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Author
Johnston, Healoha

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PACIFIC ARTS
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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

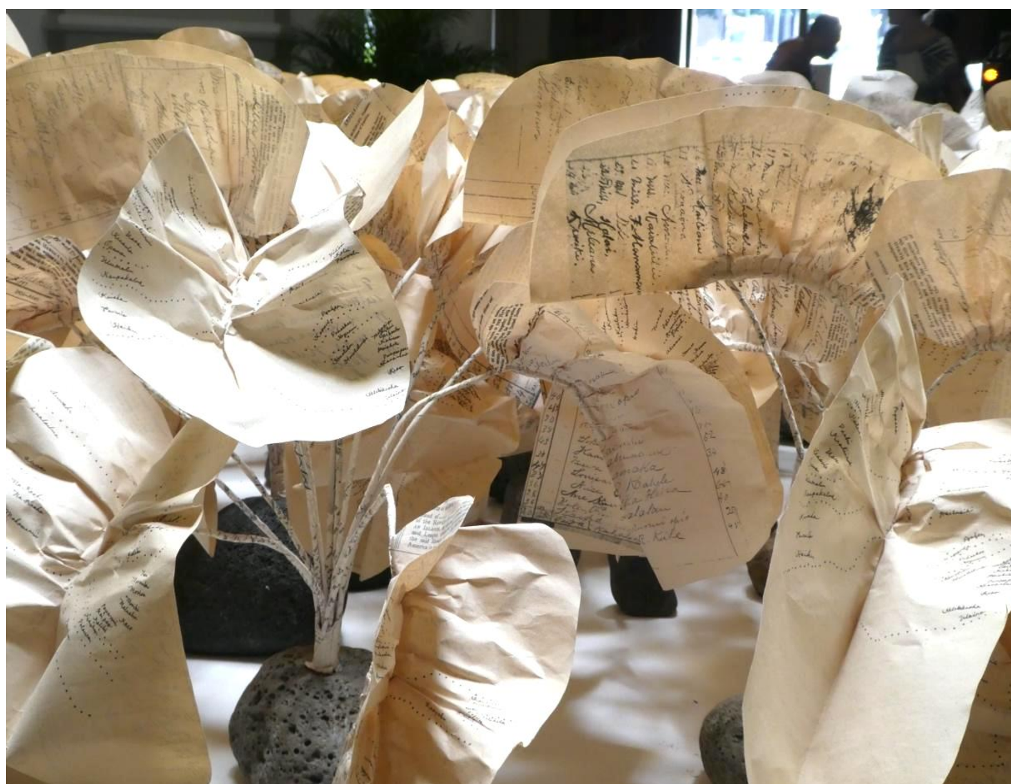

Figure 3. Bernice Akamine, *KALO* (detail), 2015. Ink, newsprint, and pōhaku (stone); installation dimensions variable. Photograph by Stacy L. Kamehiro. Courtesy of the artist

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.

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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 Kahunawaikaʹala 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."