10<sup>10</sup>).

Vehine Haā vahana, femme qui a toutes les habitudes des hommes.

**WHAKA-MAHU, to cause to heal; a remedy: Hei whakamahu mo to kiri—G. P., 480.**

**Samoan—mahu, to heal up (of an ulcer): O le pahu o le tino sa i ai se pepelo, a ua mahu; The flesh in which there was a boil, which is healed. Tahitian—mahu, to cease or stop; to be quenched, as thirst; satisfied, as desire. Mangalan—māu, to be healed: Māu aea koe i te māu a Rongo; Be healed with the healing of Rongo. Hawaiian—mahu, a man who assimilates his manners and dresses his person like a woman; a hermaphrodite; an eunuch. Cf. maha, oonva-lescence; to begin to recover from sickness; mahani, to heal up, to granulate, as a wound, so as to disappear.**

Figure 9. Dan Taulapapa McMullin, 'O 'Upu: Words, 2024. Text collage print on paper, 44 x 70.5 in. Courtesy of the artist

HALENA KAPUNI-REYNOLDS

## Exhibition Review: *Project Banaba*, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum

### Abstract

Exhibition Review: *Project Banaba*, curated by Katerina Teaiwa, Yuki Kihara, Joy Enomoto, Healoha Johnston, and Pūlama Lima. Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, Kaiwi'ula, O'ahu, Hawai'i, November 4, 2023–February 18, 2024.

**Keywords:** Banaba, Hawai'i, Bishop Museum, phosphate, art exhibition



Figure 1. Katerina Teaiwa, *Body of the Land, Body of the People*. Hessian sacks with calico appliqués and historical photographs printed on voile. Photograph courtesy of the author

*Project Banaba* is a multimedia exhibition that brings together government records, archival footage, and oral histories to tell the history of phosphate mining and the resulting environmental catastrophe on Banaba (previously known as Ocean Island), a Pacific island formerly part of the Republic of Kiribati. Paired with this colonial history are familial photographs, contemporary art, music, and poetry that speak to the displacement of Indigenous Banabans from their homeland, as well as the resilience of their diasporic communities. *Project Banaba* was originally

conceived by Dr. Katerina Teaiwa as part of her PhD research while she was a student at the Australian National University in the early 2000s.<sup>1</sup> Whereas her dissertation became a scholarly monograph titled *Consuming Ocean Island: Stories of People and Phosphate From Banaba*, *Project Banaba* represents the ongoing life and movement of her scholarship, modeled on public dissemination, collaboration, and creative-relational praxis.<sup>2</sup> The exhibition opening at Bishop Museum, held on November 3, 2023, paid tribute to Teaiwa’s sister, the late Pacific studies scholar Teresia Teaiwa, and included performances by Brigham Young University–Hawai’i’s I-Kiribati Dance Club; mele (music) by Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo’ole Osorio and Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio; and poetry readings by Lyz Soto, Carol Ann Carl, No’u Revilla, and Brandy Nālani McDougall.

This is the fourth iteration of *Project Banaba* and the first to be shown outside of Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Whereas Teaiwa is the creative force behind the exhibition, Yuki Kihara has served as the lead curator since the exhibition was first shown at Carriageworks in Sydney (November 17–December 17, 2017).<sup>3</sup> An integral component to the curatorial strategy for *Project Banaba* is Kihara’s efforts to work with other curators and exhibition venues that are located “along the same routes as the mined phosphate rock . . . where Banaban phosphate rock, or manufactured fertiliser from Banaban phosphate, is applied to farm soil.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, Bishop Museum’s *Project Banaba* included the participation of in-house curators Healoha Johnston and Pūlama Lima, as well activist-artist Joy Enomoto, who was invited to co-curate the show. Through this place-based curatorial strategy, each iteration of the exhibition is adapted to include interpretive elements connecting its venue’s location to phosphate extraction on Banaba—elements that I discuss later in this review.

*Project Banaba* features three installations by Teaiwa. *Body of the Land*, *Body of the People* consists of suspended hessian sacks printed with key events in the island’s history juxtaposed with twentieth-century photographs of Banaban ancestors printed on voile (Figs. 1–2) intended to illuminate the violent impact of phosphate extraction on Banaban life and culture. In addition to quotes and images, the reverse sides of the sacks include haunting calico appliqués shaped like limestone pinnacles; these represent the skeletal remains of the island due to extraction activities. The pinnacle shapes also appear as frames for key labels and are painted on three exhibition walls (Figs. 1–3). As murals, they looked to me like snow-covered pine trees, and I found them to be a distraction from other exhibition elements. A printed handout, featuring a dialogue between Teaiwa and her co-curators, aids in explaining why the pinnacles are a prominent motif in the exhibition: they were “picked up” by the exhibition designer (Michael Wilson) and

graphic designer (Susan Yamamoto) as a “central motif” identified over numerous planning conversations and meetings.<sup>5</sup> While this explanation of the pinnacles is offered in the brochure, there is no explanation of them in the exhibition labels. One wonders how visitors who did not see or choose to read the brochures interpreted these pinnacles.



Figure 2. Katerina Teaiwa, *Body of the Land, Body of the People*. Hessian sacks with calico appliqués and historical photographs printed on voile. Photograph courtesy of the author



Figure 3. Katerina Teaiwa, *Mine Lands, For Teresia*, 2017. Multimedia installation. Photograph courtesy of the author

The second installation, *Mine Lands, For Teresia*, is a three-screen video featuring an approximately seven-minute montage of footage from the early twentieth and twenty-first centuries layered with sound and poetry (Fig. 3). The installation is inspired by Teresia Teaiwa’s 1995 poem “Mine Land: an Anthem,” a commentary on Banaban displacement and loss of land to mining that evokes the colonial dynamics between various officials, migrant workers, and Banabans. An example of what visitors can see and hear during the montage is the Kiribati national anthem sung by children on Tabiteuea—the home island of Teaiwa’s grandmother, which provided many mine workers to Banaba. The song—when paired with the video’s footage of Banaban performances, colonial officials overseeing mining operations and interacting with laborers, and scenes of life on Banaba—evokes the complicated and limited political and economic sovereignty of Banabans, who were forced to become part of Kiribati by the colonial administration overseeing the island and the Gilbertese government.<sup>6</sup>



Figure 4. Katerina Teaiwa, *Teaiwa’s Kainga*, 2017–ongoing. Multimedia installation. Photograph courtesy of the author

The third installation in the exhibition, *Teaiwa’s Kainga*, is conceptualized as a “photographic reef” (Fig. 4). In it, colonial-era photographs of Banaba and its peoples are juxtaposed with pictures of Teaiwa family members, many of whom live on Rabi Island in Fiji, where Banabans were relocated following Japanese occupation during World War II. The photographs are installed on a backdrop

depicting an island scene of palm trees, coastal foliage, the horizon, the ocean, and the sky. At the center is a portrait of Teresia Teaiwa. To its left is a quote from her poem “In my Ideal Pacific” that reads:

In my ideal Pacific  
my ancestral island of Banaba  
or Ocean Island in the central Pacific  
would not have been mined  
into a moonscape oblivion  
by the British Phosphate Company

To the right of her portrait is a quote from Ted Rowlands, UK Parliamentary Undersecretary, that reads: “. . . Australia, New Zealand and Britain had together created the island’s present predicament. All three governments had rendered it totally uninhabitable for their own benefit.” The juxtaposition of these texts is jarring, underscoring Teaiwa’s desire for a past and present for her ancestral homeland that is different than the one that we remember and see today. Lastly, visitors can hear a song composed by Jon Kamakawiwo’ole Osorio, Lyz Soto, and Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio in honor of Teaiwa by standing under a sound dome—an auditory companion to the visual critique offered through the photographic reef.

In addition to Katerina Teaiwa’s installations, the exhibition includes other elements that reflect its ongoing evolution as it travels to different venues. Featured prominently in the center of the exhibition is a mannequin dressed in a Cook Islander dance skirt by Caren Jane Rangi and wearing a neckpiece and headpiece made of acrylic beads by Roselyn Corrie Teirei (Fig. 5). Although the neckpiece and headpiece lacked curatorial interpretation, a quote from Rangi explains that she made the skirt in 1982 from phosphate sacks sourced from the Ravensdown phosphate factory, which processed phosphate from Banaba and Nauru.<sup>7</sup> At Bishop Museum, the mannequin stood on a black pedestal situated on a historical map of Banaba. Conceptually, the mannequin’s placement on the map reminded viewers that, although Teirei is part of the Cook Islands diaspora, Rangi’s skirt is part of Banaba’s story, for it exists because of the “interconnected histories of extraction and labour between Cook Islands, Aotearoa, Banaban & Nauruan lands,” as the artist states in her quote. Other objects featured in the exhibition included four kamari neckpieces by Banaban artists Aroiti Tane and Temaea Nanton (Fig. 6). These were not displayed as elaborately as the dance skirt, being simply laid flat on black fabric in two display cases; they seemed to be an afterthought rather than an integral component in the exhibition.



Figure 5. View of mannequin installation in *Project Banaba* featuring a Cook Islander dance skirt by Caren Jane Rangī and neck and head pieces by Roselyn Corrie Teirei. Photograph courtesy of the author



Figure 6. Kamari neck pieces by Aroiti Tane in display case. Photograph courtesy of the author



Figure 7. Writing desk featuring interactive materials related to Hawai‘i’s participation in phosphate mining on Banaba. Photograph courtesy of the author

Finally, there are four exhibition elements that connect *Project Banaba* to Hawai‘i. In addition to the previously mentioned song for Teresia Teaiwa by Jon and Jamaica Osorio in the photographic reef, the installation *Mine Lands, For Teresia* included a lumpy seat made of two fertilizer sacks representing the Hawaiian Fertilizer Company, a commissioned statement written in the Hawaiian language by Paige Okamura, and a display area that featured a writing desk and information related to Hawai‘i’s participation in phosphate extraction on Banaba in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Fig. 7). Through poetic Hawaiian prose, Okamura’s statement—which is on an exhibition wall panel and in the previously mentioned handout—provided a brief cautionary tale of Banaba’s colonial history and the extraction of its land and people. In reflecting on this history in relation to Native Hawaiians, Okamura ends with a question for readers to ponder: “I mea aha ka lāhui Hawai‘i, ke ‘ole ka ‘āina? (What is the Hawaiian people without land?)” In contrast, the writing desk featured photocopies of primary source materials and a vintage rotary telephone with an audio recording that offered visitors an opportunity to learn more about Banabans and I-Kiribati laborers who were brought to Honolulu. This part of the exhibition highlighted the relationships that these laborers made with Native Hawaiians and the return of a few laborers to Banaba in 1903. The primary source material is an excellent addition to the exhibition, but I found the overall display and setup of the area as an interactive

station—especially the recording via the telephone—to be out of place with the introspective design and overall aesthetic of *Project Banaba*.

In conclusion, Bishop Museum’s iteration of *Project Banaba* offers visitors an opportunity to witness a violent colonial history of extraction and displacement that has left Banaba degraded and lacking in freshwater resources. In many ways, it relays a warning about the unsustainability of extractive capitalism in Oceania. However, rather than presenting Indigenous Banabans as victims of external forces and empires, Katerina Teaiwa’s scholarly and artistic approach successfully combines archival and contemporary materials to juxtapose this history with intimate images of Banaban life, poetry, and art. Teaiwa terms this approach “remix,” referring to the numerous ways that images, sounds, objects, and texts made in different contexts and for differing reasons are brought together to reveal both a difficult history and the ongoing presence and vitality of Banaban communities across the Pacific. Just as the exhibition “gives form to the sense of remix that researching this history creates,” its ongoing evolution as it travels is another form of “remix” aimed at bringing local collaborators and community members into the fold.<sup>8</sup>

Lastly, the inclusion of Hawai’i-specific elements in the exhibition fervently reminds viewers that this is not just a story about a people from a distant island, but rather a story where Banaban and Hawaiian histories intersect with one another in surprising and unexpected ways. Although there were a few design choices that seemed to not fit with the larger aesthetic of the installations, the exhibition and its narrative proved highly impactful overall. All that is left to be said is: Where will *Project Banaba* travel to next?

*Halena Kapuni-Reynolds is the associate curator of Native Hawaiian history and culture at the National Museum of the American Indian. Kapuni-Reynolds’s scholarly interests center around Native Hawaiian art and music, place-based research, and Hawaiian museology. Most recently, he co-authored a chapter with Noelle M. K. Y. Kahanu titled “Native Hawaiians and the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum: Historical Reckoning, Truth-telling, and Healing,” in the 2024 volume U.S. Museum Histories and the Politics of Interpretation: Never Neutral. In addition to his professional and scholarly work, Kapuni-Reynolds recently joined the board of the Hawai’i Council for the Humanities, where he is supporting the development of the NEH-funded Pacific Islands Humanities Network, which aims to cultivate further conversation and collaboration between humanities organizations in Hawai’i, American Sāmoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands.*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Katerina Teaiwa and Yuki Kihara, "Project Banaba: A Dialogue on Exhibition Collaboration and Methods," *Pacific Arts: Journal of the Pacific Arts Association* 22, no. 1 (2022): 84.

<sup>2</sup> Katerina Teaiwa, *Consuming Ocean Island: Stories of People and Phosphate From Banaba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Other previous venues include MTG Hawke's Bay Tai Ahuriri in Napier, New Zealand (April 4–September 1, 2019), and Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery in Auckland (March 5–May 29, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Teaiwa and Kihara, "Project Banaba," 85.

<sup>5</sup> Healoha Johnston, "Artist and Curator Dialogue: Ancestors, Solidarity, and Re-growing Islands," *Project Banaba* exhibition brochure (Honolulu: Bishop Museum 2023).

<sup>6</sup> Katerina Teaiwa, email to author, December 21, 2023.

<sup>7</sup> The Ravensdown phosphate factory continues to exist and now processes phosphate from places including the Western Sahara.

<sup>8</sup> Teaiwa and Kihara, "Project Banaba," 83.

SYLVIA COCKBURN

## Book Series Review: *Pacific Presences*, 9 vol., Nicholas Thomas (general editor)

### Abstract

Book series review: Nicholas Thomas, general editor, *Pacific Presences*, 9 volumes, Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2018–2021.

**Keywords:** Oceanic art, material culture, museums, collections, European voyages, *Pacific Presences*, anthropology

Alison Clark and Nicholas Thomas, eds., *Style and Meaning: Essays on the Anthropology of Art: Anthony Forge*. *Pacific Presences* series, vol. 1., 2017. ISBN: 978-90-8890-446-2. 304 pages, color & b/w illustrations. Paperback £45.00, Digital £0.00.

Julie Adams, Polly Bence, and Alison Clark, eds., *Fighting Fibres: Kiribati Armour and Museum Collections*. *Pacific Presences* series, vol. 2, 2018. ISBN 978-90-8890-565-0. 202 pages, color & b/w illustrations. Paperback £45.00, Digital £0.00.

Bronwen Douglas, Fanny Wonu Veys, and Billie Lythberg, eds., *Collecting in the South Sea: The Voyage of Bruni d'Entrecasteaux, 1791–1794*. *Pacific Presences* series, vol. 3, 2018. ISBN 978-90-8890-574-2. 382 pages, color & b/w illustrations. Paperback £60.00, Digital £0.00.

Lucie Carreau, Alison Clark, Alana Jelinek, Erna Lilje, and Nicholas Thomas, eds., *Pacific Presences Volume One: Oceanic Art in European Museums*. *Pacific Presences* series, vol. 4A, 2018. ISBN 978-90-8890-589-6. 254 pages, color & b/w illustrations. Paperback £45.00, Digital £0.00.

Lucie Carreau, Alison Clark, Alana Jelinek, Erna Lilje, and Nicholas Thomas, eds., *Pacific Presences Volume Two: Oceanic Art in European Museums*. *Pacific Presences* series, vol. 4B, 2018. ISBN 978-90-8890-626-8. 512 pages, color & b/w illustrations. Paperback £85.00, Digital £0.00.

Elena Govor and Nicholas Thomas, eds., *Tiki: Marquesan Art and the Krusenstern Expedition*. *Pacific Presences* series, vol. 5, 2019. ISBN 978-90-8890-690-9. 250 pages, color & b/w illustrations. Paperback £60.00, Digital £0.00.

Alison Clark, with Eve Haddow and Christopher Wright, *Resonant Histories: Pacific Artefacts and the Voyages of HMS Royalist, 1890–1893*. *Pacific Presences* series, vol. 6, 2019. ISBN 978-90-8890-629-9. 272 pages, color & b/w illustrations. Paperback £55.00, Digital £0.00.

Mark Adams and Nicholas Thomas, *Photo-Museology: The Presence of Absence and the Absence of Presence*. *Pacific Presences* series, vol. 7, 2022. ISBN 978-90-8890-632-9. 480 pages, color & b/w illustrations. Paperback £85.00, Digital £0.00.

Julie Adams, *Museum, Magic, Memory: Curating Paul Denys Montague*. *Pacific Presences* series, vol. 8, 2021. ISBN 978-90-8890-635-0. 318 pages, color & b/w illustrations. Paperback £55.00, Digital £0.00.

In Mark Adams and Nicholas Thomas's book, *Photo-Museology: The Presence of Absence and the Absence of Presence* (2022), there is an image of the memorial to Captain James Cook at the site of his death at Kealahou Bay in Hawai'i. Presented in a panoramic triptych, the memorial is shown in three scenes that individually tell very different stories. On the left is the stark white obelisk that credits Cook with the "discovery" of the Hawaiian Islands and commemorates his death on February 14, 1779. The monument is fenced with metal chains; a red-lettered sign announces that the area is government property and that trespassers will be prosecuted. Panning to the right, a group of swimsuit-clad people, likely tourists, are lounging in the sun by the turquoise waters while recreational boats pass by. In the middle image, only the chained fence that marks the boundary of the monument are visible. In the rightmost image there is no indication of it at all. Assembled together, the triptych reveals multilayered entanglements of colonial histories and settler-colonial realities in the Pacific. Much like the extended photo essay that is *Photo-Museology* as a whole, each image here represents an incomplete part of a larger story. The book is an exploration of Mark Adams's photographic practice over more than three decades, and particularly his engagement with Pacific museum collections through his longstanding collaboration with the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge. The release of *Photo-Museology* marked the final volume of the nine-book series *Pacific Presences: Oceanic Art and European Museums*, published by Sidestone Press (2017–2022). In many ways, *Photo-Museology* is a fitting end to the series, offering readers a new lens through which to view Pacific collections in museums. Its exploration of Pacific and European landscapes, exhibition displays, and museum

storerooms visualizes the worlds inhabited by Pacific ancestral treasures and the expansive nature of the current and historical relationships that surround them.

*Pacific Presences* was a European Research Council–funded project that ran from 2013 to 2018. Its aim was to explore the collections of Pacific art and material culture held in anthropology and world culture museums across Europe in order to better understand what the collections are comprised of, how they came to be in Europe, and how their meanings and salience have evolved over time, both within their European institutional contexts and for the Pacific Islanders descended from those who first made, traded, or were forcibly separated from their ancestral treasures. Among the project’s key objectives was to show that these collections remain dynamic and alive rather than fixed and static within museum storerooms. To this end, *Pacific Presences* utilized a vast network of contributors, from a core team of researchers based at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge to collaborators from across Europe and the Pacific. The resulting nine books form a well-illustrated set that includes volumes on art and anthropology, European voyages of discovery, histories of collectors and collections, and the iconic body-armor suits from Kiribati. On the surface, these subjects are wide-ranging enough to feel like they don’t always belong to a cohesive set. At the same time, the histories of Pacific collections do not form a tidy narrative. Moving between the volumes becomes itself an exercise in tracing the threads of relationships—past, present, unfixed, and evolving—that surround the collections described within the texts.

The first book published in the series, *Style and Meaning: Essays on the Anthropology of Art: Anthony Forge* (2017), edited by Alison Clark and Nicholas Thomas, revisits the writings of the influential anthropologist. It is divided into two parts: the first compiles a series of Forge’s writings on art and anthropology in Papua New Guinea, published between 1960 and 1990, while the second features essays by contemporary scholars reflecting on the legacy of Forge’s research and its impact on their own thinking about the anthropology of art. Howard Morphy, for instance, relates Forge’s writings on Abelam painting to the interpretation of Yolŋu bark painting, while Lissant Bolton carries Forge’s discussions of artistic innovation in men’s ceremonial art into her analyses of women’s fiber arts from Vanuatu. Forge’s own thinking focused particularly on the art of the Abelam and other Sepik communities, but his questions of meaning and communication through art remain relevant to curatorial acts of translation around Pacific collections today, where museums are increasingly working to layer Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into their interpretations of art.

The subsequent books in the series focus more closely on Pacific collections, unpacking European holdings from different angles and across different scales of time, geography, and physical objects. The first in a pair of eponymous books from the series (*Pacific Presences: Oceanic Art and European Museums*, vols. 1–2, 2018) maps the histories, fates, and ongoing relationships of the Pacific collections in selected European countries: Britain, France, the Netherlands, Russia, and Germany. From competitive institutional and national agendas to colonial, scientific, and missionary interests, to the personalities of some of the key collectors and curators involved, the first volume highlights the related yet geographically specific pathways taken by Pacific collections to their current repositories, and the shifts in their reception and presentation over subsequent decades. As an overview, this book serves as a solid grounding point for the series, historically situating Pacific collections and documenting important provenance research undertaken by the project team and their networks of curators and researchers.

Of course, provenance research that focuses largely on the European agents who transported cultural objects from the Pacific risks privileging a narrative of extraction above that of the complex webs of Indigenous agency and interaction that are behind all these collections. This is one of the points addressed in the second volume of *Pacific Presences*, which expands the focus on the history of collections to look at the kinds of contemporary collaborations taking place in museums. This book is divided loosely into four sections that view collections through their materialities, collection and exhibition histories, legacies of empire, and contemporary activations by artists and Pacific communities. While working with contemporary Indigenous artists has become almost standard practice in anthropology museums, little has been published on such collaborations from the perspectives of both the artists and museum staff involved. The later chapters of this book, therefore, make important contributions in documenting how artists, curators, and wider Pacific communities are working together to address collection histories and many of the questions facing the role and future of anthropology museums. As the artist Rosanna Raymond argues in her chapter, “Backhand and Full Tusks: Museology and the Mused,” “There is still enormous work to be done if we are to add new vital strands to the frozen narratives, attitudes, and practices embedded in most museum practice” (407).

Some of the material in *Pacific Presences*, vol. 2 is expanded in greater detail in other volumes of the series. A chapter by Kaetaeta Watson, Chris Charteris, Lizzy Leckie, and Alison Clark on a project to create a new suit of Kiribati body armor based on museum examples is elaborated into its own volume in *Fighting Fibres* (2018). That book’s close look at the materiality and collection histories of

the suits of armor that are a familiar sight in Pacific exhibitions includes reflections from conservators tasked with preserving museum pieces alongside those of the artists and makers working to recreate the techniques no longer in common use on the islands, despite the suits themselves taking on the status of national cultural symbol. In my own conversations with Charteris regarding this project and the team's subsequent work creating another suit at the Asia-Pacific Triennial of Art in Brisbane in 2018-19, he reflected on the importance of this collaborative museum work as a form of intergenerational knowledge sharing, reforging links between museum collections and contemporary practice for future generations.

One of the central methodological themes of the project is that of reassemblage—the act of reuniting collections, and the archival fragments relating to them, that have been scattered across countries and institutions since they were first formed. Three of the books in the series tackle this act of reassembly around collections from European voyages that brought treasures back from the Pacific, which were then dispersed throughout Europe and beyond. Edited by Bronwen Douglas, Fanny Wonu Veys, and Billie Lythberg, *Collecting in the South Sea: The Voyage of Bruni d'Entrecasteaux, 1791–1794* (2018) presents efforts to reassemble the now-scattered collections made by Joseph Antoine Bruni d'Entrecasteaux and his shipmates on their ill-fated Pacific voyage. *Tiki: Marquesan Art and the Krusenstern Expedition* (2019), edited by Elena Govor and Nicholas Thomas, discusses the collections made during twelve days on Nuku Hiva by Ivan Fedorovich Krusenstern (commander of the *Nadezhda*), Urey Lisiansky (commander of the *Neva*), and the crew of the first Russian circumnavigation of the world between 1803 and 1806. Lastly, *Resonant Histories: Pacific Artefacts and the Voyages of HMS Royalist, 1890–1893* (2019), by Alison Clark with Eve Haddow and Christopher Wright, discusses the collections made by Captain Edward Henry Meggs Davis during the three voyages of the HMS *Royalist* in Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Kiribati between 1890 and 1892.

Each of the above expeditions set out to the Pacific under the flag of a different nation and with different instructions relating to the colonial, scientific, and political environments in which they were operating. Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's mission was influenced both by political and scientific movements in France. Its purpose was to find the ships of La Pérouse, his compatriot who had vanished some three years prior, and to collect natural history specimens amidst the Enlightenment and Romantic fever for scientific research and collecting. However, following the death of Bruni d'Entrecasteaux and many of his crew in 1793, the voyage's collections arrived in Java before being dispersed across Europe. The book dedicated to this topic presents a full catalogue of the works believed to

have been gathered on the voyage—some confirmed, others speculative—alongside reflections from curators working in the museums that house elements of Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's collection on the processes through which they have been able to attribute works despite a particularly fragmentary archival record. Interjections by artists and scholars throughout the text offer contemporary responses to key works identified from within the collection.

Krusenstern did not have specific instructions to collect objects or make scientific observations during the voyage of the *Nadezhda* and *Neva*. As a result, the collections gathered on this journey reflect snapshots of encounters, trade, and relationships that took place between the Russian sailors and Marquesan people over the twelve days spent in Nuku Hiva. Govor presents a catalogue of the documented collection, and discusses the history of the voyage and how the pieces came to be distributed across different institutions. These chapters are accompanied by contributions that place the collection in the context of the Marquesan environment, other European collections of Marquesan art, and art historical framing of the development of Marquesan visual culture in the period surrounding early European encounters.

As captain of the HMS *Royalist*, Davis commanded three voyages to the Pacific, each linked to different British interests in the region. The official aims of the *Royalist* were to police the region and regulate the labor trade that forcibly removed Pacific Islanders from their homelands to work sugar plantations in Queensland and New South Wales in Australia. In an environment of intense colonial contact and outbreaks of violence, Davis's second voyage was a punitive mission to Solomon Islands and New Guinea in response to crimes committed against British expatriates. His third voyage was intended to declare a British protectorate over the Gilbert Islands (present-day Kiribati). On these missions, Davis made extensive collections of objects and photographs. These collections are steeped in imperialism and colonial violence, yet their contemporary resonances are complex and nuanced. The final three chapters of *Resonant Histories* each present a case study of how the histories of the *Royalist* have been remembered and repurposed in different ways in the islands that were impacted by its visit. Eve Haddow, for instance, presents the history of a pig-killing hammer from Vanuatu now held at the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne as one example of an act of violent justice by Davis. Christopher Wright discusses how communities in western Solomon Islands use oral histories of the punitive missions of the HMS *Royalist* to explain more recent ethnic tensions. And Alison Clark relates the seemingly paradoxical celebration of the raising the Union Jack flag by a community in Kiribati as an exercise in cultural survival.

The three volumes *Collecting in the South Sea*, *Tiki*, and *Resonant Histories* all feature impressively detailed provenance and archival work that reassembles the available information about their respective collections, and places them within the historical specificity of their times, both in the islands and in the European nations that sponsored the respective missions. Significantly, these texts point to the importance of reassembly as a path to eventual community connection and engagement.

The threads that tie people, objects, places, and histories together on very intimate and personal scales are further untangled in Julie Adams's *Museum, Magic, Memory: Curating Paul Denys Montague* (2021), which traces the life and collecting of the zoologist and anthropologist who contributed important New Caledonian collections to the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology before his premature death in the First World War. Adams's book is an intimate and moving portrait of one man—not just as a collector and natural historian, but as a brother, son, student, and friend. The research that formed the book was itself a kind of pilgrimage, retracing Montague's steps from his family home in Devon to Cambridge University, to the Houailou Valley in New Caledonia, and to the battlefield in Greece where he lost his life. Adams's research connects stories of loss over generations and vast geographies. Montague's collection was formed, and for many years forgotten, in the wake of the loss of a generation of young men in the First World War. But the collection embodies absence and loss in other ways too, which Adams movingly articulates when describing an encounter between a group of magic stones collected by Montague and Kanak archaeologist François Wadra; the latter recorded and photographed each stone, including how the pieces were expressing their own desire to return home (227).

In *Photo-Museology*, Nicholas Thomas reflects that both the process and outcomes of *Pacific Presences* were more open and ambiguous than is typical of research projects (9). This is true also of the complete set of publications which, in its multivocal and interdisciplinary framings, can be difficult to connect to overarching narrative threads. That said, as a series, *Pacific Presences* is a monumental achievement that gives extensive insight not only into the histories and distribution of Pacific collections in museums but also the many ways curators, researchers, artists, communities, and cultural practitioners are connecting and engaging with the collections today. Each book is richly illustrated and published with open access through Sidestone Press, which will expand the project's outreach and accessibility. Taken together, they offer a definitive account of Pacific collecting in Europe, as well as of the processes that the core project team and their collaborators undertook in their research. In the context of broader discussions currently

taking place about the histories and futures of museum collections, the books highlight that provenance cannot, nor should not, be separated from the personal, nor academic research from community engagement. As a curator raised in Australia and currently working with Pacific collections in the United States, I am struck by the fact that this depth of historical research and interconnected network of practice and research is yet to be achieved in these countries, whose own collections and colonial histories of the Pacific demand ongoing and critical investigation. While the final publication of the *Pacific Presences* series marks an end to the research project, hopefully it is also a starting point for further engagement, research, and connection around the Pacific collections in museums that still have many more stories to tell.

*Dr. Sylvia Cockburn is a curator and art historian specializing in contemporary Pacific art, community engagement, and collaborative practice in museums. In 2020, she completed her PhD at the University of East Anglia, where her research focused on collaborations between contemporary Pacific artists and ethnographic museums in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. She has held curatorial roles at Queensland Museum, Museums Victoria, and the Australian War Memorial. She is currently senior research associate at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, where she is working on the redevelopment of the Oceania galleries in the Michael C. Rockefeller Wing.*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### *Pacific Arts* -- Call for Submissions

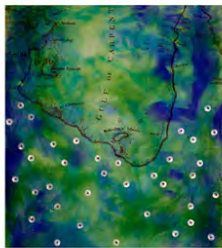
*Pacific Arts*, the journal of the Pacific Arts Association, has an **ONGOING OPEN CALL** for submissions on the arts of Oceania and its diasporas focusing on visual arts, material cultures, and heritage arts. The scope is temporally broad, highlighting both historical and current topics while engaging with a wide range of creative mediums, forms, and subject matter. *Pacific Arts* encourages interdisciplinary approaches to examining the political, social, economic, cultural, aesthetic, and environmental stakes in the production and study of Indigenous visual and material cultures in Oceania, past and present.

Please send full-length submissions and an abstract to [pacificarts@ucsc.edu](mailto:pacificarts@ucsc.edu). Submissions should follow the [Pacific Arts style guide](#). *Pacific Arts* is a peer reviewed open access online journal published by the University of California/eScholarship and encourages broad participation and circulation.

*Pacific Arts* is also accepting reviews of books, media, and exhibitions that relate to visual and material cultures of Oceania. Authors, artists, museums, and publishers interested in having their work reviewed and anyone interested in writing a review should contact the editors at [pacificarts@ucsc.edu](mailto:pacificarts@ucsc.edu).

There is no cost to publish with *Pacific Arts*. However, our editorial staff are volunteers and all of our publication costs rely entirely on donations to UC Santa Cruz's Pacific Art & Visual Studies Fund. We encourage readers and contributors to join the [Pacific Arts Association](#) and/or [donate to the Fund](#) (donations, no matter how small, are very helpful and welcome).

Pacific Arts  
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association



N.S. Vol. 22 No. 2  
2022

Pacific Arts  
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association



N.S. Vol. 23 No. 1  
2023

Pacific Arts  
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association



N.S. Vol. 23 No. 2  
2023-2024



The Pacific Arts Association is an international organization devoted to the study of the arts of Oceania. The Pacific Arts Association (PAA), founded in 1974 and established as an association in 1978, is an international organization devoted to the study of all the arts of Oceania. PAA provides a forum for dialogue and awareness about Pacific art and culture. By connecting individuals and institutions around the world, PAA encourages greater cooperation among those who are involved with the creation, study, and exhibition of Pacific art.

The peer-reviewed **Pacific Arts journal** features current research and reviews. The **PAA Newsletter** provides timely information about important events to members. PAA's triennial **International Symposium** takes place in alternating venues across the globe and includes special tours, performances, exhibitions, and presentations of academic and artistic research on the arts of Oceania. Members have the opportunity to meet and participate in a PAA-sponsored session at the **College Art Association** annual meeting. PAA-Europe holds a meeting in Europe annually.

PAA's **goals** are:

- To make members more aware of the state of all the arts in all parts of Oceania.
- To encourage international understanding among the nations involved in the arts of Oceania.
- To promote high standards of research, interpretation, and reporting on the arts of Oceania.
- To stimulate more interest in the teaching of courses on Oceanic art especially but not only at the tertiary educational level.
- To encourage greater cooperation among the institutions and individuals who are associated with the arts of Oceania.
- To encourage high standards of conservation and preservation of the material culture in and of Oceanic arts.

**Membership:** US\$50 for professional individuals and institutions, US\$35 for visual and performing artists, students, and retired persons. Individuals and institutions wishing to become members of PAA can visit the membership page of the PAA website [www.pacificarts.org/membership](http://www.pacificarts.org/membership).

Please support the study of Asian American and Pacific Islander art and culture at UCSC on Giving Day!



Giving Day 2024 is **NOVEMBER 20**  
<https://give.ucsc.edu/giving-day-2024>

**The Pacific Art & Visual Studies (PAVS) Fund** was established to advance innovative approaches to the study of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) arts and cultures. The PAVS mission is to support educational and professional development for students (**paid internships**, **workshops**, **guest speakers**, **field trips**). It also enables **student-faculty research collaboration** and the **publication of *Pacific Arts***, the only international peer-reviewed open access journal dedicated to Pacific Islands art.

UCSC is the only institution in the U.S. that offers a full undergraduate curriculum and a PhD program in Pacific Islands visual studies as well as a PhD program in Asian American/Diaspora visual studies.

Your donation strengthens our mission to lift, honor, and **celebrate AAPI arts, cultures, and heritages**. PAVS contributes to the understanding of humanity—of our past and its relationship to our present as expressed through art, cultural objects, photographs, performances, and other forms of creative activity. These are at the center of community activism, expressing identities, healing, maintaining ties to histories and ancestors, cultural knowledge transmission, creating a sense of place and belonging, and forging sustainable futures.

Given that Pacific Islander communities are among the most underrepresented groups in higher education, combined with heightened anti-Asian American discrimination, **it is especially urgent to advance AAPI voices and perspectives**. ***Your support will have a significant impact on AAPI arts in higher education!***

The PAVS Fund is housed at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC)—an Asian American & Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AA-NAPISI)—but relies entirely on extramural funding.

**PAA SPEAKER SERIES**

**Pacific Currents**

(Pacific Arts Association online speaker series)

**Imagining Global Samoan Subjectivities After Diaspora**

**Lana Lopesi**

Wednesday, Nov. 6, 2024, 12:00 noon PST via Zoom; Register [here](#)



Still of *Savage Love (Laxed – Siren Beat)* by Jawsh 685 x Jason Derulo music video, 2020

Sāmoa is positioned in prevailing discourses as “tiny islands in a vast sea.” Professor Lopesi’s talk, however, remembers the cosmopolitanism of Sāmoa and connects this to today’s global Samoan population in diaspora across the United States, New Zealand, and Australia. This project considers what the moving image works of Samoans globally tell us about contemporary Samoan subjectivity, and if these global subjectivities can be thought of as being “after” diaspora.

Lana Lopesi is an assistant professor in the department of Indigenous, Race, and Ethnic Studies at the University of Oregon. She is author of *False Divides* (2018) and *Bloody Woman* (2021) and editor of *Pacific Arts Aotearoa* (2024).



**PAA CONFERENCE SESSION at CAA**



## Current Research in Pacific Visual Studies

**PAA Session @ College Art Association Annual Conference**

**Thursday, February 12, 9–10:30am**

**Hilton Midtown, New York City**

The Pacific Arts Association panel at the College Art Association will feature current research in the interdisciplinary field of Pacific Visual Studies. Panelists will discuss ideas of futurism, contemporary activations of customary forms, activism, anti-colonial creative practices, and more.

**Panelists:**

“Mata Aho—Weaving and Empowering Female Narratives”

**Jacqueline Charles-Rault**, Université Le Havre Normandie

“Mapping Race or Nation in the Kingdom of Hawai‘i”

**Stacy L. Kamehiro**, University of California Santa Cruz

“Fale, Tapa, and Fala: The Past and Future of Samoan Heritage Arts”

**Anne E. Allen**, Indiana University Southeast

“Hawaiian Futurisms: Mixed-Media Mediums as Generating Anti-Colonial Art”

**Nicole K. Furtado**, University of California Santa Cruz

“Community Workshops, Environmental Justice, and Installation Art in Oceania”

**Maggie Wander**, Santa Clara University

**Please visit the [CAA Conference website](#) for the full schedule and information about membership and registration.**

**RECENT PAA-E CONFERENCE**

**“Multiplicity of Voices in Exhibitions and in Collaborations”**  
**Pacific Arts Association–Europe Annual Meeting**  
**October 9–11, 2024, Humboldt Forum, Berlin, Germany**



With the staggered opening of the Ethnologisches Museum (Ethnological Museum) in 2021 and 2022 at the Humboldt Forum in Berlin, four rooms dedicated to Pacific Islanders and their cultural belongings were revealed to the public. The Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz with the Ethnologisches Museum and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin is a partner for the cultural and academic field at the Humboldt Forum alongside the Stadtmuseum Berlin, the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss. In 2023 the Ethnologisches Museum and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst started a three-year project that centred multi-perspective approaches to researching the collections and tests new formats of collaboration in partnership with international museum and scientific communities as well as with representatives of source communities.

How do sites like the Humboldt Forum with a unique past facilitate or impede the engagement with (Pacific) collections? How are exhibitions and European museums addressing Europe’s trade, colonial, missionising or relationships with the Pacific? What are new formats of collaboration in museums?

Key issues:

- Politics of display
- Object or collections trajectories
- Trade, colonial and/or missionising histories
- Collaboration formats
- Reports on ongoing projects and research

Additional Information: <https://pacificarts.org/paa-europe/>

**CONFERENCE**

**ASAO Annual Meeting**

**February 12–15, 2025**

**Nadi, Fiji**

<https://www.asao.org/>



The **Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO)** is an international scholarly society dedicated to the anthropology of the Pacific. ASAO welcomes anyone interested in the lives of Pacific people, including scholars working in Native/Indigenous Studies, Pacific Studies, Cultural Studies, and other disciplines.

For over fifty years, ASAO has served to connect scholars from across the globe and to further knowledge of the Pacific. Our annual meeting has played a role in the origin of several important pieces of Pacific scholarship, including Epeli Hau'ofa's essay "Our Sea of Islands" and Marshall Sahlins's "Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities."

Our annual meetings are intimate, discussion-based, and cooperative, especially in support of developing topics for publication. ASAO has a book series and a special publication series. Many other publications have emerged from ASAO sessions, including but not limited to those listed in this cumulative bibliography.

ASAO supports the full participation of Pacific Islanders through the Pacific Islands Scholars Award (PISA). ASAO also encourages members to return information to the island communities from which it originated, in forms appropriate to and usable at the village level, through a program called Grant to Return Indigenous Knowledge to Pacific Islands Communities (GRIKPIC).

ASAO also publishes a newsletter three times per year, with useful information such as annual officer reports, meeting session reports, and community updates. Many ASAO members participate throughout the year on the NESIA-O Google Group ([nesia-o@googlegroups.com](mailto:nesia-o@googlegroups.com)).

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

**THE PACIFIC ISLANDS:  
ZONE OF PEACE OR OCEAN OF DISCONTENT?**

**PACIFIC ISLANDS POLITICAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION (PIPSA) CONFERENCE  
Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand  
February 20–21, 2025**

The PIPSA executive is delighted to announce an in-person conference running again for the first time since the pandemic, providing the opportunity for scholars, policy makers and all other interested parties to share knowledge and perspectives on a range of important issues facing the region. We want the conference to be broad and inclusive, welcoming of a diverse range of topics, approaches and methods. PIPSA is suitable not only for political scientists and international relations specialists, but also Pacific historians, geographers, economists, anthropologists and those interested in a wide range of security, developmental and political issues. Early career researchers and post-graduate students are especially welcome.

The conference theme is: Pacific Islands: Zone of Peace or Ocean of Discontent? Proposals for panels and papers, however, are welcomed on any aspect of politics in the Pacific region, including relations between the island states/territories and the Pacific Rim nations.

Proposals for papers and panels should provide the title and a 300 word abstract and (for the program) short biographical details (3 lines maximum) sent to [pipsa2025@gmail.com](mailto:pipsa2025@gmail.com).

Deadline for individual papers or thematic panels is October 22, 2024.  
Deadline for conference registration is February 1, 2025.

Call for Papers pdf: [https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/strategic-studies/about/pipsa-2025/document/extended-call-for-papers\\_pipsa-conference-2025.pdf](https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/strategic-studies/about/pipsa-2025/document/extended-call-for-papers_pipsa-conference-2025.pdf)

Conference information: <https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/strategic-studies/about/pipsa-2025>

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

### 49th Annual Meeting of the French Colonial Historical Society (FCHS) “Representations of Empire: Art, Museums, International Expos” May 29–31, 2025, Buffalo, NY

Most conference events, including all panels, will take place on or near the campus of SUNY Buffalo State University.

Proposals on any topic related to French colonial history and its legacies are welcome. We especially invite papers related to this year’s theme, “Representations of Empire: Art, Museums, International Expos.” The FCHS invites participants to explore how the French colonial empire and its colonizing mission(s) were/are portrayed to audiences in the peripheries of empire, mainland France, and the wider world, as well as how the visual culture of empire created spaces for cross-cultural exchanges as well as resistance to empire. Recent years have witnessed an explosion in the historiography of the French imperial imaginary, including how the empire was depicted visually and in other forms. Scholars have discovered myriad means and ways by which people who worked on visual representations of empire have conceptualized French overseas conquest and rule, sometimes deepening longstanding stereotypes while at other times challenging and even changing cultural norms. Colonial subjects and others used visuals to contest empire and its legacies, and still others employed representations of empire in different media to communicate values, reinforce power, or increase their influence across transnational space. An extensive colonial imagery archive resulted in a significant colonialist legacy, which scholars are only just beginning to unpack and understand today.

The Society encourages students, scholars, and educators from all disciplines to submit proposals. **The proposal submission deadline is November 1, 2024.** Papers may be delivered in English or French.

**Paper proposals** should include a 100-200 word summary with the title of the paper, name, institutional affiliation, e-mail address, and a brief curriculum vitae (1-2 pages) integrated into a single file, preferably in MS Word format. **Proposals for complete panels or round tables** should include the information above for each participant, as well as contact information and a short C.V. for the moderator if one is suggested. Individual paper proposals should be submitted online via the [Individual Paper Proposal form](#). Proposals for complete panels or round tables should be submitted online via the [Panel Proposal form](#). Individuals willing to moderate a panel should provide their contact information and a brief c.v. via the online [Moderator Interest form](#).

All conference participants must be or become members at the time of acceptance (January 2025). All conference participants must also purchase registration for the conference. The rates for membership and conference registration, as well as the payment system, will be available on the society’s website.

Additional information about the Society’s scholarly activities, fellowships, and past conferences is available at [www.frenchcolonial.org](http://www.frenchcolonial.org). If you have questions concerning the conference, please email [frenchcolonial2025@gmail.com](mailto:frenchcolonial2025@gmail.com).

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

**Connections within and Beyond Oceania**

European Society for Oceanists (ESfO) Conference

June 24–27, 2025, Lucerne

<https://www.pacific-studies.net/conferences/public.php?confID=5>

Oceania has always been interconnected in a myriad of ways. From the first peopling of Australia and the Pacific to today's age of the internet, social media, and mobile phones, people of the Pacific have initiated, strengthened, reinforced, and affirmed, but also blocked, interrupted, resisted, and broken off connections with humans and non-humans alike. They have established complex relations within and between communities, societies, and nation states, formed and recognized links with their physical environment, circulated objects, visions and ideas that shape and redefine their worlds, created artistic expressions celebrating all kinds of connections, and continue to be affected by and contribute to global processes that impact us all.

This conference opens a forum for establishing which connections are central to the lives of Pacific people, but also which connections are neglected, de-emphasized or forgotten. We invite participants to reflect on the nature, shape, direction, and durability of connections, how they are initiated and maintained, and the goals and aspirations towards which they are established. We seek to explore the complex interplay between the environmental, social, and cultural landscapes of Oceania and their local, regional, and global connections and disconnections in the past, present and future.

The conference is also an opportunity to reflect on future connections in Oceania and beyond. With new and continuing challenges like climate change, geopolitical shifts, migration, pandemics and other health crises, the impact of extractive industries, or enduring legacies of colonialism and racism, what new connections and alliances are being forged, which new pathways created? How do people remain connected with their heritage in an increasingly globalized world? And what are the objects and ideas that continue to connect people within Oceania and beyond?

For more information, please contact [esfo2025@gmail.com](mailto:esfo2025@gmail.com)

## EXHIBITION AND PROGRAM

Please join us for Ke Alaula Program in conjunction with *The OGs: Photographers of the Silver Gelatin Process* Exhibition on view from Sept. 6—Dec. 6, 2024 at Gallery 'Iolani, Windward Community College. Artists/Educators Kimo Cashman and Karen Kosasa reflect on how their artworks in the exhibition are inspired by 'āina in “'Āina: That Which Feeds on Saturday,” Oct. 19, 2:00–3:30pm in Gallery 'Iolani. This program is free and open to the general public.

### KE ALAULA

#### 'ĀINA: That Which Feeds

Kimo Cashman and Karen Kosasa



Kimo Cashman, *Kapu Aloha 'Āina - Lahui*



Karen Kosasa and Stan Tomita, *Blank/White Erasures*

Join us for a discussion with artists/educators Kimo Cashman and Karen K. Kosasa, moderated by co-curator Kapulani Landgraf. Cashman and Kosasa reflect on how their artworks in the exhibition are inspired by 'āina. Cashman considers his Kapu Series started 30 years ago, a “work-in-progress” based on major issues facing “our people and our 'āina.” Kosasa will describe her collaborative work with photographer and educator, Stan Tomita, and how they, as third-generation Japanese settlers, began asking questions about how artists represent the land and space in Hawai'i. As educators at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Cashman and Kosasa may also discuss the relationship between teaching and creating artworks.

Gallery 'Iolani, Windward Community College  
Saturday, October 19, 2024; 2:00 - 3:30pm



Photographer and educator, Kimo Cashman is an Aloha 'Āina and his work in visual arts and education focuses on bringing an end to the U.S. occupation of the Hawaiian Kingdom and the post-occupation future of our lāhui. He received his BFA from University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Art Department, and after, went on to achieve a MeD and PhD in Education. He is a tenured-faculty member at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa - College of Education where he serves as co-director of the Aloha 'Āina Education and Leadership graduate programs and the Aloha Kumu-Teacher Leadership program.



Artist, Karen K. Kosasa received a MFA from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and a MA and PhD in Visual and Cultural Studies from the University of Rochester, NY. She is now retired and was the director of the Museum Studies Graduate Certificate Program and Associate Professor in American Studies at UH-Mānoa (2002-2023). For over 13 years she taught studio art (drawing, painting, and design) at UH-Mānoa and University of Rochester, and Boise State University.

This program is free and open to the general public. *Ke Alaula* is the accompanying program for the exhibition: *The OGs: Photographers of the Silver Gelatin Process*, September 6 - December 6, 2024. Windward CC Gallery 'Iolani hours: Monday through Saturday, 1-5pm. Located adjacent to Palikū Theatre. For more information contact: [kapulani@hawaii.edu](mailto:kapulani@hawaii.edu) / 808-236-9155 / [gallery.windward.hawaii.edu](http://gallery.windward.hawaii.edu)

## KE ALAULA

### *The OGs: Photographers of the Silver Gelatin Process*



Join us for a series of six discussion programs featuring the photographers in the exhibition, a roundtable conversation with experts on the importance of archiving and caring for photographs, and a second roundtable on the historic struggles over water diversion in Waiāhole and using photography as a weapon.

Gallery 'Iolani, Windward Community College

Saturdays; 2:00 - 3:30pm

October 19 - 'Āina That Which Feeds, Kimo Cashman and Karen Kosasa

October 26 - Wayne Levin: A Life in Photography

November 2 - Mai Nā Kūpuna Mai, Renee Iijima and Shuzo Uemoto

November 9 - Capturing Our Past for Our Futures — Preserving the Photographer's Opus

November 23 - Franco Salmoiraghi: Photography + Experience

November 30 - Waiāhole: Photography As a Weapon

All programs are free and open to the general public. *Ke Alaula* is the accompanying program for the exhibition: *The OGs: Photographers of the Silver Gelatin Process*, September 6 - December 6, 2024. Windward CC Gallery 'Iolani hours:

Monday through Saturday, 1-5pm. Located adjacent to Palikū Theatre.

For more information contact: [kapulani@hawaii.edu](mailto:kapulani@hawaii.edu) / 808-236-9155 / [gallery.windward.hawaii.edu](http://gallery.windward.hawaii.edu)

EXHIBITION



Ka 'Ula Wena: Oceanic Red, to be held May 25, 2024–Jan. 12, 2025, is an original Bishop Museum exhibition that explores manifestations of red in the landscapes, memory, and created expressions of Oceania. Ka 'Ula Wena originates in Hawai'i, but we reach out to embrace our cousins across the vast Moananuiākea.

The phrase “ka 'ula wena” refers to a glowing red, one whose warmth envelops Hawai'i each day, first at Kumukahi, the storied easternmost point of the Islands. It is the strength of the sun but also the bounty of reds found in the plants and animals it nourishes. Ka 'ula wena is a red experienced beyond seeing. This redness is felt in mele (song), mo'olelo (stories), and the wena (warmth) of kinship. Red conveys a constellation of ideas densely populated by meaning. Red, beyond color, shade, or hue, elevates the senses, shifts emotions, affirms kinships, enlivens passions, consecrates the sacred, and sets apart the profane.

Ka 'Ula Wena: Oceanic Red celebrates the distinctly unique reds of Oceania and the redness of our connection.

## EXHIBITION



## Contemporary Painting in Papua New Guinea: Mathias Kauage and His Family

De Young Museum, San Francisco, March 30, 2024–March 15, 2026

Mathias Kauage (ca. 1944–2003) is acclaimed for his boldly colorful paintings of a world radically changing around him in the late twentieth century. *Contemporary Painting in Papua New Guinea: Mathias Kauage and His Family* at the de Young Museum in San Francisco features four paintings from the permanent collection, including a new acquisition, on view for the first time. During his lifetime, Mathias experienced dramatic societal shifts — not only during the decades under colonial Australian administration but also after Papua New Guinea achieved independence in 1975. Both periods are a focus of his work. In the late 1970s, he led the contemporary arts movement in the newly independent country, which explored nationhood and technological advancement. Later works by Mathias, his wife Elizabeth (Elisabet), and their family also addressed social issues such as the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The circle of artists working in their style grew to encompass their children, including nephew and adopted son Apa Hugo. They, along with Elizabeth, continue their father’s artistic legacy today as professional painters.

<https://www.famsf.org/exhibitions/papua-new-guinea-mathias-kauage>

Image Credit: Mathias Kauage (Mingu Village, Kundiawa-Gembogl District, Chimbu [Simbu] Province, now in the independent country of Papua New Guinea, ca. 1944–2003). *Kauage Flies to Scotland for Opening of New Museum of Contemporary Art*, 1999. Acrylic on canvas. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Museum purchase, Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions, INC2023.66. Photograph by Randy Dodson. Courtesy of the Estate of Mathias Kauage and Rebecca Hossack Gallery, London

EXHIBITION



**He‘e Nalu: The Art and Legacy of Hawaiian Surfing**  
East Hawai‘i Cultural Center, October 13—November 29, 2024

*He‘e Nalu: The Art and Legacy of Hawaiian Surfing* covers 2,000 years of surfing history and Indigenous creative expression, from the earliest stories of surfer deities to contemporary works of art and surfing innovations, through the lens of modern Kānaka ‘Ōiwi creatives and cultural practitioners.

In 2023, *He‘e Nalu: The Art and Legacy of Hawaiian Surfing* debuted at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona and was developed in partnership with guest curator, Carolyn Melenani Kuali‘i of Kua‘āina Associates and artist Ian Kuali‘i. In collaboration with some of Hawai‘i’s leading art organizations presenting smaller iterations of this exhibition to O‘ahu and Maui, the Donkey Mill Art Center and East Hawai‘i Cultural Center are proud to bring *He‘e Nalu* home to our island of Hawai‘i.

Exhibiting artists: Solomon Enos, Daniel Ikaika Ito, Kaumakaiwa Kanaka‘ole, Clifford Kaponono, Ha‘a Keaulana, Ian Kuali‘i, Tom Pōhaku Stone, Cory Kamehanaokalā Taum and Zone Media.

This exhibition is free and open to the public.

Info: <https://donkeymillartcenter.org/event/?event=5547>

**East Hawai‘i Cultural Center**, Oct. 13—Nov. 29, 2024 (opening & artists talks, Oct 12)

141 Kalākaua Street, [ehcc.org](http://ehcc.org), (808) 961-5711

Image: Featured photograph of Puamakamae DeSoto sliding on her longboard in Mākaha, O‘ahu, 2021, in the series *Aia no i ke kō a ke au - Whichever Way the Current Goes* by Ha‘a Keaulana.

## EXHIBITION

### THE YALE PEABODY'S NEW "HALL OF THE PACIFIC" OPENS TO THE PUBLIC



For the first time, the Peabody is exhibiting an extensive collection of artworks, contextual photographs and historical artifacts that celebrates the living cultures of Pacific Islander communities. The 254 objects on display include a carved seagoing canoe prow from Vanuatu, elaborate façade paintings that adorned a ceremonial house in Papua New Guinea, and decorated shields from the Solomon Islands used for defense and in ceremonies.

The comprehensive new exhibit will showcase the enormity of the Pacific, the vast distances explored and navigated by Pacific Islanders, and the rich diversity of the region's cultures.

The 3,655 sq.-ft. Hall of the Pacific, the museum's second largest space behind the Burke Hall of Dinosaurs, showcases dozens of objects that have been out of public view and held in private collections for decades. The Peabody has never had a permanent exhibit of cultural artifacts from the Pacific, so in addition to Jaffe's collection, many of the museum's objects are also on display for the first time as well. The Peabody's new work and classroom spaces will enable faculty, students, and researchers to have greater access to the collection for study.

The expansive hall will also serve as a space for community events and discussions for the wider AAPI community in New Haven and beyond.

#### **Other Highlights from the Hall of the Pacific Include:**

- A rare *Tago* mask from Tami Islands.
- A pair of rare *Eharo* masks from Papua New Guinea
- A 19th-century *warup* drum from Saibai Island
- An *iUla Tavatava*, a ridged-head missile club from Fiji
- A collection of stylized spirit face masks from Vanuatu
- A Māori feather cloak from New Zealand

See additional photos of the new Hall of the Pacific and its collection [here](#).

**Plan Your Visit to the Peabody:** <https://peabody.yale.edu/>

EXHIBITION



**Aloha Nō**

**Hawai'i Triennial**

**Feb. 15–May 4, 2025**

**Curated by Wassan Al-Khudhairi, Binna Choi, and Noelle M.K.Y. Kahanu**

More than a ubiquitous Hawaiian greeting, aloha is a Hawaiian philosophy and way of life. Aloha is an action that embodies a profound love and truth-telling, a practice that has been kept and cared for by the people of Hawai'i for generations. This practice of aloha engenders a deep connectivity to the 'āina (land), environment, elements, and each other. By collapsing two, seemingly opposite, meanings — “no” in English with “nō,” an intensifier, in 'ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language) — ALOHA NŌ seeks to reclaim aloha as an active cultural practice and situate it as a transformative power that is collectively enacted through contemporary art.

Curated by Wassan Al-Khudhairi, Binna Choi, and Noelle M.K.Y. Kahanu—the first non-hierarchical trio of curators for the Triennial composed of women of color—HT25 is a multi-site exhibition of contemporary art from Hawai'i, the Pacific, and beyond. As part of an established field of art biennials and triennials around the world, HT25 is an internationally recognized, large-scale exhibition that presents the latest artistic works and explores local-global dialogues through a Hawai'i- and Pacific-centered lens.

Additional information and updates: <https://hawaiicontemporary.org/>

EXHIBITION



## KE AO LAMA, Enlightened World

Celebrating the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture

Capitol Modern, The Hawai'i State Art Museum, June 7—December 31, 2024

Presented by the Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, *KE AO LAMA, Enlightened World* celebrates traditional and contemporary expressions of Pacific Island nations through five interconnected exhibitions highlighting the expanse of inspired Indigenous thought and creativity:

*PILINA: Festival of Pacific Arts and Cultures 50th Anniversary*

*Our Sea of Islands*

*'Ai ā manō*

*Nā Akua Ākea: The Vast and Numerous Deities*

*Huli Ki'i: Traditional Hawaiian Puppetry*

In acknowledgement of the vital role that Indigenous Pacific Islanders play in the health, care, and wellbeing of Pacific communities, the exhibitions on view will be bolstered by and activated through diverse cultural programming. This includes a Native Hawaiian artist video series, docent-led tours, live performances, demonstrations, hands-on workshops, theatrical productions, and augmented reality experiences.

Information on the exhibitions can be found here:

<https://www.capitolmodern.org/festpac#exhibits>

EXHIBITION

**SHIFTING GROUND**

Australian Indigenous Printmaking  
Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, University of Virginia  
March 9, 2024 – March 2, 2025



*Shifting Ground* explores the dynamic terrain of Australian Indigenous printmaking, showcasing works by twenty-two artists who have produced prints with Basil Hall Editions. Established by master printmaker Basil Hall, who began working collaboratively with artists in the early 1980s, Basil Hall Editions has worked for more than two decades with several hundred artists, many based within Aboriginal run art centers in the Northern Territory, South Australia, and Western Australia, and who have been introduced to print through visiting workshops.

In 2023, Hall donated a vast collection of 1,316 workshop proofs to the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, which is becoming a center for the study of Indigenous prints. The collection represents a complex roving topography of Indigenous contemporary art practice from the last twenty years, traversing works by senior and emerging artists, significant collaborative projects, engagements with renowned print artists, and a diversity of experimental and singular approaches to the print medium.

This exhibition explores the transformative effects of print collaborations – shifting practice, opening-up new ground, and instantiating new material, conceptual, and visual languages. For many of these artists, engagement with print has led to the production of some of their most iconic artworks; and for some it has become a recurring and central practice. The prolific travel of studio-workshops like Basil Hall Editions across Australia, and the intensive engagement of collaborating artists, has established print as a major phenomenon in Indigenous art, marking new ground in a multitude of ways.

To view the artwork labels and wall text for the exhibition, click the link below: [\*Shifting Ground\* Part 1 Wall Texts and Labels](#)

Image: Detail of GULUMBU YUNUPINU, *Garak*, 2008, etching on Hahnemühle paper, collaborator: Basil Hall, Jacqueline Gribbin; printer: Jacquelin Gribbin, Monique Auricchio. Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia, gift of Basil Hall, 2023.0006.011.001. Courtesy of the estate of the artist and Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre.

EXHIBITION

# Kū a Lanakila!

## Expressions of Sovereignty in Early-Territorial Hawai'i



OCTOBER 5, 2024 – AUGUST 10, 2025 | J. M. LONG GALLERY

*Kū a Lanakila! Expressions of Sovereignty in Early Territorial Hawai'i, 1900-1920* delves into the ways Kānaka ʻŌiwi (Native Hawaiian people) asserted their presence and sovereignty during Hawai'i's early territorial period through cultural and political expressions. Featuring a stunning array of collection items including 'ahu'ula (capets), lei hulu, banners, and political ephemera, the exhibit highlights how Native Hawaiians engaged in public ceremony, competitive sports, and political activism to maintain their identity and agency in a time of profound change.

Showcasing rarely seen items from Bishop Museum's Ethnology and Library & Archives collections, this exhibit bridges the gap between the Hawaiian Kingdom and early territorial periods, revealing the resilience and adaptability of Native Hawaiian People. Visitors will see how ali'i leadership and cultural production continued to thrive. Notable pieces include the 40-foot koa racing canoe commissioned by Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole, alongside embroidered handkerchiefs and campaign ribbons that tell stories of political engagement and advocacy.

Kū a Lanakila! Expressions of Sovereignty in Early Territorial Hawai'i, 1900-1920 not only celebrates Hawaiian cultural and political history but also serves as a vital narrative extension of the museum's Hawaiian Hall, filling in historical gaps and offering new perspectives on the continuity of Native Hawaiian leadership and cultural expression. Whether you are a lifelong learner, museum member, or part of the Native Hawaiian community, this exhibit invites you to reflect on the enduring spirit of Kānaka ʻŌiwi and their contributions to Hawai'i's story.

<https://www.bishopmuseum.org/kualanakila/>

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### Libraries, Archives, and Museums in Oceania

A Special Issue of the *Journal of New Zealand & Pacific Studies*

Guest Edited by Joshua Bell, Cristela Garcia-Spitz, and Halena Kapuni-Reynolds

Though shaped by their colonial legacies and postcolonial presents, libraries, archives and museums can also be spaces of hope, healing and collective reimagining. These institutions and their staff steward various media formats (audiovisual objects and texts), giving presence to the many pasts of Oceania, and must reckon with Indigenous interventions that reconfigure these collections as familial legacies, belongings and ancestors. Collaborative work with Indigenous communities has also helped open these institutions and their collections to new possibilities, resulting in richer understandings about activating belongings to nurture and uplift source and descendant communities and returning belongings and ancestors through legal and ethical means. Simultaneously, Indigenous communities continue creating their own cultural centers, blurring distinctions between libraries, archives and museums to serve the needs of their respective communities.

While these projects and trends are in dialogue with global practices, they are also distinctly local and heterogeneous within Oceania. How are these projects in and around libraries, archives and museums transforming these institutions and their collections? How are Indigenous epistemologies helping to challenge the colonial legacies of these institutions? What new collaborative practices are emerging, which help to recenter the relations that may have otherwise been dormant? What lessons for institutions outside of Oceania can be taken from these engagements?

The *Journal of New Zealand & Pacific Studies* invites contributions that offer new insights into library, archive and museum practice in and about Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific, and associated collections from the region that may be housed outside of Oceania. Papers might address the following issues:

- Indigenizing and decolonizing strategies for curatorial practice, exhibition design, collection
- development and management
- community-based programming and research
- repatriation and ethical returns
- rematriation initiatives
- conservation/preservation
- digitizing collections and ethical and inclusive metadata practices
- digital scholarship and pedagogy
- emerging technologies and their impact on research
- evolving roles, education/mentoring the next generation of museum/archive professionals

We are particularly interested in case studies highlighting lesser-known libraries, archives and museums in or of the Pacific.

The *Journal of New Zealand & Pacific Studies* is a double-blind refereed journal. Articles, accompanied by a short biography, abstract and keywords, must be between 5000 and 8000 words, including notes and references, and must be formatted according to the journal style guide (<https://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/MediaManager/File/intellectstyleguide2016v1.pdf>). Original interviews (for example, with an artist, curator, librarian or archivist), research reports, review essays and exhibition reviews, between 1500 and 4000 words, are also welcome.

**Deadline for submissions is 14 April 2025.** All article submissions will be subject to peer review. If accepted for publication, essays will be published in vol. 13, no. 2, December 2025. Please submit complete articles for consideration to Heather Waldroup at [waldrouphl@appstate.edu](mailto:waldrouphl@appstate.edu)

**NEW PUBLICATION**

***An Ocean of Wonder: The Fantastic in the Pacific***

University of Hawaii Press

Edited by kuʻualoha hoʻomanawanui, Joyce Pualani Warren, and Cristina Bacchilega



*An Ocean of Wonder: The Fantastic in the Pacific* brings together fifty writers and artists from across Moananuiākea working in myriad genres across media, ranging from oral narratives and traditional wonder tales to creative writing as well as visual artwork and scholarly essays. Collectively, this anthology features the fantastic as present-day Indigenous Pacific world-building that looks to the past in creating alternative futures, and in so doing reimagines relationships between peoples, environments, deities, nonhuman relatives, history, dreams, and storytelling.

Wonder is activated by curiosity, humility in the face of mystery, and engagement with possibilities. We see wonder and the fantastic as general modes of expression that are not confined to realism. As such, the fantastic encompasses fantasy, science fiction, magic realism, fabulation, horror, fairy tale, utopia, dystopia, and speculative fiction. We include Black, feminist, and queer futurisms, Indigenous wonderworks, Hawaiian moʻolelo kamahaʻo and moʻolelo āiwaiwa, Sāmoan fāgogo, and other non-mimetic genres from specific cultures, because we recognize that their refusal to adopt restrictive Euro-American definitions of reality is what inspires and enables the fantastic to flourish.

As artistic, intellectual, and culturally based expressions that encode and embody Indigenous knowledge, the multimodal moʻolelo in this collection upend monolithic, often exoticizing, and demeaning stereotypes of the Pacific and situate themselves in conversation with critical understandings of the global fantastic, Indigenous futurities, social justice, and decolonial and activist storytelling. In this collection, Oceanic ideas and images surround and connect to Hawaiʻi, which is for the three coeditors, a piko (center); at the same time, navigating both juxtaposition and association, the collection seeks to articulate pilina (relationships) across genres, locations, time, and media and to celebrate the multiplicity and relationality of the fantastic in Oceania.

NEW PUBLICATION

***In a room, in a house, on an island, in an ocean***  
**Waka Kuaka | Journal of the Polynesian Society**



Each of the writers in this special issue, from essayists and reviewers to poets and interview subjects, addresses chains of connection. Through many different pathways they articulate and critique discontinuities created in colonial contexts. Memory and systems of memory, from storytelling to whakapapa (genealogical ties) to colonial archives and museums, are responded to in both material and abstract ways, creating fine networks and continuities at personal and institutional levels. Disconnection and connection are the themes that bind this special issue of *Waka Kuaka: The Journal of the Polynesian Society* as we seek to amplify the words and images of Indigenous poets, artists, archivists, creatives and curators and their innovative and unconventional approaches to reclaiming memory and history making.

Link: Vol. 133 No. 1 (2024): Waka Kuaka | *Journal of the Polynesian Society*

**NEW PUBLICATION**

A beautiful, exceptional book on prestigious Oceanian objects made from giant clam fossils, the intriguing and majestic *Tridacna Gigas*.

AU VENT DES ÎLES 

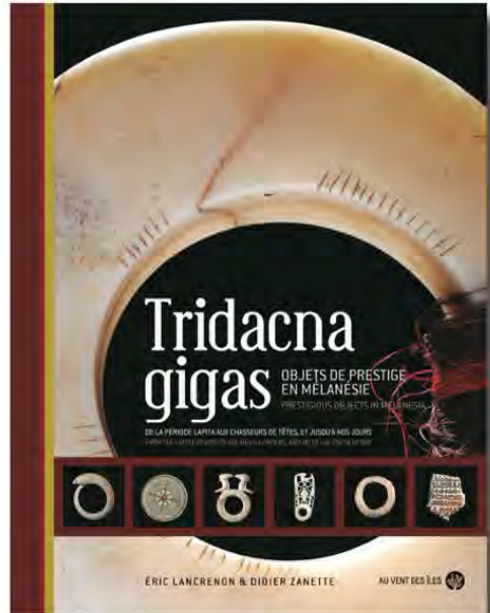
**TRIDACNA GIGAS**  
OBJETS DE PRESTIGE EN MÉLANÉSIE  
PRESTIGIOUS OBJECTS IN MELANESIA

Éric Lancrenon et Didier Zanette

Mise en place > 23 août 2024  
Prix > 60 €  
ISBN > 978-2-36734-422-5  
Format > 235 x 295 mm - 336 pages



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Un beau livre d'exception sur les objets de prestige océaniques confectionnés à partir de fossiles de bénitier géant, l'intrigant et somptueux *Tridacna Gigas*.

**LE LIVRE :** Fruit de la rencontre entre deux passionnés d'art océanien, *Tridacna gigas* met en lumière les fabuleuses pièces réalisées à partir des coquilles fossilisées de bénitier géant (espèce rare endémique à l'Océanie), ancrant ces oeuvres dans un contexte historique et culturel. Une fois façonnées, ces pièces énigmatiques deviennent de véritables objets de prestige au sein des sociétés océaniques, revêtant une fonction sacrée ou utilitaire. En résultent des pièces d'exception, fruits d'un labeur minutieux et d'une expertise séculaire, empreintes d'une pratique artistique immémoriale, dont les lignes épurées dénotent d'une vraie compréhension de la proportion et confèrent aux objets un design très juste, équilibré, quasiment contemporain.

lire un extrait : [en cliquant ici](#)

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## ORGANIZATION



### EASTER ISLAND FOUNDATION

<https://www.easterislandfoundation.org/>

The Easter Island Foundation (EIF) is a public 501(c)3 organization registered in California. The organization is overseen by a volunteer Board of Directors who share an interest and concern about the culture and history of Rapa Nui and Oceania and include a variety of professions with expertise in anthropology, art, education, information technology, management and fundraising. The EIF supports the preservation of the Rapa Nui heritage and culture through education. It was incorporated in 1989 to give back to the community that has inspired the world through its rich history, vibrant culture and monumental archaeological treasures.

#### **Our Mission:**

The Easter Island Foundation supports the Rapa Nui people to preserve their vibrant Polynesian culture. We believe that education and opportunity strengthen the individual, family, economy, and community as a whole. Our vision is to empower the communities of Rapa Nui to make a difference in protecting their future and past. The EIF focuses on education to fulfill this mission.

NEW & RECENT PUBLICATIONS

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