

**DREW KAHU'ĀINA BRODERICK with MAILE MEYER,  
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## **Native Art, Culture, Education, and Healing in Hawai'i: Family Stories of Connection<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

*This personal essay takes shape around short descriptions and images of recent community arts and cultural events of Hawai'i. Reflections by the authors bring additional layers of meaning to the text. Through the interweaving of these different elements, the essay proposes family stories of Native art, culture, education, and healing in Hawai'i as antidotes to art-historical canons, especially those reinforced by settler colonial museums and Westernized higher education systems in the Hawaiian Islands.*

**Keywords:** *Hawai'i, contemporary art, community engagement, grassroots organizing, Hawaiian sovereignty, intergenerational healing*

Hawai'i community art events led by Hawaiian women, queer folks, and their allies represent ongoing group processes committed to cultivating long-term structural and systemic change. Recent grassroots, do-it-yourself endeavors can be traced back to the late 1960s and early 1970s, a particularly transformative moment for the Hawaiian Islands characterized by an archipelago-wide cultural and political reawakening. Energized by the possibilities of ea (sovereignty, life, breath, freedom) “we”—all those working toward more abundant futures for Hawai'i beyond the tourism industry and United States military occupation—have been creating, educating, organizing, protesting, and protecting for over half a century.<sup>2</sup> As a Hawaiian artist, curator, and writer with an interest in local and global histories of art, I am acutely aware of how much work has been done by past generations of creative practitioners to ensure that future generations—both active across the islands and abroad—do not have to endure the same struggles or make the same sacrifices again.

This personal essay touches on some of these longstanding efforts, in particular those involving my family, friends, mentors, and frequent collaborators.

The four authors of this paper are related: Maile, my mother; and my aunts, Manulani and Meleanna. I recorded three informal discussions, one with each co-author, between March and April of 2024. These discussions provide a foundation for this co-written text, which takes shape around excerpts from edited transcripts of our conversations.

Our connections—daughters, sisters, mother and son, aunts and nephew—are vital aspects of our individual and collective processes. Beyond so-called “conflicts of interest,” statements of relationality like this offer us an opportunity to acknowledge relations to their fullest potential. Where the four of us live, work, and care in Hawai'i nei, relationships are a lifeforce, not a liability. Educator and philosopher Manulani Aluli Meyer speaks of working with family and the need to change an entrenched and somewhat misguided perspective that views family collaboration as problematic:

*NEPOTISM ROCKS!* Let's make a bumper sticker! I tell people all the time: “I want to hire my sister. She's three times better and twice as cheap.” And they usually respond, “You can't do that, it's a conflict of interest.” So, whenever I can, I try to help organizations and institutions change their conflict of interest disclosures to statements of relationality. We can't let the inauthentic voice be raised up as authentic. We need to challenge Westernized notions of integrity and insist on Hawaiian practices. I'd take a deep relationship over a community of strangers any day.<sup>3</sup>

In this essay, memories of the authors from childhood and adulthood are interspersed among a series of scenes describing different scales and configurations of arts organizing and activism in Hawai'i. Through a loose weaving of our family experiences and stories with brief accounts of arts and cultural events of the 2010s and early 2020s, a mesh of kinship, community, and place emerges. As Hawaiian and local creative communities of Hawai'i continue to navigate international art worlds, we would do well to share our family stories of art, culture, education, and healing, not just as antidotes to the “art-historical canon” but because they remind us where we come from, who we are, and what we might be, especially if we embody aloha 'āina—love for lands, waters, and skies.

Accompanying the main text is a selection of captioned images documenting opening activations, exhibitions, installations, artworks, public programs, workshops, and cultural field service trips. These captioned images serve as a supplemental record and provide additional information that helps to visualize and

contextualize the varied efforts being considered. At times the link between text and image is direct, and at other times less so.



Figure 1. Participants in the opening ceremony of *Ke Ao Lama: Enlightened World*, prior to entering *Nā Akua Ākea, The Vast and Numerous Deities*, one of five interconnected exhibitions presented at the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture (FestPAC), Capitol Modern, Honolulu, Kona, O’ahu, June 7, 2024. Photograph courtesy of DKB [Drew Kahu’āina Broderick]

*Ho’oulu Lāhui: Regenerating Oceania*, the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture (FestPAC), was convened on the island of O’ahu, Hawai’i, June 6–16, 2024 (Figs. 1–2).<sup>4</sup> It has been over fifty years since the South Pacific Commission organized the inaugural festival in Suva, Fiji, and a century and a half since David Kalākaua, elected king of Ke Aupuni Hawai’i (Hawaiian Kingdom), shared his famed motto with the world: “E Ho’oulu Lāhui,” which translates as “to grow or nurture a nation or people” (specifically, of course, the Hawaiian nation and its people).<sup>5</sup> In 1874, after nearly 100 years of loss—including mass death due to introduced diseases, the forced removal of cultural practices by Protestant missionaries, and land dispossession for American businesses—the Hawaiian population had collapsed. From an estimated one million in the late eighteenth century, it fell to less than 50,000 by the late nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> King Kalākaua, like the South Pacific Commission, understood that if “we”—Hawaiians and Indigenous peoples of the

Pacific, more broadly—are to survive and maintain some semblance of independence in the face of colonization and ongoing occupation, it is absolutely necessary to grow our national consciousness by invigorating our people and advancing our cultural practices. FestPAC—a transoceanic exchange that takes place every four years in a different Pacific Island nation—was created in response to this need for a collective consciousness. It brings together thousands of delegates and visitors from different countries and territories across Oceania for a memorable, if brief, celebration.



Figure 2. Installation view of *'Ai ā manō*, 2024, curated by Drew Kahu'āina Broderick, Kapulani Landgraf, and Kaili Chun, in *Ke Ao Lama, Enlightened World*, Capitol Modern, Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, Honolulu, Kona, O'ahu. Artwork from left to right: Scott Fitzel, *Evolution—ʻŌ Lei O Mano*, 2016; Kapulani Landgraf, *Māmakakaua*, 2021; ʻĪmaikalani Kalāhele, *Divided*, 2018; and Sean Kekamakupa'aikapono Ka'onohiokalani Lee Loy Browne, *Kalamakū (Guiding Light)*, 2004. Art in Public Places Collection, Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts. Photograph courtesy of DKB

It is mid-July 2024 now, and many are still reflecting on the significance of the 13th FestPAC. Drawing on our experiences at the festival, we know we must continue efforts to rekindle and repair our relationships with one another as part of a larger effort to perpetuate diverse and creative cultural practices. The event

reminded us of the ways in which Indigenous internationalism and solidarity influence the health and wellbeing of Moananuiākea (the Pacific), and how the caring social bonds of our immediate families (both chosen and given) sustain generations and communities.

Artist and filmmaker Meleanna Aluli Meyer reflects on creativity born of community and healing:

When I started on this journey as a creative, nearly fifty years ago, there was so little appreciation of and support for Hawaiians, let alone us Hawaiian contemporary artists. It was a sorrowful time. At a certain point, I just got tired of holding protest signs at marches and rallies. So instead, I began painting community murals to work through generational trauma and help envision abundant futures for Hawai'i. Understanding what it is to heal is a lifelong process and that's how I found my way to the creative work I'm doing today. Art, education, and cultural practice activated through community become tools for our own healing.<sup>7</sup>



Figure 3. Left to right: Keliolalo-Kimiko “Lalo” Ishiki-Kalāhele (back), Calvin Hoe, and Loretta Ritte pictured inside *Tūtū’s Hale*, at *Hō’eu Mana: Reawakening Ancestral Stories*, hosted by Ho’oulu ‘Āina, organized by Pu’uhonua Society as part of Lā Ho’iho’i Ea 2024 at Thomas Square, Honolulu, Kona, O’ahu. Photograph courtesy of Ka’ōhūa Lucas

As I write this paper, my sister Emma, mother Maile, and aunts Meleanna and Manulani—along with an extended support network of members of the nonprofit arts and culture organization Pu'uhonua Society—are preparing to take part in activations commemorating Lā Ho'ihō'i Ea (Sovereignty Restoration Day).<sup>8</sup> In 1843, King Kamehameha 'Eolu, Kauikeaouli, established July 31 as a national holiday to mark the end of temporary occupation by rogue agents of the British Crown and the return of sovereign control by Admiral Richard Darton Thomas, who traveled to Hawai'i on behalf of Queen Victoria to correct the “unwarranted transgression against the Hawaiian Kingdom.”<sup>9</sup> On that day, the British flag was ceremoniously lowered and the Hae Hawai'i (Hawaiian flag) triumphantly raised to symbolize the restoration of the Hawaiian Kingdom encapsulated by the motto “Ua mau ke ea o ka 'āina i ka pono” (“The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness”).<sup>10</sup> Today, Lā Ho'ihō'i Ea is annually observed at Thomas Square Park in Honolulu.

To celebrate Lā Ho'ihō'i Ea in 2024, Pu'uhonua Society collaboratively organized *Hō'eu Mana: Reawakening Ancestral Stories*, a two-day community art gathering focused on ea, a Hawaiian concept encompassing sovereignty, life, breath, and freedom. Through *Hō'eu Mana*, photographers, sculptors, weavers, poets, musicians, dancers, farmers, chefs, filmmakers, activists, archivists, historians, and storytellers—both Hawaiian and non-Hawaiians—held ground at Thomas Square Park to practice their freedoms. In the astute words of Hawaiian patriot Dr. Kekuni Blaisdell, participants “recognize[d] what the British did and what the United States government has not done as of yet.”<sup>11</sup>

Lā Ho'ihō'i Ea is an event where families gather, and relationships are strengthened (Fig. 3). Community advocate and entrepreneur Maile Meyer attests to the importance of nurturing arts and culture through family and relationships:

My mother, Emma Aluli Meyer, believed that children should be exposed to every possible kind of art form at a very early age. She did everything she could to foster an environment of unfettered access to creativity in all its expressions. Singing, dancing, life drawing, ceramics, cooking, weaving, lei making—you name it, we did it. This kind of upbringing liberated me and my siblings and a lot of the neighborhood kids from believing that there was only one way to do or be in the world. Even though she lost her mother at an early age and was raised by Catholic nuns, my mother was always an independent, creative thinker [who valued] community presence and participation.<sup>12</sup>

Carrying on the conscious work of previous generations, in the early 2010s I began organizing, curating, designing, advocating for, and writing about the contemporary art of Hawai'i. At the time, there were few engaged in this work who were in my position: a Hawaiian artist who was born and raised, as well as living and working, on O'ahu. This multifaceted engagement was an important tactic to advance my own creative practice, as well as those of my family, friends, mentors, and our overlapping communities. By honing our skills, demonstrating our capacity, and affirming our presence, we could eventually force mainstream museums and educational institutions with exclusionary practices and environments—such as the Honolulu Museum of Art; Department of Art and Art History, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa; and Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts—to acknowledge our significant contributions to the art ecosystem of Hawai'i. If *they* weren't going to support *us*, then *we* needed to support *ourselves*—or as my family often says, “If there is work to be done, don't wait for someone else to do it!”

Aunty Manu emphasizes the roles that unity, family, difference, and conflict play in diverse artistic endeavors:

Unity differentiates, we are the same but different. If you are not mentored by difference, you are going to inevitably want to colonize it. I've learned to appreciate and honor our differences. We've got to go where the conflict is greatest because, as Paulo Freire says, “Conflict is the midwife of consciousness.” And that's what family is to me—perceived conflict. Even in conflict, we must remain committed to recognizing the efficacy of and the need for the vibrational energy of loving and what loving can do for this planet. As artists heal and get to the next level, their ideas will inspire our evolution, not deconstruct it over and over again.<sup>13</sup>

These principles guide our creative work. Exhibitions, essays, publications, films, screenings, lectures, workshops, panel discussions, community gatherings—no matter what the collaboration, the teachings of my mother Maile, Aunty Manu, and Aunty Mele permeate it all. Through the actions of these Hawaiian leaders and others like them, I have come to know our family's stories of art, culture, education and healing. And through these intersecting stories, I am continuously arriving at a larger context for contemporary art and community in Hawai'i—a context that weaves together different places, peoples, practices, and perspectives, all grounded in lived experience and guided by the multigenerational and grassroots efforts of many. By knowing and sharing these stories, I uplift those who embody Hawaiian values of *ea*, *aloha 'āina*, and *'auamo kuleana*; participate

in larger networks of solidarity; and believe in the power of creativity to accelerate processes of positive change in communities and institutions.

During my early teens, I would hang out after school at Native Books, an independent bookstore, art gallery, and community venue dedicated to Hawai'i and the Pacific.<sup>14</sup> My mother established Native Books in 1990, after a stint as the marketing director at Bishop Museum Press during the late 1980s. She recalls the community-based origins of Native Books:

[In the late 1980s,] my sister Manu invited me to the Native Hawaiian Leadership Development Conference she organized with David Kekaulike Sing of Nā Pua No'ēau through the University of Hawai'i at Hilo. My second child, Emma, was an infant so I brought her along with me and a kupuna [community elder] offered to hold her. As I spoke to educators and took book orders, I watched Emma be loved and cared for, passed from person to person around the room until she returned to me. For the first couple of years, before we opened the bookstore in Pālama, we sold books only through community events. I'd set up tables at craft fairs, swap meets, farmers markets, concerts, and conferences, six to eight times a week. Back then, I was constantly asked why I sold books "since Hawaiians couldn't read"! That's when I started [informing] anyone who asked me that question that the Hawaiian Kingdom had one of the highest literacy rates in the world.<sup>15</sup>

A populist at heart, my mother established Native Books in the hopes of reclaiming agency and supporting knowledge exchange for and by the people—not to make a profit and certainly not, in social media jargon, for the "likes." In 1993, she co-founded 'Ai Pōhaku Press with her lifelong friend, book designer Barbara Pope (Fig. 4). A few years later in 1996, she opened Nā Mea Hawai'i, a resource center and retail environment focused on the circulation of cultural materials and products. True to form, throughout the 1990s, she would frequently distribute, for free or at cost, photocopies of the *Kū'ē Anti-Annexation Petitions* (1897) and *Indices of Awards made by the Board of Commissioners to Quiet Land Titles in the Hawaiian Islands* (1929). I didn't know it then, but Native Books, 'Ai Pōhaku Press, and Nā Mea Hawai'i's eccentric scenes—enlivened by Hawaiian artists, designers, poets, musicians, educators, and community activists such as Nake'u Awai, 'Imaikalani Kalāhele, and Calvin Hoe—would have a tremendous influence on me in the decades to follow.



Figure 4. 'Ai Pōhaku Press (Maile Meyer and Barbara Pope) with KEANAHALA, *Reading Room*, 2022. In Hawai'i Triennial 2022: *Pacific Century – E Ho'omau no Moananuiākea*, curated by Melissa Chiu, Miwako Tezuka, and Drew Kahu'āina Broderick. Hawai'i State Art Museum (now Capitol Modern), Honolulu, Kona, O'ahu. Courtesy of Hawai'i Contemporary. Photograph courtesy of Christopher Rohrer

At an event held at Native Books amid the excitement and exhaustion of the 13th FestPAC, artist and writer Dan Taulapapa McMullin of Sāmoa i Sasa'e (Eastern Samoa), who now lives in the Mahhicannituck (Hudson River Valley, New York State), celebrated the second edition of their artist book *The Healer's Wound: A Queer Theirstory of Polynesia* (Fig. 5). During the event, I found myself thinking about a story Dan told a few years earlier at a poetry reading organized in parallel with the Hawai'i Triennial 2022: *Pacific Century—E Ho'omau no Moananuiākea*. The story was about a young man who was playing an ipu (gourd) as part of a kani ka pila (impromptu jam session), with Uncle 'Imai and Uncle Cal, at a gathering Dan attended decades earlier when Native Books was still located in Pālama. As Dan recalled: "I still remember how he held that gourd. How he played it, how beautiful it was . . . How I wished I was that gourd and he was playing me."

Listening intently from the back of the room, with a big grin on my face, I was reminded of how influential pu'uhonua (places and people of refuge, peace, and safety) like Native Books can be for those who don't conform to the norms of a heteropatriarchal, settler colonial capitalist society. For thirty-five years, Native



Figure 5. Dan Taulapapa McMullin (center) at a poetry reading and book launch for *The Healer's Wound: A Queer Theirstory of Polynesia* (second edition), Native Books, Nu'uaniu, Kona, O'ahu, June 8, 2024. Artwork (background): Solomon Robert Nui Enos, *Papa He'e Nalu i ka Wā Akua, Surfing in the Time of the Gods*, 2022, in *He'e Nalu: The Art and Legacy of Hawaiian Surfing*, 2024, curated by Carolyn Melenani Kuali'i and Ian Kuali'i. Photograph courtesy of DKB

Books has offered space to gather, share, and perpetuate culture, not just for Hawaiians and Hawai'i locals but for anyone who is called to the venue from near and distant shores. According to my mother, spaces such as these are beacons of hope:

After decades of community initiatives, we are now beginning to experience the full potential of what we've been planting together and sustaining through long-term relationships with one another. When I think of pilina—the importance of community and connection—I imagine a gathering in darkness, old Hawaiian-style with kukui torches. As lights are lit, filling the gaps of darkness, enough illumination brings awareness of those already waiting. With shared presence and purpose, many things are possible. The work never happens alone even when we think we are out there on our own. We do it for our descendants, for all those future ancestors, so that they will know less heaviness and more joy!<sup>16</sup>

During summers in my-preteens, I would visit Aunty Manu on Moku o Keawe, the Big Island of Hawai'i. At the time, she was an associate professor in the Education Department at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, living and working, occasionally off-grid, at the intersections of Indigenous epistemologies, cultural and environmental stewardship, food sovereignty, transformational education, and community healing. Aunty Manu often took me with her to visit muliwai, places where stream mouths embrace ocean tides, where fresh and saltwater mix—Pāpa'ikou, Onomea, Kahali'i, Awawaloa and so on, along the Hilo Palikū shoreline of the island of Hawai'i. Here, surrounded by elemental forces, she would sit, sometimes for hours upon hours, listening, observing, gathering, making. Moving in stillness, she would shape waterworn basalt into 'ulu maika (disks) and pōpō pōhaku (spheres). Back then, I was too young to appreciate the knowledge that was being transmitted—from place to person, and from aunty to nephew. It wasn't until my early twenties, when I was living abroad, that I would come to fully acknowledge these moments of water and stone.

Aunty Manu has reflected on the significance of process and presence:

Repeating something enough so that you're not analyzing it, so that you get out of your thinking mind, is to experience it fully. When I shape pōpō pōhaku, spheres, one hand is consistent, steady, and moving in one direction while the other hand is chaotic, random, and moving without order. You need both—randomness and consistency—so there is a constant and a variable and you have to trust in the process. Sustained repetition combined with sustained creativity has led me to the inevitability of self-awareness, self-development, and self-knowledge.<sup>17</sup>

Over the years, Aunty Manu's steadiness has created numerous environments for individuals, groups, and communities to 'auamo kuleana, to practice excellence and transform ourselves collectively in the process. As the current Konohiki (facilitator) for Kūlana o Kapolei, a Hawaiian Place of Learning at the University of Hawai'i, West O'ahu, Aunty Manu continues to work toward more just and sustainable futures for Hawai'i, and through Hawai'i, for the world—"Ea Hawai'i, Ea Honua." Together with Indrajit Kumara Samarasingha Gunasekara, an Indigenous farmer from southern Sri Lanka, she leads NiU NOW!, a community cultural agroforestry movement that deconstructs capitalism and encourages a sharing economy. More specifically, NiU NOW! emerged to affirm the significance of niu (coconut) and uluniu (coconut groves) in ecological systems (Figs. 6–7). At the center of the movement is the re-establishment of a loving relationship with

niu and the ancient practices surrounding this “tree of life.” Founded in backyards, in the hearts of its practitioners, and through the cultural practices of their communities, NiU NOW! is not large-scale uluniu for economic gain, but rather uluniu for a healthy society and everyone’s wellbeing.



Figure 6. Jesika Hernandez (left) learning to weave launiu (coconut leaves) with Indrajit Gunasekara, as part of hands-on activities with NiUNOW!, *Hō’eu Mana: Reawakening Ancestral Stories*, 2024, organized by Pu’uhonua Society as part of Lā Ho’iho’i Ea 2024 at Thomas Square, Honolulu, Kona, O’ahu. Photograph courtesy of Ka’ōhua Lucas

Aunty Manu discusses the centrality of ‘āina (land, that which feeds) to ea (sovereignty, life, breath, freedom):

You can summarize Hawaiian epistemology in one idea and that’s aloha ‘āina—love of land. And we love the land because of ‘āina aloha, because we know that the land loves us. Our geography shapes our knowing. People who know what that means have spent time in place and have loving relationships with their surroundings. Hahai nō ka ua i ka ululā’au. Plant a forest and the rains will come. Share purpose with others and transform the world. My purpose is to learn how to love better, to embody aloha in all its fullness. That’s it. What is the purpose you want to share with others?<sup>18</sup>



Figure 7. Uluniu (coconut grove) work with NiUNOW! community, Makahiki, 2023, Kūkaniloko, Wahiawā, O'ahu. Photograph courtesy of Ka'ōhua Lucas

As a teenager, I would assist Aunty Mele in art workshops and mural projects across O'ahu. At Ke Kula 'o Samuel M. Kamakau, a Hawaiian public charter school in Ko'olaupoko, Aunty Mele helped young people to establish relationships with art, informed by their cultural identities and experiences. There is no easy way to address personal pain and intergenerational trauma but expressing oneself creatively in a safe and supportive learning environment can be a powerful beginning to a lifelong journey of healing. Since 1992, Aunty Mele's "classrooms" have taken many forms—a steel-framed, blue tarp tent; a wooden park bench on the beach; a pothole-ridden parking lot; a correctional facility; a family's backyard; a public library; and the white walls of a state-funded museum. No matter where the learning happens, it is never about the art or the final product; rather, it is always about connecting with people and sharing a culturally rooted creative process along the way, as Aunty Mele explains:

As a young, widowed mother of two boys, I was carried, like a high tide, to this place of going, "DAMN! There's just so much trauma, rage, and confusion in me." Finding out all the deplorable things that have happened to Hawaiians over the generations put me on a course of corrective action; as in, get myself educated so that I can make more informed decisions and then try to better understand the reasons for all of the dysfunction in the Hawaiian community—in the lives of my own family, our cousins, and their

families. Desperation. Insanity. Addiction. Suicide. Families experience loss and difficulties at some point. But if we can practice forgiveness, patience, and kindness throughout it all, then we can do it within our communities and beyond. I work whenever a need presents itself, and I don't go where I'm not invited. Serving as a community arts educator has been my own lifelong education.<sup>19</sup>



Figure 8. The painting of *Nā Akua Kia'i*, for the exhibition *'Ai Pōhaku, Stone Eaters*, 2023. Participating artists (left to right): Kahi Ching, Al Kahekiliuila Lagunero, Solomon Robert Nui Enos, Harinani Orme, Carl F.K. Pao, and Meleanna Aluli Meyer. Screenprinting studio, Department of Art and Art History, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Kona, O'ahu. Photograph courtesy of DKB

The first time I worked on a community mural with Aunty Mele was in 2004, when I was sixteen. At the invitation of Noelle M. K. Y. Kahanu, then director of community affairs at the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, Aunty Mele was developing a large, forty-panel mural. Painted by school students and community members over a period of ten weeks, *Ho'ohuli Hou: An Overtuning, A Change* (2004) is a rumination on a wānana (prophecy) attributed to Kapihe, a kāula (seer), and adapted from *Hawaiian Antiquities (Moolelo Hawaii)* (1898) by Hawaiian historian Davida Malo.<sup>20</sup> The mural, currently on view in the museum's Hawaiian Hall, celebrates the prophecy "E iho ana 'o luna. E pi'i ana 'o lalo. E hui ana nā moku. E kū ana ka paia" ("That which is above shall be brought down. That which is below shall be lifted up. The islands shall be united. The walls shall stand upright").<sup>21</sup> Aunty Mele elaborates on the mural's powerfully enduring tenet:

Our ancestors are extraordinary, and they want the best for us. I believe in them and feel their presence. I am an embodiment of their knowledge and strive to continue their good works. Everyone I vision and paint and heal with, we all channel ancestral memory in our own ways. Together we hold it, we feel it, we pray for it. Our work helps remind us of what we are supposed to be doing, of what we all should be caring about. It hasn't been easy, let me tell you, but it's certainly been worth the effort. At the end of the day, we only need to remember that Spirit is in all things and as many of my kumu, beloved teachers have said to me over the years, "It matters not *what* you practice, but *that* you practice." Simple, right!?<sup>22</sup>



Figure 9. During the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture, 2024, Meleanna Aluli Meyer leads a discussion in front of *Hawai'i Loa Kū Like Kākou*. Mural by Meleanna Aluli Meyer, Al Kahekiliuila Lagunero, Harinani Orme, Kahi Ching, and Solomon Robert Nui Enos, 2011. Hawai'i Convention Center Lobby, Waikīkī, Kona, O'ahu. Photograph courtesy of Allyson Ijima

Following *Ho'ohuli Hou*, Aunty Mele oversaw many more community murals and formed a hui (working group) with longtime friends and fellow Hawaiian painters Al Kahekiliuila Lagunero, Harinani Orme, Kahi Ching, Carl F.K. Pao, and Solomon Robert Nui Enos (Fig. 8). Among their collaborative projects, two works stand out: *'Āina Aloha* (2015) and *Hawai'i Loa Kū Like Kākou* (2011). *'Āina Aloha* is a two-sided painting addressing generational healing within Hawaiian communities. Since 2015, the mural has traveled to local and international conferences that

focus on dealing with historical and cultural trauma, and in 2023, it was included in Sharjah Biennial 15: *Thinking Historically in the Present* in the United Arab Emirates. *Hawai'i Loa Kū Like Kākou* (Fig. 9) is a monumental eight-panel meditation on 'auamo kuleana, a Hawaiian concept encapsulating the burden and privilege of responsibility in caring for Hawai'i and the planet. The mural—which shows another way of being in the world—was organized by Pu'uohonua Society in collaboration with the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and Hawai'i Tourism Authority. It was produced in advance of the 19th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting, held in Honolulu in November 2011. It was also a direct response to the State of Hawaii's commission of public art for the Hawai'i Convention Center in the late 1990s, which included no Hawaiian art. A testament to the ways in which community murals can raise awareness and bring about meaningful change, *Hawai'i Loa Kū Like Kākou* is now prominently displayed near the building's main entrance.



Figure 10. Audience activated by Manulani Aluli Meyer during keynote for *ALOHA NŌ: Hawai'i's Role in a Worldwide Awakening*, Art Summit 2024, Hawai'i Convention Center, June 13, 2024, Waikiki, Kona, O'ahu. Photograph by Bryan Berkowitz. Courtesy of Hawai'i Contemporary

On June 13, 2024, at the end of the 13th FestPAC, the Hawai'i Contemporary Art Summit 2024 opened at the Hawai'i Convention Center, two floors above

the spectacular Festival Village. A thematic precursor to Hawai'i Triennial 2025: *ALOHA NŌ*, the free, multi-day, multi-site event brought together artists, curators, and thinkers from Hawai'i, the Pacific, and around the world to consider the triennial's theme through a series of talks, film screenings, artist presentations, and workshops.<sup>23</sup>

Amid the converging arts and cultural scenes of Moananuiākea, Aunty Manu delivered a keynote, "ALOHA NŌ: Hawai'i's Role in a Worldwide Awakening," inspired by the teachings of Aunty Pilahi Pahi, Aunty Edith Kanaka'ole, Aunty Lynette Kahekili Paglinawan, and Aunty Pūlama Collier. During the session, she spoke movingly to notions of aloha as a practice that flows through truth-telling, healing, spirituality, and the Hawaiian sovereignty movement during this time of radical transformation (Fig. 10). Aunty Manu calls for aloha as method for living in a world where your worldview is valued:

Aloha (love and loving) is the primal energetic force of our collective evolution; it is the genesis of world transformation. You know how I know that? Because others told me it was! I remember listening to kūpuna, community elders, to family, to friends telling me about Hawaiian intelligence and that, in the end, it just boils down to aloha. And then, suddenly, I felt intelligent. Like, wow! You know, I was made to feel so stupid in this other world but that wasn't the one I wanted to inhabit. That was in 1997, while I was pursuing a doctorate in Philosophy of Education at Harvard University because I wanted to study with Howard Gardner whose theory of multiple intelligences resonated with me at the time. That's also when I realized how sick US society really is.<sup>24</sup>

Later in the day, Aunty Mele participated in a roundtable discussion, "Pewa: Healing and Truth Speaking," with fellow triennial artists Megan Cope, Carl F.K. Pao, and Emily Mafie'o of Taro Patch Creative, which was moderated by curator Mina Elison. The group engaged in conversation about loss and grief in a postcolonial and capitalist context, as well as healing and connectivity through artistic practices that mend cracks or divides in communities. Across the three days of Art Summit 2024, my mother Maile, then a board member of Hawai'i Contemporary, actively strengthened relationships between artists, audience members, and community partners, as she has done diligently since the organization's inception over a decade ago. On her uplifting approach to community, my mother stated:

Everything we do, it's all about lifting up the work of Native Hawaiian, Hawai'i, and Pacific creatives. If we can just meet people where they are at and help to support them so they can continue in the direction they want to go—that's it right there, that's enough. And so it's always about nurturing relationships through community in all the ways we can. This is how we rise, through a different understanding of exchange.

Witnessing my mother, aunties, and their extended support networks of friends, mentors, and frequent collaborators over the course of my life has instilled in me a deep appreciation for all those who care, individually and collectively, for the people, practices, and places that sustain Hawai'i. My family has taught me that meaningful change happens when we work together and take action, each in our own way. Or as Aunty Manu often says when speaking about 'auamo kuleana and the importance of carrying your responsibility, "Collective transformation through individual excellence."

***Drew Kahu'āina Broderick** (b. 1988) is an artist, curator, and educator from Mōkapu on the windward side of O'ahu, in US-occupied Hawai'i. His work is guided by the multigenerational, on-the-ground efforts of Kanaka 'Ōiwi women and queer folk who have devoted their lives to art, culture, education, healing, and community in Hawai'i. Currently, Broderick co-leads (with filmmaker Sancia Miala Shiba Nash), the grassroots film initiative kekahi wahi (est. 2020), which documents transformations and shares intersectional stories across the Hawaiian archipelago through time-based media. Recent projects include: 'Ai ā manō (2024) with Kapulani Landgraf and Kaili Chun; 'Ai Pōhaku, Stone Eaters (2023) with Josh Tengan and Noelle M.K.Y. Kahanu; and Hawai'i Triennial 2022: Pacific Century – E Ho'omau no Moananuiākea with Melissa Chiu and Miwako Tezuka.*

***Maile Meyer** (b. 1957) is the third daughter of Emma Akana Aluli and Harry King Meyer. She is a formally trained photographer who grew up in Kailua, between Mōkapu and Ka'ōhao, on the windward side of O'ahu. In 1990, she founded the independent bookstore Native Books with a focus on Hawaiian and Pacific literature. In 1993, with book designer Barbara Pope, she co-founded 'Ai Pōhaku Press, specializing in publications connected to the storied and sacred places of Hawai'i. In 1996, she established Nā Mea Hawai'i, a place for Hawaiian and locally made cultural products. In 2020, with entrepreneur Wei Fang, she launched Arts & Letters Nu'uau, a mixed-use bookshop, art gallery, and coworking and community events space. From 1996 to 2022, she served as the executive director of*

*Pu'uhonua Society, a Honolulu-based Native Hawaiian women-led nonprofit arts and culture organization.*

**Dr. Manulani Meyer** (b. 1959) is the fifth daughter of Emma Akana Aluli and Harry Meyer. She is an internationally renowned speaker who grew up on the sands of Mōkapu and Kailua on the island of O'ahu and along the rainy shoreline of Hilo Palikū on the island of Hawai'i. She is a writer and international evaluator of Indigenous doctoral dissertations, working in the field of Indigenous epistemology and its role in worldwide awakening. Her book *Ho'oulu: Our Time of Becoming* (2001) is in its third printing, and *Ho'opono: Mutual Emergence* was published in 2025. From 2004 to 2010, she served as an associate professor of education at University of Hawai'i at Hilo. From 2010 to 2015, she was the lead designer-teacher for *He Waka Hiringa*, an innovative master's degree in applied Indigenous knowledge at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, the world's largest Māori university. She is currently the *Konohiki* (facilitator) for *Kūlana o Kapolei, a Hawaiian Place of Learning* at University of Hawai'i, West O'ahu.

**Meleanna Meyer** (b. 1956) is the second daughter of Emma Akana Aluli and Harry Meyer. She is a community educator from the ahupua'a of Kailua, in the moku of Ko'olaupoko, O'ahu. For over thirty years, she has worked in private, public, charter and Hawaiian-language immersion schools across the Hawaiian Islands. As an artist and filmmaker, she translates 'ike Hawai'i (Native Hawaiian wisdom) through *kaona* (metaphor) to engage audiences and viewers in art, film, and the written word. She sees her work as a springboard for deeper conversations for reconciliation and for healing. Recent projects include the public mural *Nā Akua Kia'i* (2023) with Al Kahekiliuila Lagunero, Harinani Orme, Kahi Ching, Carl F.K. Pao and Solomon Robert Nui Enos; and the documentary short film *Mauna Kea: Sacred Mountain, Sacred Conduct* (2020) with Tom Coffman and Lisa Altieri. She was a participating artist in the *Hawai'i Triennial 2025: ALOHA NŌ*.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This text was originally commissioned by the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia. A previous version was published as: Drew Kahu'āina Broderick, Maile Meyer, Dr. Manulani Aluli Meyer, and Meleanna Aluli Meyer, "Native art, culture, education and healing in Hawai'i: Family stories of Connection," *Asia Pacific Art Papers*, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, December 25, 2025, <https://apap.qagoma.qld.gov.au/native-art-culture-education-and-healing-in-hawaii-family-stories-of-connection/>.

<sup>2</sup> Established in 1973, Hale Nauā III, Society of Maoli Arts was one of the first organizations concerned with advancing Hawaiian contemporary art in Hawai'i. Led by Hawaiian artist and master carver Rocky Ka'iouliokahihikolo'Ehu Jensen, Hale

Nauā III channeled the teachings and lessons of individuals into the collective well-being of a community of artists, both Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian. In line with its aims, Hale Nauā III sourced its name from an older cultural organization in existence during the late nineteenth century, Hale Nauā II. Founded by King Kalākaua in 1886 and functioning until his death in 1891, Hale Nauā II worked to secure political leadership positions for Hawaiians while also promoting the revival and strengthening of Hawaiian culture in combination with the advancement of Western sciences, art, and literature. Although membership in King Kalākaua's Hale Nauā II was limited to those of Hawaiian descent, it was open to all genders in contrast to many Western fraternal organizations active in the Hawaiian Kingdom.

<sup>3</sup> Manulani Aluli Meyer, conversation with Drew Kahu'āina Broderick, March 21, 2024.

<sup>4</sup> The 13th Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture Commission, appointed in 2018 by the Hawai'i State Legislature, included nine members: Kalani Ka'anā'anā, Māpuana de Silva, Senator Jarrett Keohokālole, Representative Richard Onishi, Jamie Lum, Makana McClellan, Stacy Ferreira, Shanty Asher, and Snowbird Bento. The festival was organized by Gravitas Pasifika, a boutique firm that harnesses the power of creative storytelling to advance Hawaiian, local Hawaiian, and Pasifika worldviews; it is led by Dr. Aaron J. Salā and Dr. C. Makanani Salā.

<sup>5</sup> "Ka Hooulu Lahui," *Ka Nuhou Hawaii*, April 21, 1874, p. 1. For additional context, see "Hawai'i, Host of the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts & Culture," Bishop Museum, <https://blog.bishopmuseum.org/nupepa/hawai%CA%BBi-host-of-the-13th-festival-of-pacific-arts-culture>.

<sup>6</sup> Nā Maka o ka 'Āina (Joan Lander and Puhipau), *Act of War: Overthrow of the Hawaiian Nation*, 1993, 60 minutes; see Hawaiian Voice, <https://www.hawaiianvoice.com/products-page/history-and-sovereignty/act-of-war-the-overthrow-of-the-hawaiian-nation-2/>.

<sup>7</sup> Meleanna Aluli Meyer, conversation with Drew Kahu'āina Broderick, April 30, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Pu'uhonua Society is a Hawaiian and women-led non-profit organization based in Honolulu, which was founded in 1972 as the Young of Heart Workshop by Emma Akana Aluli Meyer, my maternal grandmother. In the words of my sister Emma and mother Maile:

For the past four generations, the work of Pu'uhonua Society has been led by members of our family. For over 50 years, lineal descendants of Emma Yuklin Akamu and Noa Webster Aluli have focused on providing support to artists, writers, educators and community organizers who serve as translators, mediators, and amplifiers of social and environmental justice issues in Hawai'i. Ka po'e i aloha i ka 'āina, Pu'uhonua Society is of and for the people who love this land of Hawai'i nei. As an extension of our 'ohana and a reflection of our values, our collective work acknowledges our

allegiances. Our pilina—our connectivity—joins us to communities in ways that are long-lasting and deep rooted. Through these relationships with creative thinkers, dreamers, and doers, Pu'uhonua Society serves as a refuge for Hawaiian ways of being.

As of 2024, Pu'uhonua Society's primary programs include: Aupuni Space, an artist-run gallery, venue, and studios; Ho'ākea Source, a Regional Regranting Program Partner of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; Ho'omau Nā Maka o ka 'Āina, a cataloguing and public programming partnership aimed at preserving and making accessible Nā Maka o ka 'Āina's moving-image archive; KEANAHALA, an inclusive and collaborative weaving program that perpetuates the Hawaiian practice of ulana lauhala (pandanus weaving); KĪPUKA, a makers' space and educational environment offering a series of classes and workshops focused on the transmission of ancestral knowledge and material practices; and NiUNOW!, a cultural agroforestry movement affirming the importance of niu (coconut) and uluniu (coconut groves) to the health and wellbeing of Hawai'i and its peoples. For more information see: "History," Pu'uhonua Society, <https://www.puuhonua-society.org/>.

<sup>9</sup> For additional context, see Lā Ho'i Ho'i Ea, <https://lahoihoiea.org>.

<sup>10</sup> On July 31, 1843, King Kamehameha 'Eko'u, Kauikeaouli, addressed the people of the Hawaiian Kingdom at Kawaiaha'o Church and offered these timeless words of wisdom.

<sup>11</sup> Uncle Kekuni, who helped to re-establish Lā Ho'iho'i Ea at Thomas Square Park in contemporary times, speaks to the group's intention in detail, addressing the need to reclaim and restore Hawaiian independence in Nā Maka o ka 'Āina's feature film *Ka Lā Ho'iho'i Ea* (1986). Hawaiian artists, musicians, sovereignty leaders, community members, and activists—including 'Imaikalani Kalāhele, Peter Kealoha, Homer Hayes, Pua Kealoha, Haunani-Kay Trask, and Mililani Trask—have made appearances in the educational program.

<sup>12</sup> Maile Meyer, conversation with Drew Kahu'āina Broderick, March 12, 2024.

<sup>13</sup> Manulani Aluli Meyer, conversation with Drew Kahu'āina Broderick, March 21, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> At the time, Native Books was located up the hill from Niuhelewai Spring, on the corner of School and Aupuni Streets in Pālama, a short walk from the Kamehameha Schools Bus Terminal, past Maluhia Cemetery, Jean Charlot's vibrant *United Public Workers Mural* (1970–75), and Golden City Restaurant.

<sup>15</sup> Maile Meyer, conversation with Drew Kahu'āina Broderick, March 12, 2024.

<sup>16</sup> Maile Meyer, conversation with Drew Kahu'āina Broderick, March 12, 2024.

<sup>17</sup> Manulani Aluli Meyer, conversation with Drew Kahu'āina Broderick, March 21, 2024.

<sup>18</sup> Manulani Aluli Meyer, conversation with Drew Kahu'āina Broderick, March 21, 2024.

<sup>19</sup> Meleanna Aluli Meyer, conversation with Drew Kahu'āina Broderick, April 30, 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Davida Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities (Moolelo Hawaii)*, translated from the Hawaiian by Dr. N. B. Emerson, 1898 (Honolulu: Hawaiian Gazette Co., Ltd., 1903), 154.

<sup>21</sup> For further discussion of the mural, see J. Kehaulani Kauanui, "Aloha Nō and the Power of Healing in Contemporary Hawaiian Art: An Interview with Meleanna Aluli Meyer and Noelle M.K.Y. Kahanu," *Pacific Arts* 25, no. 2 (2025), 111–14, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7g64k84j>.

<sup>22</sup> Meleanna Aluli Meyer, conversation with Drew Kahu'āina Broderick, April 30, 2024.

<sup>23</sup> Hawai'i Triennial 2025: *ALOHA NŌ*—curated by Wassan Al-Khudhairi, Binna Choi, and Noelle M.K.Y. Kahanu—was the first time that the curatorial team for the Hawai'i Triennial was composed entirely of women of color working collaboratively in a nonhierarchical arrangement. Hawai'i Contemporary Art Summit 2024 is the second iteration of the event. The inaugural Art Summit 2021 was conceived shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown of March 2020, by Melissa Chiu, Miwako Tezuka, and Drew Kahu'āina Broderick, who were also the curatorial team for Hawai'i Triennial 2022: *Pacific Century – E Ho'omau no Moananuiākea*. Presented in a hybrid format comprising in-person and online sessions, the summit was envisioned as a way of exchanging ideas, sharing practices, and remaining in relation, given the travel restrictions and health risks that defined daily life then. For more information see Hawai'i Contemporary, <https://hawaiicontemporary.org/art-summit-2024>.

<sup>24</sup> Manulani Aluli Meyer, conversation with Drew Kahu'āina Broderick, March 21, 2024.