Pacific Arts

Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

N.S. Vol. 20 No. 1
2020-2021

Pacific Arts
Art and Environment in Oceania, N.S. Vol. 20, no. 1
ISSN: 2769-108X (online), 1018-4252 (print), ©2021

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The journal is made possible through the generous support of the **Pacific Visual Studies Fund** established through the University of California-Santa Cruz Foundation, which also supports Pacific Islands arts research and teaching. For more information or to make a contribution, please visit this page.

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Cover Image: Chenta T. Laury, *Patchwork #1*, 2019. `Alaea (clay), hili kukui (dark brown dye), silk, and thread on tapa (bark cloth), 35.5 x 29 inches. Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts. Photograph courtesy of the artist

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PACIFIC ARTS
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

KAREN STEVENSON

A Message from the President of the Pacific Arts Association

This is the Pacific Arts Association's first issue of *Pacific Arts* utilizing an open access on-line journal platform. *Pacific Arts* has been published for more than four decades and has been a valuable vehicle for scholarship focusing on the arts of the Pacific region. For many years it was one of the few journals that would accept Pacific material. Today, however, Pacific Arts and Oceanic Visual Studies are not only acknowledged with numerous labels, they link with multiple disciplines that investigate the artistic production of the region.

We believe that the move to an open access journal will facilitate disciplinary growth, stimulate innovative scholarship and conversations, and broaden our community of contributors. Unlike a print journal, the on-line format enables us to include an unlimited number of images, sound, and moving images. We hope that the expanded capabilities of this platform will attract both readers and contributors, allowing the Pacific Arts Association to fulfil its mission to facilitate and encourage an awareness and understanding of the arts and cultures of the Pacific region.

We invite you to join us on this new journey.

Karen Stevenson, of Tahitian heritage, was born and raised in Los Angeles. She received her PhD in Oceanic Art History from the University of California, Los Angeles in 1988. She moved to Christchurch in 1995 to take up a position at the University of Canterbury where she is currently an Adjunct Senior Fellow. Her writings and research have focused on the politics and institutionalization of culture, art and identity, the Pacific Arts Festival, and for the past 20 years, on Contemporary Pacific Art in New Zealand. She has published widely and is the author of: The Frangipani is Dead, Contemporary Pacific Art in New Zealand, 1985-2000; Johnny Penisula, Reinventing Tradition, *and* Filipe Tohi, Journey to the Present – Makahoko mei Lotokafa.

PACIFIC ARTS
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

MAGGIE WANDER

Introduction to "Art & Environment in Oceania"

This special issue of *Pacific Arts* considers the role of artistic production in relation to climate change in Oceania. Anthropogenic environmental degradation has emerged as a key theme for many scholars within the Pacific Arts Association (PAA). At the sessions of the PAA-North American chapter at the College Art Association Annual Conference, the PAA panels have recently focused on art and environmental issues in Oceania. For instance, Carol E. Mayer chaired the "Fragile Balances: Contemporary Arts, Cultural Integrity, and Environmental Change" session in 2017 and Henry Skerrit organized the session on "Mining the Colonial Imaginary: Art, Materiality, and Ecological Critique in Contemporary Oceania" in 2020. The April 2021 general assembly of the PAA-Europe chapter was organized around the exhibition *A Sea of Islands: Masterpieces from Oceania* at the Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden, which engaged with environmental issues in its focus on the role of water in Pacific cultures. This exhibition featured George Nuku's installation *Bottled Ocean 2120*, which considers the vast amount of plastic currently polluting the world's largest ocean. The most recent PAA International Symposium, "Resilience: Sustaining, Re-activating, and Connecting Culture," held in Brisbane in March 2019, focused on creative and hopeful responses to new, often traumatic, circumstances, such as sea level rise, pollution, and threatened cultural heritage.

The proliferation of work on this topic comes as no surprise considering Oceania is on the "frontlines" of anthropogenic climate change as one of the world's regions most threatened by rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and warming atmospheric temperatures. Phenomena most often associated with "climate change" in Oceania are pollution and waste, including water contamination from agriculture, resource extraction, and urbanization; species extinction and dwindling biodiversity; freshwater salinization; coastal erosion; drought; and large-scale fires. In her contribution to this volume, Marion Struck-Garbe introduces two artists from Papua New Guinea–Laben Sakale John and Gazellah Bruder–whose powerful paintings address these pressing concerns about ocean pollution, habitat loss, and extreme weather events at both a local and global level. Across Oceania, events such as these create food and water shortages; increase diseases, chronic illnesses, and cancers among

populations living with massive pollution; force people to move from their homes; and threaten cultural practices and ways of life.

In the face of such ecological crises, artistic production and creative expression are a crucial means by which people in Oceania and its diaspora are fighting for climate justice. Environmental activists are mobilizing cultural heritage in their protests against fossil fuels and resource extraction. The Pacific Climate Warriors and 350 Pacific, for instance, blockaded the Newcastle coal port in 2015 using traditional canoes from across Oceania. Cultural festivals across the region are increasingly dedicated to ecological issues, such as the King Tides Festival in Tuvalu. More and more art exhibitions are dedicated to issues of climate change and ecological justice, for instance the recent show *Inundation: Art and Climate Change in the Pacific* curated by Jaimey Hamilton Faris (2020) at the University of Hawaiʻi Mānoa Art Gallery. Other exhibitions and biennials, while not necessarily curated around an ecological theme per se, include an increasing number of artists whose work engages with climate change. Artists such as Latai Taumoepeau, Taloi Havini, Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, and many others help to raise awareness, inspire the public to act, and hold accountable those most responsible for anthropogenic climate chaos.

The present issue features the work of artists and visual studies scholars who address climate change and focuses on contemporary art and recent exhibitions that engage with environmental issues and their intersections with colonial histories, Indigenous sovereignty, and global capitalism. The contributions take a climate justice perspective, which considers the way climate change is the product of systemic and infrastructural inequality that upholds imperial formations in the past, present, and future. Jacqueline Charles-Rault, for example, analyzes a series of works by Natalie Robertson, a Māori photographer who grew up alongside the Tarawera River near the Bay of Plenty and whose iwi, Ngāti Porou, is located near the Waiapu River on the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand. Robertson's work reflects on the history of settler and industrial expansion that led to major pollution of the Tarawera River, the complete destruction of Lake Rotoitipaku, and deforestation due to pastoralism that rendered the Waiapu river vulnerable to erosion and flooding. In her contribution, Charles-Rault, who co-curated the 2015 exhibition *Pacifique(S) Contemporain* that included Robertson's work, discusses Robertson's thoughtful attention to the impact colonial history has had on Māori lands and waters.

Bodies of water also figure largely in the work of Angela Tiatia, who responds to the catastrophic, fatalist, and disembodied consideration of rising sea levels that pervades much climate change discourse. Jaimey Hamilton Faris considers Tiatia's video work *Lick* (2015) as an Indigenous feminist critique of the way "sinking islands" of Tuvalu are represented. By putting the work in conversation with other feminist environmental performance art in Oceania, such as Yuki Kihara's *Taualuga: The Last Dance* (2002), and building on Caroline Caycedo's practice of "geochoreography," Hamilton Faris argues Tiatia uses daily, intimate gestures in and

with the Pacific Ocean as a form of critical, Indigenous feminist survivance in relation to climate upheaval.

Survivance is also a key theme for Healoha Johnston, whose contribution situates the work of five contemporary artists in Hawaiʻi in the long fight for Hawaiian sovereignty dating back to the Hawaiian Renaissance of the 1960s and 70s. Each of the artists engages with the relationship between kānaka maoli (Native Hawaiians) and ʻāina (the land)–a relationship that demands care and responsibility in the face of climate change. From Imaikalani Kalahele's "Manifesto" as a form of aloha ʻāina to Abigail Romanchak's visualization of scientific data that documents the declining native bird population, Johnston urges us to recognize how the potent and critical work being produced today around climate justice is indebted to the work that Kanaka ʻŌiwi artists and activists produced in the second half of the 20th century.

Aaron Katzeman similarly historicizes contemporary art in Hawaiʻi, considering Sean Connelly's *A Small Area of Land (Kakaʻako Earth Room)* (2013) in the context of the land art movement in North America of the 1960s and 1970s. Katzeman complicates an easy reading of Connelly's work as a site-specific, material exploration of "earth" and "land" as defined by a Euro-American sense of purity, stasis, and minimalism. By comparing Connelly's piece to Walter De Maria's *New York Earth Room* (1977-present), after which the installation is named, and Helen and Newton Harrison's *Making Earth* (1970), Katzeman argues Connelly is much more politically engaged and uses his artistic practice to consider the role of colonial dispossession, commodification, and Indigenous onto-epistemological relationships to place.

Carol E. Mayer's contribution takes a curator's perspective on contemporary art and climate change in Oceania, reflecting on her decades-long relationship with artists on the island of Erub in the Torres Strait. Mayer recounts how she came to commission a number of 'ghost net' sculptures made with industrial fishing nets that are polluting the shores of Erub and other islands in the Torres Strait and threatening endangered ocean life. Mayer provides an intimate view of the work curators can do to bring these issues to light and to foster creative engagements with pollution or other ecological issues.

Alongside contributions by curators, this volume also includes an exhibition review and three artist features. Halena Kapuni-Reynolds reviews *Nā Māla: Layered Landscapes of Kona Coffee Heritage*, a recent exhibition at the Donkey Mill Arts Center in Kona, Hawaiʻi. Kapuni-Reynolds notes in particular the "layers" of history, memory, identity, and embodied relationships to Hawaiian ecologies. Lani Asuncion's exhibition *Duty-Free Paradise* is the subject of a photo-essay by the artist which explores the military and tourism industries that continue to shape the way Hawaiʻi is imagined by the United States public. Like Johnston and Katzeman, Asuncion's work foregrounds the historical process of dispossession by the United States when considering the intimate relationships between people and place in Hawaiʻi. Another artist featured in this volume, Chenta Laury, further complicates these relationships by sharing her own experience as an African American who grew up in Hawaiʻi. By combining tapa

(barkcloth) construction with other techniques adopted from her Finnish and African-American backgrounds, Laury explores the often fragile nature of identity construction and the role of natural materials in forging one's sense of belonging.

Lastly, the volume features a series of posters by the Madang Art Maniacs (MAM), a group of Papau New Guinea artists founded by Robert Banasi, who recently formed the collective to celebrate local cultures and inform the public about urgent issues. The series included in this volume demonstrates the important work MAM has done to raise awareness about the COVID-19 pandemic, which is hitting the country especially hard. The photographs show public murals, billboards, and posters with messages in Tok Pisin such as "Stand one metre away from me" and "Wash your hands with soap." While not readily associated with climate change, the pandemic intersects with the other health issues and precarity disproportionately felt by people in Papua New Guinea and "the global south." Those communities most affected by climate change are the same communities without access to healthcare, without the option to stop working, and excluded from the services necessary to survive this unprecedented health crisis. As many activists are now saying, "COVID justice is climate justice."

From the U.S. occupation of Hawaiʻi to the problematic framing of rising seas in Tuvalu, and from the COVID-19 crisis in Papua New Guinea to the display of ghost net sculptures in Vancouver, this volume provides a snapshot of the *vast* amount of work on climate change and its intersections with Indigenous sovereignty, localized relationships to place, and the ongoing fight for justice and decolonization. *Pacific Arts* anticipates and looks forward to significant growth in arts scholarship and creative work in this area as environmental conditions become increasingly acute.

PACIFIC ARTS
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

JAIMEY HAMILTON FARIS

Gestures of Survivance: Angela Tiatia's *Lick* and Feminist Environmental Performance Art in Oceania

Abstract

This article describes Sāmoan-Australian artist Angela Tiatia's performance video Lick *(2015) as an act of Pacific Islander survivance. Recorded in and with the coastal waters of Tuvalu, the work emphasizes a direct and responsive encounter with the Pacific Ocean. The video's intentional emphasis on Tiatia's malu, a tattoo specific to Sāmoan women, and her choregraphed leg and hand gestures of balance represent a powerful visual proclamation of Tiatia's Oceanic feminist relationship with the ocean. Her performance is an important challenge to the exotifying impulses of environmental documentaries and mainstream media that often represent Pacific Islanders as passive victims of sea level rise. In the context of current decolonizing performance literature and practices in Oceania,* Lick *is read as a strategic hydrochoreography—an embodied art practice that expresses the lively interconnection of body-ocean rhythms needed to sustain Indigenous futures.*

Keywords: *contemporary Pacific art, Angela Tiatia, climate change, decolonial theory, environmental performance, survivance, Indigenous feminist Pacific*

Figure 1. Angela Tiatia, *Lick*, 2015. Single-channel, high-definition video with sound, 6:33 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney | Singapore

In 2015, Sāmoan-Australian artist Angela Tiatia visited Funafuti, the main atoll of Tuvalu, which is globally known to be on the frontlines of sea level rise. During her visit, she made *Lick* (2015), a performance video in which she used her own body as a gestural medium that could incorporate and respond to multiple conflicting representations of climate change in Oceania (Fig. 1).[1] For the piece, she positioned the camera (operated by her long-time technician Kieren Cooney) a few yards from herself and a few feet below the surface of the water so that the audience's view would be of her tattooed legs standing on the ocean floor with her lowered arms swaying slowly in the surf. Filtered by the soft opacity of the blue-green ocean, and presented in slow motion with muffled underwater sounds, Tiatia's movements are minimal in the first minute of the video. The audience might, if they weren't paying close attention, initially mis-read the posture of her arms and legs as limp or unresponsive. But then Tiatia begins to bend her knees and slowly sweep her arms around and to steady herself in the waves (Fig. 2). She repeats this balancing act a few more times throughout the rest of the video—all in slow motion—so that the viewer ultimately comes to understand the ease and power of her collaboration with the water.

Figure 2. Angela Tiatia, *Lick*, 2015. Single-channel, high-definition video with sound, 6:33 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney | Singapore

I included *Lick* in a group exhibition I recently curated called *Inundation: Art and Climate Change in the Pacific* (2020).[2] Though the video is now six years old, it is an important touchstone for emerging feminist performance strategies that counteract the "engendering" of climate change in Oceania.[3] "Engendering" is a phrase used by Pacific Studies scholar Margaret Jolly in her recent article "Engendering the Anthropocene in Oceania: Fatalism,

Resilience, Resistance." Jolly articulates not only the ways in which women and those of gender and sexual fluidity are more at risk in the context of climate disaster, but also the ways in which representations of climate disaster in Oceania are gendered.[4] Isolated women in flooded waters become the embodiment of passive, feminized, and victimized Islander populations as sea levels rise.[5] *Lick*'s carefully abstracted movements, rhythms, and gestural refrains *in concert— or collaboration—with the ocean* offers an important response to these stereotypically gendered representations.

As in much of her recent performance work, Tiatia loves to play with the audience's ability to read gestural tropes and narratives of power implicit in certain postures. In what follows, I will look at how Tiatia's choreography in *Lick* deliberately creates a visual tension between the respective gestural significations of a drowned victim, a fisherperson waiting for her catch, and a dancer. Together, these are potently meaningful in a climate change context. Even more importantly, I will articulate how the video's underwater perspective highlights Tiatia's strategic reframing of these gestures to actively embody her alliance with water.

Tiatia celebrates "water as an agent of decolonization."[6] Building on the work of decolonial theorists Melanie Yazzie and Cutcha Risling Baldy, as well as Pacific feminist scholars such as Alice Te Punga Somerville and Noelani Goodyear-Kaʻōpua—all of whom describe the importance of water in decolonizing efforts—I highlight the ocean in Tiatia's videos as a medium and a relation. It supports the artist's body and cultural articulations, and by extension, supports the "survivance" of Pacific Island cultures. First coined by Gerald Visenor in 1999, "survivance" is a playful combination of "survival" and "resistance," indicating an "active sense of presence and continuance of native stories."[7] In the context of the potentially genocidal conditions of climate change, in which Pacific Islanders are being forced to contemplate relocation and assimilation, survivance is expressed in re-articulating Oceanic cultural narratives of water as a life force rather than a death force.

In a 2017 interview with Australian-based curator and artist Léuli Eshraghi, Tiatia herself makes roughly these points in terms of her sense of feminist decolonial agency. In response to Eshraghi, she states, "I have a decolonial art practice in that I seek to unravel the systematic inequalities that are placed upon the Pacific body and artist/curator by the forces of colonization." She continues in terms of her own experiences as a Sāmoan woman: "In terms of sexual expression, the Pacific female has had no agency over the portrayal of her body and sexuality due to religious pathology and continual hypersexualization of her body in the West. My works give agency to the female body as one that can no longer be taken advantage of or shamed."[8] To relay her points back to *Lick* in particular, I will discuss how Tiatia collaborates with the ocean to assert her own Pacific Islander self-representation and presence. This is an act that simultaneously critiques current engendered climate crisis representation, while offering feminist embodied relational methods of Indigenous Pacific continuity.

Figure 3. Angela Tiatia, *Tuvalu*, 2016. Three-channel, high-definition video with sound, 20:32 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney | Singapore

The Intimacy of Climate Change

Tiatia's visit to Tuvalu resulted in the related video projects *Lick, Holding On* (2015) and *Salt* (2015)—all featuring the artist's own body in performance. Additionally, she made the three-channel video *Tuvalu* (2016) (Fig. 3) focused on the daily life of the Tuvaluan community. These projects first grew out of Tiatia's concern about her coastal family home in Fagamalo, Sāmoa. She grew up between this home, where her mother was raised, and Auckland, where she was raised. During a visit to Fagamalo in the early 2000s, after eight years away, she noticed dramatic changes that had occurred in the land and sea around the family house.[9] The green grass, taro, hibiscus shrubs, and abundant breadfruit, mango, guava, and frangipani trees had all disappeared. They had given way to a thick brown sludge coming up to her ankles. This experience led her to research climate change across Oceania more rigorously and eventually to visit Tuvalu, which has strong genealogical, political, and economic connections to Sāmoa and currently faces even more serious flooding. The nine islands and atolls that comprise Tuvalu are an average of less than two meters above sea level.

Tiatia watched many documentaries before her visit, including *The Disappearing of Tuvalu: Trouble in Paradise* (2004) by Christopher Horner. She found the film so intensely mediated by tropes of the mournful disappearance of islanders that she felt she needed to see the situation for herself and hear from people directly.[10] Arriving on Funafuti as a Sāmoan sister, Tiatia committed herself to a different kind of filmmaking than most environmental documentaries, a style that would reflect and embody the multiple and often conflicting beliefs about climate change held by Tuvaluans themselves. As Tiatia put it, in a talk given to the Oceania Rising program at the Australia Museum in March 2018, she wanted to show climate change "not on a global scale but on an intimate one—to glimpse how life is lived in an environment where climate impacts are part of the everyday, rather than dramatic one-off events."[11] *Tuvalu* focuses on vignettes of kids playing in the water, women conversing on porches, and men maintaining coastal roads. In contrast to the dramatic musical score of *The Disappearing of Tuvalu*, the rhythm of ocean waves, church bells, and other everyday sounds make up the film's ambient soundtrack. Tiatia filmed daily activities and asked Tuvaluans how they thought they needed to respond to climate change. She recounts that she received a variety of answers. Some were most interested in continuing to work on climate-adaptation projects like building sea walls, while others were interested in seeking international representation for climate change via the United Nations. Still others were committed to the idea that God would intervene. Reflecting on these conversations, Tiatia decided she needed

to do some performances in which she could come to terms with these various viewpoints about climate action, which ranged from advocating for Oceanic agency to putting Pacific Islanders in positions of sacrifice.[12]

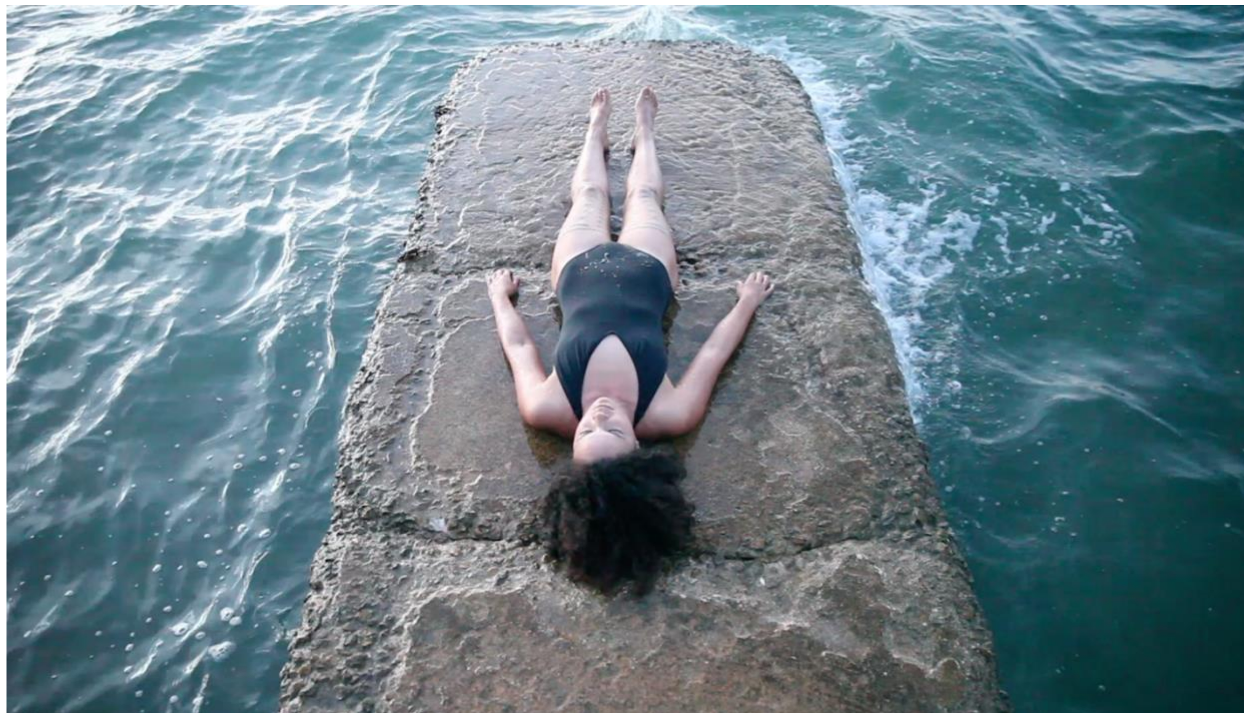

Figure 4. Angela Tiatia, *Holding On*, 2015. Single-channel, high-definition video with sound,12:12 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney | Singapore

Holding On (Fig. 4) is a performance in which Tiatia attempted to process the discussions that the artist had with Tuvaluans while there about the role of Christian faith in climate change. She lay on a concrete slab jutting into the ocean with her arms outstretched and legs placed together. As the viewer watches the tide come in, the sun sets and a crab comes out to explore her. Tiatia sways in the water, at times holding her head up over the oncoming water, but remaining calm and focused. As the tide rises and she is forced to hold the edges of the slab, her body takes on a cruciform position.

Salt, by contrast, was a more mediated performance. The looped video features uncannily multiplying images of Tiatia submerging and reemerging from the water. In "Contemporary Māori and Pacific artists Exploring Place," Pacific art historian Caroline Vercoe argues that *Salt* "embodies all of the familiar forms of a scenic tropical paradise—the exotic dusky maiden, walking away from the viewer, towards and into a picturesque island beachscape, against a dramatic moonlight glistening across the water as the skyline meets the ocean on the horizon." But, Vercoe continues, the "once postcard perfect scene, with its myriad of female forms walking into the ocean, takes on a disturbing viewing encounter across the three-minute looped sequence."[13] In the context of her article, Vercoe articulates Tiatia's *Salt* as a place-based performance. Referencing Epeli Hauʻofa's identification of

Oceania as a vast and diasporic place of Indigenous collectivity, Vercoe muses on the role of the present rising levels of the Pacific Ocean "in forcing a new kind of migration and exile experience on its community."[14]

In viewing *Salt*, especially in relation to *Lick*, and considering Tiatia's interest in creating intimate relations with climate change, I also wonder if the performance in *Salt* might be strategically reclaiming Hau'ofa's vision *in spite of* the climate crisis narratives and the threat of climate-induced migration. Its looped format and proliferating bodies performatively counter the linear capital time of climate crisis in which modern Euro-American nations recognize climate change as the end of the (settler-colonial) world. The loop emphasizes a practice and patterning of Indigenous resurgence/re-emergence. It impels viewers to think of the ocean not only as a climate-transformed place, but also as an embodiment of cyclical time and as a genealogical force—a spiritual and elemental matrix through which Tiatia can challenge dominant frameworks of climate change.

The endurance performance mode (a type of performance art often focused on repeating a single simple task) in *Lick* also plays specifically and strategically on damaging stereotypical Pacific climate change tropes and twists them to affirm Oceanic futuring narratives. From below the surface of the water, already positioned and aligned from the ocean's point of view, viewers are privy to the way Tiatia uses her legs and arms to keep balance as each gentle wave rolls past and "licks" her. The waves are not strong enough to wipe her out or defeat her, but instead seem to offer her a caress.

This double meaning of the title plays with the imagery itself. At first, the title recalls the opening minute of the performance along with the visual refrains of "drowning" Pacific Islanders (like the ones in *The Disappearing of Tuvalu*).[15] Environmental decolonial literature scholar Elizabeth DeLoughrey calls the emergence of such documentaries with repeating images of islanders walking in waist-high waters after major storms "salvage environmentalism," in which "Pacific Islanders as the harbingers of climate change, [are] habitually rendered as figures of an isolated, natural and nature-loving culture that were being appropriated to critique American petrocapitalism."[16] Fundamentally, she means that the trope of the "islander drowning" is part of the long-held colonial and capital representational history beginning with the European discovery of "Edenic" paradises. Western societies use the same Edenic imagery to now signal the death of paradise, while also denying their part in Oceania's destruction.

In fact, the mournful gaze of environmentalist films—framing islands and islanders on the verge of disappearance—are extremely disingenuous given colonialism's two centuries of resource extraction that have caused the seas to rise around low-lying islands. The reality is that sea level rise's displacement of Pacific Islanders and poor coastal communities is simply the newest wave of many other kinds of displacement caused by land privatization, development, extraction, and more. As the discourse of climate change has mobilized Oceanic communities, Pacific Climate Warriors and other Indigenous activists have called out these damaging narratives.[17] Through 350.org, Facebook, and other social media platforms, these groups are representing themselves in the water with signs that say "we are not drowning." The act of repeating this shoreline performance across islands also creates or composes an alliance through the water that can help to cultivate global political recognition.

As Jolly has attested on multiple occasions, the role of gendered representation in Oceania and climate change also plays out here.[18] The "dusky maiden" has long been a privileged trope in images of the Pacific. There are established visual histories in the Pacific in which women have explicitly represented the innocence, purity, and availability of entire cultures.[19] As tropes of exploration have turned toward environmental mourning, that same feminized innocence is now re-figured as a virginity lost. Simply put, tropes of the life cycles of womanhood as seen from a patriarchal perspective become conflated with an island's eventual degradation. To counteract this history, images of powerful female warriors in the shore waters are now central to the message of the Pacific Climate Warriors.[20]

Lick represents a quieter parallel performance that expresses not only Tiatia's ability to endure the ocean's waves but also her desire to build capacity of care and relation through repeated gestures of embrace and balance. In the repetition of her balancing sweep, other details come into focus. Tiatia's head and her steady gaze—down or toward the open ocean—is visible through reflections on the surface of the water. Over the course of six minutes, the video asks viewers to concentrate on the subtle arrangement of her balancing movements, which Tiatia could only create with the density of the salt water and the forces of the tides (Fig. 2). The waves are supportive and buoyant, and her body is active, relaxed, and full of breath. Her concentrated engagement expresses a willingness to experience, understand, and work *with* the elements and environment.

Environmental Feminist Performance Theory

How can a body (re)compose itself through gestures in the water? This question is important to Tiatia's practice, but also to a growing movement or "wave" of Indigenous and feminist performance research across the world interested in foregrounding embodied and affective attunement with water as a key decolonial environmental justice practice. In *Downstream: Reimagining Water*, a recent collection of writing geared toward this question, Dorothy Christian and Rita Wong gather a number of different voices—from First Nations Waterkeeper Anishinabe-kwe Violet Caibaiosai, who performed healing water walks across the Great Lakes region, to dancers Alannah Young Leon and Denise Marie Nadeau, who describe their movement pedagogies as embodied practices of Indigenous and settler decolonial watery relations. Many of the contributors to this volume explore the possibilities of movement and gesture in articulating water as kin or relation. Young Leon and Nadeau in particular emphasize the importance of feminist and Indigenous somatic and affective remembering (in song, dance, and drawing) that "we are borne of, dependent on, and created in water."[21]

Downstream's focus on decolonial feminist embodied relations with water is one of the latest contributions in a wider discussion about the importance of feminist environmental performance practices in general. Kaya Barry and Jondi Keane's 2019 *Creative Measure of the Anthropocene: Art, Mobilities, and Participatory Geographies* argues that creative arts practices can "alter the perceptions, expectations and capacities…produced in the Anthropocene era."[22] They voice a long-standing feminist principle that the scale of bodily movement is of ultimate importance for developing new, lively *compositions* that produce, in turn, new

psycho-social-environmental spaces. It is only through affective practices that sensitivity toward each other and the environment can shift the objectifying habitudes of patriarchal colonial-capital logic.

Barry and Keane's arguments are made in the context of evolving theorizations of the performative and the political. Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou's *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (2013) and Natalie Alvarez, Claudette Lauzen, and Keren Zaiontz's *Sustainable Tools for Precarious Times: Performance Actions in the Americas* (2019) both articulate the importance of feminist performance research on postures of empowerment and solidarity to remediate and transform multiplying situations of precarity (poverty, environmental racism, gender or sexual violence, etc.).[23] How? Performance and embodiment demand a meditation on the ways in which our habitual bodily movements are amplified across different scales and rhythms of life. Performance, especially in the context of art and activism, can concentrate on (re)new(ing) relational gestural refrains. These are repetitions of movement that practice care and interconnection—practices that can become new habits. New gestural refrains can release the performer's body, and often also the social body, from mechanical states and colonized habits, while also (re)composing the body in alternative/Indigenous life worlds. In sum, feminist performative political transformation understands that changing people's minds is not merely a conceptual or informational problem, but a deeply embodied and emotional one. Only when affective bodies are engaged can deep systemic change occur.

Hydrochoreography

Colombian artist Carolina Caycedo has a powerful articulation of these feminist decolonizing principles, which she calls "geochoreography." Caycedo's videos and performances—a combination of community-based filmmaking and symbolic performance—are centered around building local and Indigenous opposition to corporate hydropower dams in Colombia and across South America. She mainly collaborates with the communities being displaced by the rerouting of water for dams. Through film documentation and activist performance, she captures the importance of a community's intimate and daily practice of sustaining and being sustained by rivers with access to fishing and agriculture. She focuses on net throwing, farming, and swimming as gestures that need to be sustained and amplified in order to counter the corporatized view of water as energy. As Caycedo puts it, geochoreography is "the sum of everyday and extraordinary gestures and actions intrinsic to the social, political and environmental context of the river."[24] She continues:

> A geochoreography aesthetically imprints a living image on the landscape, producing an expansive motion of the body and its location. Expanding the body helps to avert fear, and to counter physical and psychological displacement. Intimate acts like remaining at home becomes (sic) a mechanism of holding the ground, a practical resistance to displacement and relocation, and serves (sic) as a tactic to negotiate better compensations.[25]

Caycedo's geochoregraphy, as it enacts a "practical resistance" to displacement, translates powerfully to Tiatia's gestural research in the waters of Tuvalu. Like Caycedo's choreographies, Tiatia's endurance performances amplify daily gestures so that they take on resonant meaning. In *Lick*, her specific stance in the water celebrates the presence of her moving, cultured body, clearly marked with her *malu*, a tattoo specific to Sāmoan women. After the first minute of the video, Tiatia stands with power, certainty, and attention to what is going on beneath the surface of the water. Her body expresses a comfortability and ongoing sustaining relationship with the water that feeds her. The underwater camera position allows the viewer to see the fish moving around her body. From within the water's expansive medium, her slow balancing sweeps seem to combine the patience of fishing in the shallows and the grace of Sāmoan dance.

The specificities and subtleties of gestural cultural expression in *Lick* are linked to a prominent genealogy in Pasifika feminist performance art. Rosanna Raymond set this precedent with her participation in Pacific Sisters, a collective of Pacific Islander and Māori fashion activists founded in the 1990s, as well as through her own performative photography practice.[26] *Eyeland* (1997) and *Full Tusk Maiden* (2005) were significant hallmarks in (re)activating her body while simultaneously addressing a visual history of the colonial gaze.[27] Raymond continues this work today through important relational art spaces including the SaVAge K'lub, which emphasize the continued struggle against the regulation of Indigenous bodies in the context of international art exhibitions.[28] Likewise, the performative photography of Yuki Kihara has established the ways in which her non-binary *fa'afafine* body challenges the colonial tradition of medical, anthropological, and tourist photography that has continually exotified and objectified Pacific Islanders.[29]

In thinking about how Tiatia's work is especially informed by that of Kihara, there is potential to see how her feminist environmental performance is rooted in and related to feminist deconstructions of the colonial patriarchal gaze. As Tiatia has recounted, growing up in urban settings in New Zealand and Australia as a Pacific Islander brought into focus the history of colonialism and its exotification and commodification of Oceanic female bodies. Before becoming an artist, Tiatia worked as a model, where she began to understand how the global fashion industry employs race and gender stereotypes. This instilled in her a desire to confront these depictions, oftentimes using her own body to exaggerate or denaturalize common feminine gestures. In her ongoing series *Inventory of Gestures*, she counters the fetishization of her body through awkward yet powerful poses that destroy the fantasy of its availability to the viewer. For instance, in *Heels* (2014) and *Walking the Wall* (2014) Tiatia created endurance performances that reappropriated the gestural language of the catwalk: while wearing high heels, she also reveals her *malu* and references *taualuga*, a Sāmoan dance.[30]

Like *Lick*, these performances ask viewers to pay attention to the subtleties of gestural language. In the case of *Walking the Wall* (Fig. 5), Tiatia undermines a superficial reading of her body as a commodity with her dramatic re-orientation of the catwalk to the wall. While lying prone on the floor may seem, at first, to put her in a powerless position, she deliberately and slowly uses the high heels she is wearing to dig into the wall and pull herself up. As Tiatia walks up and down the wall, all the while meeting our gaze, we are cued to her strength and endurance.

Figure 5. Angela Tiatia, *Walking the Wall*, 2014. Single-channel, high-definition video with sound, 13:04 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney | Singapore

It is important to fully consider the ways in which such gestural refrains release Tiatia's own body from the histories of violent appropriation and feminization of Oceanic bodies in environmental discourse. In Tiatia's view, there is value in showing the *malu* and having it play such a central role in her performances. It affirms her commitment to diasporic Sāmoan cultural life while also challenging strict rules against women displaying their *malu* that have often been reinforced through colonial-Christian attitudes of feminine modesty.[31] Wearing and showing the *malu* reminds Tiatia of her responsibility to protect relationships between family, community and environment while also "giv[ing] agency to the female body as one that can no longer be taken advantage of or shamed."[32] Her statements recall Sāmoan writer Albert Wendt's important comment that "the act of tatauing a tatau… on the post-colonial body gives it shape, form, identity, symmetry, puts it through the pain to be endured to prepare for life, and recognizes its growing maturity and ability to serve the community." This body is a "body 'becoming,' defining itself, clearing a space for itself among and alongside other bodies…"[33] The pride with which Tiatia displays her *malu* while engaging her own body in both *Walking the Wall* and *Lick* recalls a similar oppositional gaze in Kihara's *Fa'a fafine: In the Manner of a Woman* (2004–2005). In all cases, the artists return the gaze of the viewer, while also articulating the complexity of negotiating the gendered coding of their bodies.

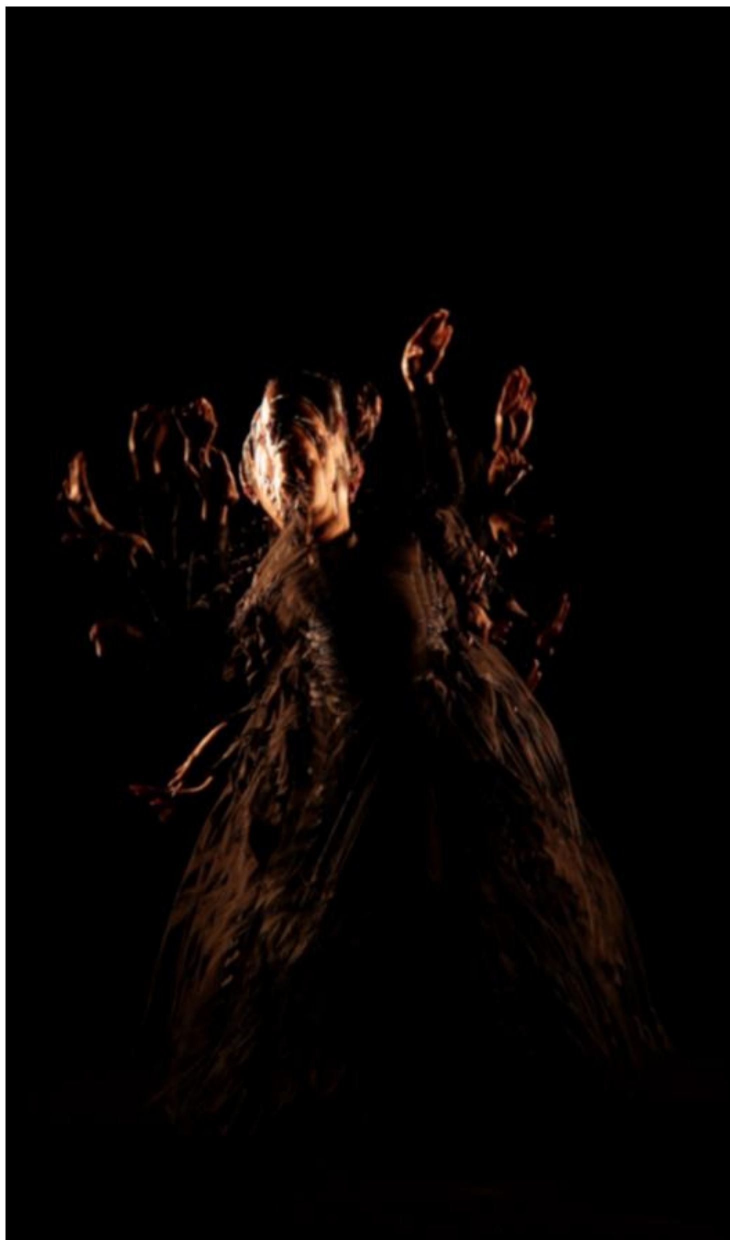

Figure 6. Yuki Kihara, *Siva in Motion*, 2012. Single-channel HD Blu-ray, silent, 8:14 minutes looped. Commissioned by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Aotearoa New Zealand / Courtesy of Yuki Kihara, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, and Milford Galleries Dunedin, Aotearoa New Zealand

The ambivalence of the postcolonial condition is palpable in all these works and becomes even more accentuated when these two artists also confront issues of climate change. Recently, Kihara has represented Oceanic survivance responses to climate change through a series of performance pieces featuring her interpretations of *taualuga*. In a suite of works—*Taualuga: The Last Dance* (2002), first performed at APT4; *Siva in Motion* (2012); and *Galu Afi: Waves of Fire* (2012)—Kihara dressed in a constraining colonial mourning dress and used the embodied language of the dance to celebrate Sāmoans' persistent struggle against colonization and the various kinds of constrictions and destruction it brings along with it.[34] In *Taualuga*, Kihara's solo dance used dramatic lighting to amplify her shadow and bring greater drama and attention to her hand gestures and the sweeping and swaying of her body. The

piece interrogates postcolonial gender performance through the dance's very specific and subtle orchestrations of movement and hand gesture usually performed by a ceremonial virgin as the last dance of a social function. It speaks to the complex pre-and post-contact history of *taualuga* and its gendered enactment of balancing social and locational dynamics.[35] *Siva in Motion* and *Galu Afi* both used chronophotography to record Kihara's choreography, and also specifically addressed the tsunami of September 2009 that took the lives of 189 people in Sāmoa and Tonga. In these two works, Kihara's carefully composed hand movements follow the pattern of the stormy seas, as the ocean disappears and reappears with incredible force (Fig. 6). Hiʻilei Julia Hobart describes *Siva in Motion* as "a dance comprised of restrained and delicate hand movements that articulate a story of waves."[36] The recorded gestures offer a critique of a history of colonial constraints on Sāmoan culture, but even more importantly, they are embodied methods of processing colonial trauma and articulating new environmental knowledge of the transforming ocean. Kihara's dances revive and transform *taualuga* as a valid contemporary cultural response to climate change.

Tiatia's *Lick* complements Kihara's *Siva in Motion* by literally engaging the waters of the rising Pacific. The slow grace and strength of Tiatia's expansive bending and sweeping gestures made with her legs, arms, and wrists are also reminiscent of *taualuga*. In contrast to Kihara's *Siva in Motion*, which focuses attention on small, carefully articulated hand movements, Tiatia emphasizes large gestures that help her maintain her poise as the tide rolls in. With her tattooed legs immersed in the surrounding waters, Tiatia's movements are freed from the strict constructs of the dance's colonial reinforcement of gender roles and notions of modesty and chastity. Instead, her movements emphasize the relational elements of the dance—her body as an extension of the land and ocean, past and future.[37]

In fact, because of the medium in which Tiatia literally makes her gestures, it is less useful to cross-reference Tiatia's particular movements with *taualuga* than it is to think of how her own body memory, trained by learning the dances in her childhood, informs her effort to balance on rocks while facing the wide expanse of the ocean.[38] That is, Tiatia highlights the ways in which her *training* in the language of dance helped her follow the flow of ocean water that carries along or *entrains* molecular water bodies from eddies into global currents and storms. Tiatia is literally re(en)training her body with the water. This is to see Tiatia's movements also with respect to Oceanic political theorists who emphasize Indigenous ontologies of relationality emerging from the space of the ocean itself. In "Where Oceans Come From," Alice Te Punga Somerville offers her own refrain on behalf of Indigenous Oceania. Long before the Pacific was named or claimed as such, she states, "*We have already been here*: thinking about oceans and how to think with them."[39] In "Indigenous Oceanic Futures," Noelani Goodyear-Kaʻōpua (also building on Vincente Diaz's studies of *etak navigation* techniques from Micronesia) offers specific ontological lessons learned from the ocean, especially that of "directionality in relation to other bodies-on-the-move."[40] The lessons of this dynamic positionality and directionality help to "negotiate the complexities of restoring Indigenous land/water-based relationships."[41] In short, Somerville and Goodyear- Kaʻōpua emphasize that Oceanic decolonial practices are strengthened when aligned with and within the forces of ocean water.

With respect to the various global feminist decolonial understandings of protecting and building ontological relationships with water I have offered in this section, and in

comparison to Oceanic performance artists like Yuki Kihara, it is useful to think of Tiatia's *Lick* as *hydro*choreography. Like Caycedo's geochoreographies, Tiatia's intimate gestures of balance help expand the body and avert fear. Tiatia's gestures bring particular visibility to her lively *hydro*-movement with the ocean—a way to stay centered-in-movement. Her embrace of the water moving through her arms, even as it "licks" her, emphasizes her kinship with the Pacific Ocean—its genealogical role in sustaining life by gestating fish, conveying canoes, bringing rains, and providing guidance.

Survivance and Watery Relations

Climate change is happening, and waters will rise, but Tiatia's work emphasizes the importance of an Indigenous survivance framework to shape action. Survivance is now coming into the foreground of decolonial practice because, as Métis anthropologist Zoe Todd emphasizes, it is more than mere survival and anti-colonial critique—it suggests the importance of futuring, the positivity of carrying forward cultural knowledge and making new knowledge. In her contribution to the 2018 collection "Indigenous People and the Politics of Water," she describes survivance as the "active assertion of, tending to, and enactment of Indigenous self-determination."[42] In the introduction to that same collection, Melanie Yazzy and Cutcha Risling Baldy also specifically emphasize survivance through the language of feminist relationality with water to "generate lively embodiments, socializations, and theorizations that exceed and influence academic meditations."[43] In sum, Todd, Yazzy, and Baldy highlight the importance of feminist ontological practices of survivance—that being a part of the ongoing struggle while also being in relation to the world and others is just as important as the more formal political work of resistance. They make a compelling argument about the need to pay attention to reproducing water relations in everyday and ritual gestures related to water because, ultimately, this kind of cultural endurance and cultural creation can upset colonial-capital processes, habits, and imaginaries.

Tiatia's own endurance performances celebrate the power of seemingly small gestures and postures if practiced and proliferated. Beyond her work (and the substantial bodies of work by Raymond and Kihara already mentioned), there are a number of other contemporary feminist Oceanic performance artists who also focus on relational gestures with and through water. The Tongan-Australian *punake* (body-centered performance artist) Latai Taumoepeau's live endurance pieces such as *i-Land x-isle* (2013) feature the artist suspended from two tons of slowly melting ice. Taumoepeau's performances often articulate the stresses of colonial-capital processes on her Oceanic body while also achieving ceremonial states of regeneration. Taloi Havini's *Habitat* (2017) offers an immersive multi-channel video installation featuring a solo female figure wading in the beautiful, haunting, and damaged rivers flowing from the open copper pits of the Panguna mine on Bougainville. Havini emphasizes the importance of her collaboration with the women of Bougainville, who affirm that after the miners are gone, and even in a devastated landscape, they will "always be here."[44] *Rise: From One Island to Another* (2018), a video poem by Marshallese poet and performance artist Kathy Jetn̄il-Kijiner and Greenland poet Aka Niviâna, launched on the

environmental media platform 350.org, features images of Jetñil-Kijiner in the coastal waters off Majuro and on the melting glaciers of Iceland.

There is an affinity between *Rise* and *Lick* in the ways the artists conceive of water as a force that supports islander resistance to neo-liberal narratives of Pacific Islander vulnerability. Both build on the visual language of the 350.org Pacific Climate Warriors by representing
themselves literally immersed in the ocean as a way to strategically claim self-determination and autonomy in climate change discourse.[45] In *Rise*, Jetñil-Kijiner repurposes the language of sea level rise, calling for human-ocean solidarity through her refrain "we will rise."[46] Likewise, Tiatia's looped video performance of *Lick* ends as Tiatia allows an oncoming wave to pick her up and carry her out of the frame and towards the shore (Fig. 7). Rising with the water is emphasized in both video performances as a gesture to be repeated so that it can become embodied habitude and an emotional orientation from which to draw strength.

Figure 7. Angela Tiatia, *Lick*, 2015. Single-channel, high-definition video with sound, 6:33 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney | Singapore

To consider Tiatia's choreographies as gestures of survivance is to think about the importance of recalibrating water/body relations—to reclaim water as the source of both inspiration and of life outside of a damaging colonial framework, with its extractive and development-based economies that have brought on the most negative effects of climate change. Tiatia's gestures are not essentializing ones that simply perpetuate "woman as nature"—they are ongoing, performative responses both to the transformations of the ocean and Oceanic cultures, and to the global politics of climate crises. Her actions cultivate the ability to face sea level rise not with fear, but with a celebration of kinship. Finally, to use the words of Yazzy and Baldy, Tiatia's performances can be read as "act[s] of (re)making our

accountability in relationship to water and (re)claiming our relational theories of water culture [to] remind us that we are water based, that we have water memory."[47] With her body's movement in the water, Tiatia practices postures of breath, presence, strength, and control in relation to, and in communion with, the elements. She relies on the ocean as a space of composition and repose through which to cultivate creative responses to the world around her. It is important that Tiatia at first does not allow us a full view of her head. Only through the water's reflective and refractive surface can we see her concentration, and with it, the cultural significance of her breath and rhythmic movement. This is the ultimate gesture of survivance.

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Notes

[1] I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Angela Tiatia for her generosity in sharing her images and stories. I would also like to thank Yuki Kihara, Milford Galleries Dunedin, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki and the gallery team at Sullivan+Strumpf in Sydney for their help with image permissions.

[2] *Inundation: Art and Climate Change in the Pacific* was held at the Art Gallery, University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, January 29–February 29, 2020.

[3] Margaret Jolly, "Engendering the Anthropocene in Oceania: Fatalism, Resilience, Resistance," *Cultural Studies Review* 25, no. 2 (December 2019): 172–195a.

[4] Jolly, "Engendering the Anthropocene in Oceania," 176.

[5] See also 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* 13, no. 2 (2019): 76-99.

[6] Cutcha Risling Baldy and Melanie Yazzie, "Introduction," in "Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Water," ed. Cutcha Risling Baldy and Melanie K. Yazzie, special issue, *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 7, no. 1 (2018): 1.

[7] Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), vii.

[8] "Bodies that Matter: Léuli Eshraghi Interviews Angela Tiatia + Jasmine Te Hira," in "Indigenous Art: New Media and the Digital," ed. Heather Igloliorte, Julie Nagam, Carla Taunto, *PUBLIC* 54 (Winter 2016):150 and 154.
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[11] Tiatia, December 17, 2019.
[12] Tiatia, December 17, 2019.
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[17] Jolly, "Engendering the Anthropocene in Oceania," 181-184; Candice Elanna Steiner, "A Sea of Warriors: Performing an Identity of Resilience and Empowerment in the Face of Climate Change in the Pacific," *The Contemporary Pacific* 27, no. 1 (2015): 147–180.
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[22] Kaya Barry and Jondi Keane, *Creative Measure of the Anthropocene: Art, Mobilities, and Participatory Geographies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 26.
[23] Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013); Natalie Alvarez, Claudette Lauzon, and Keren Zaiontz, eds. *Sustainable Tools for Precarious Times: Performance Actions in the Americas* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).
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[27] Tamaira, "Full Dusk to Full Tusk," 16.

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[30] "Bodies that Matter," 150.
[31] Tiatia, December 17, 2019.
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PACIFIC ARTS
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

HEALOHA JOHNSTON

ʻĀina in Contemporary Art of Hawaiʻi

Abstract
In this article, Healoha Johnston considers how five contemporary artists describe the interconnectivity of the environment and aloha ʻāina through their work. Recent installations and exhibitions featuring artwork by Bernice Akamine, Maile Andrade, Sean Browne, Imaikalani Kalahele, and Abigail Romanchak engage issues of sustainability, articulate genealogical connections to ʻāina, and decribe the possibilities for regenerative relationships to ʻāina through materials, form, and content. This essay considers the impact of the 1970s Hawaiian Renaissance as a cultural and political movement that re-centered the relationship between Kānaka and ʻāina, and catalyzed Hawaiʻi's contemporary art scene with a political dimension that visualized Kanaka ʻŌiwi resurgence.

Keywords: *Hawaiʻi, contemporary art, environment, Hawaiian Renaissance, aloha ʻāina*

This essay considers how five contemporary artists in Hawaiʻi communicate different connections to ʻāina (land) through their work. Recent installations and exhibitions featuring artwork by Bernice Akamine, Maile Andrade, Sean Browne, Imaikalani Kalahele, and Abigail Romanchak engage issues of sustainability, articulate genealogical connections to ʻāina, and suggest possibilities for regenerative relationships to ʻāina through materials, form, and content. The lasting relevance of the 1970s Hawaiian Renaissance as a cultural and political movement that underscored the relationship between Kānaka ʻŌiwi (Native Hawaiian people) and ʻāina, and catalyzed Hawaiʻi's contemporary art scene with a political dimension that visualized Kānaka ʻŌiwi resurgence, is presented as an important forerunner of contemporary artistic production.

Hawaiʻi's socially engaged contemporary art owes its inception, in part, to the fertile ground laid by the Hawaiian Renaissance of the 1960s and 1970s when a renewed sense of cultural and political consciousness flourished in Hawaiʻi. The Hawaiian Renaissance brought focus to ancient practices such as hula, oli (chant), mele (music), and ocean navigation by the stars, and enlivened their continuity in a contemporary context through the work of artists, practitioners, activists, and intellectuals.[1] This movement re-centered Hawaiian knowledge systems, and emphasized enduring connections between Hawaiian people and Hawaiʻi's complex land and ocean ecosystems. Although the spotlight was cast on Hawaiian culture, the momentum illuminated oppressive power structures that were pervasive across economic,

academic, and cultural sectors. This period of cultural resurgence served as a political precursor to the Hawaiian Sovereignty movements that had gained international attention by the early 1990s. It also coincided with global contemporary art practices of the 1960s through early 1990s such as conceptualism, minimalism, institutional critique, and identity politics.

In 1979, Dr. George S. Kanahele, a scholar and businessperson who has been referred to as the spiritual father of the Hawaiian Renaissance, delivered a speech as part of the Kamehameha Schools' Hawaiian Culture Lecture Series in which he masterfully synthesized aspects of the Hawaiian Renaissance by first situating it within an historical context before going on to predict long-term impacts of the cultural resurgence he likened to a "dormant volcano coming to life again."[2] Kanahele named key contributors whose visionary and substantial, yet singular, influences anticipated the renaissance of the 1970s. Set against Hawaiʻi's political backdrop of the early twentieth century, however, Kānaka ʻŌiwi visionaries were unable to achieve on their own the social change that occurred after the mid-twentieth century through mass-mobilization of Kānaka ʻŌiwi communities.

The period between the 1893 illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom monarchy and the twentieth-century Hawaiian Renaissance bears the imprint of an oligarchy whose political control over every aspect of life in Hawaiʻi was aimed at Americanizing the people of the islands by erasing the legacies of the Kānaka ʻŌiwi and Hawaiian Kingdom government from public memory. Land rights and the people's rights to enact the kānaka–ʻāina (people–land) relationship through environmental stewardship and genealogical connection to the land were among the most visibly contentious aspects of the Hawaiian Renaissance because they contradicted the dispossessing logic of militourism.[3] The arts were a galvanizing mechanism through which support for and awareness of ʻāina rights and the reestablishment of the kānaka–ʻāina relationship were cultivated.

Kanahele forecast, with incredible accuracy, what was on the horizon for the people of Hawaiʻi in the late twentieth century and beyond. Among the most profound aspects of his speech is his insistence of the importance of defining Hawaiian culture on Hawaiian terms, a process that would reassert holistic ecological approaches rooted in ancient Kānaka knowledge. He thought the culture, the land, the ocean, and the people of Hawaiʻi could not thrive in an aesthetic and political space that sought to only ever be, at most, derivative of another place. In his speech, Kanahele responded to an anonymous newspaper contributor whom he thought undermined the efficacy of the Hawaiian Renaissance:

> Writing in the *Star Bulletin* (Feb. 20, 1979), he says the term [renaissance] implies the "tangible creation of works of art and literature" and that there is "scant evidence of such work in a Hawaiian Renaissance." I don't know what he considers to be "scant evidence" in view of the prolific production of music, art and craft work, dances, and so on that Hawaiians have been responsible for during recent years. I would very much like to learn what he would consider to

> be "renaissance quality" work. If he is using standards comparable to Michelangelo, Van der Meer, Leonardo da Vinci, Bacon, Erasmus, Machiavelli, the luminaries of the European Renaissance, I think he is kidding himself. It is more realistic and sensible to use the standards of the culture in which the renaissance is happening. I say let the Hawaiians themselves decide collectively what is "scant" or non-scant "evidence" of what is good or bad.[4]

Throughout his speech, Kanahele refused to assume Eurocentric points of reference to measure the potential of what was an intergenerational cultural revolution. Visual artists who were emerging in their practice during this time approached their work through a similar lens, whereby the de-centering of Euro-American paradigms and the reaffirmation of Hawaiian frameworks were considered valid methods through which to not only interpret the world, but to reactivate the kānaka–ʻāina relationship in a direct sense. This shift occurred across media and took many different forms as artists situated themselves at the intersections of multiple art historical and material culture trajectories. This essay deliberates on pivotal examples by five contemporary artists who insisted on the continuity of the kānaka–ʻāina relationship in the decades following the Hawaiian Renaissance, though many other artists were and are critical to the discussion.

Origins, Old Spiritualism, and New Nationalism

> *The source*
> *of*
> *my origins*
> *lie beneath my feet,*
> *the breath*
> *in my chest*
> *originated*
> *in Pō*
> *the destiny*
> *of my race*
> *is*
> *plunged into*
> *my gut*
> *and*
> *infesting*
> *my veins*

with a new nationalism,
old spiritualism,
and a need
to make wrong
right
now.
—Imaikalani Kalahele, "Manifesto" from *He Alo Ā He Alo*[5]

Imaikalani Kalahele is an influential visual artist and poet whose career spans decades and a broad range of media including fiber, installation, illustration, and text. Regardless of format, Kalahele's artwork centers on sovereignty, political oppression, and liberation from dominant power structures. His "Manifesto" makes an association between Hawaiian national identity and the genealogical connection between person, land, and all living beings and elements of the world. Kalahele ardently infers the spirit of aloha ʻāina (translated literally as love of land, love of country) and asserts the authority of Hawaiian sovereignty as traced through the Kumulipo in his reference to Pō.

Dr. Kamanamaikalani Beamer describes the concept of aloha ʻāina "as a movement for social, cultural, and ecological justice" that leans "toward the *union of culture and ecosystem*."[6] Embedded in this concept is the political dimension that oscillates between Beamer's linked justice movements and the governance structure that oversees it. The concept of aloha ʻāina then weaves together ecological frameworks and issues of political sovereignty, and has been interpreted as such in a contemporary context by artists, scholars, and practitioners across disciplines. Although the words "aloha ʻāina" are not explicitly stated in Kalahele's "Manifesto," the sentiment conveyed is consistent with earlier conceptions of balanced, interstitial relationships, and with what started as a nineteenth-century pro-Hawaiʻi-independence political phrase that continues into the twenty-first century. Artists, including Kalahele, explore the links between land and fisheries' issues with governance structures, revealing in many cases the exploitive and destructive impact of systemic racism upon people, places, and bodies in Hawaiʻi after the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom monarchy in 1893 and absorption of Hawaiʻi into the U.S. political structure in 1898.

According to Hawaiian cosmogony, humans share common ancestors with other living elements of the universe, a belief that links the Hawaiian Islands and the Hawaiian people to the same origin. The Kumulipo is the Hawaiian origin story that details the evolutionary relationship between the earth and living beings, including kānaka (people), recorded in the form of a chant composed of more than 2,000 lines which are retained, handed down, and expanded over many generations. In the foreword to the 1997 reprint of Queen Liliʻuokalani's English-language translation of the Kumulipo, Dr. Pualani Kanakaʻole Kanahele describes the Kumulipo as a mele koʻihonua (genealogical chant) that "recognized the interrelationship of

all things is an everlasting continuum" and linked together the earth, the Hawaiian people, and the aliʻi (royalty) by name.[7] During the late nineteenth century, both King Kalākaua and his successor, Queen Liliʻuokalani, shared the Kumulipo through printed publications. Dr. Brandy Nālani McDougall asserts that these textual efforts were political achievements intended to affirm the "continuing strength and survival of the Hawaiian people and nation" and reinforce Hawaiian sovereignty under Kānaka ʻŌiwi governance at a time when U.S. imperialism was an increasing threat to the lifeways and people of Hawaiʻi.[8]

The genealogical connection between humans and nature was sustained through social practices that value close observation paired with personal experience tied to a particular place. Enduring ancient thoughts suggest that for someone to truly understand a place, one must have knowledge about a site extending over many generations in conjunction with personal experience caring for it and eating from it. In effect, one merges one's self with the features of that locale. This type of connection enables a sensitive and highly attuned response to particular conditions and unique circumstances associated with Hawaiʻi.

From this perspective, a person comes to understand themselves through deep analysis of and responsibility to the ʻāina that nourishes them physically and spiritually. While translated literally as "that which feeds" but often interpreted to mean "land," the word ʻāina in the context of "aloha ʻāina" extends beyond notions of soil or landforms. It is important, then, to think about ʻāina in a more comprehensive sense when associated with aloha ʻāina. In Hawaiian philosophy, the symbiosis between humans and nature is mutually activating. When balance is maintained by proper stewardship and governance, healthy functions of the natural world flow and the elements respond favorably. In this way, the phrase "aloha ʻāina" synthesizes the Hawaiian connection to the universe, not only the land but also the water, the sky, the order of the cosmos, and to all living beings. Dr. Noenoe Silva explains aloha ʻāina as

> a complex concept that includes recognizing that we are an integral part of the ʻāina and the ʻāina is an integral part of us. Part of that is a regenerated belief in our ancestors' cosmogonies, which include moʻolelo, moʻokūʻauhau (genealogies), and mele koʻihonua (genealogical chants) that tell us that the earth is Papahānaumoku, the expanse of the sky is Wākea, and that among their children and descendants are the kalo, Hāloa, and his younger brother Hāloa, the first human being.[9]

Silva describes how Kānaka ʻŌiwi ancestors and kūpuna (elders) lived aloha ʻāina concepts through an "ethic and orientation to the world," defined by her as "moʻokūauhau consciousness" —a term describing how Kānaka ʻŌiwi "drew on their ancestral knowledge and accepted and carried out the kuleana to record it so that Kānaka in their own time(s) as well as in the distant future would benefit from it."[10]

In many ways, Imaikalani Kalahele's artwork anticipated what would be a discursive turn away from describing the cultural resurgence of the Hawaiian Renaissance as a demonstration of ethnic pride to situating it firmly within a renewed sense of sovereignty and nationalism rooted in aloha ʻāina. In doing so, Kalahele connects injustices in Hawaiʻi's political past to present-day conditions associated with the expanse of the oceans and fisheries, the features of the land and places, and social and cultural well-being with his own participation in what Silva identifies as moʻokūauhau consciousness. Kalahele's textual references suggest an experience of disillusionment, frustration, and anger. Yet, with artistic lucidity, he articulates in a poem the process by which generations of Kānaka ʻŌiwi became both enraged by injustice and empowered by the knowledge of Hawaiʻi's political and philosophical past.

Methods of resistance initiated during and after the Hawaiian Renaissance intensified over the issue of Hawaiian sovereignty by the 1990s. Kānaka ʻŌiwi, along with non-Native allies, mobilized and took on a form of advocacy in which they asserted Hawaiian methodologies and deployed theories and tactics associated with critical race theory, feminism, and decolonialization in order to deconstruct systems of power in Hawaiʻi.[11] People inside and outside of academia were active in political movements, issues of land use, cultural practices, and exposing exploitative forms of institutionalized authority. Out of this emerging knowledge base came multiple interpretations of Hawaiʻi's sovereign experience, some of which developed in academia, while others gained traction through grassroots efforts.[12]

Aloha ʻāina discourses affected colloquial descriptions of personhood in that many of us today self-identify as "Hawaiian" rather than "part Hawaiian." This is in contrast to the previous three generations for whom "part Hawaiian" and other blood quantum-like terminology was the vernacular.[13] The shift is perceptibly attributed to an increased awareness of Hawaiian independence and aloha ʻāina, culminating in a complex cultural and political matrix spurred by the Hawaiian Renaissance in the 1970s, radicalized by the sovereignty movements in the 1990s, and institutionalized by academia with the founding of the Center for Hawaiian Studies and its language departments, discursive evolutions in political science scholarship, and intellectual and artistic output from faculty and students across departments at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa over the last three decades. A "new nationalism"—in the form of twentieth-century aloha ʻāina comingled with ancient knowledge systems as enacted in Kalahele's poetic "Manifesto"—set the conditions for bold artistic statements further perpetuating moʻokūʻauhau consciousness in contemporary art.

ʻĀina and the Everyday

In a 1993 interview with Bob Rees for a television series called *Island Issues*, sculptor Sean Browne described his work as part of an art historical trajectory rooted in the visual traditions

of Hawaiʻi. He explained how he was raised in a home filled with Hawaiian historical pieces collected by his parents, and how that visual record influences his work.[14] The visual record to which Browne refers is simultaneously emblematic of Hawaiian experiences and inseparable from the land through their materiality and function, whether sacred or secular. Browne's interview concluded with his assessment that matters of sovereignty and land are inextricably linked, and one gets the sense from his words and composure that sovereignty and the island's ecosystems are an impetus to create—drivers of expression—as well as phenomenon to interpret.[15]

Kanahele once said that "one of the distinguishing characteristics of the [Hawaiian] Renaissance is a great interest in studying the past and the pursuit of knowledge in general" and explained that across disciplines and professions there is a "stampede back to the past."[16] Art was no exception. Making sense of the present in correlation with the past was a unifying undercurrent across the work of many Kānaka ʻŌiwi artists as they found their voice. John Dominis Holt describes this impulse as an "awakening among Hawaiians" to "know our history," "find our roots," and set our own terms aesthetically and politically.[17] Ecological systems are frequent pathways to identifying and expanding aesthetic frameworks in Kānaka ʻŌiwi practices. "Land, body, and memory all inform one another," Dr. Sydney Lehua Iaukea explains.[18] She elaborates by situating the body within the natural ecosystem and suggests that "the body is the agent, the participant in the environment, and the container of memories."[19] Iaukea suggests that places are also vessels of memory for Kānaka ʻŌiwi. She describes how, historically, crucial information was transmitted through the environment and, therefore, places hold knowledge about who we are.[20] It is no wonder artists working during and after the Hawaiian Renaissance found access points to the past by understanding ecological connections between places, materials, and people, all of which are retained in Hawaiian material culture.

Sean Browne gained notoriety in the 1980s for his translation of Hawaiian iconography into large-scale sculptures carved and cast in metal, wood, and stone with sinuous lines. Forms that were small or human scale in life, such as fish hooks, adzes, and pōhaku kuʻi ʻai (food pounders), took on new proportions as large public art commissions. Browne treated with equal care everyday functional objects, ancestral stories, Kānaka ʻŌiwi, and wahi pana (sacred places). He frequently borrowed and then abstracted the likenesses of familiar forms such as mauna (mountains), ʻahuʻula (feather capes), pōhaku kuʻi poi (stone poi pounders), and mahiole (fiber and feather helmets) and then distilled essential visual components from these references into newly carved and reimagined shapes. When combined with Browne's own artistic interpretations and titles, classical Hawaiian images and aesthetics took on new meanings.

Because of their monumental scale, Browne's artwork commands attention whether in the public sphere or a gallery setting. Significantly, his renderings of Hawaiian ideals and

Figure 1. Sean K.L. Browne, *O Kalani*, 2019. Cast bronze and mahogany wood, 18.5 x 14 x 9 inches. Photograph courtesy of Honolulu Museum of Art

ecological connections, using dense materials such as stone and metal, give a sense of permanence and endurance to Hawaiian motifs, repositioning in a contemporary art context a visual vernacular which was previously relegated to ethnographic appraisals of the past. Browne's approach to understanding the past and creating a contemporary entry point from which others may see it means identifying his place within a continuum and adding his contribution to Hawaiʻi's memory through contemporary art.[21]

In a reversal of scale, Browne created in 2019 a bronze, maquette-size sculpture of the sacred mountain Maunakea titled *O Kalani* (fig. 1)—an indication, perhaps, of a larger monumental work to come. The sculpture hearkens to his childhood in Keaukaha, located at the coastal base of Maunakea where the mountain's running waters reach the Pacific. *O Kalani* was conceptualized at a time when the Protect Maunakea movement achieved national and international attention, and when the U.S. military's response to peaceful protests at the mountain's summit escalated. This sculpture was part of a larger museum exhibition that featured other works by Browne including sculptures depicting Joseph Nāwahī—a revered anti-annexationist, aloha ʻāina, newspaper owner, and brilliant figure in government—and Samuel Kamakau, a preeminent authority on Hawaiian history.[22] Together, Browne's sculptures articulate a triangulation between sacred places, ancient knowledge, and aloha ʻāina in the persistent struggle to achieve justice for the ʻāina in Hawaiʻi. Because the ʻāina and the people are one and the same, ecological justice is intertwined with justice for Kānaka ʻŌiwi.

KALO: ʻĀina as Process

The year 2021 marks the culminating phase of *KALO*, an art installation first assembled in 2015 by Bernice Akamine and featured in the 2019 Honolulu Biennial at Aliʻiolani Hale. Akamine's installation consists of eighty-seven unique pieces reproducing the 1897 Kūʻē Petitions in the shape of kalo plants made out of ink, newsprint, and pōhaku (stone, figs. 2 and 3). The Kūʻē Petitions are documents—written in 1897 and signed by more than 21,000 men and women—protesting the annexation of Hawaiʻi to the United States. Members of Ka ʻAhahui Aloha ʻĀina and the Hui Kalaiʻāina political organizations canvased the islands, traveling district to district across the archipelago, gathering signatures in list formation. Delegates from the Hawaiian organizations traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with members of the U.S. Senate and Congress with the goal of stopping annexation.[23] Akamine's *KALO* installation features the pages of the Kūʻē Petitions copied on newsprint paper and attached to pōhaku (stones). The combination of pōhaku and newsprint as art materials make direct reference to many aspects

Figure 2. Bernice Akamine, *KALO* (detail), 2015. Ink, newsprint, and pōhaku (stone); installation dimensions variable. Photograph by Stacy L. Kamehiro. Courtesy of the artist

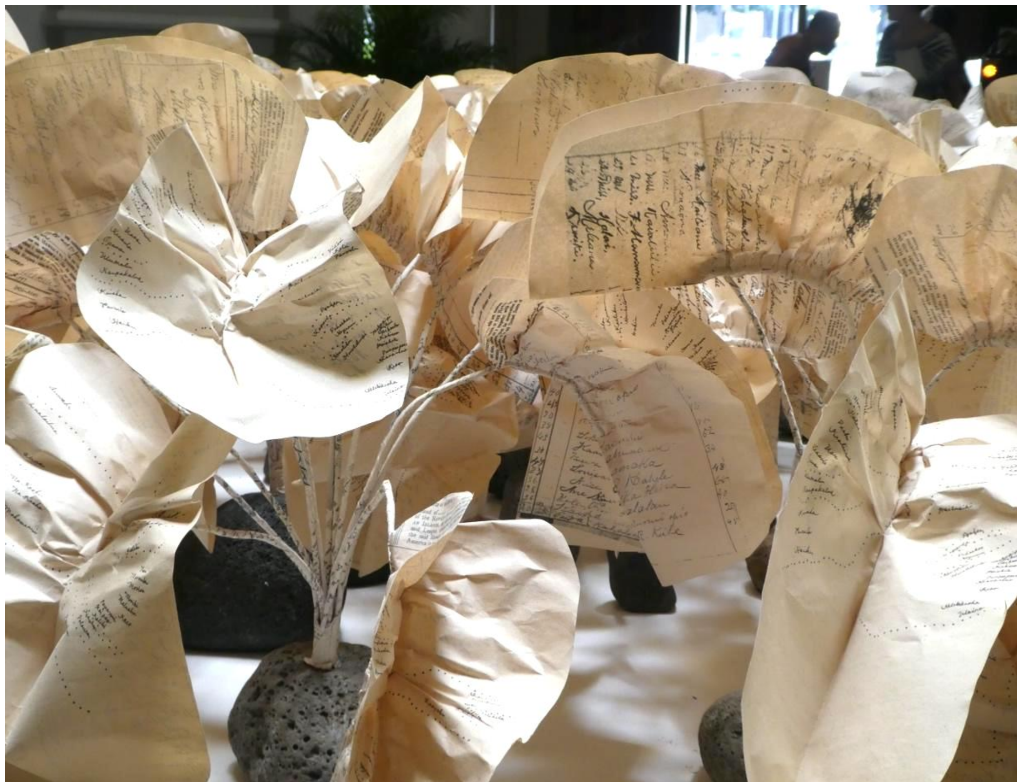

Figure 3. Bernice Akamine, *KALO* (detail), 2015. Ink, newsprint, and pōhaku (stone); installation dimensions variable. Photograph by Stacy L. Kamehiro. Courtesy of the artist

of the nineteenth-century aloha ʻāina movement, one that through the Kūʻē Petitions persuaded enough U.S. senators to vote against annexation in 1898 and ensured Hawaiʻi's continued independence.

The pōhaku in Akamine's work are conceptually derived from the lyrics of the song "Kaulana Nā Pua" (also known by the titles "Mele ʻAi Pōhaku" and "Mele Aloha ʻĀina") composed by Ellen Kekoʻaohiwaikalani Wright Prendergast in 1893. The song documents the dismissal of the Royal Hawaiian Band members for their refusal to betray Queen Liliʻuokalani after the coup by signing an oath of allegiance to the Provisional Government. The song, written in ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi (Hawaiian Language), protests annexation, asserts the rights of Queen Liliʻuokalani, and declares that the people of Hawaiʻi are "satisfied with the stones, astonishing food of the land."[24]

Akamine's decision to use newsprint as the surface upon which to reproduce the Kūʻē Petitions alludes to the prolific nineteenth-century Hawaiian-language newspapers and the aloha ʻāina leaders who ran them while spearheading anti-annexation efforts. Hawaiian-language newspapers, and to a lesser extent English-language newspapers, played an important role in mobilizing Kānaka ʻŌiwi around the Kūʻē Petitions. Newspaper offices served as gathering places for Hui Kalaiʻāina and Ka ʻAhahui Hawaiʻi Aloha ʻĀina, and were the primary communication outlets that kept Hawaiʻi's citizens informed of anti-annexation efforts archipelago-wide.[25]

Akamine's use of the kalo plant as a sculptural form is a signifier of pono (right, balanced) government structure according to the Kumulipo and Hawaiian philosophy. The artist elicits figures in Hawaiʻi's origin story through this visual reference to affirm her support for the Hawaiian Kingdom monarchy. Among the vast descendants of the celestial deities Papa and Wākea (discussed earlier in reference to Imaikalani Kalahele's work) is Hoʻohōkūkalani, who gives birth to a stillborn fetus named Hāloanaka. From the burial land of Hāloanaka sprouts the first kalo plant, the staple food of Hawaiʻi. Later, Hoʻohōkūkalani gives birth to another child in human form, named Hāloa after his elder sibling. Born healthy and strong, Hāloa, the kalo plant's sibling, is the first ancestor of the Hawaiian people. This genealogy initiates the royal line of aliʻi (chiefs, kings, and queens) who, over the course of Hawaiian history, govern the Hawaiian Islands and people and are tasked with maintaining balance and order between the human, spiritual, and earthly realms.[26]

Reinforcing a parallel between people and place of origin, the pōhaku bases of each *KALO* sculpture were lent to the artist as a contribution to the installation, and Akamine is now returning the stones to the people who lent them. Gestures of cyclical reciprocity are both human and land-based, indicated by the sustained participation in artistic production that was conceptualized and facilitated by the artist, Akamine, with community members across the

pae ʻāina (archipelago); and by the process of drawing upon earthly elements (pōhaku) as art medium and then returning those elements back to the ʻāina from where they originated. Dr. Noelani Goodyear-Kaʻōpua reminds us:

> Ea refers to political independence and is often translated as "sovereignty." It also carries the meanings "life" and "breath," among other things. A shared characteristic in each of these translations is that ea is an active state of being. Like breathing, ea cannot be achieved or possessed; it requires constant action day after day, generation after generation.[27]

Akamine's artwork makes visible the continuation of Hawaiian sovereignty and honors those who struggle(d) to sustain it. The artist's process perpetuates ea in her activation of the kānaka–ʻāina dynamic turned art installation.

Ka ʻŌpua Ā Hina: ʻĀina as Medium

In a 2018 solo exhibition at the Honolulu Museum of Art, mixed-media artist Maile Andrade transformed a gallery using wauke (mulberry bark) as her primary material. Titled *Ka ʻŌpua Ā Hina* (Figs. 4–6), Andrade's installation evokes symbolism related to the synchronicity and skill of a female deity to explore the vitality and intelligence of the natural world. Significantly, Andrade included the role of people in the activation of nature by tying together ideas of interstitial abundance, and underscoring both how vulnerable the earth is to human actions and, in turn, how vulnerable humans are to the earth's forces and systems. She made references to Hina—a female deity whose attributes are foundational to the Hawaiian concept of balance achieved through duality—and the human role as active agents, to Makaliʻi and abundance in the land, and to ʻōpihi as an indication of balanced ecological ocean health. The artist suggests that the kānaka–ʻāina relationship can play out in a cycle of healthy reliance, rather than destruction, seen in the inclusion of Makaliʻi by way of woven metal forms. More than a metaphor, Andrade situates humans within a matrix of the fertile, natural, and celestial worlds.

Andrade's studio practice is informed by her time spent researching and reactivating the kapa-making process. Kapa is a textile created out of pounded wauke, although other types of fiber were and are also used. In Hawaiʻi, kapa was methodically stretched, sometimes decorated, and often layered to function as garments, wraps, and blankets before the introduction of cotton fabrics to the Pacific. In the nineteenth century, kapa production waned as the Kānaka ʻŌiwi population drastically decreased. The catastrophic loss of human life due to the introduction of foreign disease severely diminished the work force, meaning there were

Figure 4. Maile Andrade, *Ka Ōpua Ā Hina*, 2018. Wauke, metal, and glass; installation dimensions variable. Photograph by Shuzo Uemoto. Courtesy of Honolulu Museum of Art

fewer survivors capable of passing on kapa-making expertise, and even fewer who were positioned to devote their energy to its continuation.

By the 1960s, kapa makers in Hawaiʻi had revitalized the practice through experimentation and the close study of pre-twentieth-century kapa examples housed in museum collections. Kapa-making, weaving, and the growing and gathering of requisite materials and dyes surfaced as important artistic pursuits—and as pro-Hawaiʻi political statements—during the Hawaiian Renaissance. In 1981, Andrade joined the contemporary artists and practitioners who had taken up the production of Hawaiian material culture using customary methods. Andrade channelled the material and methods of making kapa into an immersive installation as she reimagined the elemental manifestations of Hina for *Ka ʻŌpua Ā Hina*.

A divine kapa-maker, the goddess Hina created such fine kapa that the clouds in the sky were described as examples of her work. Andrade's other-worldly installation concentrates on the idea that, like Hina, we have the ability to affect change within our environment. Strips of wauke were suspended from the gallery's ceiling, creating an inverted, fibrous, forest-like ecosystem sprawling across 1,500 square feet (Fig. 4). Wall-mounted, glass ʻōpihi (limpet) shapes—translucent versions of the ocean delicacy—winding around the gallery perimeter suggested a waterline (Fig. 5). A series of partially-unraveled, metal woven baskets, repurposed from a previous sculptural iteration, were configured on the wall in the form of the

Figure 5. Maile Andrade, *Ka Ōpua Ā Hina*, 2018. Wauke, metal, and glass; installation dimensions variable. Photograph by Shuzo Uemoto. Courtesy of Honolulu Museum of Art

Figure 6. Maile Andrade, *Ka Ōpua Ā Hina*, 2018. Wauke, metal, and glass; installation dimensions variable. Photograph by Shuzo Uemoto. Courtesy of Honolulu Museum of Art

constellation Makaliʻi (Pleiades), a celestial symbol marking the start of Makahiki season when peace, abundance, and rejuvenation are celebrated (Fig. 6). Together, the wauke, the ʻōpihi, and Makaliʻi conjure generative and interconnected features of the universe.

Kā ʻŌpua Ā Hina featured wauke pounded by the artist to the moʻomoʻo phase—the material had undergone preliminary rounds of soaking, felting, and drying, priming it for handling and keeping it flexible enough to enable it to continue into the later stages of kapa production post-exhibition. Resourceful and sustainable, Andrade's practice merges twenty-first-century contemporary art priorities with the radical possibilities of Hawaiian material culture. Kapa dating to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from the Honolulu Museum of Art collection were on view in nearby adjacent galleries. Together with Andrade's installation, these textiles spanned a period of 300 years and indicated the continuity and evolutionary use of wauke as an art medium.

Kāhea: Visualizing the Unheard

Where Maile Andrade's installation radiated optimism and potential in the kānaka–ʻāina relationship, Abigail Romanchak's installation *Kāhea* (Figs. 7-9) cautioned of the consequences paid for living at odds with nature. *Kāhea*, meaning "a call," is Romanchak's visual lamentation on the quieting of the forests due to the endangerment and extinction of Hawaiʻi's native and endemic birds. It is also a call for people to turn their attention to surviving species. She explains: "In 1987, the last remaining male Oʻo bird on Kauaʻi called to his mate. His song went unanswered, and now his call is gone too. The symphony of Hawaiʻi's birds is disappearing, and this mele of our land is dying. To date, seventy-two percent of Hawaiʻi's endemic land birds have gone extinct."[28]

To create *Kāhea,* Romanchak adapted three-dimensional spectrograms that document the pitch (measured in frequency), loudness, and duration of audio recordings into a series of prints. These wrapped around a gallery so people could "*see* the bird songs of the ʻAkohekohe and Kiwikiu, two of Maui's most endangered bird species."[29] As a Kanaka ʻŌiwi printmaker, Romanchak delves into environmental phenomena to unearth systems and forces that are so removed from most people's awareness that technological assistance is required to supplement observation skills in order to explain or understand the occurrence. She uses technological renderings to her advantage, translating data from scientific graphs, audio recordings, and banal reports into textured layers carved from blocks and printed onto thick stock paper as a way to generate visual awareness of the kānaka–ʻāina relationship.

The act of manipulating data further detaches her final print from the original ʻāina source. Yet, through this act the artist attempts to bring what could be considered legitimized

Figure 7. Abigail Romanchak, *Kāhea*, 2019. Collagraph print, 5 x 23 feet. Photograph by Tony Quarles. Courtesy of the artist

information closer to what might be detectable through the human senses for those whose abilities are attuned with the patterns of the universe. One-dimensional graph lines and sterile words are transformed into capacious reverberations and atmospheric shadows by the artist's hand (Fig. 8). In doing so, Romanchak questions that which is deemed quantifiable and begs the viewer to consider new ways of knowing and perceiving the elements around us. Like Browne, Kalahele, Akamine, and Andrade, Romanchak considers people to be an essential feature of an ecosystem. This inclusion is unmistakable in *Kāhea*, as the artist is calling the viewer to consider interconnectivity and consequences through the ghostly echoes marking each print.

Figure 8. Abigail Romanchak, *Kāhea* (detail), 2019. Collagraph print, 5 x 23 feet. Photograph by Tony Quarles. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 9. Abigail Romanchak, *Kāhea*, 2019 (detail). Collagraph print, 5 x 23 feet. Photograph by Tony Quarles. Courtesy of the artist

Conclusion

Bernice Akamine, Maile Andrade, Sean Browne, Imaikalani Kalahele, and Abigail Romanchak each approach the kānaka–ʻāina relationship differently. A unifying commonality across their work is an engagement with social movements and the present moment in dialogue with ʻāina philosophies that have been refined over the course of many generations. Their oeuvres suggest that roots in resistance and renaissance are vital to conversations of restorative justice, resource abundance, and sustainability, making their methodologies all the more relevant as the world reckons with what are sure to be the lasting impacts of a dual pandemic.

Acknowledgement and Thanks

My sincerest gratitude to the artists whose works are described here for their ongoing commitment to their practice, and for their collaboration in conversation over the years. I would also like to thank Cynthia Low, Director of Collections at the Honolulu Museum of Art, who supported many of the exhibition installations and artists named in this paper. Low is a great

thought partner in decolonial museum methodologies and has empowered artists, curators, and communities to be fearless in art.

Healoha Johnston lives in Kaiwiki, Hawaiʻi and is Curator of Asian Pacific American Women's Cultural History at the Smithsonian Institution where she is part of the American Women's History Initiative and the Asian Pacific American Center. Johnston's exhibitions and research projects explore connections between historic visual culture and contemporary art with a particular focus on the socio-political underpinnings that inform those relationships. Before joining the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, Johnston served as Chief Curator and Curator of the Arts of Hawaiʻi, Oceania, Africa, and the Americas at the Honolulu Museum of Art.

Notes

[1] George S. Kanahele, "The Hawaiian Renaissance," May 1979, 1-10. The Kamehameha Schools Archives, Polynesian Voyaging Society Archives, Primary Sources Documents, Set 2–1978–1984.
[2] Kanahele, "The Hawaiian Renaissance," 1.
[3] Teresia K. Teaiwa, "bikinis and other s/pacific n/oceans," *The Contemporary Pacific* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1994), 87–109, https://doi.org/10.5749/minnesota/9780816665051.003.0002. Teaiwa's definition of "militourism" is as follows: "a phenomenon by which a military or paramilitary force ensures the running of a tourist industry, and that same tourist industry masks the military force behind it." Teaiwa's term "militourism" developed into a theoretical framework for understanding militarization and the trappings of tourism in the Pacific, which I reference in this article. For additional information on this term and related framings, see also Teresia K. Teaiwa, ed., "Militarism and Gender in the Western Pacific," special section of *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 52, no. 1 (2011), 1–55.
[4] Kanahele, "The Hawaiian Renaissance" May 1979, 1.
[5] Imaikalani Kalahele, *He Alo Ā He Alo (Face to Face): Hawaiian Voices on Sovereignty* (Honolulu: The Hawaiʻi Area Office of The American Friends Service Committee, 1993), 151.
[6] Kamanamaikalani Beamer, "Tūtū's Aloha ʻĀina Grace," in *The Value of Hawaiʻi 2: Ancestral Roots, Oceanic Visions*, ed. Aiko Yamashiro and Noelani Goodyear-Kaʻōpua (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2014), 13. Italics in original text.
[7] Pualani Kanakaʻole Kanahele, "Foreword," in *The Kumulipo: An Hawaiian Creation Myth*, trans. Liliʻuokalani (Kentfield, Calif: Pueo Press, 1997), n.p.
[8] Brandy N. McDougall, "Moʻokūʻauhau Versus Colonial Entitlement in English Translations of the Kumulipo," *American Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (2015), 755.
[9] Noenoe K. Silva, *The Power of the Steel-Tipped Pen: Reconstructing Native Hawaiian Intellectual History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 4.
[10] Silva, *The Power of the Steel-Tipped Pen*, 4–6.
[11] See key texts by Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawaiʻi* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005); Lilikalā Kameʻeleihiwa, *Native Land and*

Foreign Desires: Pehea Lā E Pono Ai? (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1995); and David Keanu Sai, *Ua Mau Ke Ea = Sovereignty Endures: An Overview of the Political and Legal History of the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: Pūʻā Foundation, 2011).
[12] Noelani Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, Ikaika Hussey, and Erin Kahunawaikaʻala Wright, eds., *A Nation Rising: Hawaiian Movements for Life, Land, and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); H. Johnston, "Visioning Nationhood," in *Hawaiʻi–Königliche Inseln im Pazifik*, ed. Ulrich Menter, Ines De Castro, and Stephanie Walda-Mandel (Stuttgart, Germany: Linden-Museum Stuttgart, 2017), 58.
[13] On the question of "What is a Hawaiian?", see John Dominis Holt, *On Being Hawaiian*, 4th ed. (Honolulu: Ku Paʻa, 1995), 11; Mary Kawena Pukui, E.W. Haertig, and Catherine A. Lee, *Nānā i Ke Kumu (Look to the Source)*, vol. 2 (Honolulu: Hui Hānai, an Auxiliary of the Queen Liliʻuokalani Children's Center, 1979), 312–314; and J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), xi.
[14] *Contemporary Hawaiian Art* (Honolulu, Hawaii: Wong Audiovisual Center, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 2012), film.
[15] *Contemporary Hawaiian Art*.
[16] Kanahele, "The Hawaiian Renaissance," 2.
[17] Holt, *On Being Hawaiian*, 8.
[18] Syndey Lehua Iaukea, *The Queen and I: A Story of Dispossessions and Reconnections in Hawaiʻi* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 14.
[19] Iaukea, *The Queen and I*, 14.
[20] Iaukea, *The Queen and I*, 14.
[21] Holt, *On Being Hawaiian,* 17.
[22] Browne's work was featured alongside pieces by Imaikalani Kalahele in a two-person exhibition at the Honolulu Museum of Art titled *O Kalani*, running from September 3, 2020 to April 11, 2021.
[23] Noenoe Silva, "Kanaka Maoli Resistance to Annexation," in *Kūʻē Petitions: A Mau Loa Aku Nō*, ed. Nālani Minton (Honolulu: Kaiao Press with Friends of the Judiciary History Center, 2020), 19–49; Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwoʻole Osorio, "Hoʻopiʻi i ka Lāhui," in *Kūʻē Petitions: A Mau Loa Aku Nō*, ed. Nālani Minton (Honolulu: Kaiao Press with Friends of the Judiciary History Center, 2020), 7–12.
[24] "Kaulana Nā Pua (Famous are the Flowers)," Huapala: Hawaiian Music and Hula Archives, accessed October 29, 2020, https://www.huapala.org/Kau/Kaulana_Na_Pua.html.
[25] The *Elele* and *Ke Aloha Aina* were among the most influential.
[26] Kameʻeleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires*, 22–25.
[27] Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, *A Nation Rising*, 3–4.
[28] "Abigail Romanchak," accessed September, 15, 2020, www.abigailromanchak.com/prints.
[29] "Abigail Romanchak."

PACIFIC ARTS
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

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Making Room for Earth in Hawaiʻi: Sean Connelly's *A Small Area of Land*

Abstract
In 2013, Pacific Islander American artist and architect Sean Connelly formed a geometric sculpture with 32,000 pounds of earthen matter at the now-closed ii Gallery in the Kakaʻako neighborhood of Honolulu. Titled A Small Area of Land (Kakaʻako Earth Room)*, the work was composed of volcanic soil and coral sand—deemed by Connelly as "two of Hawaiʻi's most politically charged materials and highly valued commodities"—sourced from various locations on the island of Oʻahu. Connelly allowed his sculpture to slowly erode in the gallery over the course of its installation, a non-gesture toward what might seem to be uncontrollable disintegration.* A Small Area of Land *adds a divergent dimension to Euro-American art movements, pushing back against the rigidity and firmness of minimalism and the grand impositions of land art that initially inspired him. In doing so, Connelly expands the notion of "land" beyond a material or merely site-specific interest for artists into something that additionally includes more explicit references to structural systems of dispossession, exploitation, theft, and lasting injustices. Connelly's work amplifies relationships to land that do not rely on economic value in the extractive, capitalist sense so much as values that link Indigenous onto-epistemologies with ecological flourishing, providing an avenue through which we can think about histories of land, labor, and the increasing disassociation between the two, as well as how material choices are imbricated with personal and political complexity in Hawaiʻi.*

Keywords: *Sean Connelly, Hawaiʻi, decolonization, contemporary art, land art*

> All property relations in the past have continually been subject to historical change consequent upon the change in historical conditions.
>
> —Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*

> One could say, echoing Marx, that a specter is haunting Hawaiʻi—the specter of sovereignty.
>
> —Paul Lyons, *"Wayne Kaumualii Westlake, Richard Hamasaki, and the Afterlives of (Native/non-native) Collaboration against Empire in Hawaiʻi"*

In 2013, Pacific Islander American artist and architect Sean Connelly (b. 1984) formed a geometric sculpture with 32,000 pounds of earthen matter at the now-closed ii Gallery in the Kakaʻako neighborhood of Honolulu (Fig. 1). Titled *A Small Area of Land (Kakaʻako Earth Room)*, the work was composed of volcanic soil and coral sand—deemed by Connelly as "two of Hawaiʻi's most politically charged materials and highly valued commodities"—sourced from various locations on the island of Oʻahu.[1] A number of local media outlets covered the project's installation, including one that suggested Connelly had become a "landowner" through the process of making the sculpture, an assertion based primarily on the substantial accumulation of natural resources needed for him to construct an artwork of such massive scale.[2] While this label is inaccurate, the very notion of an individual—artist or otherwise—as a *landowner* hints at the work's underlying implications, particularly as they pertain to the political history and present-day realities concerning land tenure in Hawaiʻi.

Figure 1. Sean Connelly, *A Small Area of Land (Kakaʻako Earth Room)*, 2013. ii Gallery, Honolulu, 2013. Volcanic soil, coral sand, water, approximately 9 x 4 x 8 feet. Courtesy of the artist

In addition to his use of contentious materials, Connelly further charged the work by physically orienting it in such a way that it directly referenced the positions of the sun and

moon on the morning of August 6, 1850. The Kuleana Act was officially enacted on that day, effectively privatizing all land in Hawaiʻi under formal law for the first time and completing a process that had been initiated two years prior with King Kamehameha III's approval of the Māhele, which divided and allocated land rights to different governmental and societal entities. Less than 50 years after the Kuleana Act, the Hawaiian Kingdom was overthrown in 1893 by white businessmen aligned with American interests and supported by the United States Marines.[3] Sovereignty was never legally or properly relinquished in accordance with international law, with Hawaiʻi "annexed" to the United States in 1898 through a joint resolution of the US Congress rather than through an international treaty. The Government and Crown Lands of the Hawaiian Kingdom were then "ceded" to (read: seized by) the American government. The islands have been continuously occupied by American military forces since, becoming the 50th state in 1959, again through an internationally illegal but "democratic" plebiscite.[4]

To date, the ever-increasing militarized and tourist landscapes of Hawaiʻi enable the devastation, desecration, and bombing of places such as Puʻuloa, Kahoʻolawe, Mākua, and Pōhakuloa, and real estate developers have turned the islands into a playground branded as a paradisiacal, fantasy getaway.[5] Cultural and genealogical connections to ʻāina (land) are continuously threatened by processes of settler colonialism and denationalization and, sometimes, physically severed due to economic strain, displacing Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) and forcing them into diaspora or toward houselessness in their own ancestral homelands. Although the totality of colonization is impossible to concisely put into words, Martinican poet Aimé Césaire has suggested that it necessitates, among other things, "societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary *possibilities* wiped out."[6] In restrained response to these various historical transformations and their constituent role in issues still plaguing the Hawaiian islands and their peoples, Connelly allowed his sculpture to slowly erode in the gallery over the course of its installation, a non-gesture toward what might seem to be uncontrollable disintegration (Fig. 2).

The discourse around the agency of evolutions in land ownership and their lasting impacts has varied within the field of Hawaiian studies, from some scholars seeing the privatization of land as a necessary protective process in line with prior practices of land tenure to others viewing it as a coercive foreign imposition and the first-felled domino leading to the eventual overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and occupation that lasts to this day. The shifting discrepancies over land are but one of the many entangled "paradoxes" detailed by Kanaka scholar J. Kēhaulani Kauanui regarding contemporary Hawaiian sovereignty claims.[7] As I will argue, Connelly's own aesthetic decisions closely parallel these debates while simultaneously complicating them, weaving the conversation through current notions of "development" and into the speculative future.

Figure 2. Sean Connelly, *A Small Area of Land (Kakaʻako Earth Room)*, 2013. ii Gallery, Honolulu, 2013. Volcanic soil, coral sand, water, approximately 9 x 4 x 8 feet. Courtesy of the artist

Connelly is one of many contemporary artists in Hawaiʻi who has strategically produced a type of decolonial aesthetics by adopting and altering established visual approaches, imbuing their work with social concerns relevant to the pae ʻāina (archipelago).[8] Here I am thinking—as a white, anti-imperialist settler with familial ties to Hawaiʻi—alongside art historian T.J. Demos when he avows, "The most compelling current artist models, in my view, join the aesthetic dimension of experimental and perceptual engagement with the commitment to postcolonial ethico-political praxis, and do so with sustained attention to how local activities interact with global formations."[9] Connelly's *A Small Area of Land*, in particular, adds a divergent dimension to Euro-American art movements, pushing back against the rigidity and firmness of minimalism and the grand impositions of land art that initially inspired him, specifically the work of Walter De Maria. In doing so, Connelly expands the notion of "land" beyond a material or merely site-specific interest for artists into something that additionally includes more explicit references to structural systems of dispossession, exploitation, theft, and lasting injustices, the implications of which are not only relevant for all contemporary art practices purporting to be ecological but also for liberation struggles throughout the Pacific and across

the colonized world. Connelly's work amplifies relationships to land that do not rely on economic value in the extractive, capitalist sense so much as values that link Indigenous onto-epistemologies with ecological flourishing, providing an avenue through which we can think about histories of land, labor, and the increasing disassociation between the two, as well as how material choices are imbricated with personal and political complexity.[10] If land in Hawai'i has long been subjected to the "cultural bomb" of American imperialism, *A Small Area of Land* asks what might be made from the rubble.[11]

Island Connections: From Mannahatta to Oʻahu

As hinted at in its full title, Connelly's *A Small Area of Land (Kakaʻako Earth Room)* is what the artist has called a "critical regional reappropriation" of American artist Walter De Maria's (1935–2013) *The New York Earth Room* (Fig. 3); it is a visual contemplation of how De Maria's work of land art might look in a Hawaiʻi-specific context.[12] Connelly visited *The New York Earth Room* in 2012 at the suggestion of Filipino American curator Trisha Lagaso Goldberg, beginning their collaborative effort to realize *A Small Area of Land* at the ii Gallery the following year.[13] Permanently installed in its current configuration since 1977 and now maintained by the Dia Art Foundation, *The New York Earth Room* is an otherwise empty 3,600-square-foot loft in Manhattan's SoHo district whose floor is covered by dirt spread evenly to a depth of twenty-two inches.[14] Viewers are not allowed to enter the space and may only stand at the entranceway to the apartment. As a result, they are unable to see the entirety of the work as it wraps around corners and, presumably, continues throughout the rest of the interior.

This work by De Maria is actually the third iteration of the same conceptual idea. The first was titled *Pure Dirt, Pure Earth, Pure Land* and was the sole work in an exhibition called *The Land Show* at the Galerie Heiner Friedrich in Munich in 1968. The second used gravel rather than soil at the Hessisches Landesmuseum in Darmstadt, Germany, in 1974.[15] The corresponding promotional poster for the Munich earth room—which included an architectural diagram of the gallery and a photo of De Maria himself—built upon the premise of "purity" in the work's title, stating:

> PURE DIRT • PURE EARTH • PURE LAND
>
> NO OBJECT ON IT
> NO OBJECT IN IT
>
> NO MARKINGS ON IT
> NO MARKINGS IN IT

NOTHING GROWING ON IT
NOTHING GROWING IN IT[16]

This idea of "purity" continues in the New York version, as the primary material in the work—like those of its predecessors—is not meant to be disturbed in any way. Even the glass barricade separating the viewer from the work shows very little differentiation in the soil composition; although "pure," it could very well be understood as "dead."[17]

Figure 3. Walter De Maria, *The New York Earth Room*, 1977. Earth, peat, bark, 3,600 square feet of floor space, 250 cubic yards of earth, 22 inches deep. © Estate of Walter De Maria; photo by John Cliett. Courtesy Dia Art Foundation, New York

The proclaimed purity of De Maria's dirt, however, is not so much inherent to the material as it is a condition consciously perpetuated and maintained by gallery attendants, who rake and water the dirt on a weekly basis and remove any unwanted growth and visible

change that appears in the form of grass, weeds, mushrooms, and mold.[18] These actions are necessary for the maintenance of *The New York Earth Room* because of its indefinite exhibition, but De Maria was already well aware of potential changes that might occur in the work from his first, much more temporary Munich room. As noted by art historian James Nisbet, De Maria commented on the unplanned effect that sun shining through the gallery windows had on altering the appearance of the dirt. Although De Maria's earth rooms appear to be unchanging, self-contained, and static, they have long been anything but. Rather, all three iterations of De Maria's earth rooms represent an *idea* that must be kept from becoming *impure*, despite the "impurities" being naturally-occurring products of the processes of evaporation, photosynthesis, and nitrogen fixation.[19] The desire for an unfluctuating viewing experience acts to destabilize the very liveliness of the material—the soil ages and becomes less viable in no small part *because of* the continual upkeep required to sustain the appearance of stasis. One might consider how these works by De Maria relate to longstanding critiques of environmental conservation, particularly as they mimic the American ideal of "untouched" wilderness that fails to consider how such presumed landscapes on the North American continent have always been culturally produced, maintained and altered by Indigenous peoples for thousands of years, with the "natural" being an arbitrarily-chosen stage that then has to be repeatedly reimplemented by forceful exclusion of human and non-human inhabitants alike.[20]

Similar to the general settler consensus around the importance of preserved national park space, *The New York Earth Room* has been praised for its perpetuity in a city where change seems inevitable and constant.[21] It is secluded, tucked away, and, therefore, a place for contemplation and reflection; if one were to visit it multiple times over any extended period, the only notable change should be within one's own self, be it internal or based on the differing experiences in arriving to the work. The dirt of *The New York Earth Room* acts as a repository, the work being less about the material itself and more the viewer's own personalized reaction or response to it. Even the interior of the apartment functions as a structural "mold," making the dirt completely beholden to its architectural frame.[22] It is, in a sense, confined by its own construction.

De Maria was elusive and reluctant to comment on any authoritative meaning behind his art, once declaring, "Every good work should have at least ten meanings."[23] While it is difficult to disagree with De Maria's sentiment, his earth rooms are still less of an ideological articulation of any sort—discernible by their repeated installations in different locales with little distinction in form—than a "purely" aesthetic experiment, granted one notable for its novelty. In effect, the room of earth floating above street level in New York functions as a metaphorical island, with all the stereotypes that come with that particular kind of geographical landmass. *The New York Earth Room* perpetuates and parallels the notion of islands as a desirable place to which one travels for rest and relaxation, without any provocation to question the realities of its physical location, in this case the actual island upon which De Maria's

earthwork is located. The room does not collaboratively engage Manhattan's ecological qualities so much as it further entrenches the separation between "earth" and "city."[24]

It is through this extended analysis of *The New York Earth Room* that Connelly's interventions into the politico-discursive limitations of the Euro-American land art movement become more readily apparent, an assessment made legible through a decolonial framework of comparative island studies.[25] Such a framework reveals a stark contrast: De Maria's choice of *not* addressing the historical processes in Mannahatta—the Lenape name for Manhattan—with Connelly's engagement with Oʻahu. When compared to De Maria's earth rooms, Connelly's *A Small Area of Land* could easily be considered "impure," from its visible striation of differing soil layers to the fact that it was meant to deteriorate and spill out from its original enclosure, allowing the soil and sand the freedom to move in unplanned ways. Moreover, *A Small Area of Land* engenders a notably direct experience than the more passive, separated encounter with *The New York Earth Room*, the former's location within the center of the gallery allowing viewers to circumambulate the work at their leisure.

De Maria's earth rooms intentionally shift the area of focus from a singular object to a field, creating what art historian Jane McFadden describes as "a rendezvous of overwhelming material possibility: too big to see in its entirety, singular yet expansive… "[26] A plane of earthly materials, though, would not necessarily have the same impact in Hawaiʻi as it does in Manhattan, where De Maria's ability to "evoke the oceanic" is admirable in a city home to Wall Street and plausibly the world's most famous skyline.[27] Whereas De Maria's expansive field might indeed be experienced as an "idealized city version of dirt, appropriate for Manhattan"—a distinction further compounded by the designated viewing distance and the unseen labor necessary to keep organic growth from occurring—Hawaiʻi residents, even those who live in urban settings, are likely more accustomed to vast agricultural fields and ocean views, as well as the materials of red dirt and sand that somehow make their way into every crevice of one's life.[28]

To reorient one's perspective in Hawaiʻi, then, Connelly turned the horizontal upright as opposed to simply re-representing the landscape in the gallery. The direct bodily interference of his work was meant to make viewers more conscious of land in all of its various forms and allow soil to feel "novel" again.[29] The scale of *A Small Area of Land*—slightly larger than human-size at nine feet long, four feet wide, and seven feet eight inches tall—enticed viewers to come eye-to-eye with the sculpture, a phenomenological experience that calls to mind some of the defining theories from the 1960s regarding the minimalist object while materially disregarding them.[30] Along with the sensorial experiences of earthy smell and sound damping, viewers were initially allowed to gently touch *A Small Area of Land*, potentially leading to its quicker fragmentation. Indeed, no matter how minor the reverberations from breathing, speaking, and walking nearby might have been, the very presence of viewers contributed to changes in the work in some capacity.

By directly confronting materials normally encountered below one's feet, Connelly foregrounds the agential qualities of the soil and sand and, thus, the entirety of the land itself.[31] Importantly, the sculpture's verticality also hints at the density of Honolulu, directly associating the development of urban centers *with* earthly concerns rather than attempting to demarcate the two as separate entities. While De Maria's installation is purposefully maintained to resist any sort of growth or allusion to changes over time, *A Small Area of Land* morphs alongside the landscape as it acquiesces to forces that manifest inside *and* outside the gallery walls, evoking temporal notions of the geological and the everyday. Any sense of purity or concreteness is thus immediately destabilized by the crumbling materials and this spatio-temporal relationship to place.

Kuleana, Reshaped

Although crucial for dually situating the sculpture within and against the canon of land art, the differences outlined above are insufficient in fully grappling with Connelly's work. We must go beyond a comparative discussion to comprehend the Hawaiʻi-centric aspects of *A Small Area of Land*, which most demonstrably distinguishes itself from its New York antecedent by its orientation in the gallery space and the corresponding historical and political references to said placement. Connelly aligned the sculpture north-to-south, as evidenced by the incision on the back side of the work, and positioned it mauka to makai (parallel from the mountains to the ocean), following the common coordination of the Hawaiian unit of land division known as the ahupuaʻa. Kanaka historian and scholar Lilikalā Kameʻeleihiwa provides a succinct definition and summary of ahupuaʻa:

> The ahupuaʻa were usually wedge-shaped sections of land that followed natural geographical boundaries, such as ridge lines and rivers, and ran from mountain to sea. A valley bounded by ridges on two or three sides, and by the sea on the fourth, would be a natural ahupuaʻa. The word ahupuaʻa means "pig altar" and was named for the stone altars with pig head carvings that marked the boundaries of each ahupuaʻa. Ideally, an ahupuaʻa would include within its borders all the materials required for sustenance—timber, thatching, and rope, from the mountains, various crops from the uplands, kalo from the lowlands, and fish from the sea. All members of the society shared access to these life-giving necessities.[32]

The ahupuaʻa system was forged from trial and error and initially enacted to dispel territorial confusion, with credit for its original design and implementation given to the aliʻi (chief) Māʻilikūkahi during his reign on Oʻahu sometime around the fifteenth century.[33]

Māʻilikūkahi helped distinguish the different levels of land palena (place boundaries) on an individual island, from the largest being the moku, to the ahupuaʻa, to the ʻili, with each having a distinct purpose within this nested structure.[34] For about 400 years, the ahupuaʻa system of land tenure coalesced, merged, and intertwined with Hawaiian life as one cohesive system.[35] As noted by Kameʻeleihiwa, nearly everything one would need to live could be obtained from within any single ahupuaʻa. Most important was the quasi-communal aspect built into this framework of food production, resource management, and land relations; although there were still duties one was expected to perform for the betterment of the whole, and societal ranks that organized how land was utilized and for what purposes, no one person privately owned natural resources. The Western notion of individuals owning land as private property did not apply.

It was only with the arrival and permanent settlement of colonizers that the ahupuaʻa system and its corresponding way of life became threatened by foreign disease, altered by the encroachment of capitalist modes of production and, ultimately, shattered by loss of governance, the foremost variable being the 1893 overthrow. In 1848, King Kamehameha III—or Kauikeaouli—worked collaboratively with aliʻi to finalize the Māhele, one of the most studied and debated subjects in Hawaiian history due to its mass division of land amongst various "owners" for the first time. The Māhele was the logical result of the first formally written laws enacted through the 1839 Declaration of Rights and the 1840 Constitution. These, along with the founding of the Board of Commissioners to Quiet Land Titles in 1845, all paved the way for land privatization under codified law.[36] The Māhele defined to whom privatized land would be split, with interests divided in thirds to the mōʻī (king), top aliʻi, and the makaʻāinana (common people). This was followed by Kauikeaouli separating his own portion into what are still known today as Government and Crown Lands.[37] The 1850 Kuleana Act was, in effect, a legal extension and completion of the Māhele, as it specifically clarified and initiated the necessary methods to grant private land to the makaʻāinana, allowing them "the right to claim lands on which they had built homes, tended loʻi, and in other ways cultivated as property in fee simple."[38]

A Small Area of Land alludes to both the ahupuaʻa system and these epochal changes in land tenure. As mentioned, a diagonal incision on the front side of the sculpture corresponds to the positions of the moon and sun on the day the Kuleana Act was put into law: the quadrilateral slope faces the sunrise, the angle of the slope follows the altitude of the moon at the solar zenith, and the directional cut runs perpendicular to the sunset (Fig. 4). This celestial inclusion is far from original in the land art movement that Connelly's work cites, but the fixed, singular focus on the Kuleana Act is a bit peculiar given its normally overshadowed role in public discourse and academic studies about the Māhele.[39]

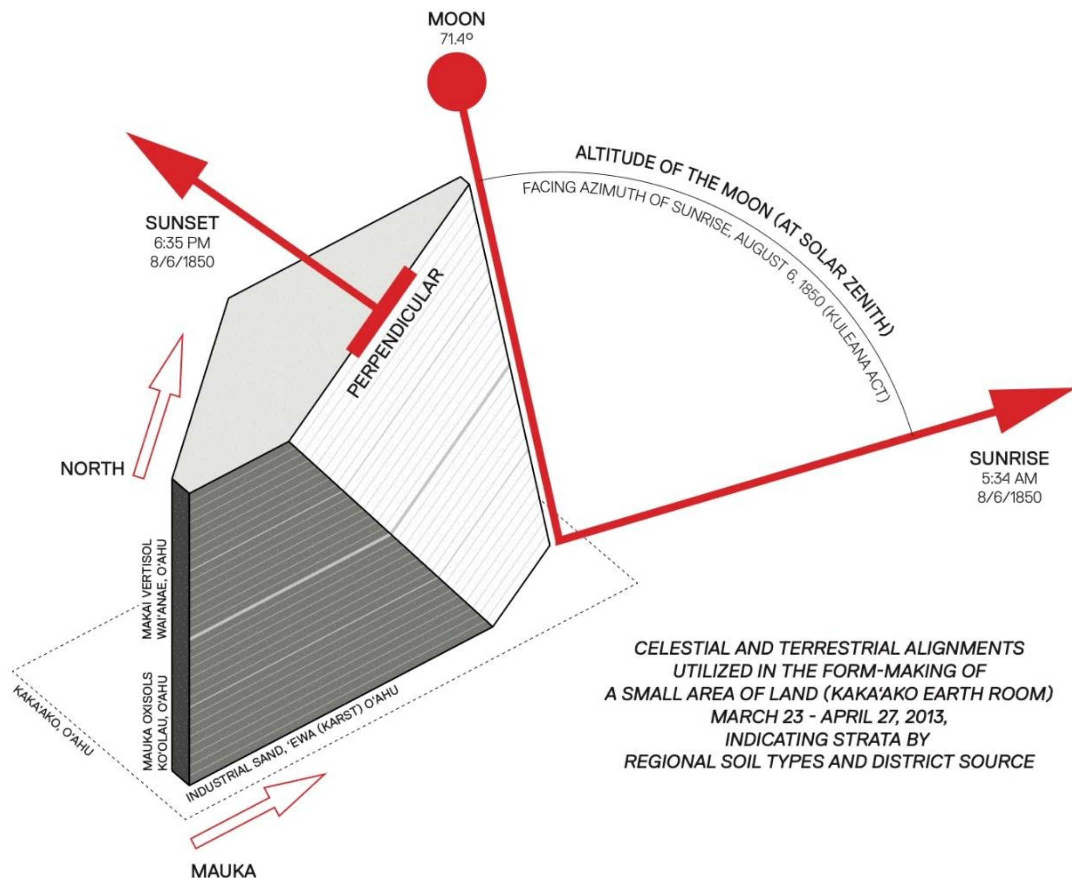

Figure 4. Sean Connelly, *A Small Area of Land (Kakaʻako Earth Room)*, 2013. Digital architectural rendering. Courtesy of the artist

The dominant historical interpretations of the Māhele and the Kuleana Act—and, thus, corresponding narratives about land privatization—have long been decidedly negative, and the debates around such topics are incredibly rich, complex, and varied. Kanaka scholar Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwoʻole Osorio once deemed the Māhele to be "the single most critical dismemberment of Hawaiian society," while Kameʻeleihiwa has linked the act of privatizing land to the eventual overthrow, arguing, "The opportunity for economic control afforded to foreigners by the 1848 *Māhele* only served to make them greedy for overt political control, which they then demanded in 1893."[40] Kameʻeleihiwa further elaborated, "Appeasement of foreign desires was certainly a mistake: giving them an inch induced them to desire many miles, in fact, the entire four million acres of Hawaiʻi."[41]

Such understandings, however, have more recently begun to shift toward a more reconciliatory stance. For example, Kanaka scholar Kamanamaikalani Beamer argues that privat-

ization was not a foreign imposition so much as an acknowledged blending of Hawaiian governance with Western law, stressing the agency of Kauikeaouli and others in government in making decisions for the betterment of Kānaka and highlighting that "aliʻi *selectively appropriated* Euro-American tools of governance while modifying existing indigenous structures to create a hybrid nation-state as a means to resist colonialism and protect Native Hawaiian and national interests."[42] Others have highlighted how the Māhele and Kuleana Act were designed to enshrine makaʻāinana gathering rights in perpetuity, meaning almost all land in Hawaiʻi—no matter who owns the allodial title—was (and is) still "subject to the rights of native tenants," with the caveat that this traditional access is now potentially limited by differing readings of the law.[43] Kanaka geographer Donovan Preza, having conducted in-depth research on the perceived limitations and "failures" of the Māhele and the Kuleana Act, suggests that they actually helped *keep* Hawaiian lands in Hawaiian hands more so than previously believed, and that it was in fact the overthrow that led to the loss of governance over land in Hawaiʻi and, in turn, the chronicle of dispossession that lasts to this day.[44] Kānaka could very well have much *less* land today if the Māhele and the Kuleana Act were not enacted prior to the overthrow. In the face of increasing pressure from foreign missionaries and businessmen living in the islands, rapidly declining native populations from imported diseases, and potentially acting in preparation for a future overthrow, it is possible Kauikeaouli viewed the Māhele as a *protective* measure.[45]

These nuanced differences in legal land claims matter for the way contemporary sovereignty activists in Hawaiʻi approach their relationship to the United States, in turn highlighting potential limits of nationhood for those seeking decolonization beyond Western-derived forms of biopolitical governmentality. Kanaka scholar J. Kehaulani Kauanui delicately balances these various positions regarding land ownership, yet points out how they are, in effect, paradoxical at their core and often uncritically reassert aspects of colonial heteropatriarchy. She asserts that both of the prominent strains of Hawaiian nation projects—Hawaiian Kingdom nationalists seeking deoccupation and those seeking US federal recognition as a Native Hawaiian governing entity—"are lodged in normative legal frameworks and their respective property regimes" and thus "rely on a proprietary relation to land rather than a decolonial relation to the ʻāina outside of Western legal frameworks."[46] At the same time the Māhele secured the very governmental land bases upon which claims for nationhood hinge, for example, it provided the same legal mechanism later weaponized by non-natives to purchase obscene amounts of land, a legacy perhaps best exemplified by tech magnate Larry Ellison's purchase of nearly the entirety of Lanaʻi and, more recently, by Facebook owner Mark Zuckerberg's attempts to sue Native Hawaiian families for their land on Kauaʻi. Likewise, the recognition of a Native Hawaiian governing entity might essentially concede land ownership to the United States government for only a limited kind of political recognition in return. Instead of viewing these possibilities as the horizon, Kauanui follows others in asserting the concept of

ea, most commonly translated as "sovereignty" but also meaning "life" and "breath," as a realignment of the political notion following Hawaiian ways of being.[47] Driven by non-statist, Indigenous anarchist politics, Kauanui's position calls for discussions about land that do not rely on conceptions of ownership and instead prioritize responsibilities as they pertain to re-invigorating lasting genealogical kinship relations, though her analysis paradoxically does not necessarily outline the means for building mass political power to avoid the constant threat of further dispossession, nor how to take back that which has already been confiscated on a large scale.

A Small Area of Land is somewhat paradoxical itself, for its reference to the Kuleana Act operates in part to deflect from the actual historical event and, thereby, obscures a more incisive and dynamic reading of the work. Upon quick assessment—and with knowledge of the foremost narrative that pervades the topic of land privatization in Hawaiʻi—it would be easy to assume that Connelly marks the Kuleana Act as the starting point of enviro-cultural degradation that continues to this day, following closely to how Kameʻeleihiwa directly links the Māhele as a precursor to the overthrow. This reading would posit that *A Small Area of Land* condenses the histories of land tenure in Hawaiʻi to the length of the work's installation by essentially acting as a sped-up metaphor of time: at the exhibition's opening, the work began as a well-shaped, compacted form—representative of ahupuaʻa-based land management—before eventually disintegrating into disarray, with the Kuleana Act serving as the catalyst for such chaos. In only a short period, viewers witness the breaking up of land and, with it, the societal structure it bound together.

Further scrutiny, though, would ask if the Kuleana Act itself is the sole focus here. The word *kuleana* is most regularly used to mean "responsibility" in everyday vernacular, but it also has a historical legal definition that roughly translates to, among other things, "a small area of land," as specified by the amount one could receive from the Kuleana Act.[48] The correlation between these two seemingly disparate meanings is not arbitrary, for it had always been the responsibility of the makaʻāinana to care for their specific small area of land, although in a social, cultural, and political context that bears little resemblance to the present. With this in mind, *A Small Area of Land* foregrounds not only the histories of land in Hawaiʻi but, more specifically, the misuse and twisted meaning of the very word *kuleana* by Hawaiʻi's *current* private landowners, who perpetuate theft in the islands by way of capitalizing on the sand and soil, often under a semantic disguise of authenticity. Kuleana has become partly divorced from its origins, engulfed and morphed into a culture-washing buzzword weaponized to stifle potential discontent. If kuleana is a reciprocal relationship concerning one's responsibility to each other and the land, appropriation of the word is ultimately a misnomer under the exploitative system of global capitalism, financial speculation, and coercive governance and is in direct opposition to other moves to reclaim more radical practices of kuleana.[49] Presuming that Connelly did become a "landowner" through the sculpture's construction, his

allowing it to fragment and fall apart would suggest a willful neglect to his kuleana; however, this purported negligence can be pinpointed more precisely as one that prevails well beyond the role of the individual.

Whose Land is it Anyway?

Many of the social movements and resistance struggles in Hawaiʻi have revolved around land. The vexed histories of land privatization and continued military occupation are obvious indications of this fact, the modern trajectory of which is helpful for further situating *A Small Area of Land* in relation to environmental art globally and in Hawaiʻi. Kanaka scholar and prominent sovereignty activist Haunani-Kay Trask traces the birth of the modern Hawaiian political movement to the resistance against the evictions of farmers for new suburban development in Kalama Valley on the east side of Oʻahu beginning in 1970, where "community-based assertions for the preservation of agricultural land against resort and subdivision use" drove organized protest (Fig. 5).[50] During the struggle, the activist coalition Kōkua Hawaiʻi formulated their six-point Peoples' Land Program, including calls to "save our farm lands to grow food," "stop the developers who want to pour concrete over everything," and "get back our land from the few big landholders that have almost all of it," among others.[51] This was complicated by the fact that the entity threatening eviction was Bishop Estate, founded in 1884 by prominent aliʻi Bernice Pauahi Bishop following her death and currently the largest private landowner in Hawaiʻi. Bishop Estate's development projects help fund Kamehameha Schools, a private school for Hawaiian children. Despite being a Hawaiian-facing institution founded with educational intentions, the estate's trustees have long been controversially connected to Hawaiʻi's most rich and powerful, and, during the mid-twentieth century, "none of them had any sympathies for the land rights of Hawaiians or other local tenants."[52] As Trask notes, "In contrast to the Trustees of the Bishop Estate, residents of Kalama Valley were poor and landless."[53]

Since reemerging from Kalama Valley, the creed of aloha ʻāina (love of the land)—engrained within Hawaiian cosmology and thus much more complicated than a simple environmentalist desire to care and protect—has been the rallying cry behind demonstrations against further evictions and the impacts of militarization, tourism, and development on the destruction of important cultural and religious sites.[54] Despite the victories earned from this legacy of resistance—going back to armed opposition in response to the forced signing of 1887 Bayonet Constitution and the 1897 Kūʻe Petitions protesting the 1893 overthrow—Kānaka have become increasingly dispossessed of, and therefore disassociated from, their ancestral lands and priced out of the islands due to the misguided motives of those who dictate the economy

to appease the interests of the tourism industry and the military occupation it helps to conceal.[55] Such an alienation from their kuleana means Kānaka are not easily able to grow food through traditional agricultural practices. Working-class populations in Hawaiʻi have been all but shepherded to work in immaterial service jobs as a result of the imposed lack of economic variability, with hotels seemingly becoming "the new plantations."[56] Pacific Studies scholar Epeli Hauʻofa described the profound effects of similar processes of deterritorialization, writing, "To remove a people from their ancestral, natural surroundings or vice versa . . . is to sever them not only from their traditional sources of livelihood but also, and much more importantly, from their ancestry, their history, their identity, and their ultimate claim for the legitimacy of their existence."[57]

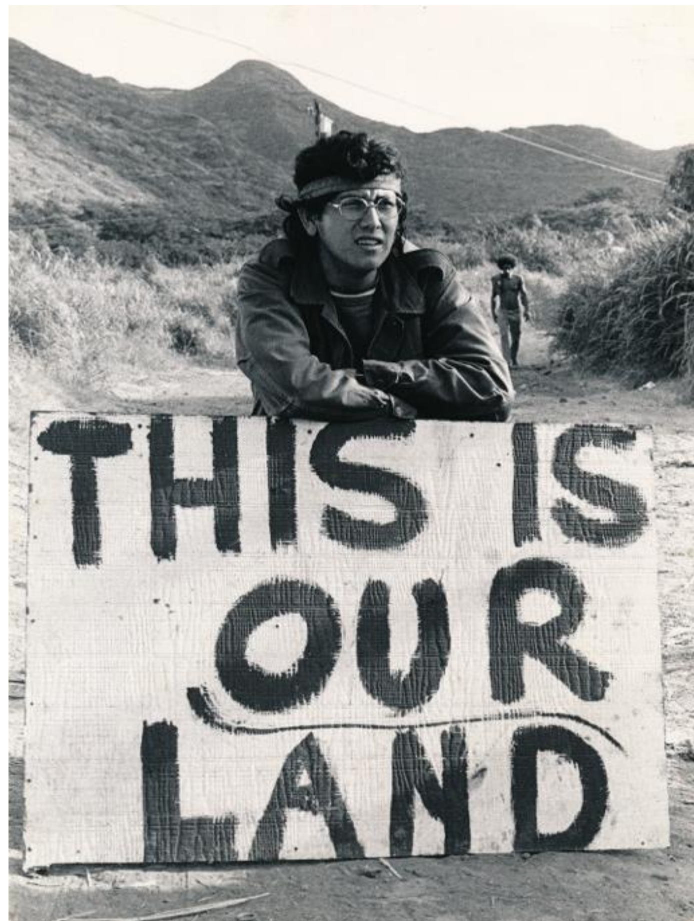

Figure 5. Ed Greevy, 1971. Photograph of unidentified Kōkua Hawaiʻi member at Kalama Valley. Courtesy of the artist

From an ecological perspective, this shift has been wholly unsustainable. The historical changes in land tenure, governmental systems, and zoning practices has resulted in close to

ninety percent of food having to be imported into the islands to feed a population comparable to the number that lived on the islands pre-contact, when no food was imported.[58] Furthermore, the US military, which is among the world's largest polluters and consumers of energy, continues to directly occupy large swaths of land in Hawaiʻi, including nearly twenty-five percent of land on Oʻahu alone.[59] Put simply, colonization and militarization are inherently environmental issues and must be regarded as such. Considering who has control of and access to land, then, should be of primary concern *before* one can even begin to think of any sort of ethically just environmentalism, an approach that would severely undermine a large portion of contemporary eco art and prompt us to question just how "ecological" it really is.

Let us briefly consider the early work of American artists Newton Harrison (b. 1932) and Helen Meyer Harrison (1927–2018) through this lens, as their practice is largely seen as evidence of the shift from the monumental works of land art and their often destructive impositions on the landscape to a more biologically-aware strain of eco art.[60] Their first collaborative work, titled *Making Earth* (1970), documented Newton working a pile of sand, clay, sewage, leaves, manure, and worms into material suitable and usable for planting—literally "making earth" outside the couple's studio at the University of California, San Diego.[61] A series of six photographs shows Newton watering the dirt, turning it, hoeing it, "shoveling and shoveling" it, "feeling and crumbling" it, and "smelling and tasting" it (Fig. 6). Despite the appearance of the photos having been taken on the same day, they represent the change in the soil's viability over a four-month period from something unproductive into something that could eventually be used to grow food and call attention to the increasing depletion of viable topsoil globally.[62]

In the exhibition catalog for the 1992 show *Fragile Ecologies: Contemporary Artists' Interpretations and Solutions*, curator Barbara Matilsky directly contrasts De Maria's earth rooms with the Harrisons' *Making Earth*, suggesting that "the material is really all they have in common." She continues, "the Harrisons ritualize the process of making earth from its elemental components and claim responsibility for creating a life-sustaining mixture, while De Maria uses the earth to alter perceptions of space."[63] Even if supposedly more "ecological" than *The New York Earth Room*, like De Maria's work, *Making Earth* includes nothing that would make one aware of the stolen land upon which the Harrisons were digging.[64] What is more, *Making Earth* can be read as placing the responsibility of responding to ecological crises solely upon the individual. Their images show *only* Newton working the soil; in later gallery reenactments of the work, the soil is gifted *only* to an individual upon the exhibition's ending.[65] Such an ecological effort is thus largely centered around the ability of a privileged few, something that even the most well-meaning person can only implement themselves through actual access to land, whatever form that might take.

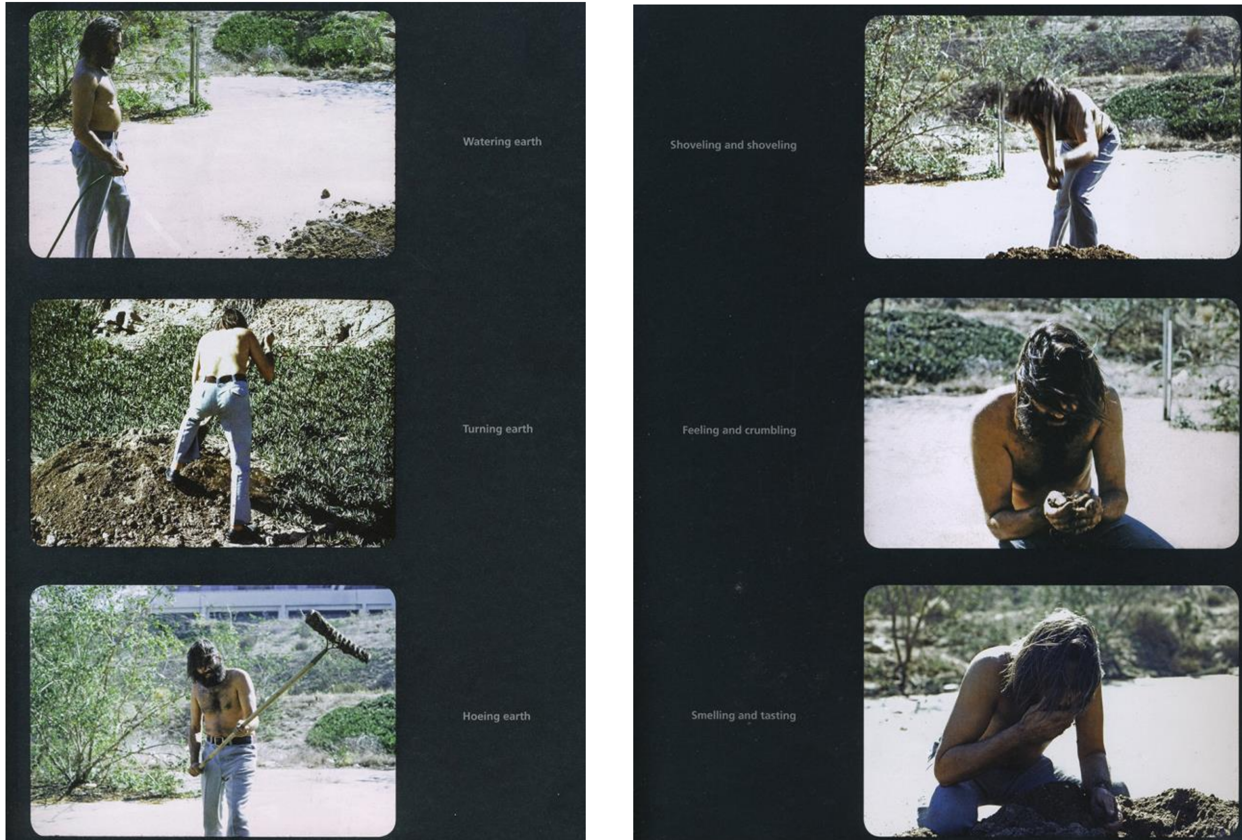

Figure 6. Newton Harrison and Helen Mayer Harrison, *Making Earth*, 1970. Photo documentation of performance with sand, clay, sewage sludge, manure, leaves, and worms. Courtesy of The Harrison Studio

What this and other similar calls to action ignore is the large-scale systems that have caused environmental catastrophe and, at the same time, largely prevent those without certain economic privileges to take part in what could be considered green individualism or lifestyle environmentalism based on liberal notions of individual freedom. Despite claims to the contrary, any attempt to make ecological art—particularly in a settler colonial context—that does not confront these facts is a contaminated kind of environmentalism based on the premise of theft, which will always only reassert the structural violence upon which it is founded.[66] For the farmers threatened with displacement in the land struggle in Oʻahu's Kalama Valley during the same year the Harrisons produced *Making Earth*, the effectual message of the work rings hollow and hovers close to being demeaning. These farmers were no doubt well aware of top soil degradation and sustainable agriculture, yet they still did not have the fiscal or political resources necessary to keep from being displaced for suburbanization.

I scrutinize *Making Earth* here for reasons regarding not only actual land ownership, but also to segue into thinking about materiality, as the Harrisons did admirably begin with dirt unsuitable for growth and ended with soil fit for food production. If Connelly's *A Small Area of Land* serves to critique the distinct types of environmental art by De Maria and the

Harrisons while also considering the exclusionary power structures that preclude certain individuals from participating in land-use decisions in Hawaiʻi, one might assume a similarly attuned and delicate attention to materiality. Yet, there was nothing in the exhibition materials or the installation's wall text that directly revealed where Connelly had sourced the 32,000 pounds of sand and soil. This information was not a sealed secret so much as purposefully left unaccounted for in order to prompt the very dialogue, engaging an oral tradition of knowledge sharing. Connelly publicly detailed his soil research and acquisition in a later interview:

> I harvested a loamy soil from the mountaintop, which was used for the base, and sourced an expansive clay soil from the valley, which was used for the upper half of the sculpture. Conceptually, this turned the watershed upside down, while also allowing the sculpture to expand and erode at eye level without completely falling apart. It was like chemistry, but rather mixing soil types to control a change in physical form.[67]

The sand, on the other hand, was not directly procured from a location on Oʻahu but crushed coral sand from ʻEwa that was bought at Home Depot, further demonstrating the material's value as a commodity.[68]

Trained as an architect, Connelly opted for the ancient building technique of rammed earth for *A Small Area of Land*'s construction, a method not historically used in Hawaiʻi.[69] After first building a wooden scaffold frame, Connelly and various collaborators smoothed layer after layer of premixed soil and sand before ramming them into place one at a time.[70] Although some sort of stabilizer is necessary to prevent disintegration in rammed earth construction, Connelly deliberately did not use any. This decision was partly for aesthetic reasons but also because doing so would have made the soil completely unusable for future purposes. As planned, the soil was redistributed to a few locations upon the exhibition's completion, further dispelling Connelly's alleged status as "landowner." A large portion of the soil was donated to Hui Kū Maoli Ola, a native plant nursery on the windward side of Oʻahu, and some was utilized in planter boxes throughout the gallery's neighborhood.

While Connelly did not necessarily "make earth" in the same vein as the Harrisons, he was still conscious of its potential to be reused for different purposes. But Connelly was never necessarily interested in making earth, nor was he simply making an earth room—more precisely, he was *making room for earth*, creating a space where one was forced to question and contend with the political materiality of soil and sand and, thus, the reality of land in Hawaiʻi. The lack of information regarding the source materials and their afterlife therefore served to reaffirm Connelly's intent; *A Small Area of Land* was meant to draw attention to the discrepancy regarding where building materials are obtained on the islands and who has the financial

means to procure such materials, let alone the land upon which to construct anything. In doing so, though, Connelly partially incriminated himself in the same processes and structures he was trying to critique. Such an aesthetic decision risks misreadings from two antipodal positions: it does not account for less politically minded viewers, who might not draw the connections desired by Connelly, while others might see his material choices as equally disrespectful as that which he is condemning.

Figure 7. Kapulani Landgraf, *Ponoiwi*, 2011. Honolulu Museum of Art, 2013–2014. Multi-media installation. Courtesy of the artist

A more delicate handling of the fraught use of natural materials in Hawaiʻi is evident in Kanaka Maoli artist Kapulani Landgraf's (b. 1966) multi-media installation *Ponoiwi* (Fig. 7), included in the Maui Arts & Cultural Center's group exhibition *I Keia Manawa* (*In This Time*) in 2011 and as a solo exhibition at the Honolulu Museum of Art from 2013–14. *Ponoiwi*, the title meaning "righteousness right down to the bone," addressed the century-long practice of sand mining on the island of Maui for sugar cane processing and the building of military installations, in addition to the more general history of coral sand extraction from beaches across Hawaiʻi to be transported to Oʻahu for the purpose of concrete production and construction

projects.[71] Central to Landgraf's concern about this process is the controversial disturbance and removal of Hawaiian burial sites traditionally placed in unmarked sand dunes, resulting in the desecration of iwi kūpuna (ancestral bones).

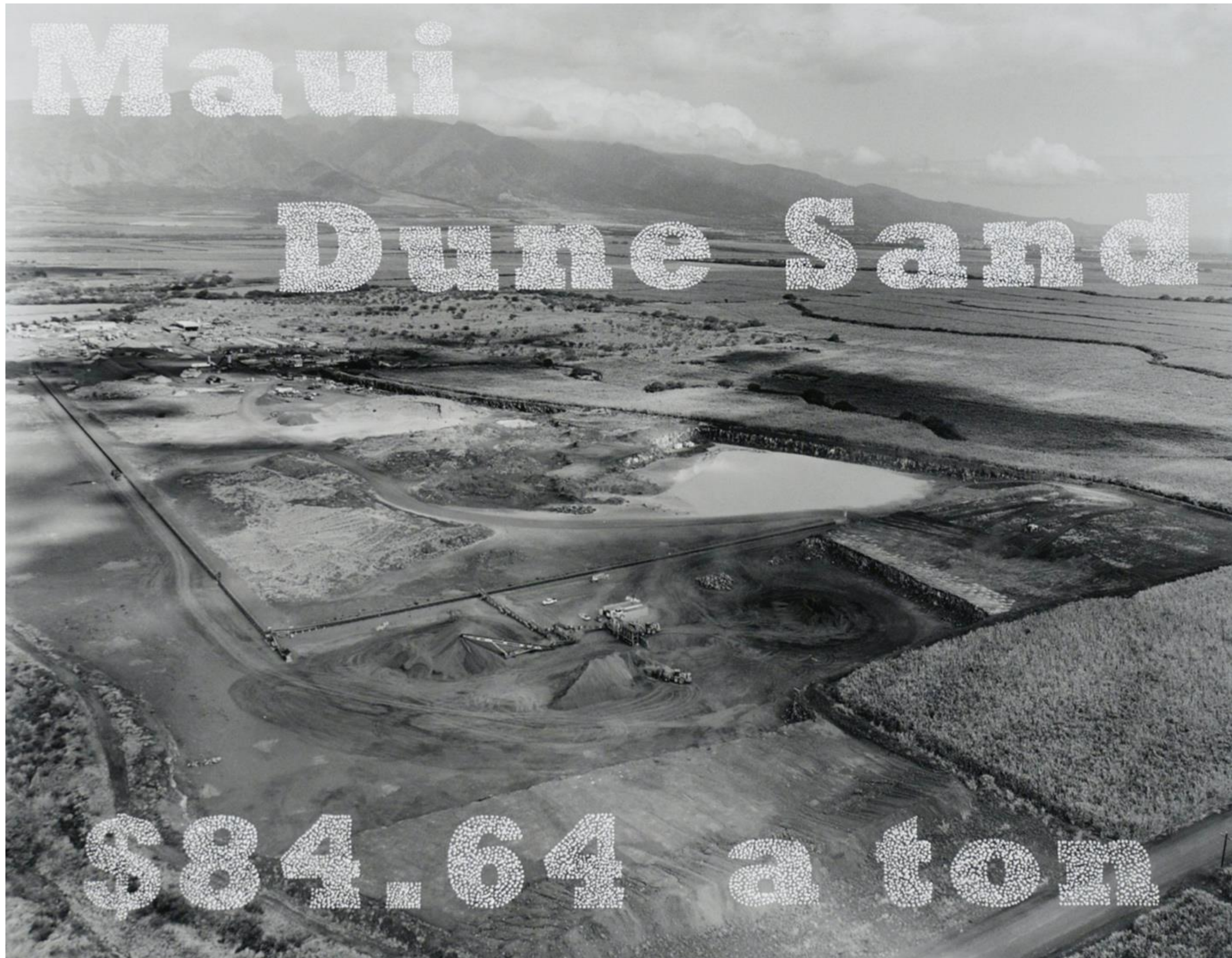

Figure 8. Kapulani Landgraf, *Ke one lele o Kamaʻomaʻo*, from *Ponoiwi* installation, 2011. Hand-etched gelatin silver print. Courtesy of the artist

Ponoiwi featured black and white aerial photographs of disparate mining sites on Maui, with Landgraf having manually etched details about each place's location on the photograph's surface (Fig. 8). Shovels were suspended in front of each photo with the corresponding name of the photographed area and text repeating a reburial oli (chant) written on the handles. These shovels did not epitomize earth-making, as seen in the Harrisons' work, so much as earth-taking, their suspension in the gallery meant to illustrate "the gouging of the land."[72] Landgraf's shovels, however, also subverted the destructive large-scale industrial mining depicted in the photographs, as she drilled holes into the cement-painted blades to

render them ineffective and unusable. Underneath each shovel was a small rounded pile of Hawaiian paʻakai (salt), a symbol of purification used in the reburial process. Sand would have been the far more obvious choice given the work's mining referent, but doing so would have implicated Landgraf in the extraction and dislocation of Hawaiian sand, the very problem she was addressing. Landgraf's refusal to bring a politically contested and culturally significant material into the gallery space clearly departs from the strategy employed by Connelly. Both *Ponoiwi* and *A Small Area of Land* comment on the speed and destructive power of development in Hawaiʻi, but Landgraf's tactfulness contrasts with Connelly's brashness.

In *Ponoiwi*, Landgraf both condemned past mining operations and warned against ongoing exhumations that occur with construction on the islands, such as the massively overbudget and long-delayed Honolulu Rail Transit Project. "[*Ponoiwi*] speaks to the constant development in Hawaiʻi at the cost of Hawaiian land, culture and people," Landgraf explained in an interview. "What's happening currently in Kakaʻako and the construction of rail in phases will set up the continuous disregard by the powers that be."[73] Although their material approaches differ, Landgraf's mention of Kakaʻako is one instance in which her interests converge with Connelly's. Indeed, salt also plays a role in Connelly's work, albeit in an indirect and discreet manner. While applicable to the entirety of Hawaiʻi, *A Small Area of Land (Kakaʻako Earth Room)* is more precisely place-specific. The ʻili of Kakaʻako—the location in the work's subtitle—was historically home to poho paʻakai (salt pans); it is from this focused, bounded place where *A Small Area of Land*'s ultimate meaning becomes clear and—again, paradoxical to the sculpture's disintegration—convincingly solid. Considering *A Small Area of Land* as an unexpectedly ʻili-specific work of art further illuminates Connelly's historical and material choices. It is from Kakaʻako that the work reverberates outward, from the ʻili to the ahupuaʻa and the entire pae ʻāina.

Remembering the Future/Making it Personal

It is fitting that a sculpture about Hawaiʻi's changing systems of land tenure, use, and ownership was installed in the urban neighborhood that is perhaps the most pointed microcosm of Hawaiʻi's latest chapter of continual displacement, speculative real estate development, and arts-based gentrification. Kakaʻako is part of the Honolulu coastal plain within the ahupuaʻa of Waikīkī, located squarely between the famed tourist destination and downtown Honolulu. Kakaʻako traditionally had poho paʻakai, loʻi kalo (wetland taro patches), and loko iʻa (fishponds), and was correspondingly utilized for sustainable food production.[74] The neighborhood morphed into a multi-ethnic working-class community in the decades following the 1893 overthrow before transforming in the mid-twentieth century into an industrial zone. Recently, a proliferation of high-rise condominiums too expensive for most locals and shopping centers

geared toward tourists have quickly sprouted up.[75] The high-rises hover above numerous houseless communities—disproportionately consisting of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders—in the public parks and walkways of Kakaʻako, a very different picture of the neighborhood from the one painted for potential buyers and tourists.[76] Graffiti stencils around the area creatively play on the neighborhood's name, branding the sidewalks as "non kanaka'ako," a contraction highlighting the detrimental effects of Kakaʻako's development for Kānaka Maoli (Fig. 9).

Figure 9. Graffiti stencil, "non kanaka'ako," 2016. Courtesy of the author

In part due to these stark contrasts, the "revamped" Kakaʻako has been posited by urban studies scholar Tina Grandinetti to be a direct result of settler colonialism in the islands and part of the continued project of urban development *as* Indigenous erasure and dispossession. Not only are the majority of the newly built condominiums above the cost threshold for low-income residents, the exorbitant prices in Kakaʻako raise the cost of real estate—and, therefore, cost of living—in other nearby neighborhoods, which have long been more residential areas. As Grandinetti asserts, "By neglecting the urgent need for low-income housing

for a majority of Hawai'i's existing population, redevelopment in Kaka'ako constitutes a project of displacement by placing indirect pressure on the residents of Hawai'i, whether or not they live in Kaka'ako."[77] *A Small Area of Land* similarly mimics this pulsating outward effect, operating from within Kaka'ako to serve as a broader articulation about Hawai'i as a whole.

Figure 10. Street view of Sean Connelly's *A Small Area of Land (Kaka'ako Earth Room)* on view at ii Gallery. Still from video by Vincent Ricafort, 2013. Courtesy of the artist

Kaka'ako's contrasting scenes of development and displacement were ongoing during the course of *A Small Area of Land*'s installation. The work was visible from the streets and sidewalks of the neighborhood; one could stand outside the gallery and see *A Small Area of Land* crumbling while being able to observe, with just a slight turn of the head, the construction of multiple high-rises (Fig. 10). Thus, Connelly's resonant critique of historical changes in land tenure continued through the work's existence, with Kaka'ako essentially acting as a present-day case study. The work was not specific to the 'ili of Kaka'ako due to its use of local materials; it was 'ili-specific for it resembled the condition of the surrounding neighborhood at the time of its exhibition, one with its cultural fabric being packaged anew. In fact, the very building where *A Small Area of Land* was installed at the ii Gallery no longer exists, in part because of these recent transformations. It has since been replaced by a shopping center and retail complex named SALT after the neighborhood's pre-existing salt ponds. The complex was developed by Kamehameha Schools, a subset of Bishop Estate, Hawai'i's largest private

landowners and the aforementioned foundation that spearheaded the Kalama Valley evictions.

Connelly himself seems ambivalent about the neighborhood's evolving and seemingly thriving art scene, saying, "On one hand it's amazing, because it's really grassroots. But, at the same time, when you really look at it, it's supported by KS [Kamehameha Schools]. So is this a façade of arts?"[78] While Trask noted the controversial makeup of Bishop Estate's trustees, Grandinetti further analyzes the principled conflicts that arise from the role of both Kamehameha Schools and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs in the neighborhood, as their "development agendas in Kakaʻako inarguably ascribe to a neoliberal model of urban growth and capital accumulation." She continues:

> Both institutes argue that capital accumulated in Kakaʻako is then used to fund projects that actively serve the community. Thus, they imply, it is their duty to ensure that maximum revenue is derived from these properties. However neither body acknowledges that this accumulation nevertheless results in dispossession and the cementing of settler colonial geographies within the district.[79]

Grandinetti's use of "capital accumulation" builds upon Indigenous studies scholar Glen Coulthard's (Yellowknives Dene) application and adjustment of Karl Marx's theory of "primitive accumulation" to more closely pertain to settler colonial contexts. Coulthard explains that "acts of violent *dispossession* set the stage for the emergence of capitalist accumulation and the reproduction of capitalist relations of production by tearing Indigenous societies, peasants, and other small-scale, self-sufficient agricultural producers from the source of their livelihood—*the land*."[80] Coulthard further clarifies, "The historical process of primitive accumulation thus refers to the violent transformation of noncapitalist forms of life into capitalist ones."[81] Keeping in mind that the violent acts mentioned here can be understood as extending beyond bodily harm, Grandinetti highlights the ways in which contemporary capital accumulation in Hawaiʻi only re-inscribes the same violence upon which it is founded, that being the premise of setter colonial primitive accumulation. Decolonial scholars Eve Tuck (Unangax̂) and K. Wayne Yang have similarly detailed this ongoing process, asserting that "the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence. This violence is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation."[82]

Such explications are precisely why revolutionary psychiatrist Frantz Fanon deemed land itself as "the most essential value" for a colonized people.[83] Urban planning scholar Annette Koh and Hawaiian Studies scholar Konia Freitas have aptly pointed out that buildings on occupied land do not "function as indigenous places because we call them by Hawaiian names," despite veiled attempts to the contrary, or—in the case of Kamehameha Schools'

SALT complex—if they appropriate naming conventions from the past for commercial interests today. Instead of these hollow measures, Koh and Freitas implore more truthful engagement with Hawaiian concepts of ahupuaʻa, kuleana, and aloha ʻāina, asking, "What would it mean to decolonize Honolulu so that we support the flourishing of indigenous values of land and kinship within the urban core?"[84] Likewise, the looming presence of *A Small Area of Land* appears to be asking each gallery-goer and passerby to consider how Kakaʻako would benefit from planning that takes more than just nomenclature inspiration from the past. Instead, would it be possible to re-inscribe systems of land use such as the ahupuaʻa and make use of the various ecological benefits that such a re-inscription might offer?

To this end, Connelly's other work begets one possible starting point, considering what might come from redefining urbanism as island living "rooted in Hawaiʻi's history, culture, and ecology."[85] In 2014, Connelly led a tour of Kakaʻako for the inaugural event of the psychogeography-inspired group 88 Block Walks, organized by artist and geographer Adele Balderston and named after the number of blocks that make up the neighborhood. According to the group's website, 88 Block Walks is an "ongoing series of walking tours [that] explores themes of gentrification, displacement, urbanization and generational change within Kakaʻako's cultural, historical and physical landscape."[86] Connelly's walk focused on the neighborhood's channelized and often completely paved-over streams and ʻauwai (irrigation ditches that lead to loʻi kalo from streams and back again).[87] Doing so showed the extent to which streams—the arteries and lifeblood of agricultural life in Hawaiʻi—have been completely left out of the urban planning process, acting as a conduit for reimagining a contemporary urban landscape in which streams are once again a focal point as opposed to something to plan *around*.

It is through such experimental excursions and ways of understanding the landscape that Connelly has been able to create an in-depth outline for the process of "recovering ahupuaʻa," or returning to the traditional system of land-use prior to land privatization as a means to move into the future. This ongoing project, titled *Hawaiʻi Futures* (2010–present), is less utopian in outlook than it is based on the already existing dialectical landscape, in this case an urban area that has very little in common with its pre-contact condition.[88] Utilizing his background in architecture, Connelly has created numerous three-dimensional interactive maps with geographic information system (GIS) software to visualize solutions to current and future issues such as flood risks, food insecurity, and public health on the islands, conceptually reframing the ahupuaʻa system as a kind of ʻāina-based technology that "engages the flow of resources and information." This pushes back against Western notions of progress and—in this case—urban planning, confirming "indigenous ways of living as legitimate coded science itself."[89] Similar calls to return to Indigenous-based land tenure practices have proliferated in recent years due in part to the climate crisis, forming the ecological rubric for extensive land-return across—and as part of the dissolution of—settler colonial states.[90] Even a 2019 special

report on land from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change noted the importance of so-called traditional ecological knowledge in curbing and overcoming challenges brought about by deforestation, desertification, and soil erosion, yet nowhere did the report suggest the possibility of land rematriation as a climate solution.[91]

As the epigraph from Marx and Engels at the beginning of this essay advocates, property relations in their current state are anything but permanent; the abolishment of land as "property" is not some unrealistic desire but, rather, something that must be actively and relentlessly pursued to make possible. The lingering dilemma in Hawaiʻi boils down to redirecting the notion of land in its entirety to something more personal, public, and communal than private, always alongside corresponding commitments to aloha ʻāina, anti-capitalism, and ea, with the understanding that such changes cannot take place in any truly meaningful extent under the current occupying government and without revolutionary Hawaiian stewardship. Herein lies the seriousness of Connelly's manifold interventions, notable for their capacious applicability now and later, whatever the political situation of Hawaiʻi might be. *A Small Area of Land* acts as a conduit to maneuver through such disputations, filling theoretical gaps and bringing viability to the future of the soil and earth upon which we all rely. "Whoever controls the land," Connelly ultimately reminds us, "controls the future of Hawaiʻi."[92]

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Notes

[1] This description for the project is from Connelly's website. "A Small Area of Land (Kakaʻako Earth Room)," After Oceanic Projects for Architecture, Landscape, Infrastructure, and Art, accessed May 10, 2021, https://www.ao-projects.com/ASAOL-2013.
[2] Lisa Yamada-Son, "Sean Connelly's Small Area of Land," *Flux Hawaiʻi*, August 6, 2013, https://fluxhawaii.com/sean-connellys-small-area-of-land/. The sculpture was also featured in the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* and the now-defunct *Honolulu Weekly*, as well as the architectural blog *BLDGBLOG*.
[3] For a general overview of Hawaiʻi's political history in relation to American colonization, see Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawaiʻi* (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 1999).
[4] For more on Hawaiʻi's "statehood," see Dean Itsuji Saranillio, *Unsustainable Empire: Alternative Histories of Hawaiʻi Statehood* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018). For more on the

effects of statehood, see Davianna Pomaikaʻi McGregor, "Statehood: Catalyst of the Twentieth-Century Kanaka ʻŌiwi Cultural Renaissance and Sovereignty Movement," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 13, no. 3 (October 2010): 311–326, https://doi.org/10.1353/jaas.2010.0011.

[5] The connection between militarization and tourism is far from tenuous. Pacific studies scholar Teresia Teaiwa defines militourism as "a phenomenon by which military or paramilitary force ensures the smooth running of a tourist industry, and that same tourist industry masks the military force behind it." See Teaiwa, "Reading Gauguin's *Noa Noa* with Hauʻofa's *Kisses in the Nederends*: Militourism, Feminism, and the 'Polynesian' Body," in *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*, eds. Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson (Lanham MD: Rowman & Litterfield, 1999), 251.

[6] Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review, 2000), 43. Emphasis in original.

[7] J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, *Paradoxes of Hawaiian Sovereignty: Land, Sex, and the Colonial Politics of State Nationalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

[8] I use "decolonial aesthetics" as it relates to the lineage detailed in Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vazquez, "Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings," *Social Text: Periscope*, July 15, 2013, https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/decolonial-aesthesis-colonial-woundsdecolonial-healings/.

[9] T.J. Demos, *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), 12.

[10] Indigenous studies scholar Vanessa Watts (Mohawk and Anishinaabe) has proffered Place-Thought—"a theoretical understanding of the world via a physical embodiment"—as an Indigenous framework that is more apt than Euro-Western epistemological-ontological conceptions of the divide between being/knowledge. See Watts, "Indigenous place-thought & agency amongst humans and non-humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European world tour!)," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 2, no. 1 (2013): 20–34. For how this pertains to Hawaiʻi, see Shawn Malia Kanaʻiaupuni and Nolan Malone, "The Land is My Land: The Role of Place in Native Hawaiian Identity," *Hūlili: Multidisciplinary Research on Hawaiian Well-Being* 3, no. 1 (2006): 281–307.

[11] "The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves." Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1986), 3.

[12] This phrase was used to describe *A Small Area of Land* on a previous version of the artist's website based on the architectural theory of critical regionalism popularized by historian Kenneth Frampton, referring to design eschewing otherwise completely universalist aesthetics for that which infuses more locally specific qualities. See Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983), 16–30.

[13] Commonly pronounced as "two eyes," the name of ii Gallery was short for "indigenous international."

[14] While initially installed in this location—then Heiner Friedrich's gallery—from October 1, 1977 through January 31, 1978, it was not opened permanently to the public until 1980.
[15] The exact titles of De Maria's first earth room exhibition and the work itself are not completely clear, and naming differs between two dominant conventions. Various sources, including Jeanne Dunning and Suzaan Boettger, refer to the full title of the work as *50 M³ (1,600 Cubic Feet) Level Dirt/The Land Show: Pure Dirt/Pure Earth/Pure Land*. See Jeanne Dunning, "Thoughts on Dirt: Walter De Maria's *The New York Earth Room* and Robert Smithson's *Partially Buried Woodshed*," in *Artists on Walter De Maria*, eds. Katherine Atkins and Kelly Kivland (New York: Dia Art Foundation, 2017), 24–43; Suzaan Boettger, *Earthworks: Art and the Landscape of the Sixties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). The promotional poster referenced features only the "50 M³ (1,600 Cubic Feet) Level Dirt" portion of this supposed extended title, making that part seem more descriptive than anything. The naming convention I have utilized here follows James Nisbet, who suggests that *The Land Show: Pure Dirt, Pure Earth, Pure Land* was the title of the entire exhibition, with *Pure Dirt, Pure Earth, Pure Land* referring simply to the work itself. See James Nisbet, *Ecologies, Environments, and Energy Systems in Art of the 1960s and 1970s* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014), 41. The Munich exhibition is colloquially referred to as "The Land Show." Boettger describes the Darmstadt earth room as being "filled with beige boulders." Boettger, *Earthworks*, 275, note 58. Another source states the Darmstadt work consisted of "level gravel"; *Walter De Maria: Two Very Large Presentations* (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1989), 111. Based on photographs of the installation, I have utilized the latter's description.
[16] The poster is reproduced in James Nisbet, "Walter De Maria in Europe," *Archives of American Art* 52, no. 3–4 (Fall 2013): 49–53, https://doi.org/10.1086/aaa.52.3_4.43155518.
[17] Dunning refers to the dirt in *The New York Earth Room* as "slowly dying." Dunning, "Thoughts on Dirt," 38. Nisbet uses the phrase "utter deadness" to describe the Munich room. Nisbet, *Ecologies, Environments, and Energy Systems*, 42.
[18] Much of what is known about the maintenance of *The New York Earth Room* has been shared by its longterm caretaker Bill Dilworth, who has been interviewed multiple times about his role and is cited in Dunning, "Thoughts on Dirt," 38.
[19] Nisbet, *Ecologies, Environments, and Energy Systems*, 42.
[20] See William M. Denevan, "The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82, no. 3 (September 1992): 369–385; William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 69–90; Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For a more recent Indigenous critique of these ideas, see Dina Gilio-Whitaker, *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, From Colonization to Standing Rock* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2019), 91–110.
[21] See, for example, Kyle Chayka, "The Unchanging, Ever-Changing *Earth Room*," *The Paris Review*, November 2, 2017, https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2017/11/02/the-un-changing-ever-changing-earth-room/.

[22] Dunning, "Thoughts on Dirt," 40.
[23] Walter De Maria, "Oral History Interview with Walter De Maria, October 4, 1972," interview by Paul Cummings, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-walter-de-maria-12362.
[24] For more about the environmental history of New York City, see Anne-Marie Cantwell and Diana diZerega Wall, *Unearthing Gotham: The Archaeology of New York City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); Eric W. Sanderson, *Mannahatta: A Natural History of New York City* (New York: Abrams, 2009); and Ted Steinberg, *Gotham Unbound: The Ecological History of Greater New York* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014).
[25] This comparative framework is inspired in part by Macarena Gómez-Barris and May Joseph, "Coloniality and Islands," *Shima* 13, no. 2 (2019): 1–10, https://doi.org/10.21463/shima.13.2.03.
[26] Jane McFadden, *Walter De Maria: Meaningless Work* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016), 85.
[27] Dunning, "Thoughts on Dirt," 36. De Maria himself referred to the work as "minimal flat horizontal earth sculpture." De Maria, "Oral History Interview."
[28] Dunning, "Thoughts on Dirt," 38.
[29] Sean Connelly, "Island Urbanism: The City as Soil System," interview by Alexandra R. Toland, in *Field to Palette: Dialogues on Soil and Art in the Anthropocene*, eds. Alexandra R. Toland, Jay Stratton Noller, and Gerd Wessolek (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2019), 668.
[30] "The awareness of scale is a function of the comparison made between that constant, one's body size, and the object." Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture II," in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 13. The changing state of Connelly's sculpture more closely aligns with the material experimentations of postminimalism, such as that exemplified in Morris's *Continuous Project Altered Daily* (1969).
[31] I am thinking here of the proliferation of new materialist theory in academic literature but also want to contend with the appropriation of such ideas from Indigenous scholars. For an overview of the distance between the two lineages of thought, see Jerry Lee Rosiek, Jimmy Snyder, and Scott L. Pratt, "The New Materialisms and Indigenous Theories of Non-Human Agency: Making the Case for Respectful Anti-Colonial Engagement," *Qualitative Inquiry* 26, no. 3–4 (2020), 331–346, https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800419830135.
[32] Lilikalā Kameʻeleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires: Pehea Lā E Pono Ai?* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1992), 27.
[33] This system was then mimicked on other islands, as exemplified by ʻUmi-a-Līloa on Hawaiʻi Island.
[34] Kamanamaikalani Beamer, *No Mākou Ka Mana: Liberating the Nation* (Honolulu: Kamehameha Publishing, 2014), 32–44.
[35] For more on land tenure practices prior to the Māhele, see Marion Kelly, "Changes in Land Tenure in Hawaiʻi, 1778–1850" (master's thesis, University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, 1956).
[36] Beamer, *No Mākou Ka Mana*, 116–153.
[37] See Jon M. Van Dyke, *Who Owns the Crown Lands of Hawaiʻi?* (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2007).
[38] Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwoʻole Osorio, *Dismembering Lāhui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887* (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2002), 53.

[39] Prominent examples of celestial components in works of land art include Charles Ross's *Star Axis* (1971–present), Robert Morris's *Observatory* (1971/77), Nancy Holt's *Sun Tunnels* (1973–76), and James Turrell's *Roden Crater* (1977–present). There is, however, a much different cultural significance in doing so in Hawaiʻi, where knowledge of stars, constellations, and their changing positions in the sky formed the basis of the science of oceanic seafaring, in which navigators intensively memorize star charts to successfully navigate the open Pacific without a physical compass or sextant. Likewise, lunar phases have long dictated patterns of everyday life, from farming to fishing to sociocultural commemorations.
[40] Osorio, *Dismembering Lāhui*, 44; Kameʻeleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires*, 310.
[41] Kameʻeleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires*, 310–311.
[42] Beamer, *No Mākou Ka Mana*, 3–4. Emphasis in original.
[43] Beamer, *No Mākou Ka Mana*, 142–144. For more on the lasting effects of the Kuleana Act and gathering rights, see Maivân Clech Lâm, "The Kuleana Act Revisited: The Survival of Traditional Hawaiian Commoner Rights in Land," *Washington Law Review* 64, no. 2 (1989): 233–288; Jocelyn B. Garovoy, "'*Ua Koe Ke Kuleana O Na Kanaka*' (Reserving the Rights of Native Tenants: Integrating *Kuleana* Rights and Land Trust Priorities in Hawaii)," *Harvard Environmental Law Review* 29, no. 2 (2005): 523–572; Mark ʻUmi Perkins, "Kuleana: A Genealogy of Native Tenant Rights" (PhD diss., University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, 2013).
[44] Donovan Preza, "The Empirical Writes Back: Re-Examining Hawaiian Dispossession Resulting from the Māhele of 1848," (master's thesis, University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, 2010).
[45] Such is the argument put forth by Stuart Banner, "Preparing to Be Colonized: Land Tenure and Legal Strategy in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii," *Law & Society Review* 39, no. 2 (June 2005): 273–314, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0023-9216.2005.00083.x.
[46] J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, *Paradoxes of Hawaiian Sovereignty: Land, Sex, and the Colonial Politics of State Nationalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 80.
[47] Among others, see in particular Noelani Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, "Introduction," in *A Nation Rising: Hawaiian Movements for Life, Land, and Sovereignty*, eds. Noelani Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, Ikaika Hussey, and Erin Kahunawaikaʻala Wright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 1–33.
[48] Paul F. Nahoa Lucas, *A Dictionary of Hawaiian Legal Land-Terms* (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 1995), 61.
[49] See, for example, Noelani Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, *The Seeds We Planted: Portraits of a Native Hawaiian Charter School* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
[50] Haunani-Kay Trask, "The Birth of the Modern Hawaiian Movement: Kalama Valley, Oʻahu," *The Hawaiian Journal of History* 21 (1987): 126. See also Neal Milner, "Home, Homelessness, and Homeland in the Kalama Valley: Re-Imagining a Hawaiian Nation Through a Property Dispute," *The Hawaiian Journal of History* 40 (2006): 149-176.
[51] Trask, "The Birth of the Modern Hawaiian Movement," 149.
[52] Trask, "The Birth of the Modern Hawaiian Movement," 131.
[53] Trask," The Birth of the Modern Hawaiian Movement," 129.
[54] Prominent examples include the direct action praxis of the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana against the bombing of the island to the establishment of Puʻuhonua o Puʻuhuluhulu and the

nonconsensual attempts to construct the Thirty Meter Telescope atop Maunakea. For more on the Protect Kahoʻolawe ʻOhana, see Jonathan Kamakwiwoʻole Osorio, "Hawaiian Souls: The Movement to Stop the U.S. Military Bombing of Kahoʻolawe," in *A Nation Rising*, 137–160. For more on the protection of Maunakea, see Uahikea Maile and Sarah Marie Wiebe, eds., "States of Emergency/Emergence: Learning from Mauna Kea," *Abolition Journal: A Journal of Insurgent Politics*, https://abolitionjournal.org/category/learning-from-mauna-kea/; "Mauna Kea Forum," *Radical History Review: The Abusable Past*, August 14, 2019, https://www.radicalhistoryreview.org/abusablepast/category/forums/mauna-kea/.

[55] For more on this early history of resistance, see Noenoe Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

[56] Tina Grandinetti, "Urban aloha ʻāina: Kakaʻako and a decolonized right to the city," *Settler Colonial Studies* 9, no. 2 (2019): 231, https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2017.1409400.

[57] Epeli Hauʻofa, "Pasts to Remember," in *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works* (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2008), 75.

[58] See George Kent, "Food Security in Hawaiʻi," in *Food and Power in Hawaiʻi: Visions of Food Democracy*, eds. Aya Hirata Kimura, Krisnawati Suryanata, Christine R. Yano, and Robert Ji-Song Ku (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2016), 36–53.

[59] See Barry Sanders, *The Green Zone: The Environmental Costs of Militarism* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2009). For more on the effects of militarism in Hawaiʻi, see Kathy E. Ferguson and Phyllis Turnbull, *Oh, Say, Can You See: The Semiotics of the Military in Hawaiʻi* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Haunani-Kay Trask, "The Color of Violence," *Social Justice* 31, no. 4 (2004): 8–16; Kyle Kajihiro, "Resisting Militarization in Hawaiʻi," in *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle Against U.S. Military Posts*, ed. Catherine Lutz (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 299–231.

[60] Nisbet, *Ecologies, Environments, and Energy Systems*, 99.

[61] Newton Harrison and Helen Mayer Harrison, *The Time of the Force Majeure: After 45 Years Counterforce is on the Horizon*, eds. Petra Kruse and Kai Reschke (Munich: Prestel, 2016), 18–20.

[62] Helen Mayer Harrison did eventually utilize the earth Harrison made in her own works, such as *Making Strawberry Jam/Strawberry Wall* (1972).

[63] Barbara C. Matilsky, *Fragile Ecologies: Contemporary Artists' Interpretations and Solutions* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), 39.

[64] The University of California, San Diego is located in the area now known as La Jolla, which is on the unceded homelands of the Kumeyaay. As I write this note in fall 2020, the Kumeyaay are currently occupying Camp LandBack along the US–Mexico border attempting to halt construction of the border wall. Beginning in late 2017, Swiss artist Christoph Büchel faced immense backlash for proposing to preserve a number of US border wall prototypes as works of land art.

[65] *Making Earth* has been reenacted and exhibited multiple times since its initial documented performance, although always in a slightly different context than the original. From 1977–78, the Harrisons scaled up the project considerably with *Art Park: Spoils' Pile Reclamation*, in

which they attempted to reclaim a large piece of degraded land in Lewiston, New York. *Making Earth* was shown in Houston at the Contemporary Arts Museum's 1990 show *Revered Earth*, under the title *Making Earth Again*; in the 2018 Taipei Biennial; and most recently in the 2019 survey show *Counter Extinction Work* at Various Small Fires, a gallery in Los Angeles, under the title *On Making Earth*. In each of these latter cases, the Harrisons exhibited a wooden box of dirt containing manure, soil, and worms that staff shoveled and made into viable material over the duration of the respective installations, bringing the original durational performance recorded in the photos into the gallery space itself. Burlap sacks installed on the wall behind the container of dirt in the 2019 exhibition read, "Please. Take this earth to a place where the soil is poor. How will you know the soil is poor. You water it and not much happens. You leave it alone and not much happens. Feed this earth to this place where you find that the soil is poor. Thank you." Upon each show's closing, the soil inside the wooden box was distributed to visitors with the aim that they would use the soil in some capacity. The giving of soil is a poetic gesture, but not one that can be sized up on any noteworthy scale.

[66] It is only fair to note that the Harrisons created a work just a few years later titled *Meditation on the Gabrielino, Whose Name For Themselves Is No Longer Remembered Although We Know They Farmed With Fire and Fought Wars by Singing* (1976) that considered these issues in what is now Long Beach, California, although framed in a way that seemingly perpetuates the myth of Indigenous "extinction."

[67] Connelly, "Island Urbanism: The City as Soil System," 652.

[68] This and other uncited information was shared with me over a series of conversations and interviews with Connelly between 2019–21.

[69] Connelly has earned a doctoral degree in architecture from the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa and a master's in design from Harvard University Graduate School of Design. His professional art and architecture studio is After Oceanic. To properly construct *A Small Area of Land*, he consulted rammed earth building codes from Arizona and New Mexico.

[70] The process and resulting visible striation were akin to the cylindrical sculpture in Japanese artist Nobuo Sekine's (1942–2019) work *Phase—Mother Earth* (1968), which helped jump-start the Mono-ha movement. In *Phase—Mother Earth*, Sekine first dug a hole in the earth, using the same matter to then cast an adjacent positive form of the same shape and size. Importantly, he was only able to construct the sculpture into the desired form by interspersing cement through the newly unearthed material before compaction. Akira Tatehata, "Mono-ha and Japan's Crisis of the Modern," *Third Text* 16, no. 3 (2002): 224, https://doi.org/10.1080/09528820110160664. Like De Maria's earth rooms and the Harrisons' process of making earth, *Phase—Mother Earth* has been redone multiple times.

[71] See Kapulani Landgraf, "Ponoiwi," in *Detours: A Decolonial Guide to Hawaiʻi*, eds. Hōkūlani K. Aikau and Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 37–44. An image from the series, *Waikapū* (*Sacred Waters*), is also included in Lucy Lippard, *Undermining: A Wild Ride Through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West* (New York: The New Press, 2014), 11.

[72] Kapulani Landgraf, "Q+A: Kapulani Landgraf on *Ponoiwi*," interview by Lesa Griffith, *Honolulu Museum of Art* (blog), http://blog.honoluluacademy.org/qa-kapulani-landgraf-on-ponoiwi/.
[73] Landgraf, "Q+A: Kapulani Landgraf on *Ponoiwi*."
[74] For a history of Kakaʻako, see Adele Balderston, "Voices of Kakaʻako: A Narrative Atlas of Participatory Placemaking in Urban Honolulu" (master's thesis, CUNY Hunter College, 2016).
[75] Despite their seemingly rapid construction, Kakaʻako's high-rises were decades in the making. There is an obvious disconnect and, in fact, inverse effect, though, between the city's initial plans for the neighborhood—meant to address a need for housing—and how the development has actually panned out, with median prices much too high for low-income residents. Although new condominiums are still selling, they are not necessarily inhabited, often becoming second or third properties for continental American and foreign investors, primarily from Japan. And despite focused attempts to gentrify Kakaʻako, local shop owners have claimed some neighborhood areas are like a "ghost town," joking that there must be some kind of power outage at night because so few people live in the buildings. Stewart Yerton, "Kakaako's Empty Condos: 'At Night, It's A Ghost Town Down Here,'" *Honolulu Civil Beat*, June 10, 2019, https://www.civilbeat.org/2019/06/kakaakos-empty-condos-at-night-its-a-ghost-town-down-here/. Notably, this development is also taking place in an inundation zone that will only be increasingly threatened in the future by sea level rise and worsening tropical storms due to global climate change. The issue of sea level rise was highlighted in a recreation of artist Eve Mosher's *HighWaterLine* project in Honolulu as part of the 2020 exhibition *Inundation* curated by Jaimey Hamilton Faris. See https://www.inundation.org/highwaterline-honolulu.html.
[76] Regular sweeps by Honolulu Police often force these communities to another, nearby location, where the inhumane process only repeats itself. See Adam Nagourney, "Aloha and Welcome to Paradise. Unless You're Homeless," *New York Times*, June 3, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/04/us/hawaii-homeless-criminal-law-sitting-ban.html.
[77] Grandinetti, "Urban aloha ʻāina," 236.
[78] James Cave, "Kakaako's Block F: Too Good to Last?," *Honolulu Magazine*, July 1, 2013, https://www.honolulumagazine.com/kakaakos-block-f-too-good-to-last/.
[79] Grandinetti, "Urban aloha ʻāina," 240. It should be noted that The Howard Hughes Corporation, a continental American real estate company, is playing arguably the largest role in developing Kakaʻako, yet their participation in such practices is not necessarily noteworthy in and of itself, for they operate under no claim to responsibly provide anything for Hawaiʻi's residents.
[80] Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 7. Emphases in original.
[81] Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 8.
[82] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 5
[83] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 9.

[84] Annette Koh and Konia Freitas, "Is Honolulu a Hawaiian Place? Decolonizing Cities and the Redefinition of Spatial Legitimacy," *Planning Theory & Practice* 19, no. 2 (2018): 281, https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2018.1456816.
[85] Sean Connelly, "Urbanism as Island Living," in *The Value of Hawaiʻi 2: Ancestral Roots, Oceanic Visions*, eds. Aiko Yamashiro and Noelani Goodyear-Kaʻōpua (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2014), 89. For a continuation of these ideas, see Sean Connelly, "Our City as Ahupuaʻa: For Justice-Advancing Futures," in *The Value of Hawaiʻi 3: Hulihia, the Turning*, eds. Noelani Goodyear-Kaʻōpua, Craig Howes, Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwoʻole Osorio, and Aiko Yamashiro (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2020), 231-236.
[86] 88 Block Walks (website), http://www.88blockwalks.com.
[87] For more on Connelly's 88 Block Walks tour, see Anna Harmon, "The Lost Waterways of Hawaiʻi," *Flux Hawaiʻi*, August 20, 2014, https://fluxhawaii.com/the-lost-waterways-of-hawaii/. See also Tina Grandinetti, "Unearthing ʻAuwai and Urban Histories in Kakaʻako," in *Detours: A Decolonial Guide to Hawaiʻi*, eds. Hōkūlani K. Aikau and Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 315–325.
[88] The entire "installation" is viewable at https://hawaii-futures.com. Again, Connelly's interests have land art antecedents, such as Robert Smithson's analysis of the work of landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. See Robert Smithson, "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 157–171. In Hawaiʻi, the past is often referred to as *ka wā mamua*, or "the time in front or before," and the future as *ka wā mahope*, or "the time which comes after or behind." Such an orientation requires one to stand with "his back to the future, and his eyes fixed upon the past, seeking historical answers for present-day dilemmas." See Kameʻeleihiwa, *Native Land and Foreign Desires*, 22–23.
[89] Tina Grandinetti, "Re-Scape the City," *Summit* 1.2 (2015), 101. See also Sean Connelly, "Recovering the Technology of Paradise," talk presented at TEDxMaui 2013, Kahului, Hawaiʻi, January 13, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEe9XKOj3Mw.
[90] Two prominent examples of this on Turtle Island include the work by Yellowhead Institute in Canada—particularly their "Land Back" report—and The Red Nation's "The Red Deal," an Indigenous critique of proposals for a Green New Deal in the United States.
[91] The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems*, https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/.
[92] "A Small Area of Land (Kakaʻako Earth Room)," https://www.ao-projects.com/ASAOL-2013.

PACIFIC ARTS
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

CAROL E. MAYER

T-shirts and Turtles: Art and Environmental Activism on Erub, Torres Strait

Abstract

North Australia is one of the last remaining safe havens for endangered marine species. For Erub Islanders, sea turtles are both a traditional source of food and an integral part of their belief systems and culture. Between 2005 and 2015, up to ten thousand sea turtles across the globe have been entangled in "ghost-nets," fishing nets that have been lost, abandoned, or discarded in the ocean. These nets trap marine wildlife invisibly and silently, hence the term "ghost." Sea turtles are especially vulnerable to entanglement in ghost-nets. Erub Islanders began to gather the nets that washed up on the beaches and were caught in the reefs, often with dead animals ensnared in the webbing. They took the nets apart to see whether they could be used for crafts. They used the multi-coloured strands that run through the centre of the ropes to weave figures of small animals and full-scale figures of sea turtles and other large creatures of the Pacific. Today, ghost-net sculptures are part of a worldwide movement: the artists of Erub work with local and international museums to express their environmental activism by creating powerful art installations that bring awareness to the global destruction of our oceans.

Keywords: *ghost-nets, Erub Island, art, environmental activism, Australia, Museum of Anthropology (University of British Columbia), endangered species*

> *It all comes back to the sea. We are all connected by the world's oceans. Making art is really making meaning. My art helps me understand and make sense of the world.*
>
> —*Florence Gutchen, artist, Erub*

In 2002, I travelled to the island of Erub, in the Torres Strait, north of Australia, to attend celebrations being held for a successful Native Title claim—a legal milestone that would have seen Indigenous land rights recognized over all the outer community islands in the Strait. At the eleventh hour, however, the federal court overseeing the case withdrew its consent, leaving the islanders with nothing to celebrate. On Erub, the people responded by choosing to take a positive step: they decided to go ahead and celebrate their traditional ownership of the Island despite the court proceedings being unsuccessful. For them, the legal win was just being delayed.[1] I was privileged to witness and film the daylong celebrations. A commemorative T-shirt had been made for the occasion; I bought one and it is now on display in the Multiversity Galleries at the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology (MOA) (Fig. 1)—a tangible memory of both a great day and the islanders' determination to respond constructively to challenges to their Indigenous rights.[2]

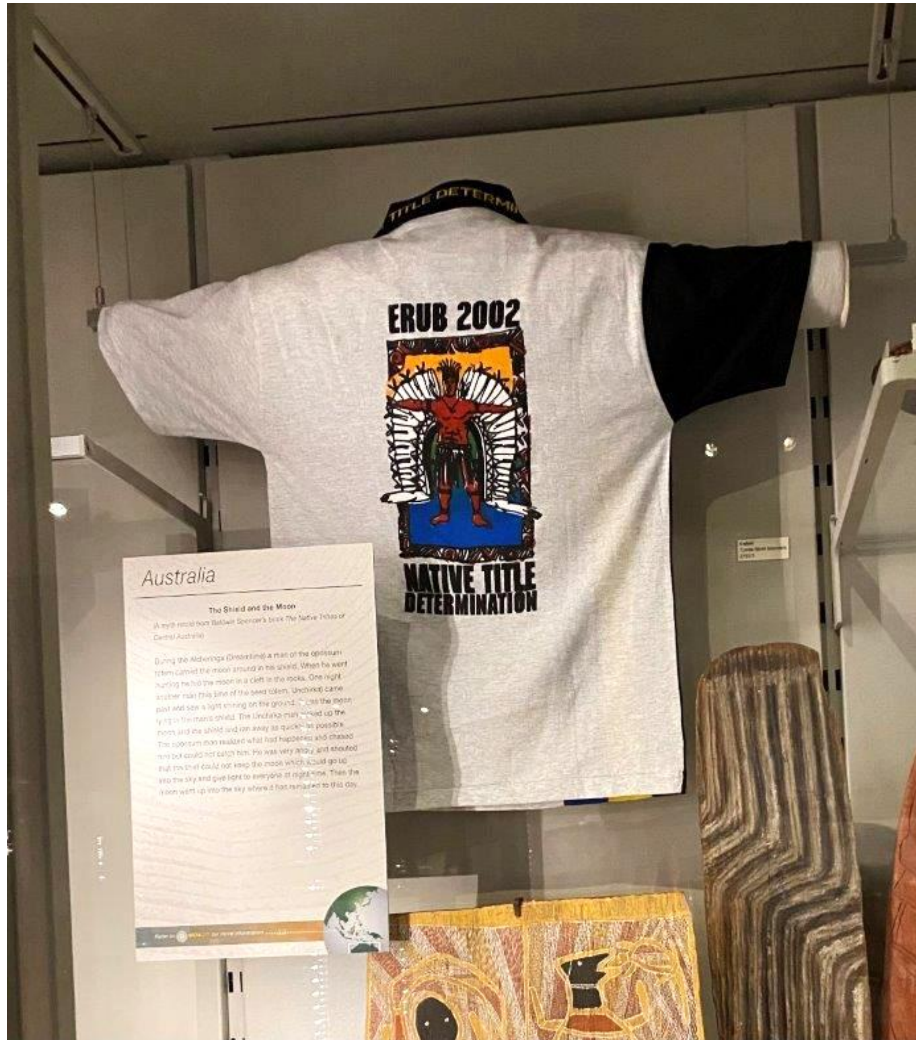

Figure 1. View of "Erub 2002 – Native Title Determination" T-shirt, design by Erub artist, Lorenzo Ketchell, on display at the Museum of Anthropology (MOA), University of British Columbia, 2021. Photograph by Carol E. Mayer. Courtesy of MOA

This determination was demonstrated again when Islanders brought global attention to the pollution that was threatening their Indigenous right to protect their marine environment. North Australia is one of the last remaining safe havens for endangered marine species. For Erub Islanders, sea turtles are both a traditional source of food and an integral part of their belief systems and culture. Between 2005 and 2015, up to 10,000 sea turtles across the globe became entangled in "ghost-nets," fishing nets that have been lost, abandoned, or discarded in the ocean. These nets entangle marine wildlife invisibly and silently, hence the term "ghost." Sea turtles are especially vulnerable to entanglement in ghost-nets. Erub Islanders began to gather the nets that washed up on the beaches and were caught in the reefs, often

with dead animals entangled in the webbing. They took the nets apart to see whether they could be used for crafts. They used the multi-coloured strands that run through the centre of the ropes to weave figures of small animals. They then decided to go big, creating full-scale figures of sea turtles and other large creatures of the Pacific.

Figure 2. Detail of exhibition *Ghost Nets of the Ocean*, Ethnography Museum Geneva, 2017. Photograph courtesy of Carol E. Mayer

I first encountered ghost-net sculptures in 2017, when they were installed in the exhibition *Ghost Nets of the Ocean* at the Ethnography Museum Geneva. It was a powerful installation; lifelike, colourful sculptures of sea creatures seemed to swim and cavort above the heads of visitors (Fig. 2). The creatures' playful, captivating appearance was tempered by the installation's wall text, which revealed they represented the thousands of endangered sea

animals killed by abandoned fishnets in the world's oceans. This wasn't just art, it was environmental advocacy seeking to bring awareness to the global destruction of our oceans. When I realized these creatures had been made by the people of Erub Island, I was struck by the similar messages between these sculptures and the Native Title T-shirt I had purchased so many years before: both reflected the tenacity of a small community of 400 people in deploying creativity to bring attention to global challenges, whether political or environmental. Clearly, this was a good reason to acquire some ghost-net sculptures for MOA, which has an ongoing commitment to exhibitions that advocate for Indigenous rights and address some of the globe's most pressing environmental challenges.[3] With monies from one of the museum's strategic acquisition funds, I was able to purchase a hammerhead shark sculpture and commission a giant turtle for MOA.[4] Both sculptures were intended for permanent installation in the Pacific area of the museum's galleries.

Figure 3. Left to right: Racy Oui-Pitt, Florence Gutchen, Carol E. Mayer, Ethel Charlie, Nancy Naawi working on ghost-net sculptures at Erub Arts, 2018. Photograph courtesy of Lynnette Griffiths

The model for creating ghost-net sculptures on a large scale was set up with non-Indigenous facilitators who worked alongside community members, as opposed to just teaching them fabrication skills. Lynnette Griffiths, artistic director of Erub Arts, explains that "the

transfer of skills both ways, and of culture both ways, was really important."[5] The artists, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, worked collaboratively, all participating in the development of the designs, shapes, and forms of the sea creatures and sharing roles in creating each sculpture (Fig. 3). "The net seems to bring people together," says Griffiths. "It's not just about the technique; your weaving process translates into your conversations."[6]

These large sculptures soon caught the attention of the Australian Museum in Sydney, and one was commissioned for the collection.[7] Today, ghost-net sculptures are part of a global movement. The artists of Erub work with museums worldwide to create powerful installations that oscillate between expressionist art and environmental activism, while also being a source of economic stability for their community. "Our art is raising global awareness around this destructive problem," says Erub artist Jimmy K. Thaiday. "The environment is important to us. We are all connected by the world's oceans."[8]

Figure 4. Ghost-nets at Erub Arts, 2018. Photograph courtesy of Carol E. Mayer

In 2018, I journeyed back to Erub to document the making of MOA's ghost-net sculpture commission: a giant sea turtle. I arrived at Erub Arts, where the artists work, to see hundreds of metres of fishing nets strewn everywhere, all waiting to become works of art (Fig. 4). The metal framework for MOA's turtle, already welded together by Thaiday, lay on a table ready for other artists to begin their work with the netting. Griffiths told me that working with the nets grows on you.

> We know nets are a menace now, but it started off catching fish for somebody's nourishment and for lives, for people. It's become rubbish, and it's become disused and a menace. But as you touch it and work with it, you think about all those things and they become really important to you; and then, as you weave it back together, you're weaving back life into something that had life in the beginning. I think that is very powerful and it's a powerful message. The oceans and waterways of all kinds are precious to us.[9]

Figure 5. Left to right: Ellarose Savage, Ethel Charlie, Racy Oui-Pitt, Florence Gutchen with unfinished sculpture *Eip Kor Korr* at Erub Arts, 2018. Photograph courtesy of Lynnette Griffiths

During my time on Erub I saw the sea turtle's shell, flippers, underbelly, and head take shape. About halfway through the process, the decision was made that MOA's turtle would be a medium sized female specimen. Florence Gutchen, one of the artists, said, "We are making this turtle for the museum in British Columbia. It is a middle-sized turtle. In Erub language we call it Eip Kor Korr; she is a teenager! I am making the flipper" (Fig. 5). There was no question of *Eip Kor Korr* travelling home with me, because she first had another journey to make. She was wrapped, crated, and shipped to Cairns where she was exhibited alongside other ghost-net sculptures at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair. She was then re-crated and flown more than 7,000 miles to Vancouver, where she was unpacked at MOA for her installation in the Multiversity Galleries opposite the Erub T-shirt from 2002. Today she swims above museum visitors' heads alongside a hammerhead shark, where she is, as Florence says, "a beautiful piece of art declaring the message that we must keep the water clean; we look after the sea and the sea looks after us" (Fig. 6).[10]

Figure 6. Installation of *Eip Kor Korr* (sea turtle) and *Irawapaup* (hammerhead shark) at MOA, University of British Columbia, 2019. Photograph by Ken Mayer. Courtesy of MOA

In February 2019, MOA welcomed Griffiths and Gutchen to the museum as the University of British Columbia's Andrew Fellowship Artists in Residence; they would share their practice and meet as many artists and community members as possible. They were here for three weeks—a short time, but this was the maximum period of time that they could be away from the island due to family and other commitments. Florence and Lynnette also intended to use the opportunity to make contacts and build networks with others working in environmental activism. To this end they met Joel Baziuk, the CEO of the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) based in Steveston, British Columbia.[11] Erub Arts is one of 130 members of the GGGI, and Baziuk keeps them in touch with the status of ghost-net activism in other parts of the world. The artists also travelled to Vancouver Island, where they met Dr. Henry Choong, a scientist at the Royal British Columbia Museum analysing the sea life found in the fishing nets and other detritus that washed up on British Columbia's shores following the earthquake and tsunami in Japan in March 2011. Griffiths and Gutchen agreed to send Dr. Choong netting from Erub for analysis alongside nets that had travelled across the Pacific.

Griffiths and Gutchen also visited the Vancouver Aquarium, where they visited *Vortex*, an exhibition curated by artist Doug Coupland examining plastic waste in the Pacific Ocean and specifically the "Great Pacific Garbage Patch." Coupland's intent, similar to theirs, was to "immerse visitors in a contemplative, emotive, and transformative experience at the nexus between art and environment."[12] In addition, they met Tofino-based artist Peter Clarkson, who is famous for creating art from detritus washed ashore. They exchanged fishing nets with him so that each could make art from nets found on the other side of the world from them. The artists and Clarkson have stayed in touch since the residency, and there is talk of an exchange visit.[13]

Workshops were an important component of the artists' residency. Both women held workshops at downtown schools, at the museum, and for the Musqueam Indian Band, a First Nations community on whose ancestral lands the museum is located. All these workshops enabled participants to share their thoughts about the art and environmental challenges while creating ghost-net "scales" for the metal skeleton of a large fish made on Erub. Underscoring the global relevance of the ghost-net sculptures, the creation of the fish's scales began in a workshop in Australia, continued with more scales added at each public program in Vancouver, and wrapped up in workshops at the Cambridge Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology in England. Finally, the fish sculpture, named *Barry the Barracuda*, travelled back to Erub, where he was completed and gifted to the Sea Swift shipping company, which ships all the art from Erub to the mainland at no cost to the artists (Fig.7).

Figure 7. *Barry the Barracuda* workshop at MOA, University of British Columbia, 2019. Photograph by Skooker Broom. Courtesy of MOA

In her final report to the Andrew Fellowship, Griffiths wrote, "With the plight and growing awareness around ocean plastic pollution, this residency was timely and important—bringing people with shared values together across the Pacific has created a new pathway and network connections that has seeded ideas and allowed me to explore laneways off the major arterial. I look forward to building on this, spending more time exploring and producing a greater body of artistic work."[14] Gutchen commented, "It was challenging for me to be by myself in another country for three weeks. It is not very often an island person who is married with children and grandchildren gets this opportunity to focus on others' knowledge and the environment. I have learnt much about other people's culture and their history. AUESWAO (big thank you)."[15]

During the final days of their residency, Griffiths and Gutchen gifted ghost-net sculptures of a jellyfish, a small turtle, and a small squid to MOA. The squid was made for a presentation to the O'Brian Strategic Acquisitions Fund that included a request for the commissioning of a 12-foot-long giant squid ghost-net sculpture (Fig. 8). Named *Sauge* after one of the

women artists, she arrived at MOA in January 2021 and is now mounted outside the Australian display that houses the T-shirt acquired nineteen years ago. She is swimming towards the giant turtle, hammerhead shark, and five jellyfish.

Figure 8. Giant squid *Sauge* and her Erub creators: Jimmy J. Thaiday, Lavinia Ketchell, Rachel Emma Gela, Ethel Charlie, Racy Oui-Pitt, Ellarose Savage, Florence Gutchen, Nancy Naawi, 2020. Photograph courtesy of Lynnette Griffiths

The artists who created the sculptures in the attention-getting installation have reached far beyond the shores of their tiny island. Their environmental activism is expressed through these works of art, and provides a positive alternative to feeling overwhelmed by the current global environmental crisis. "Ghost net is a real menace to marine life," says Erub artist Racy Oui-Pitt. "When you see the reef, you want to protect it. You want to pick up things and do something and make something out of it, anything, also something for yourself, too."[16] See for yourself: Pick up some garbage from the sea and make a turtle—it will help.

Carol E. Mayer, PhD, FCMA, is head of the Curatorial and Design Department at the Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia (UBC), where she is also responsible for the Pacific collections. Her research interests include the history of Pacific Islands collections in Canada, the exploration of intellectual property rights, and the building of collaborative networks between the Pacific and the Pacific Northwest. These interests are reflected in Dr. Mayer's numerous exhibitions, publications and conference papers. She has received several recognitions including the UBC President's Medal of Excellence, the Independence Medal (Republic of Vanuatu), the Malu Dala Award (Pacific Arts Association), and awards from the Canadian Museums Association and the International Council of Museums.

Notes

[1] Native Title was granted two years later. See National Native Title Tribunal, Federal Court of Australia, Tribunal file no. QCD2004/005, Federal Court Number(s): QUD6036/1998, http://www.nntt.gov.au/searchRegApps/NativeTitleRegisters

[2] The author is head of the Curatorial and Design Department at MOA.

[3] MOA has hosted four exhibitions related to the environment in the past few years: *Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun: Unceded Territories* (May 10, 2016 – October 16, 2016); *In the Footprint of the Crocodile Man: Contemporary Arts of the Sepik River, Papua New Guinea* (March 1, 2016 – January 31, 2017); *Amazonia: The Rights of Nature* (March 10, 2017 – January 28, 2018); and *Marking the Infinite: Contemporary Women Artists from Aboriginal Australia* (November 1, 2018 – March 31, 2018). See www.moa.ubc.ca /past-exhibitions/.

[4] On Erub, sharks are viewed as totems and ancestors as well as symbols of law and order.

[5] Lynnette Griffiths, personal communication, April 26, 2021. Lynnette Griffiths, a multimedia artist, and Marion Gaemers, who works with basketry traditions, have both taught and practised for many years in the Torres Strait, working collaboratively with the small communities across the islands. See Lynnette Griffiths and Marion Gaemers, *Final Curtain* (Townsville, Australia: Umbrella Studio Contemporary Arts, 2020), accessed March 21, 2021, https://umbrella.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Final-Curtain_eCatalogue.pdf.

[6] Griffiths, personal communication, April 26, 2021.

[7] The world's largest collection of ghost-net art is held at the Australian National Maritime Museum. In 2018, the commissioned sculpture was shown in the exhibition *Au Karem Ira Lamar Lu: Ghost Nets of the Ocean*. See also, Australian Museum, "Ghost Net Art from Darnley Island (Erub), https://australian.museum/learn/cultures/atsi-collection/ghost-net-art/ghost-net-art-from-darnley-island/, accessed April 24, 2021.

[8] "Au Karem Ira Lamar Lu: Ghost Nets of the Ocean," Australian National Maritime Museum, accessed February 10 2019, https://www.sea.museum/whats-on/exhibitions/ghost-nets-of-the-ocean.

[9] "Ocean Life 2," ReDot Fine Art Gallery, April 1, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFc7Hx6F3Ss.

[10] Final Report to the Andrew Fellowship, University of British Columbia, July 16, 2019, n.p.

[11] "The Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) is a cross stakeholder alliance of fishing industry, private sector, corporations, NGOs, academia and governments focused on solving the problem of lost and abandoned fishing gear worldwide. We believe the solution to this problem lies in working together across all sectors to achieve maximum impact for our oceans and the life within them." Global Ghost Gear Initiative, accessed February 10, 2019, https://www.ghostgear.org/.

[12] *Vortex*, Douglas Coupland (website), accessed February 10, 2019, https://coupland.com/vortex/.

[13] Pete Clarkson, The Art of Pete Clarkson (website), accessed February 10, 2019, http://peteclarkson.com/.

[14] Final Report to the Andrew Fellowship, n.p.

[15] Ibid.

[16] "Au Karem Ira Lamar Lu: Ghost Nets of the Ocean."

PACIFIC ARTS
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

MARION STRUCK-GARBE

Artists Concern: Visualising Environmental Destruction in Papua New Guinea

Abstract
This article presents ways in which two contemporary artists in Papua New Guinea (PNG) are dealing with issues of climate change and the destruction of nature in PNG and the Pacific at large through their art. Laben Sakale John and Gazellah Bruder are two well-known PNG artists who visualise their feelings and thoughts about environmental degradation and the impact of climate change in intense and expressive ways. Laben Sakale John addresses tropical storms and Australian bushfires, while Gazellah Bruder is concerned about ocean pollution, deforestation in PNG, and the extinction of wildlife. Both are aware that the lifestyles of Indigenous peoples and their traditional livelihoods are also threatened. Their works of art evoke a sense of loss and sadness but also of urgency, that something effective must be done—by all of us—to combat climate change on a global scale.

Keywords: *Pacific, Papua New Guinea, contemporary art, artists, climate change, environmental destruction, destruction of nature*

For decades, Papua New Guinea (PNG)—a country in which more than 80 percent of the population still makes their living off the water and land in remote rural areas—has suffered from environmental degradation, habitat loss, decreasing biodiversity, and pollution from mining. Poor governance has led to unsustainable resource-use practices and serious damage to the environment. The long-lasting exploitation of forests and the clearing of land for agribusiness projects such as palm oil plantations have led to extensive loss of forest areas. Open-pit mining and the disposal of mine tailings have resulted in the pollution of rivers, coastlines, and the ocean. These environmental wrongdoings no longer happen unnoticed, as increasing numbers of the population are engaging in local protests against practices that negatively affect their lives.

Environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have been raising awareness and promoting education about the destruction of flora and fauna in PNG since 1975, when the country gained its independence from Australia.[1] In 2008 some contemporary artists in its major cities began addressing climate change and its consequences for the people of PNG in their work, communicating the threats that land loss and ocean pollution pose to the nation's

collective livelihood.[2] Some of their art also accused foreign industrial nations of being responsible for the climate crisis in the Pacific region.[3] These artists have contributed to a greater awareness among people that have had difficulty unifying due to tribal boundaries, remote terrain, and resulting isolation. Advocacy and actions against government decisions that negatively impact the environment are increasing. Internet access and mobile phones now enable a broader and faster distribution of knowledge and information. Thus, people gradually begin to realise that they still are vulnerable and are living in an age in which humans are damaging the environment. As Susan Cochrane has noted in the same context, "Art, in all its forms of expression, is a powerful tool to deliver strong messages in a way that scientific language cannot."[4]

Figure 1. Laben Sakale John, *Cyclone*, 2020. Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 30cm. Courtesy of the artist

Beyond the Horizon

Laben Sakale John is one of the best known Papua New Guinea artists who addresses political and social issues.[5] He is a painter, printmaker, illustrator, and photographer in Port Moresby,

the capital of PNG. While Sakale John often portrays family themes—mother and child, everyday life, and domestic violence—in his work, he also addresses environmental issues and the consequences of climate change. He usually paints in a distinctive abstract style with intensive colouring in which blue plays a central role. The two small paintings discussed in this paper are rather atypical for his painting style in their more realistic representation. Sakale John comments on his recent work in this way: "The Pacific island countries inclusive [of] Papua New Guinea are experiencing rising sea levels. Some of our islands may not be around in 20 years' time."[6] When asked how he became interested in environmental issues, he replied:

> I first took environmental pictures when I saw on TV and read in newspapers about the sea-level rise in Mortlock Island, an island in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. That rise is a direct result of climate change. Apart from watching videos and seeing photographs of the effects of climate change, I as an artist was convicted to visually present climate change through my paintings. Through paintings people can relate well to the effects of climate change.[7]

The life-threatening impact of climate change—including rising sea levels and violent storms—is forcefully depicted in his 2020 painting *Cyclone* (Fig. 1); the sea floods the coast, overland power lines collapse, strong winds bend palms, and houses are washed away. It seems as if all life is swallowed by the blue of the sea. According to Sakale John, the cyclone in the painting doesn't refer to any particular cyclone but represents one of the many natural disasters that strike the Pacific islands. The powerful brushstrokes underscore the cultural and environmental trauma, and the unleashed elements seem palpable. The sea, revered by Pacific Islanders as a provider of food, becomes the enemy.

In Sakale John's *Australian Bushfire* (Fig. 2) he focuses his climate change concern on the neighbouring country of Australia and the fierce, devastating bushfires it experienced in 2019–2020. Sakale John has strong connections to Australia; he has had exhibitions in several Australian cities and many of his customers and collectors live there. In addition, he has curated two exhibitions of work by artists from PNG in Brisbane. While working in Australia, Sakale John had an immediate experience of the spreading bushfires:

> I was in Brisbane during the time when the bushfires began to take much of Queensland. The house of a good friend of mine was about to be burnt by the fires. Thus, I volunteered to help put the fire out but, lucky enough, the fires didn't get to the house. But there I learnt of several properties lost and many becoming homeless . . . Every time when PNG is troubled with natural disasters Australians are always the first to respond, so I felt from within my heart that I needed to help in my own way . . . That's why I did the Australian bushfire painting.[8]

Bushfires also occur in PNG, but the presence of the kangaroo in Sakale John's painting makes explicit that this is a bushfire in Australia. The kangaroo appears to have nowhere to go and seems to be trapped, with fire creeping up the trees and blazing on the ground. The bright red underscores the intensity of the ecological fiasco.

Figure 2. Laben Sakale John, *Australian Bushfire*, 2020. Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 30cm. Courtesy of the artist

PNG artists often reflect on the beauty and diversity of their culture, drawing inspiration from traditional bodily adornment and village life. Works by PNG artists have themes and motifs that are predominantly related to PNG; they often express a longing for the past, a desire for social improvements, they address realities of life in the country, and increasingly effects of climate change on the islands and their people. With Sakale John's work *Australian Bushfire*, we have an image that looks beyond the horizon. Knowing PNG's long legacy of political and economic interdependence with Australia, it sends a remarkable cosmopolitan message when a PNG artist picks this motif to express his compassion for all living creatures, including those in neighbouring Australia.[9] Sakale John sees the alarming effects of climate change as a cause for concern at the global level *as well as* the local level. He connects the two in his own statement on the painting where he highlights his concerns: "The earth is getting

warmer and hotter and as such most plants and big forests dry up leaving them prone to bushfires. In PNG we do have many of these bushfires that usually burn during long dry seasons."[10]

A Courageous Approach

Just as Sakale John's paintings address the vulnerability of nature and all life, including the global-warming-induced risks to which humans are exposed, the work of Gazellah Bruder concerns the consequences of ocean pollution. One of the most famous female artists in PNG, Bruder received her diploma in fine arts at the local University of Papua New Guinea at the age of 19.[11] She developed a unique painting style early on, one which differs significantly from those of other PNG artists, because traditional PNG motifs, patterns, and objects are rarely found in her work. Since then she has dealt in her arts and in public statements with what it means to be a woman in today's PNG and she often addresses current issues such as oppression, violence, and inequality. For three years now she has engaged with the theme of environment. Many of her works have been shown nationally and internationally, especially in Australia, Great Britain, and Germany.

In two of her recent paintings, Bruder deals with the consequences of ocean pollution. In *The Weeping Turtle* (2020, Fig. 3) she depicts a hybrid creature composed of a fish, a bird, and a turtle using bright, strong colours like blue for fish and sea and a deep-red turtle heart. They all live in a threatened ocean environment. The painting shows the common suffering these sea creatures experience as the ocean is no longer able to provide them with shelter, space, food, and other resources necessary for life. Plastic and toxic waste has changed the substance and the surface of the ocean. The marine animals no longer find food easily and they become restricted in their movement. Bruder's creature seems to be caught in a net, the one visible eye dazed, confused, and appearing to weep, yet its vivid green colours suggest the will to live. In the words of the artist:

> The heart of the ocean is broken. Man has wreaked destruction upon its habitat and marine life: overfishing, pollution, and the literal danger that drag nets and plastics pose to sea turtles and other vulnerable marine life. The turtle weeps at the future of its species, of the future of the sea birds and all fish . . .[12]

The people in the top right edge of the painting seem to be along the shoreline and might have little interest in what happens to the sea. They seem to go about their business as usual, while the turtle cries.

Figure 3. Gazellah Bruder, *The Weeping Turtle*, 2020. Mixed media on canvas, 30 x 40 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Bruder also conveys the desperation she feels in the face of environmental disasters in the form of poetry:

THE WEEPING TURTLE

I imagine Grandfather Turtle
Old man of the seas
He weeps at the destruction
And havoc wreaked upon the
Earth, sky and great waters . . . His great heart broken,
For all of creation

Humankind has polluted its airways
Choked and strangled
Poisoned the air
And burned the earth
Scorched under the burning sun

Grandfather Turtle, can barely
Swim from ocean to ocean
Its seas once a playground
For play, suffocated
With debris of a thousand ships

As humankind plays
God, judge and jury,
The icecaps melt and our
Seashores vanish

Nature wreaks havoc
As earth, wind and fire
Devoured leave mankind
A barren wasteland
Unfit and inadequate
A fitting end and woe
To humanity's selfishness

Bruder's poem suggests that people living on land will share the fate of the animals of the sea. For them, too, the sea is like a mother that nourishes and connects with others. The people standing at the edge of Bruder's canvas represent individual citizens' position: watching the sea and the land being exploited and polluted by corporations. Their red background,

thus, appears as a warning, while the bright red heart in the composition is the heart of the ocean which is truly hurt.

Figure 4. Gazellah Bruder, *Scorched*, 2020. Mixed media on canvas, 30 x 40 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Scorched (2020, Fig. 4) reveals the bitter consequences of this human behaviour. It shows only the skeleton of a turtle which is scorched due to a water shortage and extreme heat. The sea turtle seems to move from the blue-green area in the top left of the canvas, perhaps representing healthy living, to the yellow-red threatening area in the lower right to die a horrible death. The skull's eye sockets stare at withered plants in this inferno. The artist, with a furious and broad brushstroke, has dripped the colours very thickly to signal her emotional response, as if she were in a rage.

As a turtle can be found in many of her paintings, I asked Bruder what she associates with this animal and why she had chosen a turtle as her subject of environmental paintings. She stated:

> The turtle is in many cultures always depicted as [representing] ancient long life, gentle and unfathomable wisdom. For me personally, I always see my father in the old turtle being kind, gentle, and constant. It is symbolic of strength and endurance. Imagine this world . . . without turtles. These ancient seafarers, land dwellers, swamp inhabitants. Imagine a world without them. It would be devastating when the last sea turtle dies; when they cease to exist, [if] in our lifetime they became extinct.
>
> The turtle is my spirit animal. It is the creature I mostly identify with and hope to endure a lifetime as they do. I dream of someday visiting a nesting site for leatherback turtles or even the green turtle. In my lifetime I would like to witness hatchlings leave their nest for the ocean's edge.[13]

While Bruder's paintings perhaps speak to how exploitation has destroyed nature and its creatures, one can also see the artist referencing the devastation of all Papua New Guinea. Since the death of her father, she sees both herself and PNG as vulnerable. She has a strong bond with the Gazelle Peninsula in New Britain, where her father was from. This area has several mythological tales that feature a turtle as a central figure, often linked to the origin of the island. In the turtle she sees her paternal ancestors. Like her father, the turtle stands for protection, stability, and the continuation of life in the sea and on land. In her paintings, the suffering of the turtle is central, while in her poetry, people are central as the cause of suffering; their selfish and unreasonable behaviour kills life on earth and in the sea. With such wide-scale destruction, the turtle cannot fulfil its task as an environmental protector. Its tears, seen in *The Weeping Turtle*, do not help; it dies in *Scorched* and with its death the earth becomes a barren wasteland.

Bruder has composed a companion poem for this painting that underscores the desperation she feels in the face of the environmental disaster and harm:

SCORCHED

The heat comes in waves
As its hot burning flames
Scorch the leaves and Savannah grasslands
Billowing thick smoke
Fail to save… the flames
Devours our earth

What of it . . .
El Nina El Nino
Dry warm breeze
Tricks us, rain?
The air is hot,
Parched throats seek
Cool drench from heaven

The creeks they have dried up
Small springs leave no playground
For slippery tadpoles
Scorched, burnt to a crisp . . .
Literally touched, by the heavens

Yes, life ceases
Bones of the dead
Litter Mother Earth's apron
Evidence of life lived and lost

Rain clouds cease to exit
The blue sky now torments us
Gathering clouds
And gently blowing them away

Scorched. . . Our earth

Another subject that Bruder returns to through her art is issues of gender, often dealing with what it means to be a woman, especially in Papua New Guinea. The bodies of women repeatedly appear in her paintings and mono-prints. For her, the female body shows its true beauty in its imperfection; she sees in the body changed by pregnancy and childbirth proof of the emergence of a real woman, a truly beautiful woman who radiates self-confidence and asserts perseverance against all odds.[14] Consistently her theme is female identity and her reflection on her life as a single mother. At times she incorporates the female body in her artistic

confrontation of environmental issues, which simultaneously represents vulnerability, protection, and nurturing. Through her expressionist style Bruder wants to sensitize people to life itself and the significant role that women play in society. Women need to recognize their importance, she states, noting: "Appreciate your-self more than anyone else can. When you love yourself, you only invite what adds value to exist in your life. You empower yourself to rid your life of any form of toxicity."[15] It is from these ideas that she draws her own strength, which is conveyed through her artworks' strong brushstrokes and powerful colours.

Figure 5. Gazellah Bruder, *Beautiful Mother Nature*, 2020. Mixed media on canvas, 30 x 40 cm. Courtesy of the artist

In *Beautiful Mother Nature* (2020, Fig. 5), the female form seems to merge with the elements of the forest. The green-blue composition shows a woman rising from the unknown and merging with the yellow-green of the forest and land. Mother Nature is a woman of strength and confidence. Her legacy is to tell the world that there will always be new growth and life. The woman's body and ferns represent a more optimistic view than the two previous pictures. Despite the continuing destruction of the forests, the painting wants to convey hope. Mother Nature is ready to embrace all creatures and will ensure that the earth turns green again. The woman's body and ferns represent the new growth in a forest.

This painting is also accompanied by a poem, one that alleges that Papua New Guineans, in general, often neglect or destroy nature. At the same time the poem reinforces what is already in the painting. Here, Bruder invites us to see the beauty of nature while pointing out our current carelessness.

BEAUTIFUL MOTHER NATURE

Beautiful Mother Nature
She is the miracle
Born of fire and brimstone

From the ashes
She pushes forth
The curl of her Crown
From beneath
Devastation

From her bosom springs forth
Life . . . water . . .
Quenching the thirst
Quelling dying embers
Tempting life, push forward

Beautiful Mother Nature
She embraces all living things
Her apron the ferns
Her skirt the Savannah
Leaves cup her bosom

Her crown
Her head of hair
Delectable shoots to feed
The insects, birds and man

> Beautiful Mother Nature
> Why must we her children
> Forsake her, take her for granted
> Continue to show disdain
>
> Mother keeps us safe, she shelters
> Us, clothes us . . . feeds us . . .
> Think of how beautiful she is . . .

At the end of the poem, she seems to be more pessimistic, and this is evident in interviews with the artist. Bruder's view is that although Mother Nature takes care of people, her children, they do not take care of her; they even despise and devastate her:

> Such is our responsibility to make certain we protect them and their habitats. Man and his destructive behaviour consistently and continuously altered our earth and the ecosystems that exist. Driven by our greed to cut down every last tree, to harvest and overfish our oceans, our behaviours in how we continue to slash and burn, and pollute the air we breathe and our waters. What will it take to stop and change our behaviour? We have seen how in the last months, without our intention, the Pandemic Covid-19 has brought some healing to our earth. But, did we need to face such a devastating global event to force us to stop polluting our earth and to keep our humanity out of nature?
>
> My fear is that as we–the guardians of this great planet–continue to behave ignorantly the consequences will be irreversible and unforgivable.[16]

In these comments, as well as in her paintings and poems, Bruder goes beyond the usual accusations aimed at foreigners: that they are causing environmental damage and harm to the livelihood of PNG's Indigenous people. She implicates everyone globally and requires all, including the people of PNG, to take responsibility for the earth and its survival. This is a courageous approach.

Conclusion

This article provides a snapshot of two of PNG's contemporary artists dealing with themes like climate crises and the country's human-made environmental calamities. These artists visualize their concerns about how Papua New Guinea and the Oceania region are increasingly threatened by such disasters. The artworks and poetry of Laben Sakale John, Gazellah Bruder, and others—among them Alexander Mebri, Robert Kua, John Danger, Winnie Weoa, and Julie Mota—show the tragedy and suffering that people are experiencing due to environmental

degradation caused by climate crisis, natural disasters, overexploitation, deforestation, and ocean pollution. What will people have to eat when all fish are gone? When all rivers are polluted? Where will they go once they have lost their own gardens and their own land? Such are essential questions today.

Today's contemporary artists of PNG not only aim to attract local audiences—thereby raising awareness, stimulating debate, and perhaps even enhancing protests—but they also send strong messages to the outside global world. Their international audience has, however, remained essentially limited to nearby Australia and, in rare cases, extended to North America or Europe. Even in Papua New Guinea they have limited outreach. They can occasionally exhibit in Port Moresby's National Museum and Art Gallery and in the few private galleries or locations that are popping up. Moreover, these smaller art venues face uncertain futures because the local sales market remains small, with only handfuls of expatriates and tourists and a few middle-class individuals interested in buying pieces of art and paying in cash. Yet, the artists have begun to organize themselves and are coordinating their efforts. What used to be the monthly Ela Beach arts and craft market is now a weekly event that moves every Saturday to a different designated hotel location. This attracts a reasonable crowd of customers willing to purchase from the huge range of items exhibited. Street artists can supplement their income from what they sell and even most of the more recognized artists can make a living from selling their works.

It is difficult to assess to what extent artists can communicate their messages by selling at those events or on the roadside in front of the big hotels in Port Moresby, but their works and stories are also portrayed in weekend supplements of PNG's few newspapers and magazines. They communicate with their fellow Papua New Guineans not only through their art but with their written words as well. Nevertheless, print media rarely reaches the countryside. Thus, although the artists want to make a difference at home, their images are aimed more at audiences beyond Papua New Guinea's borders. As PNG's artists continue to navigate between the local and the global, these dilemmas have not yet been resolved.

The environmental threat is perceived differently by everyone. Its perception is shaped by one's own environment. Gazellah Bruder and Laben Sakale John live in an age where environmental degradation and damage has been felt and experienced for years. They show us how environmental factors make life in their home communities more precarious for both animals and humans. Extremely negative impacts on the well-being and livelihood of everyone, caused by human-induced climate crisis, deforestation, and marine pollution, are very evident. Because art makes visible what is otherwise hidden and thus enriches the human experience, triggers emotions, and poses questions, the works of Bruder and Sakale John make important contributions to PNG's reflection on environmental issues. These artists stimulate discourse and further a better understanding of what is currently going on at the local and global levels. As Jeff Koons is reported to have once said, "Art to me is a humanitarian act,

and I believe that there is a responsibility that art should somehow be able to affect mankind, to make the wor[l]d a better place - this is not a cliché!"[17]

The extent to which the works shown can live up to this statement also depends on possibilities to present them to a broad audience. In Papua New Guinea, this is essentially limited to a few places and a few events in the capital of Port Moresby. This means that a large majority of the population has limited opportunities to view and engage with these works of art, which are a kind of cry for help across borders, to the world, to the industrialised, rich nations which heavily participate in creating all this harm.

Marion Struck-Garbe is a graduate in Social Anthropology and Socio-Economics. She has worked on various subjects such as violence, international relations, ecology and contemporary art and literature in Oceania and is a lecturer at the Asia-Africa Institute of the University of Hamburg since 1987. As a student she lived and researched in Tonga and Fiji. In the nineties she lived five years in Papua New Guinea where she supported women artists and curated several exhibitions in Port Moresby. Since 2000 she organized about 20 exhibitions on PNG-contemporary art in Europe. She lives in Hamburg.

Notes

[1] Papua New Guinea (PNG) was colonized from 1884 onwards in various steps. While the western half of the island was already under Dutch rule, the eastern part became sub-divided into a German territory in the North and a British territory in the South. When Australia became an independent state in 1902, British New Guinea came under Australian rule. When the Germans entered into World War One in Europe (1914), Australia immediately moved to take the northern part of New Guinea as well and became the dominant colonial power in this area. During World War Two, the whole island became the scene of fierce fighting with Japanese troops (1942–1945). Huge numbers of American troops were stationed there supporting the Australians who, after the war ended, united the two administrative entities in the east of the island archipelago in 1949 as Papua and New Guinea. While the western half of the island, which tried to become independent in 1961, was violently incorporated by Indonesia (1961–1969), Australia turned around and pushed the country into independence in 1975 as Papua New Guinea, creating a convenient buffer zone in between itself and Indonesia.

[2] Marion Struck-Garbe, "Reflections on Climate Change by Contemporary Artists in Papua New Guinea," in *Pacific Climate Cultures: Living Climate Change in Oceania*, eds. Tony Crook and Peter Rudiak-Gould (Warsaw: De Gruyter Open Poland), 106–120, https://doi.org/10.2478/9783110591415.

[3] Alfred Banze, Marion Struck-Garbe and others, "*DEUTSCH 1914 / PAPUA NIUGINI 2014*", Artistic Dialogues about an almost forgotten Common Cultural History, exhibition catalogue, Camping Akademie, Berlin, 2015. See also the website "Deutsch 1914 / Papua Niugini 2014", http://papua2014.de.

[4] Susan Cochrane, "Floating Land—Rising Sea: Arts and Minds on Climate Change", *LiNQ* (*Literature in North Queensland*) 37, no. 1 (Dec. 2010): 93.
[5] Laben Sakale John was born in 1976 in the remote Hakwange area near Menyamya (Morobe Province). After his talent for painting was discovered at school, he received a scholarship to study at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Papua New Guinea, which he completed in 1998. His paintings can be easily recognized by their colourfulness and expressionist abstract painting style. His linocuts are characterized by bold patterns and strong lines. Here, too, the focus is on everyday life and the tension between gender roles. Besides painting, photography became a second artistic and professional mainstay for Sakale John. Today, he is an internationally recognized artist who has exhibited in the United States, Europe, New Zealand, and Australia. He curates an annual exhibition with art from PNG in Brisbane. Sakale John is an artist with all his heart; the love for what he creates and does every day is the driving force in all his works.
[6] Laben Sakale John, email messages to author, March 3, and August 18, 2020, January 20, 2021.
[7] Laben Sakale John, email message to author, March 3, 2020.
[8] Laben Sakale John, email message to author, August 18, 2020.
[9] Relations between PNG and its rich "big brother" Australia have been close but never easy, even post-independence. Australians started mining in PNG early on, built up what is now PNG's administration, and continue to support the country's NGOs and government with aid money. Some PNG artists have benefitted from Australian opportunities in terms of exhibitions, sales, and scholarships. At the same time, it is a deeply unequal relationship, creating among Papua New Guineans a feeling of being exploited, neglected, and belittled. The fact remains that when PNG is hit by major catastrophes like an earthquake, flood, tsunami, or volcanic eruption, Australia is always the first to provide humanitarian aid. Against all this background it is remarkable to see Sakale John engaging when his Australian friends were hit by the bushfire inferno, as did the PNG government, which sent PNG fire fighters to assist Australia.
[10] Laben Sakale John, email message to author, January 20, 2021.
[11] In 2011, Bruder continued her studies in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Papua New Guinea where she received an honorary degree in visual anthropology and earned a degree in art and design. During our last conversation, on September 29, 2019, in Port Moresby, she said, "For me, art is not only colour and beauty of the picture; art should also tell a story. In my works I express how I feel as a woman and how I live in Papua New Guinea. I paint and draw from the inside out." In her visual and written expressions Bruder shows the discrimination and harsh oppression endured by women and their ongoing struggle against it. At the same time, she emphasizes their beauty and her high regard for them as hard-working women. Again and again, she interprets female forms in a very special way, often in lino- and mono-prints. Bruder is a single mother of two and she has overcome some tough times. She managed by taking different jobs to make a living. She is a woman with a fighting spirit who does not give up hope. This is also reflected in her rich artwork.
[12] Gazellah Bruder, email messages to author, March 3, and August 18, 2020, January 20, 2021.
[13] Gazellah Bruder, email message to author, March 3, 2020.

[14] Marion Struck-Garbe, "Moderne Malerei Papua Neuguinesischer Künstlerinnen," *Pacific News* 20 (July/August 2003): 27–31, http://www.pacific-geographies.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/06/moderne-malerei-papua-neuguinea.pdf
[15] Gazellah Bruder, email message to author, August 18, 2020.
[16] Gazellah Bruder, email message to author, January 20, 2021.
[17] Jeff Koons, Journal of Contemporary Art (website), New York City, October 1986, accessed March 31, 2021, http://www.jca-online.com/koons.html

PACIFIC ARTS
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

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Natalie Robertson: Toxic Waters

Abstract

Natalie Robertson is a Māori photographic and moving image artist who currently lives and works in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Robertson, who is originally from Kawerau in the Bay of Plenty, belongs to the Ngāti Porou tribe. She has very strong ties to the land and to her iwi and as a tribe member shares responsibility for the life force of the Waiapu river. Her work explores Māori knowledge, practices and cultural landscapes, and also engages with conflicting settler and Indigenous relationships to land and place. Customary and contemporary mythologies of the land and space are the framework of Robertson's work, which also draws on paradoxes of economic development and environmental destruction and the effects that these have had not only on the environment, but also on its inhabitants. This paper examines her art practice, in particular, Uncle Tasman: The Trembling Current that Scars the Earth*, a three-screen video installation recorded at geothermal sites in the Eastern Bay of Plenty, and her photographic work* The Slow Catastrophe of the Waiapu River*, which was exhibited for the first time in Le Havre, France, in 2015 for the exhibition Pacifique(S) Contemporain, curated by Caroline Vercoe and Jacqueline Charles-Rault.*

Keywords: *Aotearoa New Zealand, Māori art, Natalie Robertson, photography, video art, environment*

Figure 1. Natalie Robertson, Auckland, 2008. Courtesy of Jacqueline Charles-Rault

Introduction

Natalie Robertson (Fig. 1) is a Māori photographer and film and video artist who currently lives and works in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand.[1] Her work explores Māori knowledge and cultural landscapes and engages with conflicting settler and Indigenous relationships to land and place. Originally from Kawerau in the Bay of Plenty, Robertson is of mixed heritage—Scottish (Clan Dhònnchaidh), French, and Māori—and belongs to the Ngāti Porou *iwi* (tribe) with which her family has close ties.[2] It took Robertson a number of years to build relationships with her *marae*[3] and to proclaim herself as Ngāti Porou. As a child, she didn't grow up near Tikapa Marae or even in the same region as her *iwi*, whose homeland is in the most easterly region of the North Island of New Zealand. As a young adult, she chose to travel and live abroad for two years, and spent some time living in London. On returning to Aotearoa, Robertson spent time learning from her maternal grandfather, David Hughes, who was brought up in the Ngāti Porou community in Port Awanui. He had inherited his mother Mabel's collectively-held Māori land shares and steadfastly retained them for future generations.

Robertson's quest for a deeper connection to her *iwi* and its land intensified while she was pursuing her master's degree in 1997 and working on the subject of land occupation. When reflecting on this moment, Robertson said,

> My Dad's family had ties to Whanganui and one branch of the family had stayed there and had land on the river. So, during these occupations I became really aware of the tensions between the settler history and Māori history and how that might manifest and how I might situate myself within that with all of those tensions. So, it did all begin as a trek back to my own *iwi* to start looking into how the land was and what the processes of caring for it were.[4]

This quest ultimately led to Robertson taking over her grandfather's responsibilities and becoming a trustee for her family's land. Inevitably, her relationship with the land at Waiapu grew from this and she explored it through her photographic and video work. Robertson discloses that this connection with her family's land enabled her to acquire a deeper understanding of her *whakapapa* (ancestral connections) and to become actively involved with her *marae*. According to Robertson,

> Māori is a word that means natural or ordinary, as the natural and ordinary people. It only became used as a descriptor post-European contact. It is one's tribal affiliations that matter to other Māori. The word "natural" is associated with life for the Māori. Their lives incorporate the philosophy of nature and the whole of our existence.[5]

This affiliation with her Māori origins is present in Robertson's photographic and moving image work, as she has spent a number of years making images of the rural land, rivers, seas, beaches, and mountains that are often associated with her *iwi* and its land. Her work is usually politically oriented, underscoring the social and environmental problems that Māori people have had to face in the past or are facing today. Robertson frequently documents the environmental destruction and havoc that is caused by humans, focusing on changes to the landscape and the consequences that these changes have on the *iwi* who rely on natural resources not only to survive but to maintain their traditions and their *whakapapa* (genealogy).

Figure 2. Natalie Robertson, *Uncle Tasman: The Trembling Current that Scars the Earth* (still) 2008. Three-channel video installation with sound, MIC Toi Rerehiko, Auckland, New Zealand. Courtesy of the artist

Uncle Tasman: The Trembling Current that Scars the Earth

Robertson's three-screen video installation *Uncle Tasman: The Trembling Current that Scars the Earth* was first presented in 2007 at the MIC Toi Rerehiko in Auckland. It examines the paradoxes concerning economic growth and environmental destruction in her hometown and the Bay of Plenty region while underscoring the contemporaneousness of Māori mythologies that relate to land and space. The three-channel video presents footage from different geothermal sites in the eastern Bay of Plenty, focusing on three mountains: Pūtauaki, Tarawera, and Whakaari (Fig. 2). The first channel shows a close-up view of hot, sulphuric vapours rising out of a rocky volcanic landscape; the second shows steam rising from geothermic hot springs with a mountain in the background; and the third shows a cascade of water, the size of which is difficult to determine. The camera remains still in each of these shots, never moving from its position during the 11 minutes and 11 seconds of video. A voiceover soundtrack recounts the misfortune endured by the people in Kawerau, Robertson's hometown, and its region through first-hand, eyewitness stories of environmental devastation, while also incorporating Māori mythologies, chants, and hakas. In the soundtrack you can hear predominately the cascading water overpowering the sound of the sulphuric gases from the hot springs. "The voice

of Te Haukakawa Te Rore an elder can be heard thirty seconds into the video, reciting a tauparapara, (chant), that is a lament meant for lost lands and waterways that echo back."[6]

During the pre-colonial period, the Bay of Plenty was densely populated with Māori who had settled there because of the region's natural geothermic springs. That all changed around 1870 with the arrival of the Pakeha (Europeans) who initially came to the region as tourists seeking the healing powers of the geothermic springs and then gradually settled there.[7] In 1953, the foundation of a mill for the Tasman Pulp and Paper Company was laid in Kawerau.[8] In the video installation, Robertson reveals how the activities of the mill, known locally as "Uncle Tasman," have wrought environmental devastation in Kawerau. As viewers watch the three-screen video installation of the natural wonders of the area, they hear recordings of locals who describe the environmentally destructive activities that were being carried out in Lake Rotoitipaku not only by the mill, but also by the federal government that authorized the dumping of the mill's industrial waste into the Tarawera River. The Tasman Pulp and Paper Company Enabling Act of 1954 states that the company could take water from the river and discharge "trade wastes" back into it. While the Act stipulates that trade waters should be discharged into the sewer system, the mill did not adhere to these regulations, and instead dumped their trade waste directly into the Tarawera River.

Robertson pinpoints the hypocrisy of those in power at that time by including eyewitness accounts of what happened at the mill in the installation's audio soundtrack.[9] One of the locals refers to the company's waste dumping: "They were able to take our lake away from us without any payment...what they did...was out of sight. No one could see what was actually going on. They dumped all, a lot of waste there."[10] The waste from the pulp and paper mill had disastrous consequences on the environment, the region, and its inhabitants. Greenpeace described it as "one of the worst toxic areas in the country."[11] At one point, the town of Kawerau had the highest age-standardised rate of cancer-related illness in the entire country.

Robertson spent a great deal of time researching the activities of the Tasman Pulp and Paper Company, looking at historical maps of nearby lakes and surrounding areas, and speaking to Māori who remembered fishing and swimming there shortly after the arrival of the paper mill. During her research, Robertson came across an 1883 map showing the exact location of Lake Rotoitipaku, a lake that was frequently used by the Māori of Kawerau for agricultural purposes and for the health benefits of its geothermal vapours. Elderly Māori have fond memories of the baths they had in the lake, which has now completely disappeared due to all the waste dumped into it over time, causing it to completely dry up. Over time, ordinance maps were altered to hide the pollution from the Tasman Pulp and Paper Mill and a different nearby lake was given the name Lake Rotoitipaku in order to cover up the paper mill's years of negligence.[12] In 2005, a court hearing at the Waitangi Tribunal in the Central North Island publicized the circumstances that led to the disappearance of the lake. Robertson interviewed Wayne Peters who recalled what happened when he was a schoolboy in the 1970s:

> My cousins and I went to have a look at the spillway. The sludge was slowly moving into the lake from the *ngawha* [hot pool] end. Little did we know this was the beginning of the end to our playground and food basket. Sadness filled our minds. Then anger took over. We knew what was happening was wrong. We lifted a big boulder from the side of the road and smashed the spillway. The workers fixed it up and we smashed it again. In time we came to realise the Rotoitipaku was gone FOREVER.[13]

Today, the estimated solid waste in the former lake bed is equivalent to 10,000 truckloads. Robertson, looking at a satellite photo, remarked that without local knowledge it would be impossible to know that the lake had ever existed.[14] Although none of the surveillance maps or condemning documents are present in Robertson's video installation, they are nonetheless important in understanding her actions and artistic choices from personal and political perspectives. In 2009, despite ongoing protests from the local residents, the Tasman Pulp and Paper Industry was granted permission to continue dumping waste into the Tarawera River for the next 25 years.[15]

Mountains have held a fundamental place in Robertson's life from an early age, when she could see the mountain Pūtauaki from her bedroom window. Not surprisingly, Māori storytelling about mountains finds its way into *Uncle Tasman*. In the Māori mythological story, the three mountains—Pūtauaki, Tarawera, and Whakaari—fight for the affection of Pihanga, the damsel mountain.[16] As the mountains are never fully shown in Robertson's three videos, the viewer is left to their own imagination concerning the story. When discussing her research into the mountains' mythology, Robertson said, "Loss and grief emerge in the local tribal story... It is the story of a clean, green New Zealand that comes under question as a geothermal lake smothered by waste, Rotoitipaku, is recalled by people who lived nearby."[17] For the *kaitiaki*, guardians of the land, this loss of environmental integrity signifies the destruction of their spiritual inspiration and their economic well-being.

During the video, a chant which speaks of tribal histories and cosmology can be heard. We hear a local man recalling the times he used to swim in the lake with his father and friends. The paper mill was already there and the water in Lake Rototipaku polluted. He remembers witnessing as a child eels jumping out of the lake and river onto the roadside, preferring to die there than in the polluted waters. The Ka Panapana, the customary haka of the Ngāti Porou tribe, is performed. This is followed by the haka of the God of earthquakes and volcanos, Rūaumoko. Paptuanuku (mother earth), who's unborn child's name signifies an earthquake scar. According to the artist, this is "a reminder that Aotearoa sits balanced along the Pacific 'rim of fire' with potential for sludge from deeply toxic dumping sites to be scattered far and wide from what is known as the Taupo volcanic plateau if eruptions were to occur from that site".[18] The haka Ka Panapana is followed by cries that are intended to either welcome visitors

or entreat challenges amongst rival tribes. This haka gives the women of the tribe the opportunity to express their social and political concerns.

Robertson's *Kawerau Driveby* (2008), a video shown in New Plymouth at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in the collective exhibition *Dateline* (2008), is related to *Uncle Tasman* in that it deals with the human toll of toxic waste dumping. *Kawerau Driveby* was shown on a television screen with audio headphones. Robertson takes the viewer on a tour of her hometown and neighbourhood by car at twilight, one that is entrenched in personal loss and sadness. She recounts tales and offers subdued images of her childhood, neighbours, school friends, and local histories. She also recalls a number of young people from Kawerau, many of whom she knew personally, who died of cancer, and indirectly asks if these deaths are linked to exposure to the pollution dumped by the Tasman Pulp and Paper mill. Her voice is evenly paced, like the car's steady momentum. The headphones and small screen make the experience all the more intimate. There is never a fixed moment, only perpetual movement. As Robertson's passenger, the viewer does not know where she is taking them nor when the journey will end. Streets that resemble each other are deserted and as disconcerting as Robertson's commentary, leaving the viewer perplexed and uneasy. On every street corner we hear of someone who fell victim to cancer, some of them Robertson's childhood friends. In this mournful journey, she relates one by one how each got cancer, highlighting not only the loss of youth, but also the culpability of the Tasman Pulp and Paper company and the government. Robertson's incomprehension is conveyed through the tone of her voice, which expresses confusion, sorrow, indignation, and anger. The subject, while personal to Robertson, is also universal; waste, pollution, and the destruction of the environment concern the human collective today, enabling the viewer to share her sorrow and that of Kawerau while also becoming a helpless spectator to her array of emotions.

Pohautea 1-4

In 2015, Robertson created the multimedia installation *Pohautea 1–4* for the exhibition *Pacifique(S) Contemporain,* which was presented at venues in Le Havre and Rouen, France.[19] The installation included four large black-and-white photographs depicting the Waiapu River; a wall text with the words to *He Tangi Mo Pāhoe*, a *mōteatea* (customary Māori chant); a two-channel video focused on the Waiapu River; and a photographic wall mural titled *Ko Iwi-Bones*.[20]

Figure 3. Natalie Robertson, *Pohautea 1–4*, 2015. Four black-and-white photographs, each 340 cm x 110 cm. Printed from the negatives. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 4. Natalie Robertson, *Pohautea 1–4* (detail), as installed in the exhibition *Pacifique(S) Contemporain*, Le Portique, Le Havre, France. Courtesy of Jacqueline Charles-Rault

Robertson's four large-format black-and-white photographs (Fig. 3) document the lasting devastation to the Bay of Plenty caused by Cyclone Bola in 1988. Robertson took the photographs of the region in 1996, eight years after the catastrophic storm. *Pohautea 1–4* was generated from existing 6 cm x 17 cm black-and-white panoramic photographic negatives that had never been printed prior to the exhibition. Robertson decided to show only four of the images due to the wall space in the gallery. The walls were high enough to hang the tall photographs, but too narrow to hang a fifth because of a division that cut the wall space in half. This unfortunate configuration was ultimately advantageous, as it provided a space for the video installation and connected the two works, creating a coherent environment of land and water (Fig. 4).

Pohautea 1–4 focused on the Waiapu River, which was once a beautiful natural area devoid of pollution. This all changed between 1890 and 1920, when trees from the dense native forests were chopped down and burnt to make way for agriculture that, in turn, led to widespread erosion. Today, when a storm hits the region, the land erodes and collapses into the river. During Cyclone Bola, hundreds of trees were washed into the river, their trunks and branches carried downstream where they piled up. Robertson's images show the remains of this driftwood—whitened trunks and branches resembling a mass of ancestral bones—cloaking the beach adjacent to the mouth of the Waiapu River.[21] According to Robertson, one interpretation of the name Waiapu is "consuming waters," which seems appropriate considering the gorging of land into the water that occurs. The river is conceptualized as female and is home to spiritual beings, according to Māori lore. The river also has immense spiritual, cultural, and traditional significance to the Ngāti Porou tribe, who connect it with their own identity.[22]

Robertson's large-scale photographs show tree trunks and branches strewn all over the beach at the river's mouth, locally referred to as *ngutu awa*—"the beak of the river." Her use of black-and-white emphasises the whiteness of the mutilated tree trunks and branches against the dark grey of the riverbanks. Her sweeping vantage point directs us to look at the extent of the destruction and harm the storm has brought. Although we see the direct wreckage of the cyclone, this environmental violence was indirectly caused by human action and has deep consequences for the Ngāti Porou tribe and their well-being. Fishing and seafood gathering are an integral part of Te Mahi Kai, which "refers to all activities associated with finding, preparing and cooking food. This includes hunting and gathering, as well as cultivating, and is a fundamental right and necessity for Māori people, so that they can continue to collect seafood and fish from the waters of the Waiapu River." [23]

Robertson's decision to use images from her own archive was two-fold: to connect the narrative in *He Tangi Mo Pāhoe*, a Ngāti Porou *mōteatea* from Waiapu (discussed below), and

to document Robertson's personal research into the work of James McDonald, who had spent three weeks in the Waiapu district in 1923 with Apirana Ngata, a member of Parliament and tribal leader. McDonald revealed that he, too, had photographed the river and his are likely to be the first photographs taken there, available on the public record.[24]

Robertson also wanted to show the *whakapapa* of her *iwi*'s ancestors, which is discussed colloquially amongst Māori as "bones-iwi." The word *iwi* is derived from *koiwi*, meaning the bones of the trees and their resting place, which represent the forests where the ancestors once lived, long gone because of deforestation. "With every storm and landslide, more and more silt pollutes the river and the seabed of the estuary. Māori burial remains have also washed into the river with the landslides; they are eaten by fish which are later eaten by the local inhabitants, who are unknowingly consuming their ancestors."[25] Tuna, eels, *kina* (sea urchins), and *pāua* (abalone) consume toxins from runoff and the locals who eat these sea creatures suffer accordingly. The muddy waters also make it difficult for fish to swim, causing the *kahawai*, a local fish akin to salmon that is sacred to the tribe, to slowly diminish in number. According to Robertson,

> the seafood beds that are our *kāpata kai* or food cupboards are being buried. If we cannot access food, we become totally dependent on other food sources such as the global capital system of supermarkets. We cannot host [*whānau*] and therefore we suffer a great loss of *mana* for not being able to look after our environment sustainably and not being able to give our best food to our visitors.[26]

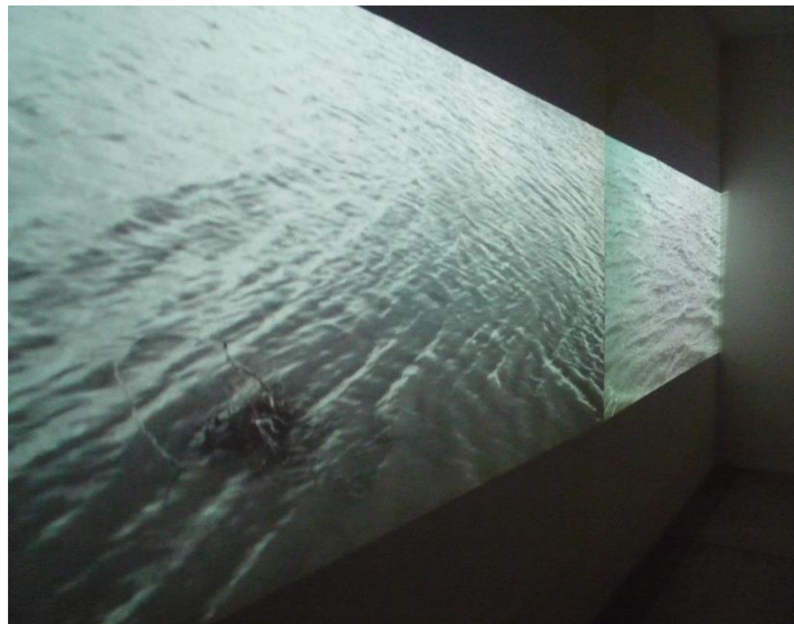

Figure 5. Natalie Robertson, *Pohautea 1–4* (detail), as installed in the exhibition *Pacifique(S) Contemporain*, Le Portique, Le Havre, France. Courtesy of Jacqueline Charles-Rault

The Waiapu River was the subject of Robertson's two-channel video installation in *Pohautea 1–4* (Fig. 5). While her imposing black-and-white photographs conjured a stark and hostile environment, the colour videos presented soothing moving images of the surface of the river and its mouth. Like the calm after a storm, the two-channel video installation's perpetual movement was a video meditation. Cushions were placed in front of the screens to allow viewers to sit and contemplate the lulling of the waters. In these images of calm waters, Robertson created visual dialogues related to Indigenous land and knowledge. The viewer is once again reminded of the richness and abundance that the river brings to those who depend on it for their survival and way of life, and how fundamental it is to keep it free of pollution.

Figure 6. Natalie Robertson, *Ko Iwi – Bones*, part of the multimedia piece *Pohautea 1–4*, as installed in the exhibition *Pacifique(S) Contemporain*, La Forme, Le Havre, France. Courtesy of Jacqueline Charles-Rault

The third work in the multimedia series, *Ko Iwi – Bones*, was exhibited in *La Forme*, a contemporary art gallery in Le Havre, and consisted of a series of still images from a video of tidal motion where the Waiapu River enters the sea. These freeze-framed images were presented in black and grey, and from a distance resembled metallic plates with abstract images

on them (Fig. 6). Upon close inspection, the viewer discovers that each image includes something resembling driftwood being washed over by the tide (Fig. 7). Robertson mounted over one hundred of these photographs onto the wall to obtain the overall effect of an abstract image in motion; the lulling and rippling of tidal movement seemed to sweep across the wall. The Māori consider the river mouth a special place to be, where the spirits of those who have passed travel on. In the images that Robertson exhibited, the river current meets the tidal motion of the sea and brings with it branches resembling bones from a tree buried in the sand.

Figure 7. Natalie Robertson, *Ko Iwi – Bones* (detail), part of the multimedia piece *Pohautea 1–4*, as installed in the exhibition *Pacifique(S) Contemporain*, La Forme, Le Havre, France. Courtesy of Jacqueline Charles-Rault

In the final part of the installation, Robertson applied the words of a 19th century lament, *He Tangi Mo Pāhoe,* to a gallery wall (Fig. 8). Composed by Hone Rongomaitu of Ngāti Porou, it tells of a young man being overtaken by a river's rushing waters and dragged down to the rocky bed. When his body is found, it is likened to a stranded fish hidden amongst the driftwood. At the exhibition opening, Robertson read the chant aloud in Māori.[27] According

to Robertson, "chants were ways of retaining knowledge and knowledge systems. A chant that might be sung to a child might take twenty minutes to describe all the land features of a journey and how they came to be where they are now."[28] In discussing her work, Robertson said, "one of the reasons why I chose to work in video is to have the opportunity to include sound. It's also a way of having Māori language, of putting language into places that it might not be highlighted in."[29] This was certainly true of this exhibition, as the majority of its visitors had likely never heard or seen the Māori language.

Figure 8. Natalie Robertson, standing next to the text of *He Tangi Mo Pāhoe*, part of the multimedia piece *Pohautea 1–4* (2015), as installed in the exhibition *Pacifique(S) Contemporain*, Le Portique, Le Havre, France. Courtesy of Jacqueline Charles-Rault

Through her work, Natalie Robertson continues to pose numerous questions as to who is accountable for human-made environmental catastrophes and who should take responsibility for cleaning them up. As lands erode, Pacific sea levels are rising, adding a greater sense of urgency to saving its land and rivers. Robertson believes that "art can safeguard against cultural, political, and historical amnesia. New media and photography and moving images

can be effectively deployed to represent issues facing land, sea, and sky."[30] Sharing such images online has become an effective way of raising awareness about environmental issues, both to Pacific and international audiences. Robertson gives voice to these slow, often silent catastrophes through her images. Her most recent exhibition, *Tātara E Maru Ana – The Sacred Rain Cape of Waiapu* at the Tairāwhiti Museum explores the erosion of the Waiapu River as well as its activities and inhabitants. Fundamental needs, such as food gathering and fishing, are represented as well as stories, laments, ancestral acknowledgement, and historical documentation of the river and its region over the past one hundred years. A ray of hope is provided through the poetic form of "a red tipped dawn" despite the tragedy of the river.[31]

Jacqueline Charles-Rault lectures in English at Le Havre Normandie Université in France and is a permanent member of the research group Le GRIC (Groupe de Recherche Indentités et Cultures). As a graduate of fine arts, she has always been passionate about the arts. Her research concentrates on contemporary Māori and Pacific art, paying particular attention to Māori women artists She has also curated a number of contemporary Pacific and Māori art exhibitions in France.

Notes

[1] Special acknowledgement and thanks to Natalie Robertson for her time and help with this paper.

[2] Robertson's parents, who are of Scottish and Māori decent, were both from large families. The elders in both their families, according to Robertson, held an important place within her parents' lives and respective cultures, and Robertson grew up acknowledging and respecting them. Her grandfather, David Hughes, with whom she was very close, played a fundamental role in Robertson's Māori education and political awareness. Having grown up in an entirely Māori environment on the East Coast, Hughes was a staunch advocate for the safekeeping of Māori land. During the 1950s, when the policy of assimilation was in full force, Hughes remained firm and loyal to his opinions. Robertson was still quite young when she began to be interested in her Māori origins and although she was familiar with and knew her grandfather's stories well, these weren't enough for her to be confident in proclaiming her Māori identity, especially as she didn't live on the tribal lands growing up. Referring to her childhood and growing up as a fair-skinned child in a mixed Pakeha and Māori environment, Robertson said, "In the era I grew up in, ethnicity was largely determined by perceptions based on skin colour and dominant race rather than cultural heritage. While I remember asking my grandfather to teach me Māori from when I was about 8 [years old], and also claiming my Māori heritage at school, this wasn't necessarily understood by those students who were identifiably Māori–and fair enough back in those days when racism was so overt in the school system, I wasn't the one being discriminated

against due to the colour of my skin." Natalie Robertson, email message to author, June 14, 2010.

[3] A marae consists of "a fenced-in complex of carved buildings and land that belong to a particular iwi (tribe), hāpu (sub tribe) or whānau (family)." https://www.newzealand.com/int/feature/marae-maori-meeting-grounds/ , 100% Pure New Zealand (website), accessed 17 May 2021. In this instance, marae also refers to how Māori regard their marae as *tūrangawaewae* (a place to stand and belong).

[4] Natalie Robertson, personal communication, Auckland, February 20, 2007.

[5] Natalie Robertson, email message to author, June 14, 2010.

[6] Jason Brown, "Uncle Tasman: The Trembling Current That Scars the Earth, 2007," April 2007, ed. Natalie Robertson, June 2008, "Pacific Rim Artworks," ZeroOne San Jose: A Global Festival of Art on the Edge & the Thirteenth International Symposium of Electronic Art (ISEA2006) August 7–13, 2006 (website), accessed April 6, 2009, http://2006.01sj.org/content/view/183/49/index.html. Brown notes that Robertson can be heard providing offstage commentary while driving through Kawerau and recounting the loss of so many young lives to cancer. I saw this as Robertson's *Kawerau Driveby* (2008) at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth, Aoteaora New Zealand, for the exhibition *Dateline*.

[7] The tourist industry in Aoteaora New Zealand took off around 1870 after the royal visit of the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Albert. The first visitors were primarily people from Great Britain taking part in a six-month cruise around the world. Places like Rotorua in the "Hot Lakes District" were extremely popular with tourists for their numerous geysers and deep lakes where the water temperature could reach 90°C. The first tourist guidebook for New Zealand was published in 1882. See Margaret McClure, "Tourist Industry," in *Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/tourist-industry.

[8] This followed extensive de-forestation that began in 1924. In 1924, extensive planting of pine trees was carried out in the Kaingaroa Plains to deliberately create a pulp and paper industry. In 1951 the New Zealand government decided that they were ready to sell the timber from the Kaingaroa Forest. "The Tasman Pulp and Paper Mill," Engineering New Zealand, accessed January 4, 2021, https://www.engineeringnz.org/programmes/heritage/heritage-records/tasman-pulp-and-paper-mill/.

[9] Brown, "Uncle Tasman." Brown's review includes witness accounts presented in evidence to the Central North Island Inquiry at the Waitangi Tribunal of 2005: "'A visit to the area today leaves me wondering how anyone could take a piece of paradise and turn it into hell. There is a stench that carries across the river to the homes of my aunties and uncles in Onepu; Waitahanui is surrounded by sludge and a pond of black water,' says Clem Park, a resident. He remembers swimming in Rotoitipaku as a child."

[10] Natalie Robertson, "Uncle Tasman - The Trembling Current that Scars the Earth (2008)," Natalie Robertson (website), accessed 15 December 2017 http://natalierobertson.weebly.com/uncle-tasman---the-trembling-current-that-scars-the-earth.html.

[11] Brown, "Uncle Tasman." According to Brown, "People Poisoned Daily is the name of one Greenpeace campaign, with an online exhibit of people affected by milling."

[12] Brown, "Uncle Tasman." When referring to the lake that replaced Lake Rotoitipaku, Brown writes: "New maps have already been printed giving a smaller, nearby lake the same name. Supposedly, this replaces the old name, Fox's Pond, a nickname applied by company officials and, apparently, picked up by cartographers."
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Isaac Davison, "Mill Gets 25-Year Pollution Consent," *The New Zealand Herald*, October 15, 2009. https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/mill-gets-25-year-pollution-consent/JX2U23RG7EU-ORVMKK2S575Y5MI/
[16] According to one of the many versions of the legend, there were four warrior mountains situated in the region known today as Tongariro National Park. They were called Mount Tongariro, Mount Taranaki, Mount Tauhara, and Mount Pūtauaki. In the same region there also resided a damsel mountain called Pihanga, who was very beautiful and all of the warriors were in love with her. One day, a huge battle broke out among the warrior mountains over who would claim the hand of the damsel mountain. The winner was Mount Tongariro. That night, the other mountains fled and the following day were frozen to their current locations by the sun. Mount Taranaki, the saddest and angriest of the mountains, headed towards the coast just as the sun was setting, but Mount Pouakai chained Mount Taranaki, forcing the warrior mountain to remain in New Plymouth next to the sea. The next day, following the flight of the other mountains, a torrent of water started to flow next to Mount Tongariro and filled the crevasse left by Mount Tarankaki. This became the Whanganui River.
[17] Natalie Robertson, "Uncle Tasman."
[18] Ibid.
[19] The exhibition *Pacifique(S) Contemporain*, co-curated by Caroline Vercoe and Jacqueline Charles-Rault, was held simultaneously in the towns of Le Havre and Rouen in France in 2015. It brought together thirteen Māori and Pacific artists from New Zealand. The exhibitions ran from November 3, 2015 to December 19, 2015. An international conference was held at the University Le Havre–Normandy at the beginning of December 2015. Natalie Robertson presented her paper "The Slow Catastrophe of the Waiapu River" at the conference.
[20] Robertson has shown *Pohautea 1-4* in New Zealand and Germany since *Pacifique(S) Contemporain*.
[21] Natalie Robertson, "Takutai Moana - Rangitukia Hikoi (Hikoi Series) 0-14. 2016," Natalie Robertson (website), accessed September 28, 2020, https://natalierobertson.weebly.com/takutai-moana---rangitukia-hikoi-hikoi-series.html.
[22] Natalie Robertson, "The Slow Catastrophe of the Waiapu River," *Pacifique(S) Contemporain* Symposium (Le Havre, France: Le Havre University, 06/11/2015).
[23] Natalie Robertson, "From the Mouth of the Port to the Beak of the River, 2014," Natalie Robertson (website), accessed January 20, 2021, https://natalierobertson.weebly.com/from-the-mouth-of-the-port-to-the-beak-of-the-river-2014.html.
[24] McDonald worked as a photographer for the Dominion Museum at the beginning of the twentieth century and was involved in tourism. His best-known photographs were taken using gelatin dry plate negatives to obtain black-and-white photos while on field expeditions

with the ethnographer Elsdon Best from 1919 to 1923, along with Te Rangihīroa (Peter Buck) and Ngata. The Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington still holds a large collection of his negatives today. During his lifetime he took numerous photos of Māori people, many of which were probably used by the tourist industry. He also took photos of famous geysers erupting, such as Waimangu Geyser, which was active from 1900 to 1904 and a famous destination for tourists at that time. For a number of years Robertson's work evolved around documentary photography before she realised the weightiness of photographing Māori people as a photographer and artist. She now prefers to record the landscapes where her ancestors once dwelt. "I'd begun my photographic practice really working in portraiture and then documentary like the main styles of many photographers, and then I got involved in a project in a small predominantly Māori town and that project then developed over three years and I realised how important the role of the photographer is in taking photos of Māori people." In conversation with the author, Auckland, 20 February 2007

[25] Robertson, "The Slow Catastrophe of the Waiapu River," *Pacifique(S) Contemporain* Symposium. (Le Havre, France: Le Havre University, 06/11/2015).

[26] Robertson, "From the Mouth of the Port."

[27] The chant was explained in French in the exhibition pamphlet.

[28] Natalie Robertson, personal communication, Auckland, February 20, 2007.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Robertson, "The Slow Catastrophe of the Waiapu River," *Pacifique(S) Contemporain* Symposium (Le Havre, France: Le Havre University, 06/11/2015).

[31] "Tātara e maru ana – The sacred rain cape of Waiapu - Natalie Robertson," Tairawhiti Museum (website), accessed February 22, 2021, https://tairawhitimuseum.org.nz/exhibition/tatara-e-maru-ana-the-sacred-rain-cape-of-waiapu-natalie-robertson/. About the exhibition: "Centuries ago, Tamokai of the inland Te Aowera people spoke to his kinsman Kōkere and said 'Hoake tāua kit e Waiapu tātara e maru ana – Let us go to Waiapu, where the rain cape is thick.' With its reference to a woven rain cape, usually made of harakeke, this Ngāti Porou whakatauāki speaks of the shelter provided by the forested Waiapu valley. Today, her 'rain cape' is now threadbare due to deforestation more than a century ago. In response, Ngāti Porou have set forth the vision to revitalize Waiapu Kōkā Hūhua. This exhibition offers a record of an ancestral tīpuna landscape as it is today. Hope comes in the form of a red-tipped dawn – ta atā kura."

PACIFIC ARTS
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

CHENTA T. LAURY

Negotiating the Ecology of Place

Abstract
I find several compelling parallels between the human and plant realms, particularly in relation to place and identity. Refreshing insights, questions, and perspectives have arisen for me in my reflections on the history and ecosystems of Hawaiʻi, my own identity, and my work. I am interested in how we construct and deconstruct individual identities within the context of a larger society. As human beings, we shift, adapt, resist, or embrace the various influences within the social, cultural and natural ecosystems in which we live. We invent and reorganize ourselves continuously as we move through time and space. I associate this journey of finding and fitting the pieces of ourselves together with patchwork — articulating and finding meaning in the patterns, textures, and salvageable pieces of our identities. Like plants, we live in transformation.

*I use a variety of natural fibers in my work, including wool, silk, and wauke (*Broussonetia papyrifera*). While I honor traditions from the past (harvesting and beating bark and hand-felting wool are among the oldest of fiber craft forms), I also experiment with new methods as a way of expressing my own, authentic voice. My current work straddles the lines between craft and fine art, representation and abstraction, and conceptual vocabularies that merge artistic traditions related to my biological origins: African American patchwork quilting and Finnish felting with tapa (bark cloth) and artistic traditions from Hawaiʻi.*

Keywords: *fiber art, diaspora, patchwork, natural fibers, identity, Hawaiʻi*

My recent work concerns itself with reconciliation. As an African American woman who grew up in the occupied territory of Hawaiʻi, the concept of "diaspora" came as a welcome model through which I could orient myself. This framework allowed me to reconcile the fact that I was part of a larger cultural community through my African American heritage, while at the same time enabling me to be true to my unique lived experience, which was largely geographically and culturally separate from that community.

In recent years, conversations about the Black Diasporic experience have become more common and have served to expand notions of what it means to be Black. I was recently introduced to discussions and scholarship that address Black visuality in Oceania: the experience of dark-skinned folks who, strictly speaking, are apart from the African diaspora. While these dialogues are critically important to how I consider my identity, the natural world, in particular the plant world, is equally central to my internal conception of self and to my artistic expression.

I see several compelling parallels between the human and plant realms, particularly in relation to geographic place and identity. The English language, when it refers to humans, borrows numerous concepts and vocabulary used in reference to plants: diaspora (from the Greek "to scatter, as in to sow"), germinate, invasive, transplant, uproot, seed, blossom, and many others. Craig Holdrege's book *Thinking Like a Plant* has further inspired my thoughts on the subject:

> Through the way they live, plants provide a model for context-sensitive thinking. Instead of using the world as a proving ground for already-set agendas, instead of formulating hypotheses based on all-too-limited perspectives, instead of implementing programs to "fix" problems, we can gain the ability to enter into an open-ended, dynamic dialogue with the world in our thoughts and actions, so that increasingly they can reveal and enhance the living qualities of the world we inhabit.[1]

Given the inherently apolitical nature of the natural world, refreshing insights, questions, and perspectives have arisen in my reflections on the history and ecosystem of life in Hawaiʻi and, in particular, on the concept of adaptive radiation. I have come to see the diasporic experience of people through the lens of adaptive radiation. These insights and questions, in turn, inform my work. Using a variety of natural fibers, including wool, silk, and wauke (paper mulberry bark), my work explores how one adapts to changing cultural, geographic, and environmental realities, which I believe are the pivotal issues of our time.

My current work straddles the lines between craft and fine art, representation and abstraction, and conceptual vocabularies that merge artistic traditions related to my biological origins: African American patchwork quilting and Finnish felting with tapa (bark cloth) and artistic traditions from Hawaiʻi. While I have deep respect for the traditions and processing methods I have learned from my teachers (e.g., my approach to harvesting materials, beating bark, and hand-felting, which is among the oldest of fiber craft forms), I also experiment with non-traditional methods of processing these materials as a way of adapting their expression to my authentic voice.

I am interested in the relationship between identity and place, and how we construct and deconstruct individual identities within the context of a larger society. As human beings we shift, adapt, resist, or embrace the various influences within the social, cultural, and natural ecosystems in which we live. We find existing patterns, invent new ones, and reorganize ourselves continuously as we move chronologically through time and geographically through space. In the most abstract terms, I see this as a relationship between individual "parts" and a larger "whole." I associate this journey of finding and fitting the various pieces of ourselves

together with the process of patchwork; we are articulating and finding meaning in the patterns, textures, and salvageable pieces of our identities. This act of journeying and growth affirms that, like plants, we live in a constant state of transformation.

The current global refugee crisis forces people to adapt and reorient themselves outside of their familiar geographical, cultural, and ideological conventions. Just as a migrant's "place" is in limbo, so too are their individual and collective cultural identities in flux. Anyone who moves to a different location faces the existential challenge of reconciling and navigating a social ecology that is new to them. How one enters a new cultural and environmental ecosystem or responds to the changing ecosystem in which they already exist determines how they will "grow" and if they will thrive. How these themes play out in Hawaiʻi is also of interest to me. Here, as with all colonized places, adaptation is forced upon not only the migrant, but also upon those already inhabiting a place. Today's native inhabitants of Hawaiʻi (including people, animals, and plants) are forced to adapt to, negotiate life with, and maintain their survival among arriving foreigners, as they have for hundreds of years. Imperialists arrive with a very different impulse than migrants, and Hawaiʻi's history continues to include both. The question of *how* new arrivals meet an existing ecosystem is vital to the health and survival of both.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association defines the term "invasive species" as

> an organism that causes ecological or economic harm in a new environment where it is not native....Invasive species are capable of causing extinctions of native plants and animals, reducing biodiversity, competing with native organisms for limited resources, and altering habitats.[2]

By this definition, a species' *behavior* is what defines it as invasive or not. I believe that if mutual survival and health are to be achieved, the introduced population and the preexisting one(s) must negotiate and reconcile belonging to a shared space in such a way that honors the integrity of both. There is no formula for this. One imagines that embracing a mode of context sensitivity—not just upon introduction, but as an ongoing state of being—will be key. This mindset is a necessary part of my artistic process, which often combines traditional processes of creating bark cloth with felting wool and needle stitching to generate my contemporary artistic vision. Context sensitivity requires recognizing the inherent qualities of the natural materials I use as a starting point—exploring, experimenting, and playing with them—and then combining multiple materials into an inherently unique, synthesized whole. This, too, is a form of reconciliation across time—between this place, this history, and me.

Originally from Oʻahu, Chenta T. Laury is a Maui-based artist and educator. She has exhibited in shows throughout the U.S., including in the 2019 Honolulu Biennial. Her work is held in numerous private collections, as well as in the Hawaiʻi State Art Museum in Honolulu. Chenta received an undergraduate degree in studio art and art history from Oberlin College, an M.Ed. from Harvard University, and a Certificate in Applied Arts from the Fiber Crafts Studio in Chestnut Ridge, NY. Chenta has also studied extensively with a variety of fiber arts and cultural practitioners including Renata Hiller in New York and Dalani Tanahy in Hawaiʻi.

Notes

[1] Craig Holdrege, *Thinking Like a Plant: A Living Science for Life* (Great Barrington: Lindisfarne Books, 2013), 9.

[2] "What is an Invasive Species?" National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, U.S. Department of Commerce, accessed February 26, 2021, https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/invasive.html.

Fig. 1. Chenta T. Laury, *Patchwork #1,* 2019. `Alaea (clay), hili kukui (dark brown dye), silk, and thread on tapa (bark cloth), 35.5 x 29 inches. Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts. Photograph courtesy of the artist

Patchwork #1 (Fig. 1) is made from the inner bark of wauke (paper mulberry tree, *Broussonetia papyrifera*), which has been processed throughout the world in a variety of ways. In Hawaiʻi, it is made into kapa (bark cloth) by Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians), whereas in Japan this same plant is processed into washi paper.

Patchwork #1 reflects aesthetic choices that differ from Kanaka Maoli traditions and demonstrates a range of ways that wauke can be processed. In some sections, silk fibers have been beaten into the cloth to create a range of colors, thicknesses, and textures. I then hand-stitched these contrasting and irregular pieces together into a cohesive whole that reflects the conceptual meaning of the work's title. *Patchwork #1* is a metaphor for how I continue to construct my identity.

The pigments used in this piece come from the earth and from plants that were traditionally used in making Hawaiian and Polynesian tapa. Hawaiʻi's iron-rich ʻalaea (clay) exists in a multitude of colors, which I gathered, ground, and mixed into a pigment. I also used hili kukui (a dark brown dye), made by boiling down the root bark of the kukui (candlenut) tree (*Aleurites moluccana*). I am indebted to the rich traditions of Hawaiʻi that have been preserved and passed down through generations of kūpuna (ancestors) over the centuries. I am profoundly grateful to this place and its people for instilling in me a deep and spiritual reverence for the natural world and inspiring artistic ingenuity, ecological responsibility, and an implicit curiosity about the world.

Figure 2. Chenta T. Laury, *Patchwork: Holding Dichotomies*, 2020. Tapa (bark cloth), silk, embroidery thread, 51.5 x 63.73 inches. Photograph courtesy of the artist

This iteration of *Patchwork* is a meditation on my experience in bringing cohesion to the disparate emotions, thoughts, and feelings I faced in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a concrete exploration of my attempt to hold the scale and plight of those suffering physically and economically with the health and beauty found in my immediate surroundings. Here, I explore the simultaneity of fragility and strength, the translucent and the opaque, the individual and the collective, as well as the numerous invisible stitches required to hold together a much larger, diverse, and yet connected, whole.

Figure 3. Chenta T. Laury, *Patchwork: Holding Dichotomies* (detail), 2020. Tapa (bark cloth), silk, embroidery thread, 51.5 x 63.73 inches. Photograph courtesy of the artist

Figure 4. Chenta T. Laury, *Patchwork: Yet Apart,* 2020. Wool, tapa (bark cloth), cotton string, 18 x 18 inches. Photograph courtesy of the artist

Patchwork: Yet Apart explores how we are bound to a common foundation and are in dialogue with one another, yet separated by the space that remains between our "edges "–our more superficial external characteristics, such as race. Each stitch is a step toward unification and finding common ground.

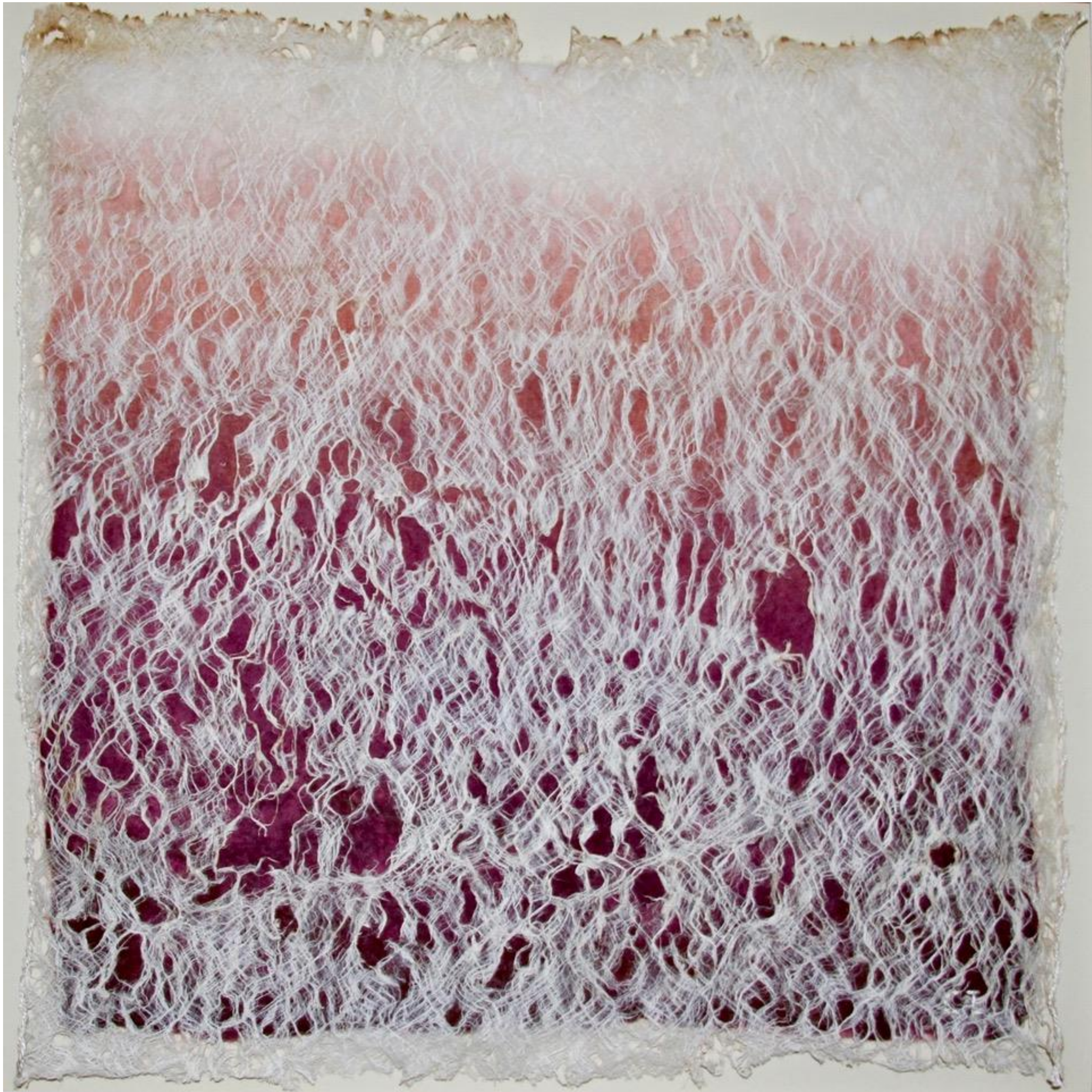

Figure 5. Chenta T. Laury, *Veiled: Kilihune I (fine, light rain),* 2020. Wool, tapa (bark cloth), embroidery thread, 18 x 18 inches. Photograph courtesy of the artist

Many of my works use a formal vocabulary of line, shape, color, and texture to investigate the concept of finding concordance or dissonance between distinct entities. I am interested in the incremental shifts we make to connect or distance ourselves from "the other." I find value in examining how this process looks beyond the human realm: in nature, or even in the meeting of different mediums. I'm also interested in the layered complexity of how distinct entities might occupy the same area, and the depth that comes with this coexistence.

PACIFIC ARTS
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

SIR PETER BARTER, ROBERT BANASI,
& EDWARD P. WOLFERS

Madang Art Maniacs and the COVID-19 Pandemic in Papua New Guinea

Abstract
Sir Peter Barter, with notes by Edward P. Wolfers, describes the creative and community work of Robert Banasi and the Madang Art Maniacs (MAM) during the COVID-19 pandemic. MAM's public art production has endeavoured to raise awareness about the pandemic and practices to promote health in Madang, the capital of Madang Province in Papua New Guinea, and in the nearby rural communities.

Keywords: *Robert Banasi, public art, Madang Art Maniacs, Papua New Guinea, COVID-19 pandemic, Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare*

Robert Banasi, originally from Milne Bay, has spent most of his life in Madang. Sir Peter Barter came across Robert's work several years ago when Melanesian Tourist Services (MTS) needed some commercial posters painted. Upon the outbreak of the COVID19 pandemic, they met again, and the Madang Art Maniacs (MAM)[1] group established by Robert indicated its willingness to raise awareness through posters prepared for the local communities, painted on black plastic using spray paint. The posters were displayed not only in the township of Madang but along the main roads in and out of town. The result was impressive; the messages in the posters were far more effective than those commercially printed because they sent a message to the people in a pictorial way and in the Tok Pisin language. It was not long before the Provincial and National Governments engaged Robert and MAM to undertake posters that have now been used throughout Madang and in other Provinces of Papua New Guinea.

In between producing posters, the MAM group under the leadership of Robert has undertaken training younger people to paint every Sunday. He has encouraged up to 100 young and eager Papua New Guineans to become artists. Robert has also accepted various commissions from business houses that include painting an entire building red and subsequent sign-writing for Coca Cola, painting the copra silos for No.1 Tea, and creating artwork at the Madang Lodge and Madang Resort depicting local fauna and flora as well as the history of Madang since colonisation. Whilst he has been paid for the commercial work, it is shared amongst the MAM Group to purchase paint and other materials, transportation, and some

food. Non-commercial works such as the COVID19 posters have been initiated by Robert and the MAM group without requesting funds.

Robert and his family live in a humble village-style house on Krangket Island, close to Madang. He has no vehicle and relies on his own legs or Public Motor Vehicles (PMVs) for transport. He has never sought fame or fortune, but, rather, he does what he does because of his desire to serve the grass roots people, and he does this gracefully, with a smile.

Robert's latest initiative is to produce public commemorations of the life of the late Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare (b. 1936). Two large-scale paintings, which are illustrated here, are in process at the time of this writing. Melanesian Tourist Services has assisted by providing art materials to complete this tribute to Papua New Guinea's founding father. The two paintings were prepared in memory and to honour the life and achievements of the late Grand Chief, who passed away on 26 February 2021. Widely mourned as "founding father of the nation," Somare was the Chief Minister who led the way to Papua New Guinea's independence in 1975, and subsequently served as Prime Minister for three further periods (1975-1980, 1982-1985, and 2002-2011) and a total of almost 17 years. He held a number of other Ministerial portfolios while serving as a Member of the National Parliament.

Media reports have speculated that, as community gatherings were held around Papua New Guinea in mourning for the passing and celebration of the life of the late Grand Chief, they might give rise to "a [COVID19] super-spreader event as people crowded together to pay respects to the country's first leader after independence."[2]

Sir Peter Barter established the Melanesian Foundation in 1983, a non-profit organization that has encouraged tourists to donate funds to invest in remote communities, built health clinics in rural areas, and provided supplies to local schools. Sir Peter's political career began in 1992 when he was elected Member of Papua New Guinea's National Parliament for Madang Province and later served as Minister for Health. In 1995 he was the Governor of Madang until the Prime Minister asked him to take up the Provincial Affairs and Local-Level Government Ministry. In 2002 he was appointed Minister for Health and Bougainville Affairs, and later served as Minister for Finance, Acting Governor-General of PNG, Chair of the PNG National Events Council, Chair of the National AIDS Council, and Patron of the Institute of Medical Research. The Queen of England conferred upon Mr. Barter the O. B. E. (Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) in 1997 and later awarded him the Knight Bachelor "for public service" in the 2001 New Year Honours.

Robert Banasi is of Madang and Milne Bay descent. Having been interested in art since the age of five, he developed his skill from primary through high to secondary school, before going on to complete a Bachelor of Art and Design at the University of Papua New Guinea (PNG). He is the founder and an active member of Madang Art Maniacs (MAM) and also has a small art business, FoxCity Designs, based in Madang. Blessed by the rich diversity of his cultural heritage, he seeks

to capture the cultures of PNG by employing vibrant colours in abstract paintings. Banasi also serves as the Project Coordinator for the National Disability Resources and Advocacy Centre where he works to train people with disabilities to build their confidence and capabilities to take centre stage in advocating and lobbying for their rights in PNG.

Edward Wolfers is Foundation Professor Emeritus of Politics, University of Wollongong. His fields of research include politics, government, public policy, constitutional development, and international relations, decolonization, and aspects of societies, including race relations, and cultures in the Pacific, focusing on Melanesia, and Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and West Papua in particular. He is author, editor, and contributor of chapters to books, articles in journals, and papers presented to the United Nations and other international seminars as well as academic conferences. His ground-breaking book, Race Relations and Colonial Rule in Papua New Guinea, *which was originally published in 1975, was republished by the University of Papua New Guinea Press in 2016.*

Notes

[1] For more information on the Madang Art Maniacs – MAM: Artists for Change, please visit their website (https://mammediamadangpng.wordpress.com/2020/03/17/madang-arts-maniacs-mam/).

[2] Ben Packham and Charlie Peel, "Covid's northern exposure," *The Australian*, March 17, 2021, p. 1.

Figure 1. Madang Art Maniacs (MAM), *Sanap 1m Long Way Lo Mi* (Stand one metre away from me), 2021. Spray paint on black plastic. Madang, Papua New Guinea. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 2. MAM, *Helpim Me, Helpim Yu, Stap Lo Haus* (Help me, Help yourself, Stay at home), 2021. Spray paint on black plastic. Madang, Papua New Guinea. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 3. MAM, *Corona Virus. Wasim Han Wantaim Soap* (Corona Virus. Wash your hands with soap), 2021. Spray paint on black plastic. Madang, Papua New Guinea. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 4. MAM, *Mam O, Yumi Sanap Longwei na Stori. Stap Long Wei Long Ol Narapela* (Mam O. We stand at a distance and tell stories. Stay a long way from other people), 2021. Spray paint on black plastic. Madang, Papua New Guinea. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 5. MAM, *Keep Your Distance. 1M. COVID-19*, 2021. Spray paint on black plastic. Madang, Papua New Guinea. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 6. MAM. *MAMi Tok 'Tap Yongwei Yo Mi'* ([Madang Art Maniacs] say stay a long way from me), 2021. Spray paint on black plastic. Madang, Papua New Guinea. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 7. MAM, *Corona Virus. Wasim Han Wantaim Soap!* (Corona Virus. Wash your hands with soap), 2021. Spray paint on black plastic. Madang, Papua New Guinea. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 8. MAM, *Keep Your Distance. Stap Longwe Lo Ol Narapla* (Keep your distance. Stay a long way from other people), 2021. Spray paint on black plastic. Madang, Papua New Guinea. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 9. MAM, *Korona Vaires Em Ino Fani* (Corona Virus is not funny), 2021. Spray paint on black plastic. Madang, Papua New Guinea. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 10. MAM, *Toksave: Kranget Island* (Information: Kranget Island), 2021. Spray paint on black plastic. Madang, Papua New Guinea. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 11. MAM, *Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare* (in process), painted billboard, Bates Oval, Madang, March 2021. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 12. MAM, *Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare* (in process), painted billboard, Bates Oval, Madang, March 2021. Courtesy of the artist

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LANI ASUNCION

Duty-Free Paradise

January 22 – February 25, 2021
Radial Gallery, Department of Art and Design, University of Dayton

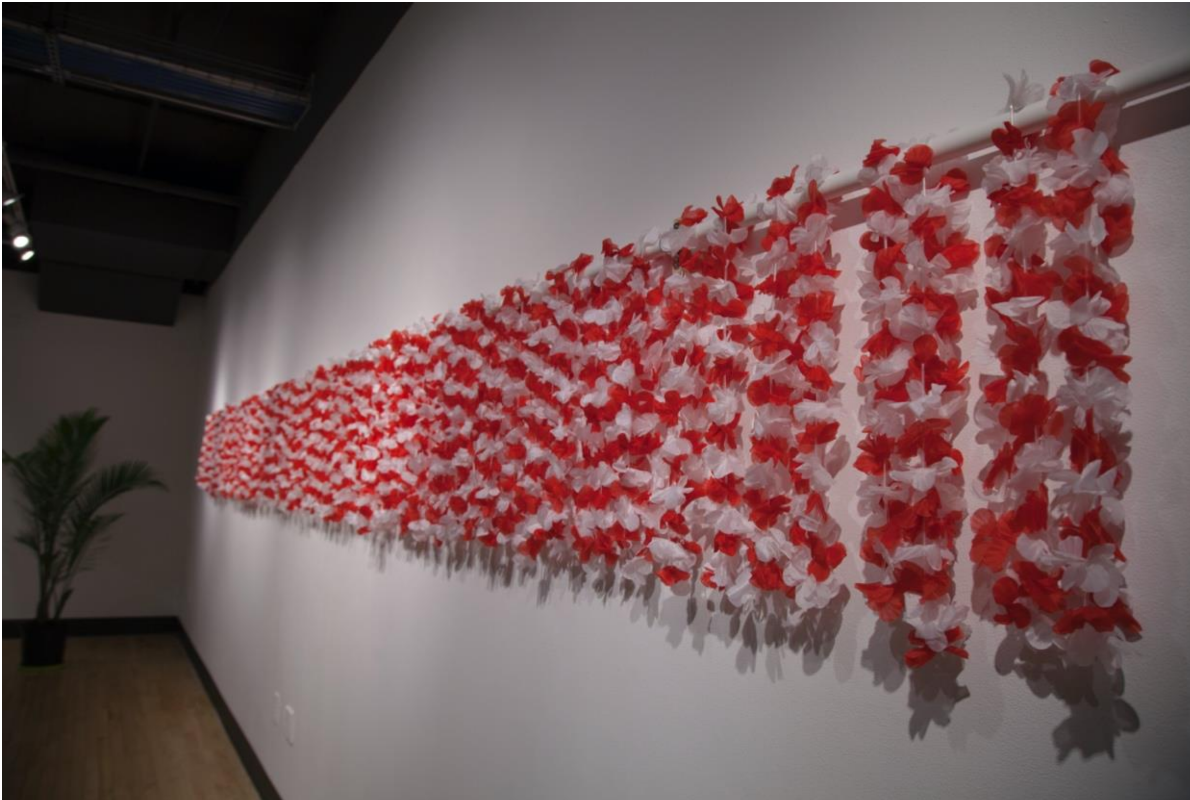
Abstract

Duty-Free Paradise *is a multimedia exhibition and a series of live broadcasted performances that play on the tensions between lived and imagined Hawaiʻi.*[1] *It explores the contradictions between the perceptions and realities of island life—broadly as a "paradise" constructed by American pop culture, and down to the flora and fauna, underwritten by militarism and biopolitics—through the lens of eco-tourism, around which Hawaiʻi's economy heavily circulates.* Duty-Free Paradise *opened coincidentally 15 days after the attempted coup on the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, and four days after the anniversary of the successful coup of 1893 that overthrew Hawaiian sovereignty.*

Keywords: Hawaiʻi, eco-tourism, militarism, paradise

Lani Asuncion is a Boston-based artist with roots in Appalachia who grew up in Oʻahu, Hawaiʻi and Okinawa, Japan. They are a multimedia artist who performs in both public and private spaces using video, sound, projection, and movement to create a visual language that comes from their identity as a queer, multicultural, third-generation Filipinx artist. Asuncion's work explores how new media can be used in transmedia storytelling to visually create a dialogue around eco-tourism throughout Hawaiʻi and the many connections it has to biopolitics and militarism throughout American history to the present day. They use new technologies to create conversations, connections, and decolonized spaces in the face of colonial and imperial ideologies.

Figure 1. View of a portion of the exhibition, *Duty-Free Paradise*, Radial Gallery, Department of Art and Design, University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio, January 22 – February 25, 2021. Courtesy of the artist



The wall text accompanying this work reads: *Please take a lei as you enter the exhibition. Mahalo nui.* Visitors from Japan make up the largest number of inbound international arrivals in Hawaiʻi in a typical, non-pandemic year.[2] In September 2020, 79 visitors arrived in Hawaiʻi from Japan compared to 143,928 visitors from Japan during September 2019. From September through December 2020, the number of Japanese arrivals declined 74.9 percent compared with the same period the previous year.

Figure 2. *79 Visitors*, 2021. Seventy-nine red and white plastic leis, 12 x 25 feet. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 3. *Golden Token: Bango 720740*, 2021. Video (11:35 trt), print. Courtesy of the artist

This work is a wall print with a design based on a 2018 entrance pass to the Dole Plantation Pineapple Garden Maze accompanied by a video of a first-person exploration of the maze itself. The Dole Plantation's website boasts that its 2.5-mile botanical maze is composed of 14,000 Hawaiian plants and was the world's largest maze as of 2008.[3] The plantation is located near Whitmore Village in Wahiawa, where the artist's family lives. The land in this district has been controlled by the U.S. military since 1888; and in 1941, the Computer and Telecommunications Area Master Station Pacific (NCTAMS PAC) was moved there. The wall print has been edited to leave only the phrase "Secret Stations," echoing the histories of the land the Garden Maze's grounds are located on. The number 720740 is the number of the ticket Asuncion received the day they toured the garden maze in 2018, and bango is the Japanese word for number as well as the name of the plantation ID tags made of brass or aluminum that had a number stamped on one side. They were usually worn on a chain around a plantation laborer's neck, and the shape was typically determined by the worker's race. Every Hawaiian plantation used the bango system, which was borrowed from the slave tag system used in the South before the American Civil War. Laborers were required to wear their bango during working hours, and plantation accounts were kept by bango number rather than the employee's name. The gold token in the video was produced by the United States to commemorate Hawaiʻi's statehood in 1959. One side has the Great Seal of the State of Hawaiʻi and the other side depicts the United States of America Seal, while the entire coin was packaged with a survey of flora and fauna found in the islands.

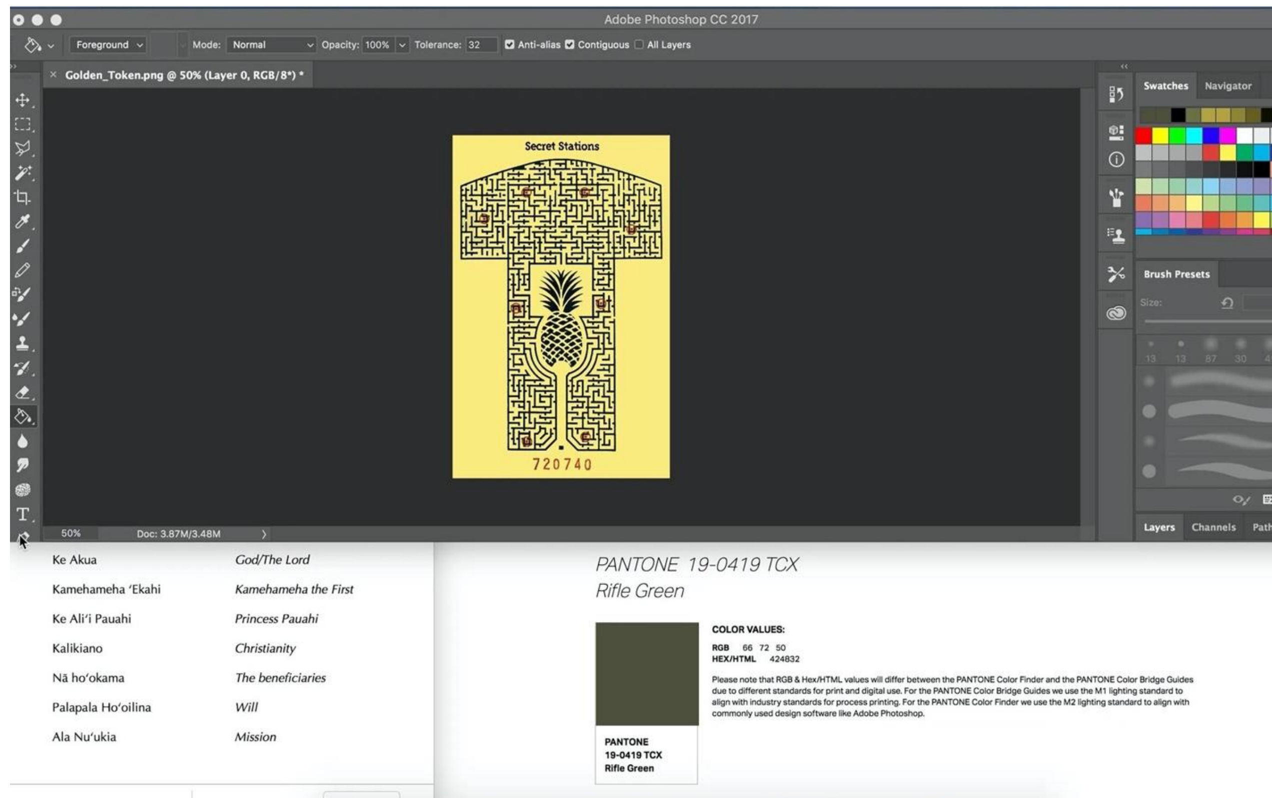


Figure 4. Video still from performance background for *HEX 424832*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist

This video still is from the interactive background used in *HEX 424832*, a virtual performance hosted by Blue House Arts at Front Street Gallery in Dayton, Ohio, that took place on Friday, February 5, 2021. A "hex" can be a spell, a curse, or a prefix for color numbers in the hexadecimal color-coding system, a tool for identifying exact colors across other systems including RGB, HSL, HSV, CMYK, and PANTONE. The color identified as Hex #424832 is the same color as PANTONE 19-0419 TPX - Rifle Green. The 'Rifle' refers to the Honolulu Rifles, an armed militia that participated in the overthrow of 1893. The performance points to the deeply layered yet invisible way militarism is embedded in economic and political planning in Hawaiʻi and the influences it has on everyday life. A total of 11 military bases are on Oʻahu, Maui, Kauaʻi, and the Big Island, many of which were active in WWII.

In this piece, a fresh pineapple that was custom-crated by Asuncion six years ago represents the last pineapple plantation in 2007 in Hawaiʻi and the canneries that eventually closed, the last one on Maui in 2017 before moving overseas to the Philippines and Puerto Rico. This piece stands as a symbol of the last pineapple crop marking the end of 146 years of the production of this fruit as a monocrop in Hawaiʻi.

Figure 5. *The Local*, 2015–2021. Six-year-old petrified pineapple, screws, wood. As exhibited in *Duty-Free Paradise*, Radial Gallery, Department of Art and Design, University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio, January 22 – February 25, 2021. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 6. *Fair Use Hawaii*, 2021. Liteboxer machine, palm plants, paint, foam gym mats, three-channel video (11:26 trt). Courtesy of the artist

This work (figure 6) critiques the commodification of Hawaiʻi as an escape to paradise for Americans living overseas on the U.S. "mainland" and tourist activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The video addresses the ways eco-tourism advertising perpetuates neoliberal economic and political gain through the exploitation of Hawaiʻi's resources, land, and peoples. The performative action of boxing reflects the cultural importance of boxing in Hawaiʻi since the 1920s, as well as Asuncion's training at the Waipahu Boxing Club from 1994–97. It also reflects the struggle for a sense of identity as a local and for the independence of Hawaiʻi as a sovereign nation. In certain sections of the video, the figure of the artist in the foreground is blurry while the background is in focus. With this choice, Asuncion deliberately shifts the viewer's gaze, challenging the way the viewer's mind is trained to expect what is far away to appear blurry and what is closer to be in focus. From 1929–33, the Hawaii Pineapple Company (now Dole Food Company) attempted to use the brown female body as a source of allure when marketing their pineapples, racially eroticizing their bodies. By flipping this optical trope, adopted by the cinematic tradition, *Fair Use Hawaii* creates a sense of control by the artist, subverting the gaze of the viewer away from the performer's body and onto the idealized background.

"*Aloha ʻOe*" playing in the video as background music

"*Aloha-Oe, Until We Meet Again*" by Goombay Dance Band

"*Hiʻilawe – Aloha ʻOe*" by Gabby Pahinui (1972)

"*Aloha ʻOe*" by Elvis Presley

"*Aloha ʻOe*" (Acapella) by Tavita Teʻo

"*Aloha ʻOe*" – The Kawaiahao Church Choir (1970)

YouTube video: *Hawaii, USA by drone [4K]*[4]

Talunan is the name of a popular Filipino chicken soup, but in Tagalog the word also means "loser" or "defeated." Sabong, another Tagalog word, translates to "cockfight." Despite the name, talunan soup is sometimes made from the winning cock of the brood when it is too old to fight. This work reflects the nuances of war, violence, and sport and how these exist in places like Hawaiʻi and the Philippines where imperialism and U.S. militarization has played a role in shaping past and current histories.

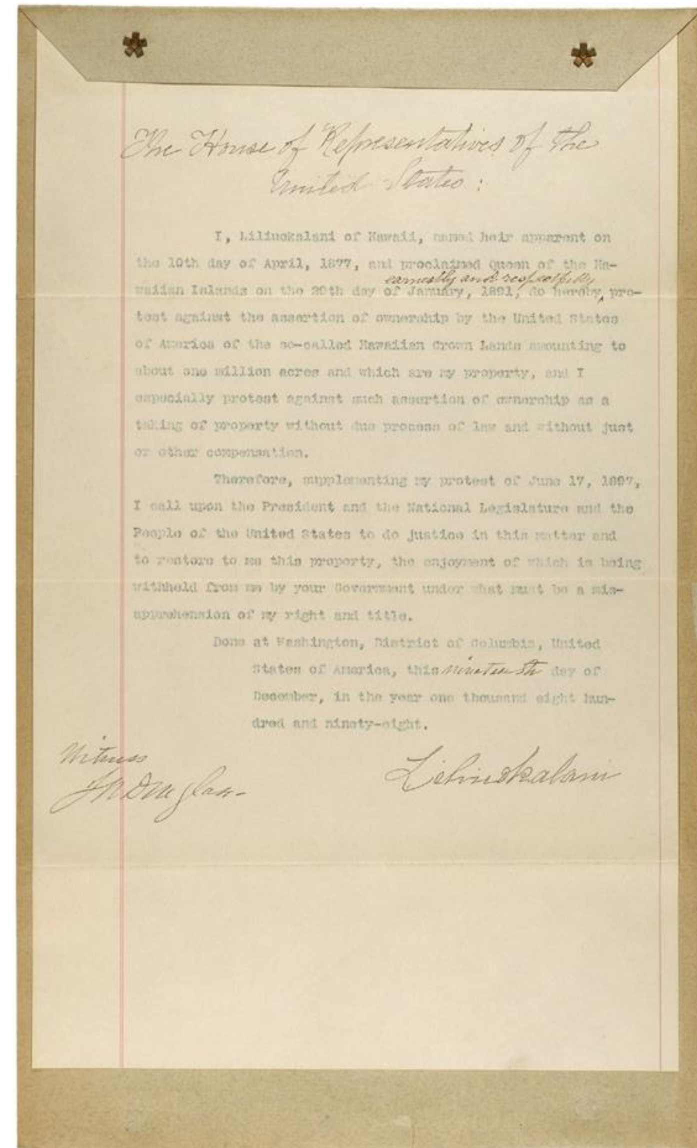
Figure 7. *Talunan sabong (defeated cock)*, 2007. Seven pairs of preserved rooster feet, 19th-century square-cut nails, beeswax-coated string, leather, wire, wood. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 8. *Talunan sabong (defeated cock)* (detail), 2007. Seven pairs of preserved rooster feet, 19th-century square-cut nails, beeswax-coated string, leather, wire, wood, 7 x 5 x 3 inches. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 9. *In place where she stood*, 2021. Pineapple-printed slippas and dirt, 24 x 24 x 60 inches. Courtesy of the artist

This work was influenced by a letter Queen "Lydia" Liliʻuokalani wrote while imprisoned at ʻIolani Palace following the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy by a Euro-American oligarchy that desired greater control of the Hawaiian government on January 17, 1893: "*Alas! My love for my homeland and my beloved people. The bones of my bones, the blood of my blood. Aloha! Aloha! Aloha!*" The United States annexed the Republic of Hawaiʻi in 1898 during the presidency of William McKinley. In this work, pineapples are printed on pink slippers, or 'slippas' as they are called in Hawaiian pidgin, to reference Queen Liliʻuokalani and the stand she took against her overthrow through letters of protest. The text is written in dirt, or ʻāina, the Hawaiian word meaning 'land.'[5] The statement in the piece, "*blood of my blood, bones of my bones,*" alludes to the land and the people being one in the same.

This letter was written by the Queen to U.S. president William McKinley protesting her overthrow and asking for the return of her sovereign title over Hawai'i. The letter influenced the text featured in *In Place Where She Stood* (fig. 9).



The House of Representatives of the United States:

I, Liliuokalani of Hawaii, named heir apparent on the 10th day of April, 1877, and proclaimed Queen of the Hawaiian Islands on the 29th day of January, 1891, do hereby earnestly and respectfully protest against the assertion of ownership by the United States of America of the so-called Hawaiian Crown Lands amounting to about one million acres and which are my property, and I especially protest against such assertion of ownership as a taking of property without due process of law and without just or other compensation.

Therefore, supplementing my protest of June 17, 1897, I call upon the President and the National Legislature and the People of the United States to do justice in this matter and to restore to me this property, the enjoyment of which is being withheld from me by your Government under what must be a misapprehension of my right and title.

Done at Washington, District of Columbia, United States of America, this nineteenth day of December, in the year one thousand eight hundred and ninety-eight.

Witness

Liliuokalani

Figure 10. *Letter from Liliuokalani, Queen of Hawaii to U.S. House of Representatives protesting U.S. assertion of ownership of Hawaii, December 19, 1898*. Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration 306653.

Duty-Free Paradise was made possible by a 2020 Live Arts Boston grant from the Boston Foundation, and Blue House Arts in collaboration with Front Street Art supported by Culture Works in Dayton, Ohio.

Fig. 11. View of a portion of the exhibition, *Duty-Free Paradise*, Radial Gallery, Department of Art and Design, University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio, January 22 – February 25, 2021. Courtesy of the artist

Lani Asuncion has a working art studio in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, one block from the family home of James Dole. Their work was included in the group exhibition CONTACT ZONE (2018), curated by Michael Rooks and Keola Rapozo and organized by the nonprofit Puʻuhonua Society at the Honolulu Museum of Art School. Asuncion has performed their work for the Boston Women's Film Festival (2017) at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and their work was screened in Another Athens Film Programme (2014), a traveling series run by Interview Room 11 (Edinburgh, Scotland) and SNETHA (Athens, Greece). In 2016, they received the Dame Joan Sutherland Fund Fellowship from the American Australian Association, and in 2020 they received a Live Arts Boston grant from the Boston Foundation. Asuncion is founder and organizer of Digital Soup, a collective in Boston which offers public, tech-supportive spaces for AAPI and BIPOC queer artists to perform and share new and experimental performative works in video, sound, and performance.

Mahalo nui loa to Nicholaus Arnold and Anthony Zaninno for believing in this work and for all their help in making this exhibition possible in such hard times.

Notes

[1] "Duty-Free Paradise Performance at Front Street Gallery," YouTube, accessed August 27, 2021, https://youtu.be/DR-7NUm2DOw.
[2] "Hawaiʻi Visitor Statistics Released for September 2020," Hawaiʻi Tourism Authority (website), October 29, 2020, https://www.hawaiitourismauthority.org/news/news-releases/2020/hawaii-visitor-statistics-released-for-september-2020/.
[3] "Pineapple Garden Maze," Dole Plantation (website), accessed August 27, 2021, https://www.doleplantation.com/worlds-largest-maze/.
[4] *"Hawaii, USA by drone [4K],"* Drone Snap, 7 June 2019, last accessed 29 April 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XZOgg9WRhI.
[5] "ʻĀina", Ulukau Hawaiian Electronic Library, accessed August 26, 2021, http://wehewehe.org/gsdl2.85/cgi-bin/hdict?l=en.

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HALENA KAPUNI-REYNOLDS

Exhibition Review
Nā Māla: Layered Landscapes of Kona Coffee Heritage, curated by Mina Elison. Donkey Mill Art Center, Kona, Hawaiʻi, October 24, 2020 – December 12, 2020.

Abstract
One such place on Hawaiʻi island where the arts are being pushed into new directions is the Donkey Mill Art Center (DMAC), a community art center founded by the Hōlualoa Foundation for Arts and Culture (HFAC) and located in the town of Hōlualoa, in the ahupuaʻa (a type of Hawaiian land division) of Keauhou, in the moku (district) of North Kona. Although the institution's name is unassuming, connoting the region's coffee history and honoring the historic Donkey Mill that serves as the flagship building and campus of the organization, DMAC functions as a vital center of creative production in this part of Hawaiʻi island. Throughout the year, DMAC organizes classes, demonstrations, workshops, presentations, and most importantly for this review, exhibitions that celebrate various art mediums, including but not limited to ceramics, drawing, painting, printmaking, mixed media, fiber arts, metal works, photography, and Hawaiian arts. In 2020, Nā Māla: Layered Landscapes of Kona Coffee Heritage, was one of DMAC's in-house exhibits, organized by Communications Director and Curator Mina Elison.

Keywords: *Hawaiʻi, exhibition, Kona, landscapes, Donkey Mill Art Center, place*

Many believe that the nexus for the arts in Hawaiʻi is the island of Oʻahu, the most populated and developed island in our archipelago. As a Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) born and raised on the island of Hawaiʻi, I believe that this is not the case. While it is true that there are more museums, galleries, and artists working on Oʻahu than any other Hawaiian island, to expand our purview of the arts in the Hawaiian islands as a whole requires a "de-centering" of Oʻahu and the highlighting of innovative work by artists and curators who live on the other islands. By intentionally visiting and writing about these lesser-known art scenes, we gain a better grasp of the diversity of artists and curators—Indigenous and non-Indigenous—who draw inspiration from working and living in this archipelago. Furthermore, we achieve a greater understanding of what the arts look like in Hawaiʻi and how they continue to play a vital role in our communities.

One place on Hawaiʻi island where the arts are being pushed into new directions is the Donkey Mill Art Center (DMAC), a community art center founded by the Hōlualoa Foundation

for Arts and Culture and located in the town of Hōlualoa, in the *ahupuaʻa* (land division) of Keauhou, in the *moku* (district) of North Kona. Although the center's name—which acknowledges the region's history with relation to coffee by taking the name of the historic Donkey Mill building—is unassuming, DMAC functions as a vital center of creative production for the region. Throughout the year, DMAC organizes classes, demonstrations, workshops, presentations, and exhibitions that celebrate various media including ceramics, drawing, painting, prints, mixed media, fiber, metal, photography, and Hawaiian arts. One of DMAC's exhibits in 2020 was *Nā Māla: Layered Landscapes of Kona Coffee Heritage*, organized by DMAC's communications director and curator Mina Elison.

Nā Māla featured the works of 19 Kona-based artists, each invited by Elison to produce an artwork that explores the layered natural, cultural, and agricultural landscapes of Kona as they relate to the artist's own positionality (i.e., Kanaka Maoli, long-time non-Hawaiian resident, recent transplant, etc.). The exhibition was shown in DMAC's Donkey Mill gallery space, a building with rustic charm and historical significance to the region, having opened as a coffee mill in 1954. The featured artists were Jake Boggs, Robert Corsair, Tara Cronin, Heide Cumes, Angaea Cuna, Akiko Cutlip, Michael Cutlip, Eric Edwards, Bailey A. Ferguson, Pier Fichefeux, Patsy Greenwell, Jesse Kekoa Kahoonei, Kanani Kaulukukui Jr., Chris Lindborg, Kasey Lindley, Gerald Lucena, Kahakaʻio Ravenscraft, Laurel Schultz, and Hana Yoshihata. Each work of art was accompanied by a wall label that included an artist statement and artist bio. I appreciated reading the artists' statements as opposed to a curator's interpretation of their art, as they allowed me to learn first-hand about their practices and inspirations.

Although the exhibition's title suggested that its focus was "Kona Coffee Heritage," the scope of the artwork in the show was much broader. In some ways, this phrase in the title undermined the complexity of the narratives and artworks presented. Yet, through the terms "*nā māla*" (the gardens) and "layered landscapes" the exhibition's title also captured the curatorial emphasis on ʻāina (land), cultural histories, and contemporary experiences. *Nā māla* refers to the Kona region's Indigenous agricultural past and its successful place-based methods of growing food and other plant resources in locations lacking perennial streams, rivers, and deep topsoil. For individuals with Hawaiian cultural acuity, *nā māla* also conjures images of Kūāhewa, the vast agricultural fields cultivated by Kamehameha I on the slopes of Hualālai in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. These Indigenous field systems served as the basis for the development of the Kona coffee industry decades later. For Kānaka Maoli from Kona, these ancestral lands continue to be interwoven into their contemporary identities. The term "layered landscapes" in the title builds on these Indigenous histories by alluding to the accumulation of histories, cultures, and peoples in Kona over the centuries.

Figure 1. Jesse Kekoa Kahoonei, *Kokole*, 2020. *`Ōhi`a* wood and *hala*, 58"x2.5"x2.5". Collection of Heide and Jeffrey Cumes. Photograph by Eric Edwards. Courtesy of the Donkey Mill Art Center

The artworks in the exhibition provided multiple points of contrast and comparison with regard to how artists from different backgrounds relate to Kona's dynamic landscape. Jesse Kekoa Kahoonei's *Kokole* (Fig. 1), a hand-carved *ʻōʻō* (digging stick), spoke directly to his deeply rooted genealogical ties to Kona. The detailed crisscross pattern that Kahoonei exquisitely carved into the wood, as well as the *lauhala* (pandanus leaf) woven on the handle of the piece, embodied the "weaving" together of family, land, and artistic practice. In his artist statement, Kahoonei explained that the term *kokole* refers to the fifth generation of *kalo* (taro) to be harvested. As an *ʻōʻō*, *Kokole* offered viewers a celebration of Hawaiian agricultural prowess, and an opportunity to imagine how *kalo* was, and continues to be, grown and harvested in Kona and elsewhere in Hawaiʻi using simple yet effective tools. Kahoonei's work was also political; in his statement, the artist identified himself as a "fifth-generation Hawaiian since the overthrow of our Kingdom" and as someone who persists in spite of the colonial violence that Kānaka Maoli have endured. Thus, *Kokole* served as a fervent reminder of Indigenous presence and modernity in Kona.

Kasey Lindley's *Kona Phenomena #1* (2020) and *Kona Phenomena #2* (2020) were abstract works—cutout pieces of paper painted with watercolors—representing the artist's lived experience of looking, listening, and creating in Kona. The colors, patterns, and shapes in each work suggested an array of settings that one may experience along the winding roads of Hōlualoa or the scorching *pāhoehoe* lava fields of Kona's *makai* (coastal) region, including flourishing coral reefs, stands filled with tropical fruits, and colorful flora of various hues and textures. Whereas Kahoonei spoke to his deep ancestral roots in Kona, Lindley's paper works evoked ephemerality and vibrancy in ways that allowed the viewer to imagine the experiences of a recent arrival to Kona.

Other works represented points on a spectrum of lived experiences in Hawaiʻi. On one end were Kānaka Maoli artists, including Kahoonei, Ravenscraft (*Eia ke Koʻi!*, 2020), and Kaulukukui (*Kealaokeakua*, 2020), whose families have lived on these islands for hundreds of generations and whose works speak to that ancestral connection. On the other end were Lindley and Cutlip (*Untitled – ʻĀina series #9*, 2020, and *Untitled [Mauna Loa Collaboration with artists Pier Fichefeux]*, 2020), whose connections to Kona are recent and speak to a different relationship to those lands. "Layered landscapes" can also be thought of along this artistic spectrum, as the depth of one's connection to specific ʻāina can have a significant impact on the ways that relationships to the natural world are interpreted through art.

Another example of how place-based relationships can inform artistic production is Gerald Lucena's stunning piece *Winter Squash, Bitter Melons, and Winged Beans* (Fig. 2), a multimedia artwork utilizing watercolor, masking tape, cotton string, ink, glass vases, and dried wood. Lucena (b. 1967) is not Kanaka Maoli but was raised on a coffee farm in the town of Captain Cook in South Kona. In his statement, he reflects on his childhood connections to

Kona's lands, as well as on the meaning of these lands amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The title of the work refers to three drawings of vegetables that the artist grew during the pandemic as part of his self-described "garden therapy." Each drawing included layers of burnt pieces of masking tape mimicking the volcanic soil of Kona, as well as cotton strings that were stitched into the drawings' paper. The ends of these strings were placed in vases filled with ink, resulting in the ink bleeding up into the paper at the base of each drawing. For the artist, the dried wood and the burnt masking tape represented death and decay in contrast to the vibrancy of the growing vegetables, while the stitching represented "connecting to the landscape." The strings absorbing the ink symbolized knowledge and nourishment and evoked the ways in which ʻāina, literally translated as "that which feeds," sustains our communities. Lucena's piece reminded viewers that an individual's relationship to place is not something that is intrinsic; it must be desired and actively cultivated over time.

Figure 2. Gerald Lucena, *Winter Squash, Bitter Melons, and Winged Beans*, 2020. Watercolor on paper, masking tape, cotton string, ink, glass vases, and dried wood, Each panel 22" x 30", variable dimensions on wood pieces, glass vases, and arrangements. Collection of the artist. Photograph by Eric Edwards. Courtesy of the Donkey Mill Art Center

Nā Māla: Layered Landscapes of Kona Coffee Heritage was a thoughtfully curated exhibition that offered viewers a wealth of ideas and information to unpack regarding the varying degrees of connection to place that exist even within a specific island community. *Nā Māla* is a model for how museums and community centers across Hawaiʻi island can use art to prompt meaningful dialogues around the ways in which we all relate to this archipelago. I hope Elison revisits the theme of layered landscapes while expanding her curatorial scope to consider how artists relate to other parts of Hawaiʻi island, such as Kohala, Hāmākua, Hilo, Puna, and Kaʻū. How do artists in these *moku* (districts) imagine and depict their connections to ʻāina? How does their art compare with works created by the Kona artists for *Nā Māla?* Hawaiʻi island's art scene is growing and has much to offer for art scholars and enthusiasts.

Halena Kapuni-Reynolds is a graduate student in the Department of American Studies at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa specializing in Indigenous museum studies. His recent publications include "Nā Wahi Pana Kaulana o Keaukaha: The Storied Places of Keaukaha" (in Detours: A Decolonial Guide to Hawaiʻi*, Duke University Press, 2019), and* Voyaging through the Oceanic Collections of the Denver Museum of Nature & Science *(Denver Museum of Nature & Science, 2018).*

PACIFIC ARTS
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

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. 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 book reviews editor Emily Cornish at emilycor@umich.edu.

Pacific Arts – Volume 21 (2021)

The forthcoming issue of *Pacific Arts* is a special issue focused on "Pacific Island Worlds: Oceania Dis/Positions." The collection of essays and creative work explores how past and present visual art forms and practices shape place-making and identities in Oceania. Colonial interactions have produced a range of mobilities, yielding fraught processes of displacement, place-making, establishing new homes, and forming social, cultural, and political positions in the face of various dis-positionings. Contributors lend insight into understanding human experiences in Oceania that generate future imaginings and contribute not only to a "mode of survival," but to "an art of living" across the region.

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

Pacifique(S) Contemporain – deuxième edition

Past & Present – Unfolding Narratives in the Pacific

Université Le Havre Normandie

Pacifique(S) Contemporain, a collective of lecturers and curators passionate about the Pacific and its arts, is pleased to announce its second international conference following *Pacifique(S)* in 2015, supported by the research group le GRIC (Groupe de Recherche Identités et Cultures).

The conference is in participation with Le Havre's Museum of Natural History and l'ESADHaR (École supérieure Art et Design Le Havre, Rouen). The International conference will be held at Le Havre Normandy University from the **22nd - 24th September 2021**, and will coincide with the exhibition *Australie* (Australia) at the Natural History Museum.

The theme is ***Past & Present – Unfolding Narratives in the Pacific***. "Narrative" is to be understood in its broadest meaning (a spoken, written or drawn account). "Unfolding" focalizes on revealing, unveiling, disclosing and unravelling narratives buried in the past and offering different layers of understanding and perceptions in the present. Associating the two words, *unfolding narratives*, inspired us to assemble four axes that would allow researchers from a variety of fields to come together and explore and evoke narratives in and concerned with the Pacific.

For more information and to submit an abstract: *https://www.univ-lehavre.fr/spip.php?article3130&var_mode=calcul*

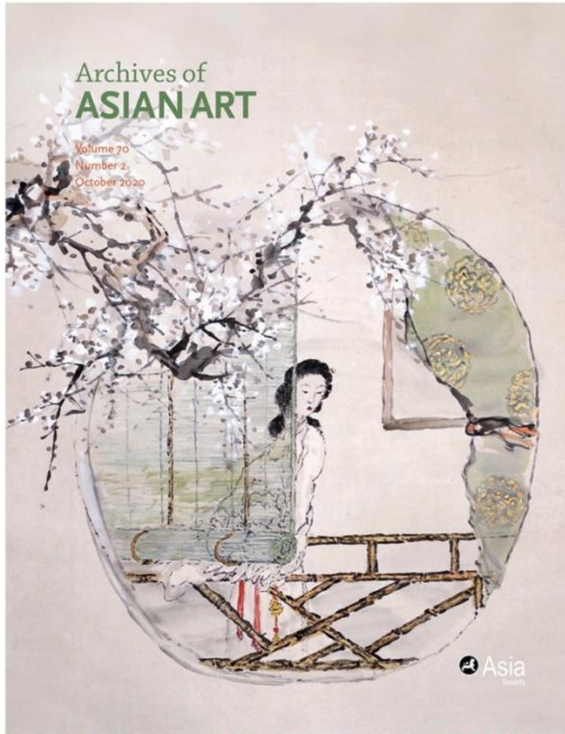
The Pacific Arts Association is an international organization devoted to the study of the arts of Oceania. The Pacific Arts Association (PAA), founded in 1974 and established as an association in 1978, is an international organization devoted to the study of all the arts of Oceania. PAA provides a forum 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.

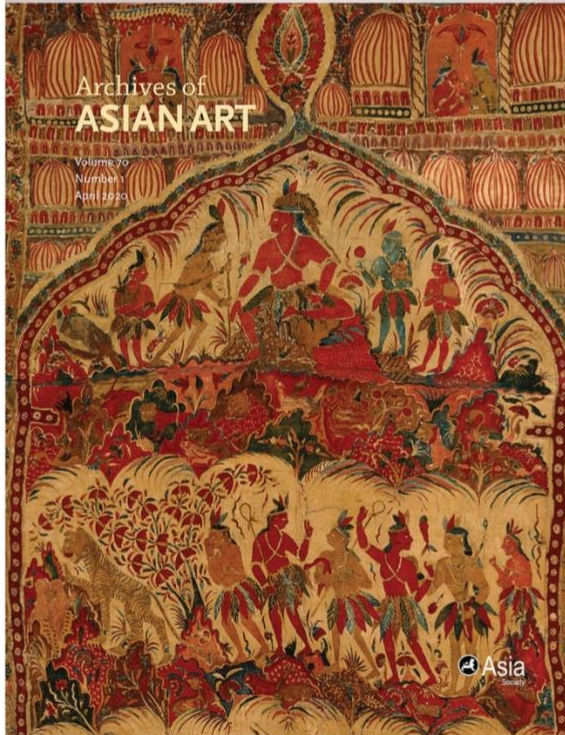
The peer-reviewed **Pacific Arts journal** features current research and reviews. The **PAA newsletter** provides timely information about important events to members. PAA's triennial **International Symposium** takes place in alternating venues across the globe and includes special tours, performances, 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.





Archives of ASIAN ART

Patricia Berger, editor

Since its establishment in 1945, *Archives of Asian Art* has been devoted to publishing new scholarship on the art and architecture of South, Southeast, Central, and East Asia. Articles discuss premodern and contemporary visual arts, archaeology, architecture, and the history of collecting. Every issue is fully illustrated (with color plates in the online version), and each fall issue includes an illustrated compendium of recent acquisitions of Asian art by leading museums and collections.

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Nka JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART

Salah M. Hassan and
Chika Okeke-Agulu, editors

Nka contributes to the intellectual dialogue on world art by publishing critical work in the developing field of contemporary African and African Diaspora art. The journal features scholarly articles, reviews of exhibitions, book and film reviews, and roundtables.

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POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

Faculty Director, Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative, Brown University

Brown University invites applicants for the position of Faculty Director for our Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative (NAISI). During a period of exciting growth and expansion, we look forward to welcoming an accomplished scholar to serve as Faculty Director of NAISI, in partnership with an Executive Director and supported by a faculty Steering Committee and an established office. The inaugural director will provide the intellectual leadership and vision to help us create a dynamic and leading academic program in Critical Native American and Indigenous Studies. By contributing to the scholarly field of NAIS and by engaging with Native American/Indigenous communities that currently define the field of NAIS, this position will help transform Brown's program in the coming years as it continues to grow, innovate and lead the field.

NAISI was established in 2016 to integrate the strong constellation of interest at Brown in Native American and Indigenous Studies among students, faculty and administrators across a number of departments. Supported by an exceptional array of resources for research, teaching and study; student organizations; and increased engagement with Native American tribes and communities in the region, NAISI has quickly grown over the past five years to include 24 affiliated faculty across a number of departments. In addition, NAIS has developed an undergraduate concentration (major) in Critical Native American and Indigenous Studies, and hired a staff of 6 (including two graduate student fellows).

Working closely with the Executive Director and the faculty Steering Committee, NAISI's Faculty Director will articulate and advance a vision in Native American and Indigenous Studies and oversee significant resources to support the goals of the Initiative. As a tenured member of the Brown faculty, they will have opportunities to work collaboratively with fellow faculty, students, departments, centers and administrative offices across the university, offering leadership in the areas of academic engagement, research and teaching in NAIS. They will contribute to our expanding engagement with tribes and Indigenous peoples on the local, national and international levels.

Review of applications will begin **Sept. 1, 2021**. For more information and to view the full job description, please visit https://apply.interfolio.com/86622 .

POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

ERC Research Group *Indigeneities in the 21st Century*
One Postdoctoral Fellowship or Doctoral Position

Available from 1 April 2022, at the latest, for the duration of 3 years

The project 'Indigeneities in the 21st Century', funded by the European Research Council (ERC) (2019-2025), attempts to understand how Indigenous actors have evolved from 'vanishing people' to global players. While the label 'Indigeneity' circulates globally, it is also defined as a place-based marker of identity. This project breaks new ground by incorporating both dimensions – global circulation and local experience – in a common framework. It does so by studying entangled Indigeneities as transregional and transcultural formations along the transpacific intersections between North and South America, Australia and the South Pacific. The project deploys and investigates a set of knowledge practices - collecting, filming, exhibiting - through which Indigenous multiplicities become constituted, and is located at the disciplinary intersections between anthropology, art, history, literature and philosophy. It aims at making a future-oriented contribution to (re)emerging Indigeneities and the (re)negotiation of their (post)colonial legacies in and with Europe.

The project seeks applications for one Postdoctoral Fellow or Doctoral Student to join an international team of researchers and conduct an individual project within the framework of '**Indigeneities in the 21st Century**' (www.indigen.eu). Candidates should be versed in Indigenous cosmologies, epistemologies, ontologies and languages. A high level of academic English is required, and knowledge of other colonial/archival languages (French, German, Spanish) is advantageous. Candidates should have an excellent early career research record and present evidence of outstanding potential. They will be expected to conduct fieldwork in the Pacific, consolidate his/her academic profile and expertise through publications and collaboration, and contribute to the research culture of the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at LMU Munich, the highest-ranked university in Germany and one of the leading universities in Europe, where this position is based.

The University is an equal opportunity employer. Applicants with disabilities will be given preference in the case of approximately equal qualifications. LMU Munich is interested in increasing the number of female faculty members and encourages women to apply. The salary grade is TVL 13 (Postdoc 100 %, Doctoral Position 75%), which provides a liveable salary and benefits including full healthcare, pension contributions, and six weeks paid vacation.

Please submit the following application documents electronically by **30 June 2021** to the principal investigator **Prof. Dr. Philipp Schorch (philipp.schorch@ethnologie.lmu.de) to** whom further questions about the position can also be sent:

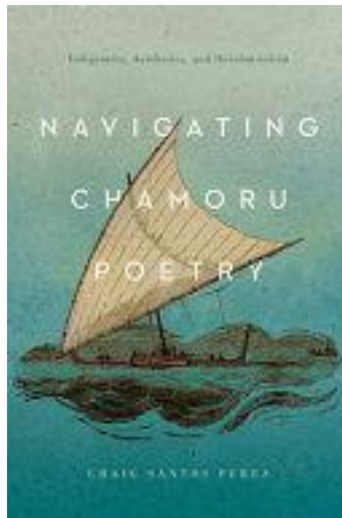
As one pdf file (in English):
(1) Application letter (letter of intent)
(2) Curriculum vitae (including all publications)
(3) Project proposal (max 5 pages)
(4) Writing sample (e.g. a published paper or a chapter of the Doctoral/MA thesis)
(5) Degree certificates
(6) Names and contact details of three referees

Shortlisted candidates will be programmed for a zoom interview in late July 2021.

The project has received funding from the European Research Council (Grant Agreement No. 803302).

NEW PUBLICATION

Navigating CHamoru Poetry: Indigeneity, Aesthetics, and Decolonization
by
Craig Santos Perez



Navigating CHamoru Poetry focuses on Indigenous CHamoru (Chamorro) poetry from the Pacific Island of Guåhan (Guam). Poet and scholar Craig Santos Perez brings critical attention to a diverse and intergenerational collection of CHamoru poetry and scholarship. Throughout this book, Perez develops an Indigenous literary methodology called "wayreading" to navigate the complex relationship between CHamoru poetry, cultural identity, decolonial politics, diasporic migrations, and native aesthetics. Perez argues that contemporary CHamoru poetry articulates new and innovative forms of indigeneity rooted in CHamoru customary arts and values, while also routed through the profound and traumatic histories of missionization, colonialism, militarism, and ecological imperialism.

This book shows that CHamoru poetry has been an inspiring and empowering act of protest, resistance, and testimony in the decolonization, demilitarization, and environmental justice movements of Guåhan. Perez roots his intersectional cultural and literary analyses within the fields of CHamoru studies, Pacific Islands studies, Native American studies, and decolonial studies, using his research to assert that new CHamoru literature has been--and continues to be--a crucial vessel for expressing the continuities and resilience of CHamoru identities. This book is a vital contribution that introduces local, national, and international readers and scholars to contemporary CHamoru poetry and poetics.

University of Arizona Press, Jan 25, 2022
https://uapress.arizona.edu/book/navigating-chamoru-poetry

CALL FOR PAPERS

Amerasia Journal: Ocean Feminisms

Guest Editors: Celia Tagamolila Bardwell-Jones (University of Hawai‘i at Hilo), Stephanie Nohelani **Teves** (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa), and Joyce Pualani Warren (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa)
Publication Date: Planned for **Fall 2022**
Submission Requirements: 5,000-6,000 words (not including endnotes), due **October 1, 2021**

This special issue aims to center Indigenous epistemologies of the sea alongside settler responsibilities through transoceanic reflections. The guest editors recognize as a starting point the importance of the elemental sea, Moananuiākea, as the basis of identity for many people of Oceania. Centering the sea also invites dialogue with feminist scholarship emerging from the Caribbean, the Atlantic, and other ocean-centered Indigenous communities. Though this project is rooted in and routed through Oceania, oceanic flows invite us to think about feminisms that move beyond cartographic boundaries and academic disciplines, and we seek contributions that develop better models of decolonizing feminisms as well as models that center Indigenous feminist practices in the diaspora. Moreover, the editors take seriously the critiques of settlers of color made by Native Hawaiian activists, such as Haunani-Kay Trask, and Moana feminists, such as Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Maile Arvin, and Teresia Teaiwa. Hence, the special issue aims to develop a decolonial conceptual framework that deeply examines how epistemic practices of knowing oceans and waterways aid in cultivating ethical orientations that are critical of settler colonial occupation within Oceania and reconstruct alternative conceptions of the sea as generative/birthing pathways that are anchored to modalities of place-based ecologies, to evade colonial logics that render the sea as passive. Navigating the terrain of the space between oceans requires a trans-oceanic placental consciousness. As Epeli Hauʻofa reminds us, a “sea of islands” invokes a trans-oceanic consciousness that navigates across oceans, dives deep into the womb of the sea, and finds landings on the liminal ecologies of the sand, the coral, and the tides.

We seek critical essays and articles as well as creative non-fiction, first person accounts, poetry, and visual art that engage the intersections of settler responsibilities and Indigenous epistemologies of the sea. Possible topics include:

- Indigenous epistemologies, cosmogonies, or ontologies of the sea (ocean literacies, waves of knowledge, epistemic resistance, philosophical conceptions)
- Black, Indigenous, people of color critical perspectives of the sea
- Oceanic rematriation projects
- Queer theorizations of the ocean and diaspora
- Birthing practices in Oceania
- Indigenous feminism in Oceania (ie, Mana Wahine, Mana tama’ita’i)
- Women of Color feminisms
- Black Indigenous Pacific feminist scholarship (centering Melanesian and/ or Afro-diasporic perspectives)
- Decolonizing allyship (settlers of color, Asian Settler colonialism)
- Ecologies of the ocean and climate change
- Water rights
- Surfing, paddling, fishing, swimming, diving, sailing, wayfinding, and activism
- Militarization across oceans
- Imaginings of the sea through art, poems, song, performance

Please submit your paper at: https://www.editorialmanager.com/ramj/default.aspx.

Please contact Arnold Pan, Associate Editor, with any questions regarding your submission: arnoldpan@ucla.edu.