

*Frames and Counterframes*

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Envisioning Contemporary Kanaka Maoli Art in Hawai‘i

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February 2015

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Australian National University

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2015

## *Declaration*

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Except where specific reference is made to other sources, the work presented in this thesis is solely that of the author.



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Andrea Marata Tamaira  
February 2015

## *Dedication*

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This thesis is dedicated to my husband Carl Franklin Ka‘ailā‘au Pao and our daughter Te Rerehau ‘Ailā‘au Helena Hanisi Pao-Tamaira, without either of whom this work would not only not have been completed, but it would never have been started in the first place.

## *Acknowledgements*

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It was Plato who said that the “beginning is the most important part of every work.”<sup>1</sup> While this indeed may be true, the statement does not account for the laborious process through which such work takes shape. Nor does it acknowledge the many contributions of kindness and support along the way by those who rally the worker toward completion. Yes, beginning is an important part of every endeavor, but the end is only ever reached through the committed assistance of a community of people.

First and foremost I am indebted to my husband Carl F.K. Pao for his enduring support and encouragement over the course of not only this doctoral project but the many years of study that have preceded it. There was a time when I thought pursuing advanced study was an undertaking as impossible for me as flying to the moon. Over the years, however, Carl convinced me to believe otherwise and for that and so many other everyday acts of love and kindness he has shown me, I am grateful. I extend my deepest thanks to my smart, sensitive, and funny little girl Te Rerehau, who over the course of my research has had to endure long periods of my absence, whether it was because I was taking part in conferences elsewhere in the world or fulfilling residency obligations at the Australian National University in Canberra, Australia. Of the three and a half years I have spent pursuing doctoral study, I have been apart from my family for a total of six months. I owe everything to Carl and Te Rerehau for their fortitude, courage, and patience during this journey on which we have all been fellow travelers, even if at times separated by considerable distance.

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Much gratitude goes to my father Constantine Wharerangi Tamaira. Even as a young child growing up in New Zealand I knew what an incredibly hard worker my

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<sup>1</sup> Plato, *The Republic Of Plato: Second Edition*, trans. Allan Bloom, 2nd ed. (Basic Books, 1991), 54.

father was, whether he was in the wool shed shearing sheep, constructing fences in the rural backblocks of Taihape, or laboring in the meat works. My father never made it past high school, but the work ethic he instilled in me has been a source of sustenance and strength during this long and arduous undertaking. Ka nui toku aroha ki a koe, e Pāpā.

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I am deeply thankful to Herman Pi‘ikea Clark—my friend, brother, and mentor—who has been one of my most ardent supporters. Over the years he has provided me with wise and gentle counsel as well as inspired me to think deeply about my responsibilities as an indigenous scholar within and outside of the academy. He is the kind of thinker I aspire to be.

This thesis would have been nothing without the many individuals who agreed to share their perspectives and thoughts with me. I am indebted to the Hawaiian artists who shared their knowledge with me during formal interview sessions, including Solomon Enos, Carl F.K. Pao, John “Prime” Hina, Estria Miyashiro, Kaili Chun, Kapulani Landgraf, ‘Īmaikalani Kalahēle, Drew Broderick, Bob Freitas, Cory Taum, Maile Andrade, Meleanna Meyer, Marques Marzan, and Haley Kailiehu. Other key research participants included Joe Rohde, John Condrey, Maile Meyer, and Noelle Kahanu. I am also grateful for the help provided by several people at the Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa, including Elliot Mills, Todd Apo, and Kahulu De Santos.

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Along with the intellectual and emotional support I have received from so many people over the last three and a half years, my doctoral aspirations would have been heavily impeded had I not had the generous financial support of the Australian National University’s Vice-Chancellor’s Scholarship for Doctoral Study. I am grateful for the investment that has been made in me and, over the course of my research, I have endeavored to ensure that such an investment has been well earned through my commitment to the research and to the people who are part of it.

## *Note on Language*

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Throughout this thesis I use the terms Kanaka Maoli, Native Hawaiian, and Hawaiian interchangeably to refer to the indigenous people of Hawai‘i. In keeping with contemporary orthographic conventions, I also use diacritical markers, including the ‘okina (glottal stop) and the kahakō (macron). However, where these markers are not included in the sources I cite, I defer to the original. As a special note on “Kanaka Maoli”: I include the macron (i.e., Kānaka Maoli) to indicate its use as a plural noun, but when used as a singular noun and adjective, I omit the macron. I have purposefully chosen to not italicize Hawaiian-language words in this thesis based on my own conviction that to do so signals them as foreign against the English-language text. However, where Hawaiian words are italicized in cited sources, I hold to the original.



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## *Abstract*

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Since the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893 and the subsequent illegal annexation of the Islands by the United States in 1898, Native Hawaiians (Kānaka Maoli) have vigilantly contested U.S. colonialism in Hawai‘i and have resolutely sought to defend and affirm their existence as the still sovereign people of their homeland through political, legal, cultural, and artistic means. While the first three instances of indigenous resistance have been well documented in numerous books, journal articles, and theses, there remains a largely untapped field of academic enquiry concerning the role of contemporary Kanaka Maoli art within this milieu. This dissertation seeks to close the gap with an examination of how Native Hawaiian artists use the visual arts as a tool to assert their socio-political aspirations, affirm their sovereign identity, and disrupt the colonial status quo by representing themselves on their own terms. Here, the visual arts function as an abstract expression of Native power.

As an analytical anchor, I use Tuscarora scholar Jolene Rickard’s term “visual sovereignty” to investigate three discrete contexts in which Kanaka Maoli art is produced: “high” art, commercial art, and public art. For the purpose of this study, I define visual sovereignty as an aesthetic strategy through which Kanaka Maoli artists articulate an indigenous-centered perspective that conveys Native epistemologies, ongoing political struggles, and ancestral connection to place. An examination of contemporary Kanaka Maoli art using this paradigm has not yet been advanced in the Hawai‘i context but a growing body of scholarship by Native American and First Nations academics and art practitioners indicates the indispensability of opening up a discussion that attends to Kanaka Maoli visual culture as an articulation of indigenous sovereignty. This thesis is a nascent step toward that end.

That which produces and manipulates the frame sets everything in motion to efface its effect, most often by naturalizing it to infinity.

—Jacques Derrida<sup>2</sup>

The truth of our race and its outside dimension is that us guys don't belong in one capsule or one box [read: frame], 'cos the box not big enough. Us guys growing.

—'Imaikalani Kalahela<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jacques Derrida, "The Parergon," *October* 9, no. Summer (1979): 33.

<sup>3</sup> In Puhipau and Joan Lander, *Contemporary Hawaiian Artists*, VHS (Nā Maka o Ka 'Āina, 1989).

## *Prologue*

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This doctoral project began its nascent development during an informal panel discussion I organized as part of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO) conference held in Honolulu in February 2011. The panel, entitled “The State of Contemporary Maoli Arts in Hawai‘i: Visual and Cinematic Insights,” featured an all-Kanaka Maoli lineup of visual artists, filmmakers, and a Native Hawaiian entrepreneur, including Carl F.K. Pao (artist), ‘Īmaikalani Kalahahele (artist), Solomon Enos (artist), Ann Marie Nālanai Kirk (filmmaker), Anne Ke‘ala Kelly (filmmaker), and Maile Meyer (business woman and entrepreneur). During the proceedings the discussants raised a number of issues, key of which was what they observed to be a lack of support for indigenous arts in Hawai‘i and the struggle of Kanaka Maoli artists to find permanent spaces to tell their stories through their chosen mediums. Some of the panelists talked about the innovative ways Hawaiians have adopted Western art traditions to represent who they are on their own terms, while others highlighted the important role Kanaka Maoli visual and cinematic narratives have played in the ongoing effort to challenge American hegemony in Hawai‘i and affirm Native identity. For instance, Anne Ke‘ala Kelly referred to her film *Noho Hewa: The Wrongful Occupation of Hawai‘i* (2008) as a guerilla documentary (the film explores the illegal occupation of Hawai‘i by the United States), thus underscoring its subversive intent as a piece of counter-colonial filmmaking, while Maile Meyer described the temporary exhibition spaces in which Kanaka Maoli art is displayed as sites that “manifest and bear witness” to the presence of Kānaka Maoli in the Islands.<sup>1</sup>

What the session revealed was that indigenous art in Hawai‘i is grounded in the political and cultural landscape of the Islands and constitutes an aesthetic mode of resistance for challenging American colonialism as well as making visible the continued presence of Kānaka Maoli in their homeland. As art historian Jeremy McClancy states, art can be a confrontational and transgressive response to external pressures such as colonialism, but it can also be an attempt by people “to recreate themselves” in constructive ways “in the transformative context of the colonialist project.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Maile Aluli Meyer, “The State of Contemporary Maoli Arts in Hawai‘i: Visual and Cinematic Insights” (Panel discussion presented at the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO), Hilton Waikīkī Prince Kūhio Hotel, Honolulu, February 9–12, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Jeremy McClancy, *Contesting Art: Art, Politics, and Identity in the Modern World* (Oxford, UK: Berg Publishers, 1997), 10.

The session stirred strong emotional responses from many of the participants, who candidly shared their personal experiences of struggling to locate their identity as Kānaka Maoli and then embarking on the equally difficult task of finding ways to artistically express that identity in a colonized land where Native perspectives are systematically marginalized by the dominant culture. During what was for all intents and purposes an absorbing exchange of ideas and views, it struck me then, as it does now, that contemporary art production in Hawai‘i is a crucial element in the Native struggle to both affirm sovereignty and resist American domination.

Over the last decade or more, a body of exceptional and diverse scholarship has emerged to shed light on the indigenous situation in Hawai‘i. These writings—and I cite here just a few—are concerned with such tasks as analyzing the political resistance of Kānaka Maoli to American colonization during the nineteenth century;<sup>3</sup> the rhetorical production of Hawai‘i through written and visual literature for touristic, non-Hawaiian consumption;<sup>4</sup> the pernicious logic of blood quantum regulation in Hawai‘i;<sup>5</sup> Kanaka Maoli masculinity in the context of the Hawaiian cultural nationalist movement;<sup>6</sup> and the ongoing question of Hawai‘i’s sovereign status through an investigation of its legal and political history.<sup>7</sup> On the topic of indigenous visual arts in particular, in her publication *The Arts of Kingship: Hawaiian Art and National Culture of the Kalākaua Era*, Stacy L. Kamehiro provides a detailed analysis of the nineteenth-century artwork and architecture associated with the reign of Hawaiian monarch David Kalākaua (1874–1891).<sup>8</sup> Still, while these and other scholarly contributions provide salient points of reference for understanding the complex political and cultural conditions that frame Hawai‘i, there remains a largely unploughed field of academic enquiry when it comes to contemporary Kanaka Maoli art.

In a special issue on Pacific arts and politics in the 1992 edition of *Pacific Studies*,

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<sup>3</sup> See Jonathan Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio, *Dismembering Lāhui: A History of the Hawaiian Nation to 1887* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002) and Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> See Cristina Bacchilega, *Legendary Hawai‘i and the Politics of Place: Tradition, Translation, and Tourism* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007) and Houston Wood, *Displacing Natives: The Rhetorical Production of Hawai‘i* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999).

<sup>5</sup> See J. Kehaulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> See Ty P. Kāwika Tengan, *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawai‘i* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> See David Keanu Sai, *Ua Mau Ke Ea—Sovereignty Endures: An Overview of the Political and Legal History of the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: Pū‘ā Foundation, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Stacy L. Kamehiro, *The Arts of Kingship: Hawaiian Art and National Culture of the Kalākaua Era* (University of Hawai‘i Press, 2009).



Adrienne Kaeppler states in her epilogue that “the dawn has come” for the political use of art in the Pacific to be apprehended as a critical line of academic enquiry.<sup>9</sup> While much has been written about the political underpinnings of Hawaiian hula, music, and literature, the dawn that Kaeppler alludes to is still in the process of breaking apropos sustained scholarly enquiry of contemporary Kanaka Maoli visual art. Indeed, an analysis of Kanaka Maoli artistic production has been conspicuously absent—or at best, minimal—in the work carried out on contemporary Pacific art in general. A cursory glance over the last several years reveals the publication of a number of noteworthy books—including *Bérétara: Contemporary Pacific Art* by Susan Cochrane (2001); *Pacific Art: Persistence, Change, and Meaning* by Anita Herle (2002); *Paradise Now? Contemporary Art from the Pacific* (2004) edited by Melissa Chiu; *Pacific Island Artists: Navigating the Global Art World* edited by Karen Stevenson (2011); and *Pacific Art in Detail* by Jenny Newell (2011). While all of these publications are in their own right commendable contributions to the important and growing scholarship on contemporary Pacific art, none of them include art produced by Kānaka Maoli.<sup>10</sup> The exception to this historical lapse of inclusion is the recent publication *Art in Oceania: A New History* (2012), a section of which is devoted to exploring a key installation by New Zealand-based Kanaka Maoli artist Pi‘ikea Clark.<sup>11</sup>

The proclivity for leaving out Hawaiian voices from Hawai‘i’s art discourse more specifically is conspicuously evident in one publication in particular. The release of *Artists/Hawaii* in 1996 was significant for the fact that it was the first comprehensive survey of Hawai‘i artists to be produced. In the Foreword, curator James Jensen praises the work as having successfully captured “the breadth, richness, and diversity of contemporary art in Hawai‘i.”<sup>12</sup> However, as Karen Kosasa states in her own insightful critique of the publication, the selection of artists was deeply problematic, given that all of them—twenty-two in total—were of settler descent; not one was Kanaka Maoli. She writes,

Those selected, of *haole* or Asian ancestry, were chosen from the collective recommendations of curators, collectors, artists, and other people interested in the visual arts community in Hawai‘i. While the

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<sup>9</sup> Adrienne L. Kaeppler, “Epilogue: States of the Arts,” *Pacific Studies*, Special issue: The Arts and Politics, 15, no. 4 (1992): 318.

<sup>10</sup> Although *Paradise Now? Contemporary Art from the Pacific* included Hawai‘i-based artists in its survey, the featured artists were not Native Hawaiian.

<sup>11</sup> The authors examine Clark’s 1996 MA thesis exhibition at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa titled “Ho‘okumu Hou [Recreation].” I discuss this work in Chapter Two.

<sup>12</sup> Joan Clarke and Diane Dods, eds., *Artists/Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1996), vii.

ethnicities of the selected artists may have appeared to be representative of the islands' multiethnic communities, *the absence of Native artists in the survey was a serious omission*.<sup>13</sup>

This instance of writing indigenous artists out of Hawai'i's contemporary art history while constituting a serious omission was at the time not in and of itself unique but rather corresponded with a tradition of erasure across many art contexts in the Islands. For instance, three years before the *Artists/Hawaii* publication The Contemporary Museum in Honolulu held its inaugural Biennial Exhibition of Hawaii Artists, the aim of which (in similar vein to *Artists/Hawai'i*) was "to promote a wider awareness . . . of the significant achievements of the artists of Hawai'i."<sup>14</sup> The goal was a laudable one, but there was a discernible shortfall: no Kanaka Maoli artists were included on the distinguished roster—at least not until 1999.<sup>15</sup> Despite the sporadic inclusion of other Kānaka Maoli since that time, over the course of the some twenty years the exhibition has been running, as of this writing the number of indigenous artists to be featured is a paltry five compared to sixty settler artists.<sup>16</sup> In the 1989 documentary *Contemporary Hawaiian Artists*, Bob Freitas describes this process of exclusion as a kind of suppression:

I think for so many years, part of the suppression of us [as contemporary Hawaiian artists] was the fact that there basically was no recognition. Hawaiian artists were unheard of. The only artists that were valid was [*sic*] the artists that were in the museum.<sup>17</sup>

Such concerns regarding the exclusion and suppression of Kanaka Maoli art in Hawai'i continue to be articulated today. In 2013 Hawaiian lawmaker Representative Faye Hanohano—who is Chairwoman for the House Committee on Ocean, Marine Resources, and Hawaiian Affairs—lambasted the absence of Native Hawaiian art at the Hawai'i State Capitol where she works. Since 1967 the Arts in Public Places program—which is operated under the auspices of the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (HSFCA)—has facilitated the commissioning and acquisition of Hawai'i-based art

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<sup>13</sup> Karen Keiko Kosasa, "Critical Sight/Sites: Art Pedagogy and Settler Colonialism in Hawai'i" (PhD, Visual and Cultural Studies, University of Rochester, 2002), 26; emphasis in original.

<sup>14</sup> James Jensen, "Introduction/Acknowledgments," in *The Contemporary Museum Biennial of Hawaii Artists*, a catalog for the Biennial Exhibition of Hawaii Artists, August 11–September 26, 1993 (Honolulu: The Contemporary Museum, 1993), 3.

<sup>15</sup> The first Kanaka Maoli artist to feature in the Biennial Exhibition of Hawaii Artists was photographer Kapulani Landgraf.

<sup>16</sup> The five Kanaka Maoli artists to feature in the Biennial Exhibition of Hawaii Artists include Kapulani Landgraf (1999), Kaili Chun (2003), Maika'i Tubbs and Abigail Romanchak (2010), and Solomon Enos (2012).

<sup>17</sup> In Puhipau and Lander, *Contemporary Hawaiian Artists*.

for display in state public places throughout the Islands, including the State Capitol. However, as Hanohano argued, none of the works—including those exhibited in her own office—were by Hawaiian artists. Unfortunately, the lawmaker’s impassioned observation regarding the underrepresentation of Native Hawaiian art was overshadowed by the very public controversy she generated as a result of remarks she made to HSFCA employees while they were installing artwork in her office. Hanohano allegedly told them that the artwork was “ugly” and that they could remove any art by “Haoles, Japs, or Pākes” (i.e., Caucasian, Japanese, Chinese).<sup>18</sup> In a formal letter of complaint written by the Senior Exhibit Specialist who was present at the time of Hanohano’s outburst, James Kuroda wrote that Hanohano also “threatened to cut funding to the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts if she didn’t get any artwork done by Native Hawaiian artists.”<sup>19</sup>

Despite the offensive nature of Hanohano’s remarks—in particular the racial insult associated with the term “Jap”—she nevertheless raised an important point about the ongoing lack of recognition of Hawaiian artists in Hawai‘i and the discontent it provokes in the Native Hawaiian community. In his doctoral research on the exclusion of Native Hawaiian art, knowledge, and practice in Hawai‘i’s education system, Pi‘ikea Clark argues that the denial of Kanaka Maoli art is symptomatic of an entrenched hegemonic art system:

The visual arts establishment in Hawai‘i could be seen as a citadel of mainstream American cultural values positioned on top of the multicultural and multiethnic setting of the islands’ diverse population. Introduced to Hawai‘i by missionaries, merchants, and colonial administrators and educators as a symbol of Euro-American intellectual superiority and cultural sophistication, the institution of visual arts (i.e., artists, museums, galleries, collectors, and critics) gained international attention with romanticized depictions of Hawai‘i’s lush landscape and exotic natives. The visual art establishment was historically less than willing to share its privileged position of cultural arbiter with Kanaka Maoli, a people that it had long made subject.<sup>20</sup>

In acknowledging the systematic ways Native art is marginalized in Hawai‘i, the

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<sup>18</sup> Malia Zimmerman, “Hawaii Representative Apologizes Over Racial Slurs and Threats She Made to State Workers,” *Hawaii Reporter*, March 1, 2013, <http://www.hawaiireporter.com/hawaii-representative-apologizes-over-racial-slurs-and-threats-she-made-to-state-workers/123>.

<sup>19</sup> James T. Kuroda, “Transcript: Complaint of Hanohano’s Racial Slurs” (KITV4 News.com, February 28, 2013), <http://www.kitv.com/politics/TRANSCRIPT-Complaint-of-Hanohano-s-racial-slurs/19130582>.

<sup>20</sup> Herman Pi‘ikea Clark, “Kūkulu Kauhale O Limaloa: A Kanaka Maoli Culture Based Approach to Education through Visual Studies” (PhD, Education, Massey University, 2006), 10.

question then becomes how to open up spaces of visibility for the art and the artists. In September 2011 I had the opportunity to attend the Western Museums Association annual conference in Honolulu. In a panel discussion titled “Creating a Place for Art: Supporting and Funding Contemporary Artists in the Pacific,” Bob Freitas restated his concerns about the lack of recognition of Kanaka Maoli artists and, importantly, urged writers and scholars to produce work that gives precedence to contemporary Kanaka Maoli artistic expression. A nascent step toward that end was achieved in 2013 when Kau‘i Chun—also a practicing Native artist—completed a PhD in Education at the University of Hawai‘i.<sup>21</sup> Importantly his work constitutes the first sustained examination of contemporary Kanaka Maoli art production to be carried out thus far. Comprising case studies of five Kanaka Maoli artists,<sup>22</sup> Chun’s thesis analyzes in detail expressions of Native identity through the visual arts. His thesis is particularly strong for the rich, in-depth interviews he conducted with artists and, importantly, his own embodied experience as a Kanaka Maoli artist. In terms of my own doctoral work, Freitas’s 2011 appeal—in conjunction with the many fruitful conversations I have had with Kanaka Maoli artists over the thirteen years I have lived in Hawai‘i—has served to fortify my resolve to add my own perspective to the growing discourse on indigenous art practice in the Islands and to open up a space for critical discussion.

In his 1935 publication *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose*, American literary theorist Kenneth Burke notes, “Every way of seeing is always a way of not seeing.”<sup>23</sup> I acknowledge from the outset the limitations of my own “seeing” in this project—limitations that will mean many questions will be left unasked due to the particularities of my own focus. As much as anything, then, the following writing, while already incomplete, will I hope serve as an invitation for more eyes to “see,” from multiple and diverse angles, this important yet still under-researched topic of enquiry.

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<sup>21</sup> See Clarence Kau‘i Chun, “Contemporary Hawaiian Artists: A Discussion on Identity, Creativity, and Exhibitions” (PhD, Education, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2013). I should emphasize here that Chun’s work joins with a modest number of other contributions by scholars who have focused on Kanaka Maoli art in some capacity, including K. Kosasa (2002, 2008); H.P. Clark (1996, 2006, 2011); Cashman (1997); and Kikuchi (1997).

<sup>22</sup> Including Dalani Tanahy, Noelle Kahanu, Kaili Chun, Solomon Enos, and ‘Īmaikalani Kalahahele.

<sup>23</sup> Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose* (New York, NY: New Republic, Inc., 1935), 70.

...with its beaches of a dazzling whiteness fringed with cocoa-palms; over all an indescribable charm of solitude and drowsy peacefulness, to him who looks for the sunny side of nature the Hawaiian Islands are the ‘Paradise of the Pacific,’ the Wonderland of the World.

—George Waldo Browne<sup>1</sup>

In colony Hawai‘i, not only the cruelty but the stench of colonialism is everywhere . . . This is Hawai‘i, once the most fragile and precious of sacred places, now transformed by the American behemoth into a dying land.

—Haunani-Kay Trask<sup>2</sup>

### Framing Perspectives

Art has figured prominently in the construction of the Pacific in general and Hawai‘i in particular. For more than a century the rhetorical production of Hawai‘i and Kānaka Maoli through such modes of representation as the visual and cinematic arts as well as touristic marketing practices has been instrumental in reinforcing American hegemony in the Islands. Through a process of relentless co-option, Hawai‘i has been framed as a harmonious “Paradise of the Pacific”—as novelist and historian George Waldo Browne so ebulliently gushed in his turn of the twentieth-century publication cited at the beginning of this chapter—a land of “indescribable charm” and “drowsy peacefulness.”

In externally produced films, photography, paintings, drawings, sculptures, as well as commercial art in forms ranging from sheet music covers to tin can wrappers, the reductive trope of white-sand beaches dotted with swaying coconut trees and “happy Natives”—or “Jolly-Polys” as art historian Lisa Taouma has put it—has given shape to a popular vision of Hawai‘i and the islands of the broader Pacific in not only the American but also the global imagination.<sup>3</sup> In reference to the Pacific, Taouma has pointed out that such images have been a principal feature of its marketing as “an accessible region” and as a “playground for the Western world . . . always inviting of

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<sup>1</sup>George Waldo Browne, *The Paradise Of The Pacific: The Hawaiian Islands* (Boston, MA: Dana Estes and Company, 1900), 19.

<sup>2</sup>Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), 19.

<sup>3</sup>Lisa Taouma, “‘Gauguin Is Dead . . . There Is No Paradise’,” *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 25, no. 1 (2004): 35–46.

the (white) tourist.”<sup>4</sup> To narrow her statement to the topic at hand, nowhere in the Pacific have the visual arts been used with such persistence to render a place so accessible and inviting as in Hawai‘i.<sup>5</sup> The result has been the enclosure of the Islands and its indigenous people within a single narrative that has served to conceal a history of American oppression, the effects of which continue to reverberate in the present-day lives of Kānaka Maoli, the sovereign people of Hawai‘i. In this thesis, I excavate the layers of colonial sedimentation in Hawai‘i, using the visual arts as a point of entry and focus. Conversely, I show how Kānaka Maoli enact agency by using the visual arts as a vehicle for asserting Native sovereignty and resisting ongoing U.S. colonialism in their homeland.

Three primary objectives provide the rationale for my investigation. The first objective is to examine how art produced by outsiders has aided in the encasing of Hawai‘i and Kānaka Maoli inside a dominant American framework—what I refer to as a colonialist frame—by which the fact of colonialism and its deleterious effects are concealed through the construction of powerful stereotypical imagery of Native Hawaiians and the island archipelago they call home. In this thesis I allude to key examples of settler colonial art that tie into a more extensive genealogy of colonial visuality, which continues to circulate in Hawai‘i as well as beyond its shores. Ultimately, the effect of these aesthetic productions, whether by the intentional or unintentional design of the artists who created them, is the confinement of Kānaka Maoli within a distorting and degrading visual narrative frame, or what Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie describes as a “single story.”

In a powerful presentation she gave in 2009 titled “The Danger of the Single Story,” Adichie asserted that when we are told a single story about a place or a people, it arrests our perspective, “causing us to overlook the many other stories that exist.”<sup>6</sup> In the case of Hawai‘i, images of “dusky maidens” and brown muscular Native men playing ‘ukulele under coconut trees, for instance—powerful visual threads that make up the popularized “single story” of the Islands—displace other narratives, such as those infused with indigenous perspectives. Such slanted narratives as produced by the dominant culture are by their very nature entrenched in a system of hegemonic power.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>5</sup> I acknowledge that this statement is open for debate, since many other parts of the Pacific, particularly Tahiti, have been heavily visualized for touristic purposes. See, for instance, Miriam Kahn’s publication *Tahiti Beyond the Postcard: Power, Place, and Everyday Life* (2011).

<sup>6</sup> Chimamanda Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story,” Youtube, TED Talk (Oxford, UK, 2009), [http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story#](http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story#).

States Adichie:

It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. . . Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person but to make it the definitive story of that person.<sup>7</sup>

As I show, the single story of Hawai‘i as a possession of America and of Kānaka Maoli as a willing citizenry—the story to which the majority of the globe is attuned—is in large part created through a suite of colonialist images that is driven by powerful hegemonic interests.

In contradistinction to the hegemonic framing of Hawai‘i and its people through a genealogy of colonial visibility, Kānaka Maoli have for decades been making their own artistic interventions by—as Stuart Hall notes in his discussion about marginalized communities more generally—visually retelling their “story from the bottom up, instead of from the top down.”<sup>8</sup> In *Contesting Art: Art, Politics, and Identity in the Modern World*, Jeremy McClancy highlights the necessity of the visual arts in the liberation and transcendence of subject peoples from colonial systems of power. He states:

Art is not a decorative border to the anticolonialist and antiracist struggles, but an integral, essential part of them. People, to be free, have to fight against both the objective conditions and the terms of subjectivity imposed on them. To do that, they need, among other things, to create and share art.<sup>9</sup>

The second objective of this thesis, then, is to show how Kānaka Maoli use the visual arts as a means of empowering self-representation—and in so doing free themselves from the “subjectivity imposed on them”—as well as challenge the pervasive force of U.S. colonialism in ways that are both overt and veiled. Throughout this thesis I make the argument that Kanaka Maoli art constitutes an instance of “visual sovereignty,” a term pioneered by Tuscarora artist and art historian Jolene Rickard.<sup>10</sup> Here, Native visual representations operate as declarations of unrelinquished sovereignty and are inextricably tied to political and cultural acts of resistance in the face of advancing colonialism. I also take as a critical point of analysis Rickard’s insistence that “the work of indigenous artists needs to be understood through the clarifying lens of sovereignty

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Stuart Hall, “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity,” in *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony D. King (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 34.

<sup>9</sup> McClancy, *Contesting Art*, 10.

<sup>10</sup> Jolene Rickard, “Sovereignty: A Line in the Sand,” *Aperture* 139 (1995): 51–54.

and self-determination.”<sup>11</sup> To date, this critical line of enquiry has not been undertaken vis-à-vis the visual arts in Hawai‘i where sovereignty and self-determination have been at the core of Kānaka Maoli struggles for over one hundred and twenty years.

The violent transformation of Hawai‘i from a sovereign nation to a colonized “dying land,” as Haunani-Kay Trask characterizes it in the second epitaph above, has been purposefully omitted from America’s discourse on the Islands, resulting in what Hawai‘i-born Japanese-American scholar Karen Kosasa has described as the “peculiar inability” of the settler population in Hawai‘i “to see the existence of colonialism.”<sup>12</sup> So, the third objective of this thesis is to investigate in a theoretically grounded way how this inability to see occurs, despite vocal and sustained protest on the part of Kānaka Maoli who claim their homeland was wrongfully and fraudulently seized by the United States.

In my examination of the competing and contradictory ways Hawai‘i is perceived by settlers and Kānaka Maoli, respectively—on the one hand as a place “as American as hot dogs and CNN” and on the other as a Native homeland under colonial siege<sup>13</sup>—I draw on frame theory, by way of a social constructionist perspective, as a foundation for examining how “reality” is framed in Hawai‘i.<sup>14</sup> The notion of the frame is a rather handy analytical apparatus given the art-oriented subject matter of this thesis. A frame, after all, typically provides the physical margins of an artwork, as in a painting. However, this thesis is concerned with the more critical task of identifying and analyzing the ideological frames that direct a particular understanding and interpretation of the world—more specifically, Hawai‘i. As Joe Feagin states, “A particular frame structures the thinking process and shapes what people see, or do not see.”<sup>15</sup> A frame, then, both demarcates and delimits our perceptual scope. This thesis approaches framing as both a set of socially mandated prerogatives that govern individual and collective cognition and as a compilation of discrete products—i.e., the materialization of those prerogatives—such as, in terms of the visual arts, paintings, drawings, and photographs.

Frame theory spans a number of disciplines, including the cognitive and neurological branches of the biological sciences as well as social movement studies and media studies in the social sciences. Although there are numerous (and sometimes

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>12</sup> Kosasa, “Critical Sights/Sites,” 6.

<sup>13</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Joe R. Feagin, *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 10.



competing) definitions of frame theory, the most salient offering with respect to the focus of this thesis comes from media critic Todd Gitlin: “Frames are principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters.”<sup>16</sup> Here, the frame functions as a discursive device that directs the audience (or social group) toward a prescribed reality. In the case of Hawai‘i, a settler colonial reality—characterized by American essentialism and a virulent settler ideology—is presented, while a Kanaka Maoli-based reality is displaced to the concealed edges of the dominant frame. That is to say the frame is not neutral or innocent. It directs our way of seeing the work of art and thus shapes what we see. A particular frame affects that which is being represented: enhancing it, supporting it, undermining it, or altering it. Choosing a particular frame (or, indeed, pedestal) thus has consequences for how art is represented and how we see and interpret it. This thesis is concerned to examine how outsider visual representations feed into such framing practices and, inversely, how Kanaka Maoli artistic expressions constitute a critical *counter*-framing that is grounded in cultural affirmation and resistance to colonialism. Thus, this research is firmly located in the broader discourse of indigenous self-determination.

## **Methodology**

This study draws on a wide range of disciplines, including anthropology, history, visual studies, and Pacific Islands studies. Such a privileging of the syncretic over a single branch of knowledge is rooted in the conviction that multiple frameworks for understanding bring a more nuanced perspective to bear on the research task. Indeed, the benefit of drawing from many schools of thought, as it were, is imbedded in a Kanaka Maoli worldview as evidenced in the much cited ‘ōlelo no‘eau (proverb): “‘A‘ohe pau ka ‘ike i ka hālau ho‘okāhi” (All knowledge is not taught [or learned] in the same school). Throughout this thesis, then, I weave between multiple disciplines and theoretical perspectives in an effort to cover the complex historical, social, and political terrain that constitutes Hawai‘i.

The project is qualitative in nature and uses participant observation and in-depth interviewing as key methods of inquiry. With regard to the latter, I engage in in-depth interviews with purposively selected Kanaka Maoli artists who work across a number of different artistic modes from fine art to public art like graffiti writing and muralism. I

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<sup>16</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*, 1st ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), 6.

also engage with other research participants who facilitate the display of contemporary Kanaka Maoli art in a variety of spaces, ranging from galleries to resorts. I examine, through the technique of participant observation and ethnographic enquiry, the display of Kanaka Maoli art at the Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa. Here, the goal is to illuminate the overlapping tensions, ambiguities, and enactments of Native agency that emerged during the production of indigenous art for this complex and contested space.

The scope of this thesis, though focused specifically on Hawai‘i, will—albeit impressionistically—encompass other regions where sovereign indigenous peoples use the visual arts as a means of affirming and articulating their sovereign identity, while at the same time contesting colonial oppression in their homelands. I therefore draw comparisons between the artistic expressions of Kanaka Maoli artists in Hawai‘i and indigenous artists in other parts of the world, significantly Aotearoa, North America, and Australia with the understanding that while these places are marked by similar settler colonial experiences, they nevertheless retain unique identities and historical trajectories that make them wholly different from one another. To this end, rather than seeking to impose broad-sweeping generalizations on these diverse communities, the comparative element of this thesis is used to identify thematic confluences and stimulate a dialog across cultures and contexts.

### **Ethical Dimensions**

As a woman of New Zealand Māori ancestry investigating the political, cultural, and social issues affecting an indigenous people other than my own, I have been keenly aware of the complex nature of my role as researcher. Indeed, at a fundamental level, the very terminology that has been perennially associated with the academic enterprise I have been involved in—such as “researcher,” “research,” and “researched”—has throughout the course of this thesis made me feel intensely ambivalent about my own place as an indigenous scholar working in a setting that tends toward a singular, Western epistemological framework of understanding. My discomfort at being subsumed under the “researcher” category is foregrounded by the knowledge that research, with its proclivity for collecting, classifying, and misrepresenting Native peoples, has served as a principle element in the larger colonial project. In her much cited publication *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes:

[T]he term “research” is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, “research”, is probably one of the dirtiest

words in the indigenous world's vocabulary. When mentioned in many indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful. It is so powerful that indigenous people even write poetry about research."<sup>17</sup>

It is not surprising that Native scholars like myself would recoil from any association with such a colonially entrenched research enterprise.

One of the many problems that have plagued Western-oriented research methodologies is a truculent adherence to a separation of the self from the other. This alienation is characterized by a commitment to cool objectivity and a clear delineation between researcher and researched. Such a separation is wholly foreign to my own Māori sensibilities, where engagement on kinship terms is emphasized. Cartesian dualism has no place in this arrangement, in which the individual is indivisible not only from others, but from the natural and spiritual world as well. For example, in both Māori and Native Hawaiian cultures, land (whenua and 'āina, respectively) is viewed as an ancestor who is inextricably connected to the people—its descendants—and they, in turn, are connected to one another. Further, kinship connections are not only realized through genealogical links but are similarly forged through social relations. Barbara Thayer-Bacon, in linking this relationally oriented worldview to the research endeavor, writes that the building of knowledge is mediated “by embedded, embodied people who are *in relation* with one another.”<sup>18</sup>

The last couple of decades have witnessed a surge in scholarship aimed at decentering research methodologies that emanate from the positivist-driven, Western-centric canon and instead provide guidance for academic inquiry that is ethical, empowering, self-reflexive, collaborative, and respectful of the communities and places being considered. At the heart of this methodological overhaul is a commitment to building and maintaining reciprocal relations between researchers and research participants in the knowledge-building process and pursuing intellectual inquiry “with an openly emancipatory intent.”<sup>19</sup> While there is a broad array of “new methodology” perspectives to draw from, I have chosen a participatory mode of consciousness approach to inform the core of this thesis.

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<sup>17</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1999), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Cited in Russell Bishop, “Freeing Ourselves From Neocolonial Domination in Research: A Kaupapa Māori Approach to Creating Knowledge,” in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman Denzin K and Yvonna S Lincoln, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 118; emphasis added.

<sup>19</sup> Patti Lather, *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/in the Postmodern* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), 51.

In “Freeing Ourselves From Objectivity: Managing Subjectivity or Turning Toward a Participatory Mode of Consciousness,” Lous Heshusius offers critical insight into what she refers to as an “alienated mode of consciousness”<sup>20</sup>—that is, the detachment of self from other—and advances in its place the competing and compelling idea of a *participatory* mode of consciousness, which entails a reaching out “*with* all of ourselves”<sup>21</sup> and a “recognition of the deeper kinship between ourselves and other.”<sup>22</sup> It is a perspective that eschews the dogged determination by some researchers to maintain an objective distance from the focus of their enquiry and instead prompts a letting go of the “idea of being-separate-and-in-charge.”<sup>23</sup>

To turn to my own personal experience during the research process, such a separation of myself from the people with whom I have collaborated during the course of my doctoral work would be impossible. For instance, one of the artists highlighted in this thesis—Carl F.K. Pao—is my husband with whom I share a daughter, and the other research participants are my friends, some of them very close and dear. In fact, while I noted earlier on that this thesis uses participant observation as a method of investigation, in reality my engagement with my “research participants” is more in the order of a lived, embodied involvement. Whether through genealogical or relational links, I share a kinship connection with these people. Throughout my work, then, rather than trying to manage (or simulate) any kind of objective distance as, say, a “participant observer,” I have simply sought to be a fellow member of the group trying to make sense of things.<sup>24</sup> This thesis is a synthesis of what has emerged from that dialogical, kinship-centered undertaking.

Amidst such talk of kinship connections, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the points at which, during the course of my research, such connections were strained and in one particular instance severed. In May 2013, a number of Kanaka Maoli artists were involved in an exhibition titled ‘*a’ mini retort* at Arts at Mark’s Garage gallery in Honolulu, the premise of which was to respond to characterizations of Hawaiian culture at the Aulani resort (discussed in detail in Chapter Four). As part of the show, one of the participating artists, Kapulani Landgraf, produced an installation

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<sup>20</sup> Lous Heshusius, “Freeing Ourselves From Objectivity: Managing Subjectivity or Turning Toward a Participatory Mode of Consciousness,” *Educational Researcher* 23, no. 3 (1994): 15.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 16; emphasis in original.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>24</sup> In her doctoral thesis, Katherine Lepani describes her own embodied, relational connection to Trobriand Islanders as one of “affinity.” See Katherine Lepani, “‘In the Process of Knowing’: Making Sense of HIV and AIDS in the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea” (PhD, Anthropology, The Australian National University, 2007).

that was specific in its intent to critique Kanaka Maoli artists whose works are on permanent display at the resort. The installation was graphically direct and provoked intense unease among some of the artists who were involved with the Aulani project. That one of the artists targeted for critique in the installation was my own husband, Carl F.K. Pao, created a fraught situation that almost arrested my research.

Pao and Landgraf had known each other for nearly two decades, had exhibited together on numerous occasions, and were both originally part of my study. However, the installation created disagreement and tension between them, which resulted in an unresolvable schism. I became personally implicated when I produced a brief review of the show, a review that I believed was fair, balanced, and nonpartisan. However, I learned quickly that by saying anything at all I had unwittingly transgressed certain individuals' expectations of me as a researcher. Approximately two weeks after the show's opening I received an e-mail message from Landgraf informing me that she no longer wanted to participate in my research. The artist gave me no definitive reason why, but to honor her request I released her from my study. Seven months later, I received an unexpected e-mail from Kaili Chun, who was also a participating artist in the *'a' mini retort* exhibition and also a research participant in this study, advising me of her decision to withdraw, chiefly in support of Landgraf.<sup>25</sup>

The loss of two valued research participants was devastating. I felt a deep sense of failure as a researcher. I even contemplated quitting my doctoral work altogether. However, after receiving the support and advice of my supervisory committee—in particular Professor Margaret Jolly, Dr. Katerina Teaiwa, and Dr. Katherine Higgins—my family, and other members of the Kanaka Maoli arts community with whom I retain a strong relationship, I resolved to continue and find a way to let go and surrender to the changing circumstances. The fact is that when one is working so closely with any community it is impossible not to get entangled in the political affairs that frame them. My status as the wife of a Kanaka Maoli artist, as a long-time supporter of the Kanaka Maoli arts community, and as a researcher embedded within that community located me fully in that complex, messy matrix of human relations. My experience, I know, is not unique. Anyone who ventures into this kind of work will encounter similar crises. It is unavoidable. Such crises are symptomatic of the awkward and fraught interface between the role of “researcher” and the lived reality of the individual who is fully immersed in the social and kin relations that make up a community.

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<sup>25</sup> See Footnote #20 in Chapter Three where I discuss my decision to preserve Chun's work in the thesis by using only materials made publically available.

The controversy that emerged from the *'a' mini retort* exhibition while having seeming negative consequences for my research on one level nevertheless yielded invaluable insight. Although I was aware of the diverse and heterogeneous nature of the Kanaka Maoli arts community, I had not considered the deep fissures that existed within it. In the wake of the show, I came to see that the arts community I have lived with for so many years—quite literally if you think about how one of the members of that community is my husband—is not the cohesive, unified movement of people I had thought it to be. Rather, it is made up of different alliances, the members of which come together for an array of different reasons and mutual interests. At times those alliances are stable, and at other times, as with the account I have shared, they shift or fall apart. Indeed, similar to the way disagreement in perspectives has given rise to the myriad and often competing groups that constitute the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, over the years the Kanaka Maoli arts collective has been marked by its own series of internal disputes among members. Still, despite the extant divisions—some of which have lasted for decades—Kanaka Maoli art continues to thrive and develop. It remains my and others' responsibility and privilege to write about it.

Throughout this thesis, I have blended together academic and creative nonfiction genres of writing. The decision to do so is premised on my personal belief that the best kind of intellectual inquiry is that which is intertwined with the imaginative quest. As historian Greg Dening writes, "Imagination is the ability to see those fine-lined and faint webs of significance"—lines and webs we might fail to see when using the one-dimensional lens of academic analysis.<sup>26</sup> It is my hope that such a stylistic mixing will not only provide the reader with a more nuanced understanding of the complex issues addressed in this thesis, but it will also enable them to engage with the material not only at an intellectual level, but at an emotional and human one as well.

### **Acts of War and Aesthetic Resistance**

Honolulu, Hawai'i, January 16, 1893. Under cover of night, a group of thirteen men—haole (white) businessmen and politicians known collectively as the Committee of Safety—meet in secret to discuss their plan to overthrow the Hawaiian Queen Lili'uokalani and her government. The tension in the room is palpable. Every man knows that if their attempt to depose the Hawaiian monarch fails, they will most likely be tried for treason and—if convicted—could face imprisonment or, worse, execution. But the high stakes are worth the risk: if they do not move to strike now, the Queen's

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<sup>26</sup> Greg Dening, "Empowering Imaginations," *The Contemporary Pacific* 9, no. 2 (1997): 421.

scheme to promulgate a new constitution—one that will, among other things, reinstate monarchical authority and return voting rights to Native and non-Native subjects of the Kingdom—will undermine the political and economic control they have worked so hard to acquire and consolidate. As the conspirators strategize into the night, the nascent beginnings of a new era of power begin to take root on Hawaiian soil. The next day, 17 January, aided by U.S. Marines from the USS *Boston* and under the leadership of Lorrin Thurston—the grandson of Protestant missionaries who were some of the first to Christianize the Islands—the Committee executes its fateful coup d'état. Lili'uokalani is forced to cede her authority as sovereign monarch of Hawai'i to the United States, and the next day the hastily established Provisional Government, headed by Sanford Dole—also a descendent of Protestant missionaries—takes control as the de facto government of the Hawaiian Archipelago. In his correspondence with the U.S. State Department, U.S. Minister to the Kingdom of Hawai'i John L. Stevens wrote, “The Hawaiian pear is now fully ripe, and this is the golden hour for the United States to pluck it.”<sup>27</sup>

Fast forward to 1895. Queen Lili'uokalani looks out of her second-floor bedroom window to gaze upon the grounds of 'Iolani Palace, the royal residence. She has been imprisoned there since 17 January of that same year—for “misprision of treason,” no less. The bitter irony of that date, marking as it does both her incarceration and the overthrow of her Kingdom two years earlier, is not lost on the Queen. The other events that have transpired—the failed uprising by royalist supporters and the forced abdication of her throne—slip into the folds of history. And, although she does not know it yet, in the span of three short years her nation will be illegally annexed to the United States and her people brought under foreign rule, first as a territory and then as a state in the American Union.

The Queen's vision shifts from the expansive grounds below to the room in which she has slept as a prisoner for these many months. A single bed in the corner, a small square table, a chair, an iron safe, a bureau, a chiffonier, a cupboard in which to store food, and a sofa: all have become the familiar furnishings of her captivity. After surveying her humble quarters, she turns her attention back to the task that has kept her mind and hands occupied during the long days of confinement. Running a vibrant thread of blue through her fingers, she prepares to put the finishing touches on the last of eight miniature Hawaiian flags she has been embroidering onto a quilt she has been

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<sup>27</sup> James Blount, “The Blount Report: Affairs in Hawaii,” 1895, 244, <http://libweb.hawaii.edu/digicoll/annexation/blount.html>.

working on since her internment began. The quilt is a patchwork maze of multicolored threads, ribbon, plain, printed, brocaded and painted fabric, and the lustrous shimmer of silk. Each stitch, each block of material is an element in a story, a mo‘olelo, about her life and the tumultuous circumstances that have brought her to this place in time. This visual archive, not unlike the numerous mele (songs) she has composed, is infused with a message of resistance and steadfastness in the face of political adversity.

The embroidered Hawaiian flags and royal seal, the inscription screen-printed on a block of fabric, “Kuu Hae Aloha” (“My Beloved Flag”) (Fig. 0.1), and the embroidered words “Dethroned January 17th 1893” and “Imprisoned at Iolani Palace January 17th 1895” all constitute an imaged history told from a Native perspective. Through her act of aesthetic resistance in response to an act of war, the last reigning monarch of the Hawaiian Islands affirms in her creation the sovereignty of a nation and at the same time evinces the duplicity of those faithless individuals who commenced “a new era in [Hawai‘i’s] history.”<sup>28</sup>

The previous paragraphs, though partly an exercise in speculative fiction, are nevertheless based on actual events. In 1893, the sovereign monarch of the Hawaiian Islands, Queen Lili‘uokalani, was forced to cede her authority to the United States through armed insurrection by a small group of wealthy white men who, with the help of a few key sympathizers in the U.S. government (such as John L. Stevens), managed to establish oligarchic rule in the Islands.<sup>29</sup> This and other acts of outsider aggression that preceded and followed it culminated in what Kanaka Maoli historian Jonathan Osorio has described as the dismemberment of Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) from their lands, traditions, and government.<sup>30</sup>

During her incarceration in ‘Iolani Palace between 17 January and 6 September 1895, the Queen and, it is believed, one of her loyal ladies-in-waiting,<sup>31</sup> created a “crazy quilt,”<sup>32</sup> the likes of which were popular during the Victorian era. Today that quilt—

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<sup>28</sup> Liliuokalani, *Hawaii’s Story: By Hawaii’s Queen, Liliuokalani*, 8th ed. (Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 2003), 285.

<sup>29</sup> Osorio, *Dismembering Lahui*; Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*.

<sup>30</sup> Osorio, *Dismembering Lahui*, 3.

<sup>31</sup> That individual was most likely Mrs. Eveline Townsend Wilson, the Queen’s principal lady-in-waiting (see Hackler and Woodard, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> Crazy quilting became popular in the United States in the 1880s. It is a particular kind of patchwork style that is characterized by irregularly shaped and sized pieces of textile—including wool, silk, cotton, and artificial fibers—embroidered onto a fabric background. Silk-printed and painted images as well as colorful beads and strips of ribbon were also added for effect. The term “crazy quilt” derives from the seemingly jumbled, haphazard design of these quilts. For more on crazy quilting, see Cindy Brick’s publication *Crazy Quilts: History, Technique, Embroidery Motifs* (2011).



affectionately known as *The Queen's Quilt* (Fig. 0.2)—is exhibited in a plexiglas and koa-wood display case in the very room where Lili'uokalani was imprisoned. Despite the fabric of the quilt having long lost its original vibrance and having in many places tendered and worn with age, the nineteenth-century textile nevertheless retains its potency as an early example of Hawaiian visual sovereignty. It also constitutes a visual testament to Hawai'i's turbulent political past and, of equal importance, its unsettled colonial present.

I have relayed the story of the Queen's quilt set as it is against the incoming tide of U.S. colonialism in the Islands to underscore the fact that the visual arts constituted an important medium through which Kānaka Maoli in the nineteenth century asserted their political sovereign will and resisted colonial takeover. Lili'uokalani's protest quilt was not the only incidence of aesthetic activism to emerge during this chaotic period. In the wake of the 1893 coup d'état, the Hawaiian flag—the symbol of Hawaiian sovereignty and independence—was flown beneath the American flag in a hubristic statement of U.S. sovereignty over the Islands.<sup>33</sup> In response to the blatant denigration of their flag (and by extension the undermining of Native mana or power/prestige) and the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, Kanaka Maoli artisans throughout the archipelago began in earnest to make Hawaiian Flag quilts, which “were used to communicate loyalty and personal service to the Hawaiian nation . . . and protests to foreign domination.”<sup>34</sup> Hawaiian royal insignia and the incorporation of appliquéd or embroidered phrases like the one used by the Queen, “Kuu Hae Aloha,” were used to affirm Hawaiian nationalism (Fig. 0.3). In one particular quilt—believed to have been made in response to the illegal annexation of Hawai'i to the United States in 1898—the creator overtly contested the political events that were taking place in the Islands by incorporating several upside-down Hawaiian flags in the quilt, the upside-down flag being the universal nautical symbol for distress.<sup>35</sup>

To bring the quilt as symbol of Hawaiian sovereignty forward into the contemporary period, 78-year old Kanaka Maoli quilting practitioner Deborah Umiamaka Kakalia's quilt—titled *Lili'uokalani*—was exhibited as part of the 1993 5<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Triennial in Brisbane, Australia. Importantly, the year 1993 held deep significance for Kānaka Maoli, signaling as it did the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom. Striking in its complementary color scheme of purple and

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<sup>33</sup> Joyce D. Hammond, “Hawaiian Flag Quilts: Multivalent Symbols of a Hawaiian Quilt Tradition,” *The Hawaiian Journal of History* 27 (1993): 1–26.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 7–8.

yellow, the quilt was adorned with “images of crowns and feathered standards, and an eight point star representing the Queen’s husband, all framed by the Queen’s favourite flowers of milkwood and fluttering fans.”<sup>36</sup> Like those of her quilt-making forebears, Kakalia’s creation, as Margaret Jolly has astutely pointed out, was “not just a nostalgic lament for a lost past *but an affirmation of sovereignty sentiments in opposition to the United States in a contested present.*”<sup>37</sup>

In an effort to broaden the scope of this inquiry, it is prudent to acknowledge that such affirmations of sovereignty were neither then nor are they now limited to the visual. For Kānaka Maoli, all forms of artistic expression—what Steven Leuthold refers to as “loci of aesthetic activity”<sup>38</sup>—including music, dance, literature, and, yes, the visual arts—are strategically deployed to creatively respond to colonial oppression. In “Writing in Captivity: Poetry in a Time of Decolonization,” Haunani-Kay Trask writes that “Life is a confluence of creativities: art is a fluid political medium, as politics is metaphorical and artistic.”<sup>39</sup> Here, she makes the critical observation that art—in its broadest measure and expression—and politics are distinct yet converging flows of indigenous agency and sovereign will. Kanaka Maoli creative production in all its multi-generic permutations is part of the potent sweep of aesthetic activism whereby social and political action takes place “on the plane of artistic discourse.”<sup>40</sup>

Political messages, similar to those embedded in the quilts and flags mentioned above, were and are expressed through a suite of artistic genres that make up the aesthetic arsenal of Kānaka Maoli. For example, nineteenth-century mele (songs, chants, and poems) like “Kaulana Nā Pua” leveled a ringing condemnation of the overthrow and subsequent annexation of the Islands by the United States: “No one will fix a signature/To the paper of the enemy/With its sin of annexation/And sale of native civil rights.”<sup>41</sup> Such messages of protest continued to be conveyed nearly one hundred years later through songs like “Hawaiian Awakening.” Written in 1976 by Debbie Ann Punalani Maxwell during the Hawaiian occupation of Kaho‘olawe, the latter song

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<sup>36</sup> Margaret Jolly, “The South in Southern Theory: Antipodean Reflections on the Pacific,” *Australian Humanities Review* 44 (2008): 11.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*; emphasis added.

<sup>38</sup> Steven Leuthold, *Indigenous Aesthetics: Native Art, Media, and Identity* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1998), 204.

<sup>39</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, “Writing in Captivity: Poetry in a Time of Decolonization,” in *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*, ed. Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson (Honolulu: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 18.

<sup>40</sup> Dean Rader, *Engaged Resistance: American Indian Art, Literature, and Film from Alcatraz to the NMAI* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011), 5.

<sup>41</sup> Cited in Eleanor C. Nordyke and Martha H Noyes, “Kaulana Nā Pua: A Voice for Sovereignty,” *The Hawaiian Journal of History* 27 (1993): 29.

became an anthem of protest for the many sovereignty-related struggles that would follow:

Deep in this tortured island all alone  
Hear the winds cry, the mountains moan . . .  
A culture, a land, destroyed  
By white men's greed  
Taking our pride and honor,  
They planted their seed . . .  
We followed their rules much too long  
Our protests are heard in our music and song.<sup>42</sup>

Hawaiian politics have also been transposed from lyrical melody to the rhymes and sounds of rap groups like *Sudden Rush*, which combines Hawaiian language and chant with the grit of African-American hip-hop to create, as Fay Yokomizo Akindes notes, “a counter-hegemonic transcript that challenges tourism and Western imperialism.”<sup>43</sup> The power of mele “as carriers of messages of opposition and as signs of Kanaka identity” is transferred to the poetry of Wayne Kauali‘i Westlake,<sup>44</sup> ‘Īmaikalani Kalahēle, Brandy Nālani McDougall, Sage U‘ilani Takehiro, and others, as well as through the spoken-word performances of versifiers such as Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio, David Keali‘i MacKenzie, Donovan Kūhiō Colleps, and No‘u Revilla. The works of John Dominis Holt, Victoria Kneubuhl, Haunani-Kay Trask, Ku‘ualoha Ho‘omanawanui, Mahealani Dudoit, Jonathan Osorio, and so many others coalesce to form a powerful indigenous literary voice that continues to be heard today.

Despite the popularization of hula throughout the globe as an entertainment spectacle of the tourist industry, the art form has in fact always been intensely political and steeped in Kanaka Maoli nationalism. Hula practitioner Momi Kamahēle describes hula in the colonial era as a form of cultural resistance, the unyielding expression of “a people’s identity, a kind of collective consciousness externalized.”<sup>45</sup> In the nineteenth century, the reinstitution of hula was part of the resurrection of Hawaiian cultural pride and served to unite ka lāhui Hawai‘i (the Hawaiian nation). In her account of King Kalākaua’s 1883 coronation at ‘Iolani Palace, Noenoe Silva writes that the performance

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<sup>42</sup> Cited in George H. Lewis, “Storm Blowing from Paradise: Social Protest and Oppositional Ideology in Popular Hawaiian Music,” *Popular Music* 10, no. 1 (1991): 54.

<sup>43</sup> Fay Yokomizo Akindes, “Sudden Rush: Na Mele Paleolelo (Hawaiian Rap) as Liberatory Discourse,” *Discourse* 23, no. 1 (2001): 95.

<sup>44</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 184.

<sup>45</sup> Momi Kamahēle, “Hula as Resistance,” *Forward Motion* 11, no. 3 (1992): 40. For more on the history of hula as a political tool, see Amy Ku‘uleialoha Stillman, “Re-Membering the History of Hawaiian Hula,” in *Cultural Memory: Reconfiguring History and Identity in the Postcolonial Pacific*, ed. Jeannette Marie Mageo (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2001), 187–204.

of hula, which had previously been banned by haole missionaries, “over the two-week period bound the Kanaka together.”<sup>46</sup> Further, in the wake of the overthrow and the forced annexation of the Islands by the United States, hula—along with mele and chants—“provided alternative narratives and epistemologies to those offered by the ruling haole and Americans.”<sup>47</sup> The political work of hula continues to be evident in today’s performances. For instance, in 2012, hula dancer Rebecca Lilinoekekapaunau Sterling won the prestigious title of Miss Aloha Hula at the Merrie Monarch Hula Festival. Significantly, all of the songs to which Sterling danced relayed love for the land and loyalty to the Hawaiian nation.

On the topic of Hawaiian literature, Haunani-Kay Trask observes that regardless of what form writing takes, “whether we write *mele* (songs) or *oli* (chants) or essays or speeches or poetry or scholarship,” it is all part of “a continuing refusal to be silent, to join those groups who have been disappeared.”<sup>48</sup> From the Hawaiian-language newspapers of the nineteenth century and the contemporaneous works of scholars like Davida Malo, John Papa Ii, Joseph Nawāhi, and Samuel Kamakau to the writers of the current time, the collective intellectual and literary oeuvre of Kānaka Maoli continues to expand and intersect with the corpus of other creative enterprises—including art—to form “a cross-genre discourse of resistance.”<sup>49</sup>

### **Framing Chapters**

One of the overarching goals of this thesis is to dislodge dominant notions of Hawai‘i as a Pacific paradise and reveal it as a besieged indigenous homeland where for over 120 years Kānaka Maoli have vigilantly fought for their sovereignty in the context of U.S. colonial occupation. In Chapter One I provide a framework for understanding Hawai‘i’s political situation. I begin by offering a brief history of early engagements between Hawai‘i and the rest of the world and gradually segue to the lead up to and eventual invasion of the Islands by the United States. I also consider the links between colonialism, militarism, and tourism, an arrangement that I refer to as a 3-D frame of power. As Karen Kosasa has so insightfully pointed out, colonialism in Hawai‘i goes largely ignored by the majority of Island inhabitants, in particular settlers. Using Charles Mills’s formulation of an “epistemology of ignorance” and Nicholas Mirzoeff’s

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<sup>46</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 111.

<sup>47</sup> Adria L. Imada, *Aloha America: Hula Circuits Through the U.S. Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 123.

<sup>48</sup> Trask, “Writing in Captivity,” 20; italics in original.

<sup>49</sup> Rader, *Engaged Resistance*, 1–2.

interpretation of “colonial visuality,” I interrogate how art produced by outsiders functions to undergird and maintain such lapses in perception.

Chapter Two expands on Hawai‘i’s political situation as an occupied nation by focusing on the indigenous sovereignty struggle. In this chapter I examine the difference between Western and Native concepts of sovereignty, the former being grounded in the edicts presented in the Peace of Westphalia (1648)—the emphasis of which is the self-governing authority of discrete states—while the latter is grounded in indigenous epistemologies and ontologies that highlight the indivisible relationship between humans, ancestors, and the land. I also explore the range of different approaches to sovereignty that exist among the diverse and sometimes divided Hawaiian political groups and highlight two historical events, the occupation of Kalama Valley in 1970 and the occupation of the island of Kaho‘olawe in 1976, which together provided the foundation for the modern-day Hawaiian sovereignty movement. I end the chapter with an analysis of Pi‘ikea Clark’s 1996 dual-sited, multi-formatted exhibition titled *Ho‘okumu Hou [Re-creation]* in which he challenges the systematic exclusion of Hawaiian art practice and knowledge in the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa’s art curriculum. Clark’s sovereignty-affirming show provides an important conceptual connection to the final three chapters of this thesis in which I focus more attentively on manifestations of Kanaka Maoli visual sovereignty in specific sites and contexts.

I use the term “visual sovereignty” as a key framing device throughout this thesis to forge a deeper understanding of contemporary Kanaka Maoli art as an expression of Native self-determination and resistance. Visual sovereignty takes particular precedence in chapters Three, Four, and Five. Here, I use a blend of embodied description, in-depth interviews, and interpretive analysis to explore the different but converging ways visual sovereignty is expressed in three discrete contexts: “high” art, commercial art, and public art. In Chapter Three, I examine how visual sovereignty is borne out in key bodies of work by three celebrated Kanaka Maoli artists: Kaili Chun,<sup>50</sup> Carl F.K. Pao, and Solomon Enos. In the gridded assemblage of vertical steel cells that constitute *Veritas II*, Chun examines the interlocking themes of colonial containment and indigenous liberation. In his series of monumental freestanding wood phallic sculptures and in his painting titled *Waikāne*, Pao combines the generative powers of Kū (male)

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<sup>50</sup> In Chapter Three, I explain my rationale for retaining Chun’s work in the thesis. As stated earlier, all references to my interviews with the artist have been removed and I have drawn only from materials made publically available, such as newspaper articles, catalog publications, my own embodied experience of the artist’s installation *Veritas II*, and a public talk given by the artist about her work.

and Hina (female) to symbolically recover Hawaiian masculinity as well as affirm the shared role of men and women in the Kanaka Maoli sovereignty struggle. And, finally, in his graphic novel *Polyfantastica* and his series of paintings *From Stars to Stars: An Indigenous Perspective on Human Evolution*, Enos maps an expansive history of a future Hawaiian race that explores the stars and eventually transforms into stars. In these visual mo‘olelo (stories/histories), the artist-storyteller privileges a worldview that is both grounded in a system of indigenous knowledge and open to change and innovation.

In Chapter Four I shift from the realm of “high” art to the commercial space of the Aulani, A Disney Resort and Spa, which features one of the largest collections of contemporary Kanaka Maoli art in the world. The display of indigenous art at a tourist resort provides an important point of tension in the thesis given the relationship between corporate tourism and colonialism. It would therefore be tempting to view the art and the artists at Aulani as an instance of Native co-option and complicity. Importantly, I argue that such a perspective is ultimately limiting and ignores the strategic ways indigenous peoples engage with systems and sites of power. In this chapter, then, I use Mary Louise Pratt’s theorization of the “contact zone” to read Aulani not simply as a node of colonial power in an absolute sense but as a space where indigenous artists engage with Disney as fully aware and active agents.

Central to this chapter is an analysis of the controversial 2013 exhibition ‘*a’ mini retort*. Comprising an all-Kanaka Maoli group of artists, the show was a retort to Aulani and the ways Kanaka Maoli culture is represented there. Many of the works examined issues relating to Native identity, the potential dangers of cultural co-option, and in particular the perceived complicity of indigenous artists in the project. In a significant way, ‘*a’ mini retort* not only revealed the long-standing struggle of Kānaka Maoli to push back at powerful corporations like Disney but it also exposed some of the ideological fault lines that exist within the Kanaka Maoli arts community itself.

In Chapter Five I explore the world of public art with specific attention to the overlapping genres of graffiti writing and muralism. I show how Native artists use the discrete discursive space of urban and temporary walls as semiotic slates to both affirm Kanaka Maoli sovereignty and contest U.S. colonialism. I explore visual sovereignty as it is manifested in three wall projects: *Ola Ka Wai*, *Ola Ka Honua*, and ‘*Onipa ‘a* by graffiti writers John “Prime” Hina and Estria Miyashiro and the Aloha ‘Āina Mural by Kanaka Maoli students at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.

The collection of Kanaka Maoli artists I examine throughout this thesis are diverse in terms of the kinds of materials and techniques they use, the thematic orientation of their works, and where those works are displayed—on a beach, in a gallery, in a resort, or on public walls. However, as I show, the overarching motif of visual sovereignty serves as the lashing that binds the artists and their works together in common self-determination.



Figure 0.1: Detail of *The Queen's Quilt* showing the appliqued phrase "Kuu Hae Aloha." (Image from Rhoda E.A. Hackler and Loretta G.H. Woodard, *The Queen's Quilt*).





Figure 0.2: *The Queen's Quilt* (1895). (Image from Rhoda E.A. Hackler and Loretta G.H. Woodard, *The Queen's Quilt*).





Figure 0.3: “Ku‘u Hae Aloha” (“My Beloved Flag”) made on the island of Maui, 1895. Maker unknown. (Image from Reiko Mochinaga Brandon and Loretta G.H. Woodard, *Hawaiian Quilts: Tradition and Transition*).

[The] operation of the frame and of framing is itself sanctioned by powers, inflected by institutions, marked by the urgencies of economic, social, and ideological determination.

—Louis Marin<sup>1</sup>

### Frames of Power

Paul Duro suggests that “the task of any discussion of frames and framing in the visual arts is first and foremost to counter the tendency of the frame to invisibility with respect to the artwork. *We see the artwork, but we do not see the frame.*”<sup>2</sup> This observation is echoed by Jacques Derrida in his essay “The Parergon” (“The Frame”) in which he writes that, “the *parergon* is nevertheless a form which has traditionally been determined not by distinguishing itself, but by disappearing, sinking in, obliterating itself, dissolving as it expends its greatest energy.”<sup>3</sup> I use the idea of the elusive frame as a working metaphor for contemplating the discursive productions that have been deployed in the service of U.S. domination in Hawai‘i, specifically through the visual arts. Though not explicit—in fact, such ways of thinking about Hawai‘i and Kānaka Maoli have become so naturalized, so “sunk in,” that we are oblivious to their presence—these frames for understanding the world wield significant interpretive power in the process of meaning making and, more importantly, in the maintenance of regimes of power. Far from being an innocent exercise, the framing of Hawai‘i and its people is rooted in powerful interests and agendas that have economic and political stakes for the dominant group.

Before examining in closer detail the discursive strategies by which Hawai‘i has been constructed, it is germane to first consider the independent and interlocking ways that U.S. colonialism, militarism, and tourism have operated and continue to operate as mutually supportive strands of American domination in the Islands.<sup>4</sup> Focusing on what I

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Marin, “The Frame of Representation and Some of Its Figures,” in *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork*, ed. Paul Duro (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 82.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Duro, ed., “Introduction,” in *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Derrida, “The Parergon,” 26.

<sup>4</sup> The term “mili-tourism” as developed and theorized by Teresia Teaiwa to describe the symbiotic relationship between militarism and tourism as it exists in the wider Pacific provides a strong foundation for thinking about the three –isms with which I am concerned in this thesis.

refer to as a 3-D frame of power (we might read the “D” here as standing for domination), I investigate how this tripartite coalition orders and legitimizes sustained American control through a combination of coercive (force or “hard power”) and co-optive (consent or “soft power”) strategies—what political theorist Joseph Nye refers to collectively as “smart power.”<sup>5</sup> Although Nye views “smart power” in the context of diplomatic foreign policy relations on the world stage, the term is nevertheless useful for understanding the tactics the United States deploys to preserve its political and economic supremacy within its domestic borders, such as regards Hawai‘i. In this section I draw from Antonio Gramsci’s formulation of hegemony as it relates to coercion and co-option and the respective political and civil spheres in which each is embedded. Throughout this chapter I seek to illuminate the persuasive, taken-for-granted forms of control that are deployed in Hawai‘i, specifically as they occur through different media, particularly the visual arts.

Despite the fact that Kānaka Maoli have for over 120 years contested U.S. rule in their homeland, the majority of Hawai‘i residents and the broader American public on the continental United States fail to understand Hawai‘i as an illegally colonized and occupied place. To that end, in this chapter I consider the imbricated processes that create the conditions for this phenomenon of not knowing. It is my contention that settler blindness to Hawai‘i as a country under colonial occupation is in large part due to the production of a particular way of seeing that is embedded in the contemporary legacy of colonial discourse. Here, a perception of Kānaka Maoli is crafted in such a way as to make them appear to be either in need of American intervention or as unproblematically and unquestionably citizens of the nation.

Art—as an aesthetic discourse that generates a particular perception of the world—has been central to sustaining the twin notions of Hawai‘i as a willing part of the United States and of Kānaka Maoli as assimilated subjects. In the pages that follow, I argue that within the context of a narrowed field of colonial visibility, past and present representations of Hawai‘i and Kānaka Maoli oscillate between, on the one hand, images of fear and loathing and, on the other, romanticized and idealized tropes of the Other, such as the hyperfeminine “Lovely Hula Girl” and the hypermasculine “Brown Mercury.” These “favored image[s]” deployed by the colonizer have helped cultivate sclerotic understandings of Hawai‘i and Kānaka Maoli, while distracting attention from

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See, Teresia K. Teaiwa, “Militarism, Tourism and the Native: Articulations in Oceania” (PhD, History of Consciousness, University of Santa Cruz, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Nye, Jr, *The Future of Power* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2011), 207–234.

the ongoing trauma of colonization.<sup>6</sup> Art, in this way, has functioned as the symbolic brick and mortar from which a “prison of false [Hawaiian] identities” has been created.<sup>7</sup>

## I. Colonialism in Hawai‘i

Jonathan Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio argues that the colonization of Hawai‘i did not simply take place through “the naked seizure of lands and governments” but rather by way of a “slow, insinuating invasion of people, ideas, and institutions,”<sup>8</sup> which ultimately resulted in the dismemberment of Kānaka Maoli from their traditions, lands, and power of self-governance. Osorio’s observation is significant because it highlights the covert ways by which the colonial project gained traction in Hawai‘i, and in other parts of the Pacific, not so much through force (although later on I will show how that was certainly the case) but moreover through the strategic initiation of subtle but key structural transformations that in the end amounted to monumental and irreversible changes. Colonization is a systematic, methodical, and incremental process of dispossession and subjugation as much as it is the deafening blast of cannon fire and armed attack by the colonizing force.

Between 1778 and 1820, Hawai‘i was the site of intensive global mercantile activity, serving as a stopover for foreign ships—from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and Spain—which carried items such as whale oil, fur, and sandalwood between the Northwest Coast and Alaska, and China.<sup>9</sup> These circuits of trade did not merely entail the transportation of goods across the vast ocean and land routes that were being opened up during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; they were also marked by the movement and migration of people. Thousands of Kanaka Maoli seamen sailed from their home islands on commercial ships to distant parts of the world. Some of them returned but many others either chose to settle in foreign lands or through circumstance were simply never able to make it home.<sup>10</sup> Even as Kānaka Maoli were shipping out, other people were shipping in. The status of the Islands as a commercial hub meant that merchants were one of the earliest waves of Outlanders to

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<sup>6</sup> Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1991), 79.

<sup>7</sup> Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence* (Nebraska, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 22.

<sup>8</sup> Osorio, *Dismembering Lāhui*, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Sally Engle Merry, *Colonizing Hawai‘i: The Cultural Power of Law* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 22.

<sup>10</sup> David A. Chappell, *Double Ghosts: Oceanian Voyagers on Euroamerican Ships* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1997).

take up residence in Hawai‘i.<sup>11</sup> The influx of this community of foreigners, while helping to grow Hawai‘i’s global business prospects, also had the unforeseen consequence of facilitating the introduction of alien diseases, against which Hawaiians were immunologically defenseless.<sup>12</sup> Early epidemics of what Kānaka Maoli referred to as ma‘i ‘ōku‘u (crouching disease) were followed by whooping cough, measles, and influenza, all of which swept across the Islands.<sup>13</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century the Native population had been annihilated by as much as 95 percent, by some estimates.<sup>14</sup>

The inexplicable death of so many people and the spiritual and psychological impact it had on the remnant survivors was exacerbated by the social upheaval created by the 1819 abolition of the ‘ai kapu (literally: eating restrictions), a social and religious system that had previously ordered interactions between men and women and the ali‘i (divine chiefs) and the maka‘āinana (ordinary people). Taken together, these turbulent events—the mass death and the dismantling of the kapu system—provided purchase for the next wave of change bearers. In 1820 the first American missionaries arrived to begin the Christianization of Hawai‘i. They brought with them the capitalistic and moral zealotry of Calvinist Protestantism and set about undermining Native beliefs in their gods and institutions. The missionaries also introduced Christian law and through it criminalized customary activities, including certain sexual practices, ‘awa drinking, and hula.<sup>15</sup> The establishment of a system of secular American law soon followed. Here, Hawaiians’ conversion to Christianity and their eventual adoption of Western law—a process the missionaries also mediated—served as twin engines that secured colonial power in Hawai‘i. Osorio is explicit on this point:

Native conversion to Christianity and Western laws enabled haole to become powerful authorities in Hawaiian society while managing the

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<sup>11</sup> As historian Robert Borofsky refers to those not indigenous to the Pacific Islands. For more on the distinction between Outlanders and Pacific Islanders, see Robert Borofsky, “An Invitation,” in *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts: An Invitation to Remake History*, ed. Robert Borofsky (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2000), 1–30.

<sup>12</sup> Although, some diseases, such as gonorrhea and syphilis, were introduced much earlier during exploratory voyages.

<sup>13</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 24. Further, as Davianna McGregor notes, crouching disease was most likely cholera or the bubonic plague. In 1804 it wiped out almost half the Native population in the Islands. See Davianna Pōmaika‘i McGregor, *Nā Kua ‘āina: Living Hawaiian Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2007), 30.

<sup>14</sup> For two competing analyses of Native population decline in Hawai‘i in the wake of Euroamerican contact, see David E. Stannard, *Before the Horror: The Population of Hawai‘i on the Eve of Western Contact* (Honolulu: Social Science Research Institute, 1989) and Andrew F. Bushnell, “‘The Horror’ Reconsidered: An Evaluation of the Historical Evidence for Population Decline in Hawai‘i, 1778–1803,” *Pacific Studies* 16, no. 3 (1993): 115–161.

<sup>15</sup> Osorio, *Dismembering Lāhui*, 13.

systematic destruction of the relationship between chiefs and people. It was the dismembering of that relationship that crippled the Natives' attempts to maintain their independence and their identity.<sup>16</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth century U.S. economic influence in Hawai'i expanded, specifically through the burgeoning sugar industry, which was ostensibly controlled by a circle of corporate elite that came to be known during Hawai'i's territorial period as the "Big Five": Castle & Cooke, Alexander & Baldwin, O. Brewer & Co., American Factors (Amfac), and Theo H. Davies and Co. (Castle & Cooke and Alexander & Baldwin having been founded by missionaries and the children of missionaries, respectively). Capitalist development and the alienation of Hawaiians from their lands through the passing of such devastating legislation as the Māhele in 1848—which converted Native land tenure into private property and enabled outsiders like the "Big Five" members to purchase large tracts of land—gradually delivered the balance of power to the side of the Americans. In 1887, haole planters and businessmen collectively known as the Hawaiian League coerced Hawaiian monarch King David Kalākaua to sign a constitution—colloquially referred to as the Bayonet Constitution—which among other things, limited his sovereign executive power.<sup>17</sup>

In January 1893, a group of politically powerful haole businessmen, many of whom were involved in instigating the Bayonet Constitution six years prior, staged a coup d'état. Queen Lili'uokalani was forced to cede to the United States her authority as sovereign monarch of Hawai'i, and the next day the hastily established Provisional Government, headed by Sanford Dole—a descendant of Protestant missionaries—took control as the de facto government of the Hawaiian Archipelago.

Despite widespread Native protest,<sup>18</sup> in 1898 Hawai'i was illegally annexed to the United States.<sup>19</sup> With the passing of the Organic Act in 1900 the Islands were officially

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> As well as terminating Kalākaua's sovereign executive powers, the constitution simultaneously opened up voting rights to non-citizens while restricting the voting rights of others. Voting eligibility was restricted to those who either owned property to the value of three thousand dollars or more or who received an annual income of six hundred dollars. For details of the Bayonet Constitution see Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*; Osorio *Dismembering Lāhui*; and Coffman, *Nation Within* (2009).

<sup>18</sup> In *Aloha Betrayed*, Noenoe Silva provides comprehensive and compelling evidence of Native Hawaiian resistance to American colonialism and annexation, in particular through the kū'e (resistance) petitions.

<sup>19</sup> Until recently scholars have written about the annexation of Hawai'i as a matter of fact. However, in his close analysis of American law as it relates to the Hawai'i situation, David Keanu Sai reveals that annexation never legally occurred. For more, see David Keanu Sai, "A Slippery Path Towards Hawaiian Indigeneity: An Analysis and Comparison Between Hawaiian State Sovereignty and Hawaiian Indigeneity and Its Use and Practice in Hawai'i Today," *Journal of Law & Social Challenges* 10 (2008).

made a U.S. territory and remained so until 1959 when they were fraudulently incorporated as the fiftieth state of the American Union. Further, in her astute historical-legal analysis of blood quantum logic in *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (2008), J. Kēhaulani Kauanui argues that the very mode of identifying as Hawaiian through kinship and genealogy was summarily undercut by the passing of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (1920), which instituted the 50-percent blood quantum rule. Here, “Native Hawaiian” was redefined under Western law as any individual who could prove they had at least 50 percent Hawaiian blood. This logic formed—and to this day continues to form—the basis for evaluating claims to land and other resources. As Kauanui asserts, such reframings of what it means to be Hawaiian through the mechanism of blood quantum logic “is a manifestation of settler colonialism that works to deracinate—to pull out by the roots—and displace indigenous peoples.”<sup>20</sup> The overthrow, annexation, and statehood of the Islands along with the establishment of laws and policies designed to undermine Native claims to being and belonging culminated in “a long-term slide into political powerlessness, economic fragility, and cultural dispossession.”<sup>21</sup>

## II. Militarism in Hawai‘i

The geographical location of Hawai‘i as a gateway to Asia and the Pacific has made it a valuable centerpiece in terms of U.S. military enterprise in the Islands. Indeed, today Hawai‘i is the most densely militarized state in the United States. During the nineteenth century as the key powers in Europe began carving up the Pacific for strategic and commercial purposes, the United States was making its own expansionist overtures in the region—with special focus on the Hawaiian Islands—using the guise of protection as an excuse for diplomatic encroachment. For instance, in his 1842 address to Congress, President John Tyler asserted America’s claim to Hawai‘i as a territory within the U.S. sphere of economic and political influence, citing the need to protect the Islands from unscrupulous powers who would otherwise no doubt try to take possession of it. As history bears witness, such acts of imperial benevolence were rooted in an American ideology of Manifest Destiny that saw indigenous peoples and lands as fodder for the fledgling nation’s *own* protection and advancement.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood*, 9.

<sup>21</sup> Merry, *Colonizing Hawai‘i*, 23.

<sup>22</sup> To read the full transcript of the speech, see John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, “John Tyler: Special Message,” *The American Presidency Project*, December 30, 1842, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=67360>.



Although, as Osorio argues, the U.S. colonization of Hawai‘i transpired as a gradual process of systematic and structural changes that ultimately culminated in a loss of power for Kānaka Maoli, it is equally true that the military was, at key moments in Hawai‘i’s colonial history, mobilized as the coercive arm of the United States. For instance, on the day the Hawaiian Kingdom was overthrown,<sup>23</sup> 160 marines from the warship USS *Boston* marched on Honolulu and mounted artillery weapons in strategic areas throughout the city. The move was tactical: the presence of a cadre of armed military personnel was designed to intimidate the Kanaka Maoli population and to pressure Queen Lili‘uokalani to acquiesce to the conspirators’ demands. The military was also highly visible during the formal ratification of Hawai‘i’s illegal annexation to the United States. On the morning of August 12, 1898, troops from the USS *Philadelphia* assembled to preside over the annexation ceremony held at ‘Iolani Palace, the seat of power for the Hawaiian monarchs. One photograph taken on the day shows the grounds of the palace occupied by hundreds of American troops (Fig 1.1). Oriented in orderly lines, in some parts five or six rows deep, teams of uniformed men stand at attention in front of the central dais. Their presence is at once a visible declaration of U.S. military prowess as well as a threatening deterrent against any thought of Native reprisal.

Less than a week after the annexation ceremony, 1,300 U.S. troops descended on Honolulu to establish the first permanent garrison in Hawai‘i.<sup>24</sup> Two years later, in 1900, the body of water known to Hawaiians as Ka Awalau o Pu‘uloa (translated as The Many Harbors of Pu‘uloa) was appropriated and over the next several years was transformed into what is today known as Pearl Harbor, the most strategically important naval base in the United States. In the years following annexation, a string of military installations emerged across the Islands, including Fort Shafter, Fort Weaver, Schofield Barracks, Fort Ruger, Fort Armstrong, Fort DeRussy, and Fort Kamehameha, Kāne‘ohe Marine Corps Station, Wheeler Air Force Base—all on O‘ahu alone. They remain in operation today. Installations on neighboring islands include the Pacific Missile Range Facility at Barking Sands on Kaua‘i and Pōhakuoloa Training Area on Hawai‘i Island. As the principal hub of U.S. national military defense, Hawai‘i serves as headquarters to the U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM)—located at Camp Smith on the island of O‘ahu. Subsumed under the authority of USPACOM, the U.S. Pacific Fleet, the U.S.

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<sup>23</sup> This was done at the request of John L. Stevens.

<sup>24</sup> Adria L. Imada, “The Army Learns to Luau: Imperial Hospitality and Military Photography in Hawai‘i.” *The Contemporary Pacific*. 20, no. 2 (2008): 332.

Pacific Air Forces, the U.S. Army Pacific, and the U.S. Marine Forces are all based in Hawai‘i.

The militarization of Hawai‘i has necessitated the accumulation of tens of thousands of acres of land to support military infrastructure. In the wake of Hawai‘i’s annexation to the United States, 1.8 million acres of national and Crown lands were seized by the military.<sup>25</sup> At statehood, these “ceded lands” were transferred to the fledgling State of Hawai‘i, of which the military retained 180,000 acres. A further 30,000 acres was leased back to the military by the state, in some cases for the nominal fee of just one dollar for the entire term of the lease.<sup>26</sup> As of 2006 the military was in control of 5 percent of Hawai‘i’s total land mass.<sup>27</sup>

Military buildup has also involved the influx of tens of thousands of military personnel and their dependents to the Islands. In 2005 there were 32,629 military (i.e., army, navy, marine corps, and air force) personnel stationed in Hawai‘i along with 53,264 military dependents, amounting to 6 percent of Hawai‘i’s population at that time (i.e., 1,275,194).<sup>28</sup> The most recent figures available indicate that in 2010 the number of military personnel increased to 38,755.<sup>29</sup> As of 2012, veterans make up an estimated 10 percent of Hawai‘i’s total population.<sup>30</sup> In this sense, the transformation of Hawai‘i from Native homeland to “militarized outpost of empire” is as much about the persistent population transfer of military people and their families to the Islands as it is about the consolidation and display of national military assets.<sup>31</sup>

In *Oh, Say, Can You See? The Semiotics of the Military in Hawai‘i* (1999), Kathy Ferguson and Phyllis Turnbull observe that despite the pervasive presence of the U.S. military in Hawai‘i, a “series of narratives of naturalization and reassurance” help

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>26</sup> Kyle Kajihiro, “The Militarizing of Hawai‘i: Occupation, Accommodation, and Resistance,” in *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008), 176. The duration of military leases is 65 years.

<sup>27</sup> Imada, “The Army Learns to Luau,” 333.

<sup>28</sup> Hawai‘i State Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT), “National Defense.” Accessed June 20, 2013. [http://dbedt.hawaii.gov/economic/databook/2010-individual/\\_10/](http://dbedt.hawaii.gov/economic/databook/2010-individual/_10/).

<sup>29</sup> Hawai‘i State Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT), “National Defense.” Accessed June 20, 2013. [http://dbedt.hawaii.gov/economic/databook/2010-individual/\\_10/](http://dbedt.hawaii.gov/economic/databook/2010-individual/_10/). 2010 figures enumerating military dependants are not available.

<sup>30</sup> Chad Blair, “Abercrombie: 10 Percent of Hawaii Are Veterans,” *Civil Beat*, February 6, 2013, [http://www.civilbeat.com/fact\\_checks/2013/02/06/18245-fact-check-abercrombie-10-percent-of-hawaii-residents-are-veterans/](http://www.civilbeat.com/fact_checks/2013/02/06/18245-fact-check-abercrombie-10-percent-of-hawaii-residents-are-veterans/). 2012 Census data puts Hawai‘i’s population at 1,392,313.

<sup>31</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 17.

mitigate public perceptions.<sup>32</sup> One such narrative—Military Appreciation Month—is of particular interest because it entails an annual statewide acknowledgment of the U.S. military in the Islands. Inaugurated in 1985 by the Chamber of Commerce of Hawai‘i, during the entire month of May each year the State of Hawai‘i honors military personnel and their families with parades, concerts, and other celebratory events. On a recent Hawai‘i Army Weekly website posting, an invitation was extended to Hawai‘i residents:

Please join us as we celebrate the military’s presence in the islands and extend our deepest appreciation for its vital contributions to the social, cultural, and economic well-being of our *Ohana*, along with a heartfelt *Mahalo* for protecting our nation, Islands and families.<sup>33</sup>

Such acts of recognition on a collective level serve as consciousness-shaping touchstones that affirm in the public mind the military as righteous and good. In addition, allusions to the military as ‘ohana (family) deploys Kanaka Maoli traditions of kinship connection, thereby further naturalizing military belonging in the Islands. Military Appreciation Month is just one brief example of how such powers of persuasion operate to direct in very narrow but predetermined ways people’s understandings of militarism in Hawai‘i. As Cynthia Enloe notes, it is difficult to get a handle on militarism and uproot it because “in its everyday forms it scarcely looks life threatening.”<sup>34</sup>

Of course the militarization of Hawai‘i has been and will continue to be a constant and present threat, particularly in relation to the devastating impact it has on the land and, by extension, on Kānaka Maoli. Kyle Kajihiro states that the military “has left a trail of environmental disasters” through its ceaseless use of the land for military training activities (such as live-fire bombing and artillery exercises), waste disposal, and large-scale construction of facilities.<sup>35</sup> Places like Kaho‘olawe Island, Mākua Valley, and Hālawā Valley on the island of O‘ahu, and Pōhakuloa on Hawai‘i Island—all of them rich in terms of the Islands’ diverse cultural and natural heritage—bear deep scars of destruction as a result of being bombed, shot at, poisoned with toxic waste, and

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<sup>32</sup> Kathy E. Ferguson and Phyllis Turnbull, *Oh, Say, Can You See? The Semiotics of the Military in Hawai‘i* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), xiii.

<sup>33</sup> Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii, “Hawaii Military Appreciation Month,” *Military Affairs*, accessed May 21, 2013, [http://cochawaii.com/hawaiimilitaryappreciationmonth\\_new.asp](http://cochawaii.com/hawaiimilitaryappreciationmonth_new.asp).

<sup>34</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women’s Lives* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>35</sup> Kajihiro, “The Militarizing of Hawai‘i,” 178.

burned.<sup>36</sup> Incredibly, these ruinous activities are neatly concealed by the numerous and very public environmental awards the military receives from the State each year and the many philanthropic projects it sponsors, such as beach cleanups. The status of twenty-first century world politics and the realignment of the strategic focus of the U.S. toward Asia and the Pacific in response to global shifts only serve to foreshadow what will likely entail intensified militarization in Hawai‘i in particular, and the Pacific region in general, in the near future.<sup>37</sup>

### III. Tourism in Hawai‘i

Tourism, Dean MacCannell states, constitutes a specific kind of framing that is “not just an aggregate of merely commercial activities; it is also an ideological framing of history, nature, and tradition; a framing that has the power to reshape culture and nature to its own ends.”<sup>38</sup> Framed as tourist attraction, Hawai‘i has been re-signified from Native homeland to destination getaway—or a “tourist archipelago” as Haunani Kay Trask puts it—a place for leisure seekers to discover.<sup>39</sup> Through tourism, Kanaka Maoli culture has been reduced to a consumable commodity, not just through the sale of tourist souvenirs, but as well through the spectacle of for-tourist-by-Native performances where the tourist experience is authenticated through a “meeting with the Other and a sharing of its culture.”<sup>40</sup> The marketing, packaging, and selling of Hawai‘i articulates with the broader colonial project, assimilating Native land and bodies into a system of control.

Affluent Americans were traveling to Hawai‘i throughout the nineteenth century, many spurred by the touristic writings of literary giants like Mark Twain and Jack London. A nascent attempt to create a more organized profile of the Islands for potential visitors came in 1888 when King Kalākaua established the magazine *Paradise*

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<sup>36</sup> For an insightful discussion of the destructive impact of U.S. militarism in Hawai‘i, see Kajihiro, “The Militarizing of Hawai‘i.”

<sup>37</sup> In a speech he delivered to the Australian Parliament in 2011, U.S. President Barak Obama shared his administration’s security plan to turn attention back to the Asia Pacific region, stating, “As we end today’s wars [in Iraq and Afghanistan], I have directed my national security team to make our presence and mission in the Asia Pacific a top priority.” The expansion of America’s presence in the region is clearly discernible in places like Okinawa and Guam where military buildup is currently in progress. To read the full transcript of Obama’s speech, go to <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>.

<sup>38</sup> Dean MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers* (London: Routledge, 1992), 1.

<sup>39</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, *Night Is a Sharkskin Drum* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002), 35.

<sup>40</sup> John Goss, “Placing the Market and Marketing Place: Tourist Advertising of the Hawaiian Islands, 1972–1992,” *Environment and Society D: Society and Space* 11 (1993): 672.

*of the Pacific* (which remains in print today in the form of *Honolulu Magazine*), but it was not until 1903 that the ideological framing of the Islands as a tourist destination began in earnest with the establishment of the Hawaii Promotion Committee.<sup>41</sup> It is not insignificant that financial support for this early tourist bureau came from none other than Governor Sanford Dole, one of the chief conspirators in the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom.<sup>42</sup> As part of the Hawaii Promotion Committee's promotional agenda, a New York agency was hired to place advertisements in periodicals all over the United States. Within a year, the Committee had distributed approximately 500,000 items of promotional materials.<sup>43</sup>

The development of the hotel and transportation industry boosted tourism in Hawai'i significantly. The construction of two luxury hotels—the Moana Hotel in 1901 and the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in 1927—opened up Waikīkī Beach to becoming the epicenter of tourism in the Islands it is now. In terms of transportation, the phasing out of sailing ships in favor of commercial steamships in the early twentieth century cut travel time considerably.<sup>44</sup> The key shipping corporations at the time, Matson Navigation Company and the Oceanic Steamship Company, transported thousands of visitors from the West Coast of the United States to the Islands during the early 1900s. By the end of World War I, Matson was the leading shipping line serving Hawai'i, and by 1922 it was providing bi-weekly passenger service between San Francisco and the Islands.<sup>45</sup> The development of propeller-driven commercial air transport began in 1930, and in 1936 Pan America World Airways began flying regularly from the continental U.S. to Hawai'i, bringing the Islands ever closer as a site for rest and relaxation. A 1938 Tourist Bureau booklet underscores the growing propinquity between the U.S. continent and the Islands, if not geographically, certainly notionally:

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<sup>41</sup> Over the intervening decades, the original name changed several times over: Hawai'i Tourist Bureau (1919); Hawaiian Travel Bureau (1944); Hawaiian Visitors Bureau (1945); and Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau (1996). See Jane Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display From Waikiki to Sea World*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 276.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 35. As a point of interest, Dole was a principal figure in ensuring the successful establishment of the Hawaii Promotion Committee with his appropriation of \$15,000, at that time an enormous sum of money.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas G. Thrum, *Hawaiian Almanac and Annual for 1923: The Reference Book of Information and Statistics Relating to the Territory of Hawaii, of Value to Merchants, Tourists and Others* (Honolulu: Thomas G. Thrum, 1922), 78.

<sup>44</sup> For more on the development of sea transport in the Pacific during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Frances Steel, *Oceania Under Steam: Sea Transport and the Cultures of Colonialism, c. 1870–1914* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2011).

<sup>45</sup> Matson Navigation Company had a vast fleet of steamships that sailed between the United States and Hawai'i. By 1922 the fleet included: *Matsonia*, *Maui*, *Lurline*, *Manulani*, *Makena*, *Manukai*, *Hyades*, *Mahukona*, *Wilhelmina*, *Enterprise*, and *Makaweli*.

Hawaii is magic! Just the name is “[open] sesame” to a vividly gorgeous kaleidoscope of thought. . . . Sure, actual knowledge of the brief time required, the comfort, the luxury, and low cost of modern travel to the land of Aloha...will *bring Hawaii temptingly near, nearer than ever before*.<sup>46</sup>

In the months leading up to President Dwight Eisenhower’s proclamation of Hawai‘i as the fiftieth state of the American Union, Pan Am began its first jet aircraft service to the Islands, prompting a massive influx of tourists to Hawai‘i that has not ceased since.

Today, tourism is Hawai‘i’s primary industry, generating billions of dollars each year. It is the principal source of revenue after the U.S. military. In 2011 alone, 7.3 million visitors from all over the world—the majority from the United States, closely followed by Japan—descended on the Islands, producing a ratio of seven tourists to every local resident.<sup>47</sup> As was the case during the previous decades, these vacationers and others like them are drawn to Hawai‘i by the *idea* of the place that has been so thoroughly and effectively manufactured through literature, film, radio, art, millions of marketing materials—brochures, magazines, booklets, and so forth—and now, of course, the Internet. A quick Google search of “Hawaii” directs the enquiry straight to gohawaii.com, Hawai‘i’s official tourism site. Here, the website declares to readers, “The people of Hawaii would like to share their islands with you.”<sup>48</sup> The allusion to sharing is necessarily situated in the deep discursive bowels of “Hawaiian hospitality.” Here, Kānaka Maoli are cast as hosts who welcome the guest-traveler with open arms, enunciating the iconic invitational, “Alooooohaaaaa!” The rhetoric of the Native as hospitable and sharing conceals the fact that what is allegedly being “shared” has actually been stolen—a homeland that has been repackaged as paradise and sold by the colonizer. Trask articulates this point through poetic prose: “For the foreigner, romances/of ‘Aloha’/For Hawaiians/dispossessions of empire.”<sup>49</sup>

Although the financial slump of the Global Financial Crisis in 2007–2009 and the Japan tsunami in 2011 triggered a temporary downturn in tourist travel to the Islands, according to a First Hawaiian Bank analysis, as of 2012 “hotel occupancies, person-per-

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<sup>46</sup> Cited in DeSoto Brown, “Beautiful, Romantic Hawaii: How the Fantasy Image Came to Be,” *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 20 (1994): 259; emphasis added.

<sup>47</sup> Hawai‘i Tourism Authority, “Reports,” *Annual Visitor Research Report*, accessed May 26, 2013, <http://www.hawaii-tourism-authority.org/research/reports/>.

<sup>48</sup> See <http://www.gohawaii.com>.

<sup>49</sup> Trask, *Night Is a Sharkskin Drum*, 36.

day spending and person-per-trip spending [were] all performing solidly.”<sup>50</sup>

Developments in the travel and construction industry, including added U.S. and international flights and the construction of a US\$5.2 billion 20-mile mass transit rail line on O‘ahu—which is projected to not only ease traffic congestion but also improve visitor mobility around parts of the island—only promises to increase the number of people who come to “experience the Islands.”

Militarism and tourism are imbricated processes—what Teresia K. Teaiwa refers to more economically as “mili-tourism”<sup>51</sup>—with a long history in Hawai‘i, working independently and in association with one another to create a basis for U.S. domination in the Islands. During the years following annexation, tourism and militarism were advanced in tandem. For example, in the August 14, 1912, edition of the *San Francisco Call*—the entire edition being dedicated to the promotion of Hawai‘i—one section reads: “There will the tired tourist go to recuperate. There will the buffer of American power in the Pacific stand, as a menace to all foremen, as a guard to all that is American.”<sup>52</sup> “There”—Hawai‘i—is touted as both a place for city-weary visitors to go to recharge and for the nation as a collective to display its military brawn to global competitors. During the two world wars, the twin industries of tourism and militarism overlapped in sometimes intriguing ways. At the close of World War I, between 1917 and 1919, Matson Navigation Company’s fleet of leisure liners was requisitioned by the United States and pressed into service to transport tens of thousands of troops across the Pacific and Atlantic to England and France. Matson’s SS *Wilhelmina* was one of seven ships to be appropriated for the war effort. Guttled of its luxurious lodgings to accommodate teeming troops and retrofitted with four fifty-caliber guns, two Colt automatic machine guns, and four depth bombs, the vessel was transformed from tourist cruise liner to national war machine. Throughout the war years it achieved an outstanding war record, earning it the title “Watch Dog of the Convoy.”<sup>53</sup> When the United States entered the Second World War in 1941 with the bombing of Pearl Harbor

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<sup>50</sup> First Hawaiian Bank, “Hawaii’s Tourism Industry Continues to Be Robust; Other Economic Sectors Getting Brighter,” *Economic Forecast*, 2013–2012, [https://www.fhb.com/en/assets/File/Marketing/FHB\\_Oahu\\_Econ\\_Forecast\\_2013.pdf](https://www.fhb.com/en/assets/File/Marketing/FHB_Oahu_Econ_Forecast_2013.pdf).

<sup>51</sup> Teaiwa, “Militarism, Tourism and the Native,” 5.

<sup>52</sup> *The San Francisco Call*, “Paradise and Its Prosperity,” August 14, 1912. Special Hawaiian publicity edition, 2.

<sup>53</sup> Fred A. Stindt, *Matson’s Century of Ships* (Modesto, CA: Fred A. Stindt, 1982), 32. After coming through World War I unscathed, the *Matsonia* was sunk by a German submarine off the coast of England in 1940.

by the Japanese, Matson's passenger liners were once again commandeered for U.S. national wartime service.<sup>54</sup>

During World War II, the military also took control of tourist operations. As Adria L. Imada so cogently shows, the deployment of troops to foreign battlegrounds was paralleled by the transfer of Kanaka Maoli hula dancers from the leisure liners where they previously worked to military ships and land-based barracks where they provided entertainment for soldiers stationed and on leave in Hawai'i. Imada makes the critical observation that, during wartime, Hawai'i "became the staging ground not only for battle, but also for the leisure of millions of soldiers, defense workers, and military administrators."<sup>55</sup> Today, Hawai'i continues to serve the military as the number one destination for rest and relaxation (R & R).

Tourism and militarism also converge at key sites of memory, specifically the USS *Arizona* Memorial at Pearl Harbor and the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific located at Puowaina (colloquially named Punchbowl), both of which are principal tourist attractions on O'ahu.<sup>56</sup> These sacred centers of national identity and memory, along with the many other sites and instances where tourism and militarism overlap and come together, concomitantly naturalize Hawai'i as Island America while neutralizing Native sovereign jurisdiction over their ancestral homeland.<sup>57</sup>

### **Colonialism: An Inconvenient Truth**

In 2013, Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index once again ranked Hawai'i as the least stressed out state in the nation. Since the poll began in 2008, Hawai'i has consistently been listed at the top in terms of having the highest level of well-being, that is, the best emotional and physical health and the most positive work conditions. For many, the results were probably not all that surprising. Hawai'i's white-sand beaches, verdant

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<sup>54</sup> These passenger liners-turned-warships became known as the "Ships in Gray" (the usual white exteriors of the ships were painted over with Navy gray for camouflage). For a detailed account of the vessels' activities during World War II, see Matson Navigation Company, *Ships in Gray: The Story of Matson in World War II* (San Francisco, CA: Matson Navigation Company, 1946).

<sup>55</sup> Imada, "The Army Learns to Luau," 333.

<sup>56</sup> Each year an estimated 1.5 million visitors make the pilgrimage to the USS *Arizona* Memorial.

<sup>57</sup> Geoffrey M. White has written extensively on the relationship between tourism, representations of Hawai'i, and military sites of memory in Hawai'i—in terms of the latter, specifically Pearl Harbor. For more, see "Disney's Pearl Harbor: National Memory at the Movies," *The Public Historian* 24, no. 4 (2002): 97–115 and "Moving History: The Pearl Harbor Film(s)," in *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)*, ed. T. Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White, and Lisa Yoneyama (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 267–294.



mountain ranges, and salubrious weather are evidence of why locals often assert the popular Pidgin English phrase, “Lucky you live Hawai‘i.”

But the poll does not reflect the lived reality experienced by many people in the Islands. Hawai‘i’s ranking as one of the most expensive places to live in the United States means that it is not unusual for residents to work two or three jobs just to make ends meet. Then there is the ever-present issue of homelessness in the Islands. Rather than prompting a comprehensive plan to improve the living conditions of thousands of people living on beaches, parks, and city curbsides, the crisis has instead propelled government officials to come up with ways to clear them out of tourist spots like Waikīkī and Ala Moana Park to maintain the illusion of “paradise” for visitors. Hawai‘i, one could argue, is a “space of denial,”<sup>58</sup> where inconvenient truths are, like the homeless, displaced and put out of sight.

Of all the truths that have been evacuated from popular consciousness, colonialism in Hawai‘i is the most significant. In Hawai‘i, colonialism is viewed as an artifact of the nineteenth century, not the present. The colonization of Hawai‘i is something that happened with the overthrow but ended with Hawai‘i becoming a state in the American Union. Despite decades of organized protests by Kānaka Maoli calling for justice and liberation from the United States, the majority of Hawai‘i’s residents—settlers in particular—as well Americans on the U.S. continent, fail to equate Native unrest with the struggle against ongoing colonialism in their homeland. In *Colonizing Hawai‘i: The Cultural Power of Law*, Sally Engle Merry makes a compelling confession about her own initial inability to recognize colonialism in Hawai‘i:

My mythic understanding of Hawai‘i as a vacation spot, based on tourism’s constructions of it as a primitive, sexual, and out-of-time-and-place location against a backdrop of overbuilt beaches and excessively luxurious hotels, had blinded me to the extent of the tragedy that had occurred in the islands.<sup>59</sup>

Even for a sympathetic outsider, intuiting the contour and substance of colonialism in Hawai‘i—anywhere, for that matter, where indigenous homelands are dominated by an outside force—is a difficult endeavor when the mythic creation, such as that constructed through tourism, is so pervasive. So how do we name and theorize this lack of knowing?

In his 1997 publication *The Racial Contract*, Charles Mills examines issues of race through the lens of his own theoretical innovation, the Racial Contract. Here, he defines

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<sup>58</sup> Merry, *Colonizing Hawai‘i*, 24.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

the Contract as a set of meta-agreements between whites and non-whites through which the former is endowed with privilege and status and the latter is subordinated. This structuring of privilege and subordination along racial lines, Mills argues, is dependent on a collective white “understanding about what counts as a correct, objective interpretation of the world.”<sup>60</sup> Significantly, such an understanding by whites of what constitutes “reality” is, as Mills contends, “divergent from *actual* reality.”<sup>61</sup> Mills writes that this misrecognition of reality by white signatories is generated by an “epistemology of ignorance,” a cognitive dysfunction that requires “a certain schedule of *structured blindnesses and opacities* in order to establish and maintain the white polity.”<sup>62</sup>

While the word “ignorance” in conventional usage tends to imply gaps in knowledge that are accidental and possible to rectify through concerted effort on the part of the would-be knower, ignorance in the epistemic sense is instilled through active social production.<sup>63</sup> In this instance, ignorance is not accidental but rather is prescribed through social mediation. As Alison Bailey states in *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*, socially constructed ignorance yields “epistemic blank spots that make privileged knowers oblivious to systemic injustices.”<sup>64</sup> I suggest that the epistemology of ignorance to which Mills and Bailey refer serves as a useful conceptual tool for understanding settlers’ inability to perceive Hawai‘i’s colonial reality—and the systemic injustices therein—and how this misrecognition aids in the maintenance of U.S. domination in the Islands.

### *Producing Ways of Seeing: Colonial Discourse and Its Visualities*

In seeking to understand why settlers are unable to comprehend Hawai‘i’s colonial reality, it is necessary to examine how this process occurs. Eve Sedgwick’s insight is helpful here for understanding how ignorance is shaped: “These ignorances, far from being pieces of the originary dark, are produced by and correspond to particular knowledges and circulate as part of particular regimes of truth.”<sup>65</sup> Colonial discourse constitutes a particular kind of knowledge production and offers a way for thinking about how it is that such blindnesses, blank spots, and opacities extant in colonized Hawai‘i become rooted in the collective settler psyche. In *Colonial Encounters: Europe*

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<sup>60</sup> Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 17–18.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 18; emphasis added.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 19; emphasis added.

<sup>63</sup> Alison Bailey, “Strategic Ignorance,” in *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*, ed. Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana, 1st ed. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>65</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 25.

*and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797*, Peter Hulme offers a salient definition of colonial discourse that helps shed light on my own reading of the Hawai‘i context:

The general area within which this study operates could then be named colonial discourse, an ensemble of linguistically-based practices unified by their common deployment in the management of colonial relationships . . . Underlying the idea of colonial discourse . . . is the presumption that during the colonial period large parts of the non-European world were produced for Europe through a discourse that imbricated sets of questions and assumptions, methods of procedure and analysis, and kinds of writing and imagery, normally separated out into the discrete areas of military strategy, political order, social reform, imaginative literature, personal memoir and so on.<sup>66</sup>

Colonial discourse, then, is a kind of framing that creates narrow borders of understanding around the indigenous world in ways that serve to maintain and advance the colonial/colonizing project. It is a form of demarcation, where boundaries between the colonial authority and the Native subordinate are drawn.

One of the principal goals of this thesis is to show how imagery created by outsiders has helped promote particular understandings of Hawai‘i and Kānaka Maoli. Here, then, I draw on the concepts of visibility and simulation as key tools of analysis. As visual studies theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff informs us in *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (2011), “visuality” first emerged in the work of early-nineteenth century Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle, who devised the term to characterize “the tradition of heroic leadership, which visualizes history to sustain autocratic authority.”<sup>67</sup> In *Vision and Visuality* (1988), Hal Foster offered his own expanded interpretation, noting that while “vision suggests sight as a physical operation,” in the case of visuality, the emphasis rests on “sight as a social fact.”<sup>68</sup> Foster’s insightful distinction is important insofar as it relates to settler blindness in Hawai‘i because it places visuality squarely in the realm of social construction, where it exists in the nexus of human relations and the social mechanisms and practices that control “how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing or the unseen therein.”<sup>69</sup> Finally, Mirzoeff’s version of visuality as being specifically linked to the colonial project is key to my own reading of settler art as a specific means through which U.S. colonial authority in the Islands is simultaneously

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<sup>66</sup> Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797* (London: Methuen, 1986), 2.

<sup>67</sup> Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 3.

<sup>68</sup> Hal Foster, ed., *Vision and Visuality* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), ix.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

concealed and naturalized. States Mirzoeff, “The authority of coloniality has consistently required visibility to supplement its deployment of force. *Visibility sutures authority to power and renders this association ‘natural.’*”<sup>70</sup>

Colonial visibility as it relates to the suite of imagery produced by non-Hawaiian artists can be linked to Jean Baudrillard’s theoretical offerings in *Simulacra and Simulation* (2010 [1981]). Here, he collapses the image into four phases. In the first phase, the image reflects a fundamental reality; in the second, it “masks and denatures” a fundamental reality; in the third, it “masks the absence” of a fundamental reality; and in the fourth, it bears no resemblance to any reality: it is no longer “of the order of appearances, but of simulation.”<sup>71</sup> For Baudrillard, simulations make a radical break from the order of representation by superseding or, as he put it, murdering the Real:

When the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a plethora of myths of origin and of signs of reality—a plethora of truth, of secondary objectivity, and authenticity. Escalation of the true, of lived experience, resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared. . . . This is how simulation appears in the phase that concerns us—a strategy of the real, of the neoreal and the hyperreal that everywhere is the double of a strategy of deterrence.<sup>72</sup>

I suggest that simulations—or what I extend here as “assimulations”—replace the real Kānaka Maoli with artifices that have no bearing on reality. Idealized tourist simulations of the “Lovely Hula Girl,” the “Hawaiian Host,” or the “Waikīkī Beachboy”—what Vizenor would describe as “simulation[s] of dominance”<sup>73</sup>—are three such examples, but as I will show as well, simulations of a more debased nature have also been circulated. The term “assimilation” that I offer is a play on the two words “assimilation”—the absorption of Kānaka Maoli into an American system of power and control—and “simulation,” an apparatus of dominance that fabricates a false reality. The process and practice of assimilation through colonialist imagery has had the effect of folding Kānaka Maoli into an American master narrative—or, to return to Adichie, a “single story”—in which they are divested of their sovereign autonomy and depicted instead as domesticated subjects of the United States. The result is the successful concealment of U.S. colonialism.

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<sup>70</sup> Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look*, 6; italics added.

<sup>71</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 2010), 6.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 146.

In connection with the key concepts of visuality and simulation, in *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (1993) David Spurr argues that embedded within colonial discourse is an infinite series of rhetorical modes that “constitute a kind of repertoire . . . a range of tropes, conceptual categories, and logical operations available for the purposes of representation.”<sup>74</sup> In his book, Spurr examines twelve rhetorical modes, two of which—the rhetoric of debasement and the rhetoric of idealization—I use as a basis for examining the different ways Kānaka Maoli have been imaged and imagined through non-Native representations. Although my interrogation of settler art is by no means comprehensive—for my own part, I have purposefully chosen to avoid overemphasizing and thus privileging works that I believe promote a Hawaiian absence—it nevertheless reveals, albeit in broad strokes, the various canvases colonialist imagery traverses across time and artistic mode.

### **Cartoon Frames and the Rhetoric of Debasement**

During the late 1800s as American interests in Hawai‘i intensified, Kānaka Maoli began appearing in U.S. political cartoons in a range of ways that placed them at the “negative end of a system of value.”<sup>75</sup> This system of value, Spurr argues, had its ontological and epistemological grounding in Western notions of superiority in relation to the distant and dark savage. In the case of Hawai‘i, the images of debasement that were produced were designed to create a particular perception of Kānaka Maoli for American audiences during a period of heightened expansion by the United States. The underlying message in the cartoons was that Kānaka Maoli were unfit to rule themselves and needed the guiding hand of an advanced nation, specifically the United States, to pull them toward civilization. Here, the groundwork for political intervention was being prepared.

In the years leading up to the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893 by an all-white oligarchy and in the years following, a handful of U.S.-based political magazines and newspapers published a series of cartoons that—along with contemporaneous written literature—drew on a range of negative stereotypes of Kānaka Maoli. Some of these depictions were designed to infantilize Kānaka Maoli, as was the case with the cartoon titled “A Trifle Embarrassed”—published by *Puck Magazine* in 1898—where Hawai‘i, along with Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico is depicted as

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<sup>74</sup> David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 3.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

wailing children being given over to the paternalistic care of a bemused Uncle Sam (Fig. 1.2).<sup>76</sup>

In other illustrations, cartoonists targeted notable figures of the Hawaiian monarchy—specifically King David Kalākaua, his wife Kapi‘olani, and Queen Lili‘uokalani—using ridicule and racist allusion to undermine the indigenous authority of their subjects. For example, in 1887, the same year Kalākaua was coerced into signing the Bayonet Constitution, *The Wasp* published a cartoon portraying the king in a heavily inebriated state with his crown askew and being supported on his left side by his aggrieved looking wife Kapi‘olani. On the other side, Kalākaua is held up by the well-known British character John Bull,<sup>77</sup> who pours the contents of a bottle onto the ground while looking reproachfully at the king. Meanwhile, U.S. President Grover Cleveland kneels in front of the trio in what looks to be an attitude of supplication. The caption reads: “Which Will Win?” (Fig. 1.3).

While the cartoon represents Kalākaua as a bumbling drunk and, by inference, a man unfit to rule a kingdom, the treatment of Queen Kapi‘olani takes on a distinctly racial tone. Here, she is rendered with black skin and conspicuously Negroid features, phenotypic stereotypes of Black Americans that, as cultural theorist Stuart Hall writes, “were so common that cartoonists, illustrators and caricaturists could summon up a whole gallery of ‘black types’ with a few, simple, essentialized strokes of the pen. . . . Black people were reduced to the signifiers of their physical difference—thick lips, fuzzy hair, broad face and nose, and so on.”<sup>78</sup> As well as being assigned racially inflected physical characteristics, elements of Kapi‘olani’s clothing also constituted part of the cartoon’s broader “racial grammar of representation.”<sup>79</sup> Here, she is drawn wearing a head cloth, similar to those used by black female slaves and, later, domestic servants, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The feather-adorned crown that protrudes from her head covering serves only to mock Kapi‘olani’s royal status, suggesting that she is merely playing at being Queen by borrowing the regal accouterments of Western culture but adding Native feathers that confirm her primitive identity and therefore inferiority. It is important to note that the racist force of such

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<sup>76</sup> The chromolithograph was illustrated by cartoonist Udo J. Keppler and appeared as a centerfold in volume 43, number 1117 of *Puck Magazine*, August 3, 1898. Keppler also served as editor for the magazine.

<sup>77</sup> John Bull was a popular fictional character during the nineteenth century that came to symbolize the United Kingdom in much the same way Uncle Sam was used as a national personification of the United States.

<sup>78</sup> Hall, *Representation*, 249.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

imagery was not a solitary statement in and of itself but rather its function was to undergird the written text that preceded it in the front section of the magazine.

Remarking on the cartoon, the *Wasp* editors wrote:

On our concluding page is portrayed the contest between John Bull and this country for the possession of the Sandwich Islands. The well-fed Briton thinks the best way to make favor with the king is to yield to his personal wishes and gratify all his appetites. On our side President Cleveland is ingratiating himself with Queen Kapiolani as being the nearest cut to the heart of the people. It is pretty certain that some outside power will soon have to take a ruling hand in governing the dusky monarch's realm, as he has completely ingulfed [*sic*] it in insolvency and misrule. Of course it seems natural to us that the United States should control these islands, but there may be some international considerations that would cause England and Germany to object. One thing is sure, however, and that is that America will never consent to any foreign power settling down and exercising ownership to the exclusion of this republic.<sup>80</sup>

French literary theorist Gérard Genette notes that such “text rarely appears in its naked state without the reinforcement and accompaniment of a certain number of productions, themselves verbal or not, like an author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations.”<sup>81</sup> These productions Genette describes as “paratextual elements” and which Marie Maclean expands as “frames” that relate a “text to its context.”<sup>82</sup> In the case of “Which Will Win?” the illustration works in tandem with the written text to legitimize colonialist interests in the Islands by discrediting Native Hawaiian leadership and thereby making American intervention in Hawai‘i's affairs seem an inevitable and beneficent necessity.

Probably the most caricatured figure of the Hawaiian monarchy was Queen Lili‘uokalani. On February 3, 1893, just over two weeks after the overthrow of her kingdom, a cartoon was published in the Minnesota newspaper *St. Paul Daily Globe*. In the cartoon, the Queen is shown attempting to sell her crown to a pawnbroker (Fig. 1.4). The text in the illustration reads:

Lilioukalina [*sic*]: How much can you lend me on this Honolulu crown?

Pawnbroker: I might have let you have a few sandwiches a month ago, but it isn't worth a wisp of hay now.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *The Wasp Magazine*, “Our Pictures,” August 27, 1887, 3.

<sup>81</sup> Gérard Genette and Marie Maclean, “Introduction to the Paratext,” *New Literary History* 22, no. 2 (1991): 261.

<sup>82</sup> Marie Maclean, “Pretexts and Paratexts: The Art of the Peripheral,” *New Literary History* 22, no. 2 (1991): 273.

<sup>83</sup> The reference to “sandwich” in the dialogue is obviously an allusion to “Sandwich Islands,” the name given to Hawai‘i by Captain James Cook in the late 1700s.

As with the cartoon of Kapi‘olani, Lili‘uokalani’s image is freighted with the same kind of black stereotypes mentioned by Hall: “thick lips, fuzzy hair, broad face and nose” and black skin. She is also barefooted, which, as Noenoe Silva points out in connection to another cartoon made of Lili‘uokalani titled “We Draw the Line at This” (1893), is “a sign meant to show that she is not civilized.”<sup>84</sup> Where Kapi‘olani was depicted wearing a head cloth to mark her “blackness,” Lili‘uokalani is drawn with a thick anklet on her right foot and a large oval earring in her right ear, adornments worn by women in many African countries. In particular, the anklet is suggestive of the foot cuffs used to shackle black slaves during the era of slavery in America. The Queen also appears to be brandishing a club, upon which is inscribed her name. The inclusion of this object no doubt draws attention to the idea that not only is the Queen uncivilized, but she is also endowed with savage hostility.

As well as adhering to an underlying logic of racism, the cartoonist also portrays Lili‘uokalani in an overtly sexual way. Here, she is shown wearing the basic undergarments of the Victorian period, a corset and petticoat. Her state of undress is used to both reinforce her purported uncivilized condition as well as impute that she is sexually promiscuous, on par with a prostitute.<sup>85</sup> As Silva has argued in relation to her own analysis of nineteenth-century cartoons of Kānaka Maoli, such visual statements in conjunction with written texts helped cast an image of Hawai‘i’s Native population as uncivilized, debauched, and savage, thereby providing America with the rationale and justification it needed to colonize Hawai‘i.<sup>86</sup>

It is important to note that the rhetorical strategy of debasement was not limited to representations of Kānaka Maoli but was part of a broader pattern of colonial discourse occurring throughout the Pacific during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In *Colonial Dis-Ease: US Navy Health Policies and the Chamorros of Guam, 1898–1941*, Chamorro historian Anne Perez Hattori analyzes a cartoon that appeared in the 1912 edition of the *Guam News Letter*. The cartoon shows the iconic figure of Uncle Sam standing atop a platform on which is inscribed the word “Advancement.” Located to the left of him is a figure symbolizing Guam—rendered with dark complexion and childlike characteristics—standing atop three stacked platforms, variously inscribed with the words Hospitals, Telephones, Ice Plant, Educational System, Good Roads, Electric Plant, and Water Works System. The caption at the foot of the image reads, “More Like

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<sup>84</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 177.

<sup>85</sup> Noenoe Silva similarly interprets the depiction of Lili‘uokalani in the cartoon titled “Lili to Grover.” See *Aloha Betrayed*, 177

<sup>86</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 177.



His Dad Every Day.” As Hattori argues, the “image not only reduced the Chamorro people to mere children under the training of a superior patriarch, but did so in a particularly racist manner, emphasizing the primitiveness and dark color of the child.”<sup>87</sup>

In similar vein, Pat Lawlor’s 1926 publication *Maori Tales: A Collection of 100 Stories*—which I came across while rummaging through an old book sale in Honolulu—was replete with images that depicted Māori as both savage and dim-witted.<sup>88</sup> In one particular cartoon—bearing the caption “An Early New Zealand Christmas: Te much trouble catching te Christmas Goose”—several Māori characters wearing grass skirts and headdresses embellished with feathers fall over each other as they run in pursuit of a moa (Fig. 1.5).<sup>89</sup> The Native clothing in this context becomes a synecdoche of Māori primitivity and the antics of the characters as they fall over themselves while giving chase positions them as guileless fools. Significantly, too, the use of the Māori language article “te” in the text—which translates as “the”—is also a form of debasement in that it signals to the reader the inability of Māori to fully grasp English. The overriding message is that the status of Māori remains uncivilized and in need of the paternalistic beneficence of Pākehā.<sup>90</sup> The inclusion of the moa, now extinct in New Zealand, implies, too, that Māori will follow the same fate.

As Hawai‘i became more tightly tethered to the United States politically through such acts as the overthrow and the illegal annexation, rhetorical shifts began to take place. If the images deployed during the late-nineteenth century inspired fear and loathing of Kānaka Maoli in the American public consciousness, the images that were circulated during the mid-twentieth century were designed to promote Kānaka Maoli and their homeland as objects of American desire.

### **Fine Arts Frames and the Rhetoric of Idealization**

The rhetorical strategy of idealizing Kānaka Maoli as nonthreatening, alluring hosts as opposed to dangerous savages can be linked to the development of tourism during the twentieth century. As Spurr observes, such rhetorical shifts follow a Western expansionist logic of utility: “It is no accident that the idealization of the savage from the beginning has always accompanied the process of Western imperial expansion, for

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<sup>87</sup> Anne Perez Hattori, *Colonial Dis-Ease: US Navy Health Policies and the Chamorros of Guam, 1898–1941* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2004), 40.

<sup>88</sup> Pat Lawlor, *Maori Tales: A Collection of 100 Stories* (Sydney: New Century Press Ltd, 1927).

<sup>89</sup> The moa is an extinct bird that was native to New Zealand.

<sup>90</sup> Translates specifically as Caucasian New Zealander and more generally as anyone of non-Māori ancestry.

*this idealization simply constitutes one more use that can be made of the savage in the realm of Western cultural production.*"<sup>91</sup> The production of pleasure through the tourist industry required the instrumentalization of Kanaka Maoli bodies in ways that were of an exotic, erotic nature. Although many artists during the 1930s and 1940s produced work for the tourist industry—such as printmaker John Melville Kelly and design illustrator Frank McIntosh—here I briefly consider four key works in the oeuvre of Eugene Savage.

American fine artist Eugene Francis Savage (1883–1978) was one of many artists to travel to Hawai‘i in order to image the Islands and its people for touristic purposes. Savage arrived in Honolulu in 1938 to begin preliminary work on a series of murals he had been commissioned to paint by the passenger-freight firm Matson Navigation Company, a principal player in the growing tourism and commercial industries in the Islands throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. After spending three months in Hawai‘i drawing sketches and researching Hawaiian culture, history, botany, and geography, over the next two years Savage completed six eight feet wide by four feet high paintings—designed to fit together as a single mural—all of them intended to furnish the interiors of two of Matson’s luxuryliners the SS *Lurline* and the SS *Matsonia*.<sup>92</sup>

All of the paintings depict various scenes of an idealized Hawai‘i and feature the common themes of celebration, feasting, and abundance.<sup>93</sup> In *Island Feast* (Fig. 1.6), for instance, a party of Native male and female revelers congregate around a central figure, an ali‘i (chief), carrying baskets laden with offerings of food—bananas, pineapples, mangos, watermelon, sweet potato, and fish—and a pig tied to a pole, presumably to be cooked in an imu (underground oven), visually implied by flames of yellow and purple hues ascending into the sky at the left-hand side of the painting. In the central middle-ground, a line of female dancers sway in unison to the beat of a pahu (drum)—the repeated shapes and colors of the undulating forms lending a sense of movement and rhythm to the painting—while to their right a young man pounds taro

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<sup>91</sup> Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire*, 128.

<sup>92</sup> The six paintings were titled separately and included *Island Feast*, *A God Appears*, *Hawaii’s Decisive Hour*, *Pomp and Circumstance*, *Festival of the Sea*, and *Aloha . . . The Universal Word*. For more on the paintings, see Don R. Severson, Michael D. Horikawa, and Jennifer Saville, *Finding Paradise: Island Art in Private Collections* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 126.

<sup>93</sup> Which is perhaps why many of the original paintings were reproduced as menu covers for the luxury liners.

root to produce poi.<sup>94</sup>

It is a scene of Bacchic sensuality, reminiscent, one might argue, of William Bouguereau's *La Jeunesse de Bacchus* (*The Youth of Bacchus*) (1884). Lei (floral garlands) are a ubiquitous adornment in this island-style Eden, with a hint of hedonism alluded to by the inclusion of a god figure, the deity Lono (the Hawaiian god of agriculture and peaceful pursuits), which presides over the carefree event at the far left of the painting. As one reviewer wrote in 1924 in regard to another of Savage's works, *The Expulsion* (1922): "he presents lines and forms intended to create emotion and awaken imagination."<sup>95</sup> Indeed, in *Island Feast*, through strength of line and a colorful palette of blue, green, yellow, and red, Savage awakens the viewers' imagination to a time of "primitive" perfection in Hawai'i.

If the logic of modernist primitivism is present in depicting the Hawaiian past in *Island Feast*, in two other paintings in the mural series, history itself is reframed through the artist's brushstrokes. In the painting titled *A God Appears*—which was also reproduced for the cover of the SS *Lurline's* dinner menu (Fig. 1.7)—an ali'i is depicted extending a lei to the famous navigator Captain James Cook in a gesture of welcome. Here the trope of the Native host is deployed in an overt way. Ocean waves—similar in style to those rendered in Japanese artist Hokusai's famous woodblock print, *The Great Wave of Kanagawa* (1826)—race toward a shore populated by men and women, some carrying food, others of whom appear to be raising their hands in veneration of Cook. As with the other paintings in the series, all of the women are clothed in the figure-fitting tie sarongs fashionable during the late 1930s, which also featured in other exotic representations of Hawaiian women as well as women in the Cook Islands and Tahiti.

The painting clearly represents Cook's third voyage (1776–1779), as evidenced by the presence of a ship in the middle ground bearing the name *Resolution* (a second ship in the distance, though undistinguished, is presumably the *Discovery*). The scene that is imaged is one of peaceful interaction and, as with the other paintings in the series, is infused with a celebratory mood as Cook the "god" is received ashore joyfully by a Hawaiian milieu. (Here, Savage draws on the then-popular notion that Hawaiians viewed Cook as an incarnation of the god Lono.)<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Poi is the customary staple food of Kānaka Maoli and is made by pounding the corm of the taro plant into a thick paste.

<sup>95</sup> M.P., "A Painting by Eugene F. Savage," *Bulletin of the City Art Museum of St. Louis* 9, no. 3 (1924): 41.

<sup>96</sup> This notion was later revived in the famous competing analyses of anthropologists Marshall Sahlins and Gananath Obeyesekere. See Marshall David Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Reality: Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Islands Kingdom* (Ann Arbor,

But it is a scene that obfuscates the violent reality of many encounters that took place between Cook and Pacific Islanders, including Hawaiians, particularly during his third and final voyage. Indeed, the explorer's last encounter with Hawaiians was marked by brutal confrontation over the attempted kidnapping of Hawai'i Island chief Kalani'ōpu'u, which culminated in Cook being killed along with four of his crew.<sup>97</sup> The occlusion of such conflicts in the work of artists like Savage may be best understood in the context of what Margaret Jolly has described as the "aestheticization of a Pacific Pacific."<sup>98</sup> In the case of *A God Appears*, a pacified, tamed Hawai'i is presented to tourists, planting in them the seed of expectation that the same joyful reception of friendly lei-, food-bestowing Natives will greet them as well. As for the idea of Cook being perceived by Hawaiians as a god, Gananath Obeyesekere argues that such a notion, far from being grounded in reality, was instead a strategic creation of the European imagination. Cook as deity, Obeyesekere writes, was part of a process of mythmaking, at the heart of which were the tripartite goals of "conquest, imperialism, and civilization."<sup>99</sup> Celebrated Kanaka Maoli artist Herb Kane put it even more succinctly: "Apotheosis it was. Making Cook a God it was. But it was Europeans who made Cook a God, not Hawaiians."<sup>100</sup> In *A God Appears*, Savage continues the tradition of making Cook a god in the service of twentieth-century tourism.

The final painting in Savage's mural series is titled *Hawaii's Decisive Hour* (Fig. 1.8). The work is an exercise in the same sort of idealized—and, in this sense, distorting—interpretation of the past that is evident throughout the mural series. The painting—which is for all intents and purposes a history painting in that it sustains "a narrative within a single frame"—depicts the Annexation Day ceremony,<sup>101</sup> held at 'Iolani Palace on August 12, 1898, during which the sovereignty of the Hawaiian

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MI: University of Michigan Press, 1981) and Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

<sup>97</sup> Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 212.

<sup>98</sup> Margaret Jolly, "From Point Venus to Bali Ha'i: Eroticism and Exoticism in Representations of the Pacific," in *Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Margaret Jolly and Lenore Manderson (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 104. Jolly's quote extends and complicates arguments made earlier by Bernard Smith that European artists (Smith focused on John Webber's rendering of Raiatean noblewoman Poedua in particular) tended to portray the Pacific as pacific: i.e., feminine, vulnerable, and as a place of tranquility (see Smith 1992). For more on the visual construction of Pacific peoples by early European explorers, see Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific* and Rüdiger Joppien and Bernard Smith, *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages* vols. 1–3 (1985–1988).

<sup>99</sup> Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook*, 3.

<sup>100</sup> Cited in Houston Wood, *Displacing Natives*, 21.

<sup>101</sup> Nicholas Mirzoeff, "On Visuality," *Journal of Visual Culture* 5, no. 1 (2006): 56.

Islands was formally (though not legally) transferred to the United States.

In the background of the painting, Lili‘uokalani is shown seated on a throne, while directly in front of her U.S. Minister to Hawai‘i Harold Sewall exchanges a handshake with President of the Republic of Hawai‘i Sanford Dole to officially seal the transaction. Of particular interest is the activity in the foreground. A crowd of onlookers, mainly Hawaiian women and children, respond to the unfolding event before them with animated jubilation. One Native woman looks to the sky in an attitude evocative of Giani Lorenzo Bernini’s captivating sculpture *The Ecstasy of St. Theresa*, while two others raise their hands in tribute in the direction of Dole and Sewall. The soldiers of the USS *Philadelphia* are included in the painting as well but are here represented less as a somber corp of military personnel providing security for the event and more as a marching band providing musical entertainment. For all intents and purposes, the scene Savage has rendered implies an event imbued with gaiety and celebration—an ideal vision of unity. But what appears to be a coherent visual narrative is actually an artfully constructed illusion. In contrast to Savage’s visual construction, actual written observations at the time of annexation indicate that the Hawaiian presence was sparse, bar a few “silent and distant spectators.”<sup>102</sup> And, far from being a joyful affair, the atmosphere at the event was patently somber. One witness, Mabel Carter, noted that “[t]he ceremonies had the tension of an execution.”<sup>103</sup>

Indeed, as Noenoe Silva has so critically shown in *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (2004), Kānaka Maoli mounted vigorous resistance against the annexation of their homeland. Most notably, in 1897 several anti-annexation petitions were circulated throughout the Islands. Of an estimated population of 40,000 Kānaka Maoli, over 21,000 signed.<sup>104</sup> Further, six days before the Annexation Day event, a protest letter opposing annexation was filed by several Hawaiian political groups, part of which read: “the people of Hawaii have protested against the consummation of any invasion of their political rights, and have frequently appealed to the President, Congress, and the people of the United States to refrain from further participation in the wrongful annexation of Hawaii.”<sup>105</sup> The truth of these historical details, however, is absent in Savage’s depiction. Indeed, in an inverse way, the presence of Lili‘uokalani shown seated on the throne is equally distorting of

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<sup>102</sup> Thomas G. Thrum, *Hawaiian Almanac and Annual for 1899: The Reference Book of Information and Statistics Relating to the Territory of Hawaii, of Value to Merchants, Tourists and Others* (Honolulu: Thomas G. Thrum, 1899), 79.

<sup>103</sup> Cited in Ruth Hoosegow Lowe, *Liliuokalani* (Kamehameha Schools, 1993), 86.

<sup>104</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 151.

<sup>105</sup> *New York Times*, “The Flag Over Hawaii,” August 21, 1898.

the proceedings as much as the blatant absences. The Queen did not attend the ceremony; she, along with many of her supporters, boycotted it. Hawaiians did not celebrate the annexation of their Islands, as Savage would have the viewer believe, nor was it a “decisive hour” as the title of the painting asserts. As has been noted, as night fell on the day of annexation, “a wail of sorrow from Hawaiians” was “heard throughout Honolulu.”<sup>106</sup>

However, through Savage’s representation of the event, the transfer of Hawai‘i to the United States is memorialized as an amicable, uncontested affair, while the legal and physical violence through which it was actually acquired is concealed. Mary Louis Pratt describes this process as an “anti-conquest” strategy, whereby the dominant group—in this case the colonizing force of the United States—seeks “to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert . . . hegemony.”<sup>107</sup> This point is echoed by Karen Kosasa, who states that the production of such images has “contributed to the colonization of the Islands and continues to daily transform . . . an indigenous place into a territory of the United States.”<sup>108</sup>

Over the last fifty years, countless other non-Native artists have built lucrative careers out of creating images that promote Hawai‘i as a place of idyllic splendor and Hawaiians as acquiescent cultural hosts. Such is the case with two of the most prominent and successful artists living in the Islands today, graphic designer and painter Pegge Hopper and photographer Kim Taylor Reece, both of whose work has been exhibited in galleries in Hawai‘i and abroad and has been reproduced in a number of formats, including calendars, book publications, greeting cards, and posters.<sup>109</sup>

Well known for her trademark palette of vivid tropical hues and strong graphic sensibility, since the 1970s Hopper has run a successful practice producing sumptuous images of Hawai‘i, the principal subject of which is the archetypal full-figured Hawaiian female. Hopper’s subjects are often shown wearing colorful traditional mu‘umu‘u (loose gowns) or sarongs and are situated in scenes of lush vegetation or white-sand beaches. The women are routinely depicted in submissive supine repose—whether lounging on a bed or couch, stretched out on a floor, or floating face-up in the

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<sup>106</sup> Mike Gordon, “Annexation,” *The Honolulu Advertiser*, July 2, 2006, Sesquicentennial edition, <http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/150/sesq1annexation>.

<sup>107</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 7.

<sup>108</sup> Kosasa, “Critical Sight/Sites,” 58.

<sup>109</sup> Due to rigorous copyright restrictions associated with each of the artists’ works, I have chosen to not include images. However, such restrictions do not prevent me from referencing publications in which the cited images can be found.

ocean—their heavy-lidded eyes staring passively toward some unseen place outside of the composition in which they are ensconced or directly at the viewer. Writing about Hopper’s work in *Women of Hawai‘i: Pictures by Pegge Hopper* (1985), Don Berry declares:

Western painters of Polynesian subjects have often caught the prettiness and romanticism of the islands. But only a few, including Hopper, have captured the inner strength of the Polynesians, the vitality of a culture that has stubbornly endured wave after wave of foreign conquerors.<sup>110</sup>

While I do not deny the artist’s technical mastery over her chosen media of painting and printing, the aesthetic drive of Hopper’s works nevertheless promotes the notion of Native women not as vital, but as passive agents. The predominant recumbent positioning of the women in the works—in many ways paralleling the nineteenth-century paintings by Paul Gauguin, such as his famous *Femmes de Tahiti* (1891) and *Spirit of the Dead Watching* (1892)—rather than serving as a counterpoint to the romanticized Western renditions of Islanders to which Berry alludes, instead fold seamlessly into them. The images do not impart a sense of Native vitality—such that has enabled Islanders to stubbornly endure “wave after wave of foreign conquerors”—but rather resigned inertness. In *Green Curtain* (1997) for instance, the subject, cushioned between a bold color scheme of pink and green, lies prone on an implied bed, her eyes barely open to the viewer. The characteristics of “inner strength” and “vitality” are muted by an overriding message of fragility and impotence.<sup>111</sup>

If Hopper’s Hawaiian subjects imply an attitude of languishing frailty, Kim Taylor Reece’s photographic models promote a lusty sensuality to excite and titillate. In *How to Photograph Hawaii* (1973), photographer Robert Wenkam wrote that key to creating an image of Hawai‘i necessarily requires “exotic glimpses of grass hula skirts, white sand, palm-fringed beaches and sultry ‘little brown gals.’”<sup>112</sup> Reece has spent the better part of 35 years harnessing such imagery in his representations of hula kahiko (ancient hula)—representations that, as he notes on his official website, are designed to capture “the mystery and magic of [hula] which for generations has excited the imaginations of people around the world.”<sup>113</sup> Working predominantly in black-and-white and sepia-

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<sup>110</sup> Pegge Hopper, *Women of Hawai‘i: Pictures by Pegge Hopper* (Seattle: Winn Press, 1985), 18.

<sup>111</sup> To view the image, see *Women of Hawai‘i* (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press), 38–39.

<sup>112</sup> Robert Wenkam, *How to Photograph Hawaii* (Chicago, IL: Rand McNally & Company, 1973), 25.

<sup>113</sup> Kim Taylor Reece’s official website “Kim Taylor Reece,” <http://www.kimtaylorreece.com/home.htm>.

tones, Reece draws unabashedly on the familiar trope of the “Lovely Hula Girl”: bare breasted, curvaceous hips swaying, adorned with head and neck garlands, dark tresses blowing in the wind, and gesturing hands aflutter or open wide in welcome. As Jane C. Desmond argues in *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikīkī to Sea World* (1999), the iconographic figure of the “hula girl” has become ubiquitous in the production of Hawai‘i’s tourist “destination image”:

With her dark hair, bare skin, grass skirt, beckoning smile, and graceful gestures over swaying hips, the hula girl image evokes the feminized lushness of the tropics: accessible, hospitable, beautiful, exotic, and natural.<sup>114</sup>

Such images as described by Desmond are the hallmark of Reece’s work, the framed prints of which festoon the walls of many Hawai‘i homes and public establishments, while books that feature his imagery (e.g., *Images of Hawaii’s Ancient Hula: Hula Kahiko Fine Art Photography* [2004], *Hula i Ka Lā: Dance in the Sun* [2002], and *Wahine* [1999]) are sold in many stores throughout the Islands.

Not surprisingly, Reece is vigilant about protecting his lucrative images.<sup>115</sup> Indeed, in 2006 the artist became embroiled in a high-profile court case in which he sued a local art gallery for copyright infringement. In the ensuing proceedings—*Reece v. Island Treasures Art Gallery, Inc.*—Reece maintained that the gallery had breached the copyright restrictions on his work by featuring a stained-glass window by Native Hawaiian artist Marylee Leialoha Colucci. In the work of art, which was made up of over 200 pieces of glass, the artist depicted a hula dancer in a traditional pose referred to by Hawaiians as “‘ike” (knowledge): the subject is in a kneeling position with back slightly arched, while the right hand is raised skyward and the palm of the left hand is opened near the left ear. Reece argued that the image bore a direct likeness to his 1988 sepia-tone photograph titled *Makanani* and accused the artist of plagiarism.

The case drew the attention of Hawaiian leaders such as kumu hula (hula teachers) Mapuana De Silva and Vicki Holt Takamine, who rallied to support Colucci. Stated Takamine, “These are movements we’ve done for 2,000 years that have been passed down from generation to generation. He cannot own this position.”<sup>116</sup> After months of deliberation Reece eventually won the court case based on the “narrow issue of

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<sup>114</sup> Desmond, *Staging Tourism*, 12.

<sup>115</sup> Which is the central reason why I have chosen to not include examples of his work in this thesis.

<sup>116</sup> Rosemarie Bernardo, “Photographer’s Lawsuit Claims Hula Image Stolen,” *Star Bulletin*, November 3, 2006, <http://archives.starbulletin.com/2006/11/03/news/story04.html>.



protectable elements within the photograph.”<sup>117</sup> As Nina Mantilla insightfully explains, in a significant way the decision highlighted the twin failures of the court to “recognize that the cultural art of hula belongs to Native Hawaiians or recognize that no other judicial remedies are available to Native Hawaiians to protect their cultural art.”<sup>118</sup>

Reading the works of Savage, Reece, and Hopper (as well as others, who in the interests of space I have not been able to discuss here) against the grain is important for understanding the ways Kānaka Maoli and their homeland have been and continue to be constructed and viewed as subjects of the United States rather than as sovereigns of an illegally occupied nation. The visual arts have functioned as a vehicle through which seemingly opposite yet imbricated rhetorical strategies—i.e., the debasement and the idealization of Kānaka Maoli—have been at various moments in history projected into the American imagination. As Edward Said has so saliently explained, the “struggle over geography . . . is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, *about images and imaginings*.”<sup>119</sup> Here, the terrain of the human mind—the “imaginative geography”—as much as the physical terrain of place is a site of struggle and contestation.<sup>120</sup>

U.S. colonialism, militarism, and tourism have all depended on the assimilation of Kānaka Maoli as hosts, entertainers, passive citizens of the nation—all of which are “a form of oppression, imprisoning [them] in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.”<sup>121</sup> This pernicious habit of fixing a fiction of the real in the American (and global) imagination has been noted in Trask’s critical insight that Hawai‘i is for all intents and purposes a “state of mind.”<sup>122</sup> Through a highly crafted network of colonial representational strategies—which culminates as colonial visibility—the myth of Hawai‘i as pacific paradise and Kānaka Maoli as pacified subjects has been and continues to be constructed for mass consumption, while the actual violence and persistence of U.S. colonial occupation is obscured.

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<sup>117</sup> Nina Mantilla, “The New Hawaiian Model: The Native Hawaiian Cultural Trademark Movement and the Quest for Intellectual Property Rights to Protect and Preserve Native Hawaiian Culture,” *Intellectual Property Brief* 3, no. 2 (2011): 31.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 30–31.

<sup>119</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, NY: First Vintage Books, 1993), 7; emphasis added.

<sup>120</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, Vintage Books (New York, NY: Vintage, 1994), 57.

<sup>121</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 22.

<sup>122</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 136.

Figures: Chapter One



Figure 1.1: American flags raised over 'Iolani Palace during the annexation ceremony, August 12, 1898. Troops from USS *Philadelphia* stand at attention in front of the central dais. Photographer Frank Davey. (Image from Hawai'i State Archives Online Digital Collections).



Figure 1.2: "A Trifle Embarrassed." *Puck Magazine*. August 3, 1898. Chromolithograph. Illustrated by Udo J. Keppler. (Image from Library of Congress Online Digital Collections).

THE WASP



WHICH WILL WIN ?

8/27/87

Figure 1.3: "Which Will Win?" *The Wasp*. August 27, 1887. Artist unidentified. (Image courtesy of the Hawai'i State Archives, Kahn Collection).





Figure 1.4: Cartoon of Queen Lili‘uokalani in the *St. Paul Daily Globe*. February 3, 1893. Artist unidentified. (Image from Library of Congress Online Digital Collections).

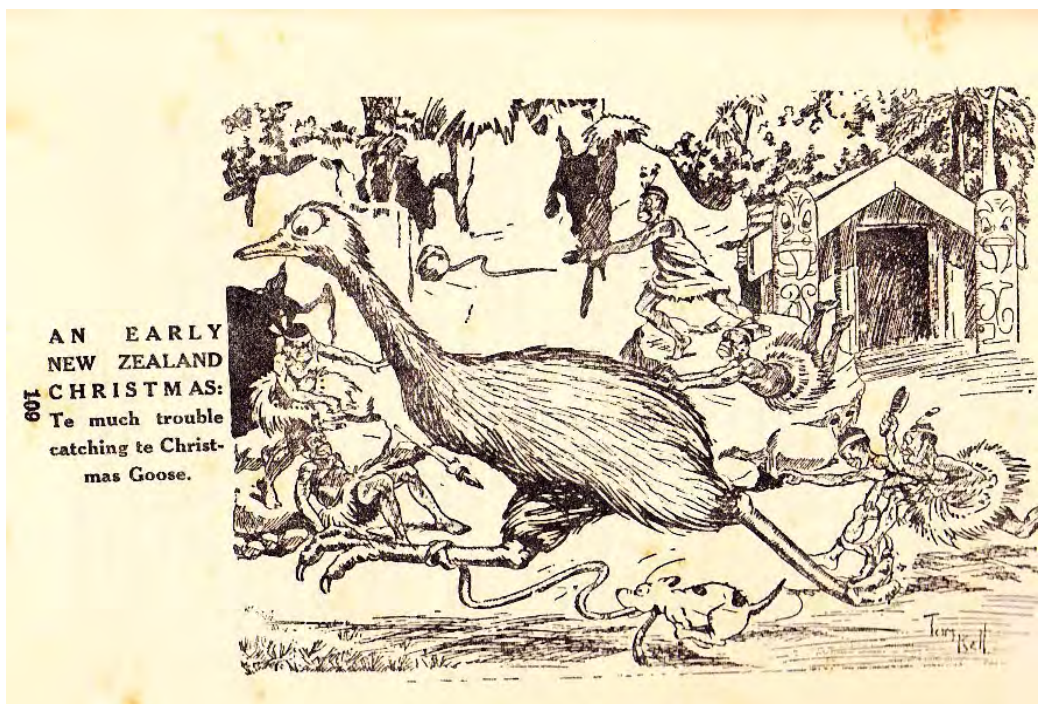


Figure 1.5: “An Early New Zealand Christmas.” Illustrated by Tom Bell. (Image from Pat Lawlor, *Maori Tales: A Collection of 100 Stories*, 1926).





Figure 1.6: *Island Feast* (1940) by Eugene Francis Savage. Giclee copy reproduced from the original and located at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, Honolulu, Hawai'i. (Photograph by author, 2012).



Figure 1.7: *A God Appears* (1940) by Eugene Francis Savage. A reproduction of the painting as it appeared on the SS *Lurline's* dinner menu dated September 16, 1953. (Photograph by author, 2014).



Figure 1.8: *Hawaii's Decisive Hour* (1940) by Eugene Francis Savage. (Image from Don R. Severson, Michael D. Horikawa, and Jennifer Saville, *Finding Paradise: Island Art in Private Collections*, 2002).

Children of the fire-clans  
Taro growers, fishermen  
Lift your voices together  
Make your stand  
Control your destiny  
Live out your fantasy  
Hawaiian bloods, set yourself free  
Sing a song of sovereignty  
—“Song of Sovereignty”<sup>1</sup>

**‘Onipa‘a**

On January 17, 1993, over ten thousand men and women, children and elderly marched together in steadfast unity toward ‘Iolani Palace—once the seat of indigenous monarchal power—to commemorate the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom by U.S.-backed haole businessmen exactly one hundred years before. The march was the culminating event in a five-day series of observances that took place across the Hawaiian Islands under the moniker “‘Onipa‘a.” Meaning steadfast, firm, resolute, “‘Onipa‘a” was the motto used by Queen Lili‘uokalani to fortify her people in the face of political chaos as the events of the overthrow unfolded, and it was deployed again a century later as a cognitive touchstone to galvanize Kānaka Maoli in their ongoing struggles against the United States. Throngs of supporters joined Kānaka Maoli in the march, with local non-Kanaka Maoli residents and sovereignty advocates from all over the world, including the Pacific. Thousands of torchlights carried by the marchers created a path of illumination in the predawn darkness as the procession wended through the streets of Downtown Honolulu. It was a physical invocation of the ‘ōlelo no‘eau “Kū ka lau lama i kukui ho‘okahi” (“Many torches stand together to give one light”).

As the marchers descended on the grounds of ‘Iolani Palace they encountered the royal palace draped in black bunting, a symbol of the deep grief that remained with Kānaka Maoli at the loss of their Kingdom. An opening oli (chant) by kumu hula (hula teacher) and sovereignty activist Momi Kamahale was given, Hawaiian flags were waved, music was played, the historical events leading up to the overthrow were

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<sup>1</sup> Written by Leo Anderson Akana and performed by The Peter Moon Band on the album *Full Moon*, 1988.

reenacted, songs of sovereignty were sung, and the rallying cry “‘Ike Pono!” (Seek balance/justice) was shouted for all to hear. As the events of the day unfolded, Haunani-Kay Trask—political scientist, poet, and leader with the sovereignty group Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i—ascended the podium to deliver her intransigent speech: “We are NOT American! We are NOT American! We will DIE as Hawaiians! We will NEVER be American!” The rally that day was not just a commemoration of an historical injustice but also a reflection of the persistent desire of Kānaka Maoli to take a stand and determine their destiny as the still sovereign people of Hawai‘i.

The overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, the illegal annexation of the Islands by the United States, and their subsequent incorporation as the fiftieth state of the American Union are events that were in essence part of a systematic endeavor by the United States to unseat Native sovereignty and substitute its own. The alienation of Kānaka Maoli from their lands, language, and cultural heritage was not only rooted in the material logic of colonial assimilation, but it was part of a psychological strategy to make an entire people forget who they were as a sovereign lāhui (nation). Mark Augé reminds us that the “duty of memory is the duty of descendants, and it has two aspects: remembrance and vigilance.”<sup>2</sup> Historic occasions like this commemoration and the countless moments of sovereign resistance that transpired before and after—in the form of rallies, sit-ins, protests, petitions, and so forth—constitute important examples of Native remembrance and vigilance in the face of ongoing colonial occupation.

In a crucial way, the centennial observances of the overthrow marked the assertion by Kānaka Maoli of their rights as the sovereign people of the Islands. The following passage from the inside cover of *‘Onipa ‘a: Five Days in the History of the Hawaiian Nation* (1993), the official book that chronicled the historic event, underscores this point:

Although they came from all walks of life and backgrounds, the descendants of the ancient civilization that once thrived in these Pacific islands united to express their love for the memory of their Queen Lili‘uokalani, to mourn the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom on January 17, 1893, and to call out to the world that the right of self-determination must be restored to their sovereign nation. After 100 years of dishonor, neglect and shame, the Hawaiian people were renewed in their efforts to seek justice for historic wrongs.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Marc Augé, *Oblivion* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 88.

<sup>3</sup> Office of Hawaiian Affairs, *‘Onipa ‘a: Five Days in the History of the Hawaiian Nation* (Honolulu: Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 1994), unpaginated inside cover.



The events of 1993 were not only about remembrance and mourning; they constituted the coming together of Kānaka Maoli for the purpose of claiming and declaring their sovereignty to the United States and the rest of the world.

It is the intent of this dissertation to demonstrate how contemporary Kanaka Maoli artists, as a discrete community within the wider lāhui Hawai‘i (Hawaiian nation), articulate sovereignty through the visual arts in the context of ongoing colonial occupation under the United States. First, however, it is necessary to examine what sovereignty means for Kānaka Maoli and what forms it takes. Any discussion about sovereignty must acknowledge the fact that it has multiple meanings depending on the historical and social context. Joanne Barker states:

Sovereignty—and its related histories, perspectives, and identities—is embedded within the specific social relations in which it is invoked and given meaning. How and when it emerges and functions are determined by the ‘located’ political agendas and cultural perspectives of those who rearticulate it into public debate.<sup>4</sup>

The wide-ranging meanings and significance ascribed to sovereignty depending on how, where, and when it is being used are punctuated by differences between Western and indigenous formulations of it as well as among the indigenous collectivities that seek to deploy it in contemporary counter-colonial struggles. In the case of Hawai‘i, the issue of sovereignty is framed by multiple approaches, strategies, goals, and agendas that have at times united Kānaka Maoli and at other times carved out deep divisions. On this last point, in his own examination of Kanaka Maoli political identity and nationhood, Jonathan Osorio issues a plaintiff question: “I wonder how much more fragmentation we [Kānaka Maoli] can endure?”<sup>5</sup> Sovereignty—for Kānaka Maoli, as well as the many other Native peoples who have been engaged in the long-term struggle for their homelands—constitutes complex and rough terrain. Kanaka Maoli perspectives on it are diverse and heterogeneous. In the following pages, I consider a range of instances where sovereignty has been invoked and given meaning within the discursive framework of particular historical and political moments in Hawai‘i. I do not pretend to offer a comprehensive overview or analysis of sovereignty and all its complexities; there is already a diverse body of exceptional scholarship that does this. Rather what I

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<sup>4</sup> Joanne Barker, ed., *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 21.

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Kamakawiwo‘ole Osorio, “‘What Kine Hawaiian Are You?’ A Mo‘olelo About Nationhood, Race, History, and the Contemporary Sovereignty Movement in Hawai‘i,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 13, no. 2 (2001): 359–379.

seek to do here is distill some of the past and current discussions surrounding sovereignty as a *principle* in order to establish a foundation for examining how it is put into aesthetic *practice* through the visual arts.

### **Sovereignty Frames**

Sovereignty is anything but fixed. One New Zealand politician once likened it to a piece of chewing gum that “can be stretched and pulled in many directions.”<sup>6</sup> Sovereignty can mean something different depending on the context, whether it is in relation to sixteenth-century concepts of divinely ordained monarchal power or contemporary efforts connected to indigenous self-determination. The tenth edition of the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines sovereignty as

- 1 *obsolete*: supreme excellence or an example of it
- 2 **a**: supreme power especially over a body politic  
**b**: freedom from external control: autonomy  
**c**: controlling influence
- 3 one that is sovereign; *especially*: an autonomous state

Such a definition, however, eschews the many other complex interpretations of the word. The evolution of sovereignty as a principle is marked by a series of distinct historical developments. In terms of its origins, sovereignty has its roots in Western theology. Here, full and final authority was the domain of the masculine Christian God, whose power on Earth was advanced by his anointed representatives, the competing entities of the Holy Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor. With the signing of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 by France, Spain, Sweden, the Dutch Republic, and the numerous smaller state entities of Europe, the concept of sovereignty was expanded further to encompass the self-governing authority of discrete states in relation to and in recognition of one another. Between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, theories regarding the relationship between state sovereignty and individual sovereignty—that is, the personal freedoms of citizens of the state—were articulated by numerous political philosophers, including Thomas Hobbes (*Leviathan* [1651]), Samuel Pfordorf (*On the Duty of Man and Citizen According to the Natural Law* [1673]), John Locke (*Two Treatises of Government* [1689]), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*The Social Contract, or Principles of Political Right* [1762]), and Immanuel Kant (*The Metaphysics of Morals* [1797]).

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<sup>6</sup> Member of Parliament Geoffrey Palmer cited in Mason Durie, *Te Mana, Te Kāwanatanga: The Politics of Māori Self-Determination* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998), 219.

During the nineteenth century, these interpretations of sovereignty became distilled in notions of the nation-state. Barker notes that European nations viewed themselves as possessing “the full measure of sovereignty because they were the highest form of civilization.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, sovereignty was subject to a system of hierarchy. As was established during the Peace of Westphalia, sovereignty depended on the mutual recognition bestowed on states by other members of the “Family of Nations.” Sovereignty as understood through a Western lens was differentially apportioned: civilized Western nations who recognized each other as family members possessed it, while the “uncivilized” of the world—the un-family/unfamiliar others—did not. During the nineteenth century, as nations like Britain, France, Spain, and the fledgling United States expanded into untouched and untapped places like Oceania, they sought ways to impose their sovereignty on the indigenous populations they encountered. However, as the foreign interlopers were to discover, Native communities did not respond passively to their interventionist strategies. Many took up arms while others concomitantly adopted and utilized the political and legal institutions of the outsider to protect their lands, resources, and way of life, with the knowledge that the world around them was changing rapidly.<sup>8</sup> The results of such adaptations in the face of change had varying results, of which Hawai‘i offers one example.

### **I. Nascent Kanaka Maoli Sovereignty Struggles**

Joanne Barker argues that although Western sovereignty “carries the horrible stench of colonialism,” indigenous peoples have nevertheless rearticulated it “to mean altogether different things.”<sup>9</sup> The early nineteenth century witnessed increased interactions between Hawai‘i and outsiders. Whalers, merchants, and missionaries converged on the island archipelago’s shores, bringing with them foreign ideas, technologies, institutions, and—tragically—diseases. Sporadic displays of aggression by incoming foreigners who viewed the lands and people they encountered as objects of conquest served as troubling indications of the political turmoil that lay on the horizon. For instance, in 1839, Cyrille Laplace—captain of the French warship *Artemise*—dispatched an ultimatum that unless a French mission was established in Hawai‘i, a land grant be provided for said mission, and the sum of \$20,000 conveyed as a guaranty for other demands, he would mount an

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<sup>7</sup> Barker, *Sovereignty Matters*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Such was the case with the Māori of Aotearoa, the indigenous peoples of the Americas, the First Nations tribes of Canada, and many more.

<sup>9</sup> Barker, *Sovereignty Matters*, 26.

attack.<sup>10</sup> Menaced by the threat of force, kuhina nui (co-ruler with the mō‘ī [highest ruler of the Islands]) Kekauluohi capitulated to all of the Frenchman’s demands.<sup>11</sup> Noenoe Silva reports that for the mō‘ī Kauikeaouli (Kamehameha III), the incident warned of Hawai‘i’s vulnerability to the predatory proclivities of larger, more powerful nations.

With the advice of his haole consultants, Kauikeaouli embarked on an enterprise to adopt Euro-American conventions of statehood and sovereignty, the goal being to legitimize and elevate Hawai‘i’s status among the elite circle of Western nations and, in doing so, protect the Islands from colonization. The appropriation of such conventions included the Constitution of 1840, which laid the foundation for representational government; the demarcation of Hawai‘i’s territorial boundaries; and the agreement of the people that they constituted one nation.<sup>12</sup> Kauikeaouli also proclaimed Hawai‘i as a Christian kingdom, “an unwritten requirement for membership” in the “Family of Nations.”<sup>13</sup> Over the next several years, Hawai‘i achieved international recognition as an independent nation, first from Great Britain and France by joint proclamation in 1843, and then from the United States by treaty in 1849. By 1882, Hawai‘i was engaging in diplomatic and treaty relations as a sovereign, self-governing nation-state all over the globe.

Hawaiian leaders traveled the world to promote the Islands as a viable nation-state and to form alliances with other members of the international power network. One of the highest-profile Hawaiian diplomatic excursions was undertaken in 1881, when King David Kalākaua became the first head of state ever to “put a girdle around the world,”<sup>14</sup> visiting such countries as Japan, China, Hong Kong, Siam (Thailand), Singapore, Burma (Myanmar), India, Egypt, Italy, Great Britain, Belgium, Germany, Austria, France, Portugal, and the United States. He used the trip as a way to see the world but more importantly for the world to see how far Hawai‘i had progressed as a civilized nation-state. It was also an opportunity for the king to forge alliances. While in Japan, Kalākaua proposed to Emperor Mutsuhito a marriage alliance between one of the princes of Japan and Princess Kai‘ulani, his heir to the throne. The king believed that a Hawai‘i-Japan partnership would protect the Islands “against any annexation schemes

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<sup>10</sup> Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 35.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> A metaphor for circumnavigation.

of the United States.”<sup>15</sup> In England, while the potential for a royal alliance between Hawai‘i and Japan was still pending, Kalākaua conducted secret nuptial negotiations at Windsor Castle to “put a British steel rod into the uneasy throne of Hawai‘i.”<sup>16</sup> Ambitious political schemes of the sort attempted by Kalākaua were accompanied by the deployment of visual declarations of nationhood and sovereignty, which were expressed both abroad and at home. As Stacy L. Kamehiro reveals in her noteworthy 2009 publication *The Arts of Kingship: Hawaiian Art and National Culture of the Kalākaua Era*, under the leadership and support of Kalākaua a national visual culture—which drew from Native and Western traditions—was established to further legitimize Hawai‘i’s sovereign status among its global equals. This included the creation of royal regalia (such as the Hawaiian coat of arms, the sword and ring of state, and the royal scepter);<sup>17</sup> buildings (such as ‘Iolani Palace); commemorative monuments (such as the Kamehameha I statue); and public civic institutions (such as the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum).

However, while Hawai‘i was making its own inroads as a sovereign nation-state on the international stage, internal forces in the shape of a predatory haole elite on home shores—many of whom had been empowered by the Hawaiian monarchs to develop the Islands’ framework for institutional government and the administration of law—began to undermine Kanaka Maoli authority and control. As the nineteenth century came to a close, the powers and agencies of the Hawaiian Kingdom that had been acknowledged and accepted by other nation-states across the globe were in the process of being eroded by the coercive sovereignty of the United States.

## II. Contemporary Kanaka Maoli Sovereignty Struggles

Joanne Barker writes:

Fiercely claiming an identity as sovereign, and including multiple sociocultural issues under its rubric, has been a strategy of not merely deflecting globalization’s reinvention of colonial processes but of reasserting a politically empowered self-identity within, besides, and against colonialism.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> William N. Armstrong, *Around the World With a King* (New York, NY: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1904), 64.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 226. Kalakāua’s attempt to secure affinal alliances between Hawai‘i and the royal families of Japan and England were both unsuccessful.

<sup>17</sup> Such regalia were used as conspicuous references to Kalākaua’s royal status during his 1881 world tour.

<sup>18</sup> Barker, *Sovereignty Matters*, 20.

In the 1980s, Kānaka Maoli began to strategically reframe sovereignty in the language of self-determination, decolonization, and renewed Hawaiian nationalism as a means of asserting their political will against the ongoing colonial occupation of their homeland. The “Ho‘okū‘oko‘a: Conference on Hawaiian Sovereignty” in 1985 was a landmark gathering that brought together musicians, poets, artists, and political activists from across the Islands for the purpose of exploring what terms like self-determination, nationalism, sovereignty, and independence entailed in the Hawai‘i context.

Several Kanaka Maoli community leaders from both grassroots and institutional backgrounds spoke, including Haunani-Kay Trask, Kalani Ohelo, and visual artist ‘Īmaikalani Kalāhele. Trask urged Kānaka Maoli to get politically engaged and to begin the process of decolonization. She exhorted “cultural people . . . to become political.”<sup>19</sup> Other speakers like Ohelo called for Kānaka Maoli to unify on the basis that “If our race can be one cohesive movement . . . we would have that cohesive force.”<sup>20</sup> Over the decades, the Hawaiian sovereignty movement has given rise to the emergence of over 300 ideologically diverse groups, the result being that it has not always engendered the kind of cohesiveness Ohelo urged. But the sovereignty struggle has continued unceasingly, albeit along many different pathways. Those pathways converged at the 1993 Ho‘okolokolonui Kānaka Maoli (The Peoples’ International Tribunal), during which the United States was put on trial for crimes against Kānaka Maoli, including ethnocide and genocide. Over a twelve-day period, Kānaka Maoli from across the Islands presented testimony to a panel of nine international judges, all respected in their fields of legal expertise.<sup>21</sup> The language of self-determination and human rights was invoked throughout the course of the hearings, particularly in relation to the United Nations Charter (U.N. General Assembly Resolution 1514, 1945), of which Article 73 was cited prominently. Article 73 directs members of the United Nations “which have or assume responsibilities for the administration of territories whose peoples have not yet attained a full measure of self-government” to, among other things:

Develop self-government, to take due account of the political aspirations of the peoples, and to assist them in the progressive development of their

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<sup>19</sup> Puhipau, *Ho‘okū‘oko‘a: Conference on Hawaiian Sovereignty*, VHS (Honolulu: Nā Maka o Ka ‘Āina, 1985).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> The tribunal proceedings took place on O‘ahu, Maui, Moloka‘i, Kaua‘i, and Hawai‘i Island between August 12–21. The beginning and ending dates were symbolic in that they related to the formal (though illegal) annexation of Hawai‘i on August 12, 1898, and the incorporation of Hawai‘i as a state on August 21, 1959. The judges on the tribunal panel included: Milner S. Ball, Hyun-Kyung Chung, Ward Churchill, Richard Falk, Lennox Hinds, Te Moana Nui a Kiwa Jackson, Asma Khader, Oka Makoto, and Sharon Venne.

free political institutions, according to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples and their varying stages of advancement.<sup>22</sup>

Although Hawai‘i had been placed under the U.N. Charter in 1945, its fraudulent incorporation as a state of the American Union by the United States in 1959 effectively nullified its eligibility for decolonization and its right to self-determination. Many sovereignty advocates, however, such as Mililani Trask of Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i, have argued that because the United States violated international rules and regulations during the statehood process, Hawai‘i should “be placed back on the list of non-self-governing territories” so that it can once again be eligible for decolonization.<sup>23</sup> So far, efforts in this direction have not yet been fruitful, largely due to sustained obstruction by the United States and its agent, the State of Hawai‘i.

Over the last thirty or so years, two self-governance models have emerged as prominent courses of action in Native sovereignty discourse: nation-to-nation relationship and complete secession from the United States (i.e., independence). The nation-to-nation model is based on the historical legal precedent established between the United States government and the Native American and Native Alaskan tribes living within its so-called territorial boundaries. Under this framework, the U.S. federal government recognizes the inherent sovereignty of those Indian tribes under federal Indian law.<sup>24</sup> Felix S. Cohen writes:

Perhaps the most basic principle of Indian law, supported by a host of decisions hereafter analyzed, is the principle that *those powers which are lawfully vested in an Indian tribe are not, in general, delegated powers granted by express acts of Congress but rather inherent powers of a limited sovereignty which has never been extinguished*. Each Indian tribe begins its relationship with the Federal Government as a sovereign power, recognized as such in treaty and legislation. The powers of sovereignty have been limited from time to time by special treaties and laws. . . . These statutes of Congress, then, must be examined to determine the limitations of tribal sovereignty rather than to determine its sources or its positive content. What is not expressly limited remains within the domain of tribal sovereignty.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> United Nations. Declaration Regarding Non-Self-Governing Territories. Chapter IX of the Charter of the United Nations. Accessed October 8, 2013. <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter11.shtml>

<sup>23</sup> Mililani Trask in Robert H. Mast and Anne B. Mast, *Autobiography of Protest in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1996), 397.

<sup>24</sup> Inherent sovereignty in this context entails that Native American and Alaskan tribes were self-governing before the arrival of white settlers.

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Charles F. Wilkinson, *American Indians, Time, and the Law: Native Societies in a Modern Constitutional Democracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 58; emphasis in original.

Significantly, while the nation-to-nation arrangement entails the recognition of Native Americans and Native Alaskans as sovereign peoples, such recognition is only the case insofar as they are regarded as “domestic dependents.” Thus, tribal sovereignty is ultimately limited by the plenary power of Congress.

In 2000, Hawai‘i Democratic Senators Daniel Akaka and Daniel Inouye proposed a legislative bill that would initiate a process for Kānaka Maoli to secure federal recognition as a Native governing entity, similar to Native American and Native Alaskan tribes. The Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization Act, colloquially referred to as the Akaka Bill, followed on the heels of President Bill Clinton’s 1993 Apology Bill (Public Law 103-150) in which, on behalf of the people of the United States, he apologized for the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and “the deprivation of the rights of Native Hawaiians to self-determination.”<sup>26</sup> The resolution also pledged a commitment to “support reconciliation efforts between the United States and the Native Hawaiian people.”<sup>27</sup> The Akaka Bill was in part designed to serve as a vehicle for beginning a process of reconciliation and also for formalizing the relationship between the United States and Kānaka Maoli, which has historically been ambiguous. The aim of the Akaka Bill is to establish a Native Hawaiian governing entity—the formation of which would be vetted by the State of Hawai‘i and the U.S. federal government—which would, on behalf of Kānaka Maoli, negotiate agreement for the transfer of lands, natural resources, and other assets back to Hawaiians. For many proponents of the bill, federal recognition is seen as a means of protection from the many race-based challenges that have been leveled against Kānaka Maoli, such as the *Rice v. Cayetano* (2000) ruling and the high-profile legal settlements surrounding the Kamehameha Schools admission policy that gives preference to children of Native Hawaiian ancestry.

Since its initial proposal the bill has undergone numerous amendments but has so far failed to pass Congress. It has also encountered significant opposition not only from U.S. legislators but—more significantly—from Kānaka Maoli. In 2004, several sovereignty groups and activists—including but not limited to Ka Lāhui Hawai‘i, sovereignty advocate Mililani Trask, and ‘Ilio‘ulaokalani Coalition—dispatched a joint online petition in opposition to the bill. Citing a number of outstanding weaknesses in its amended version, they described the bill as a betrayal that would “allow the

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<sup>26</sup> U.S. Congress, *100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom*. Public Law 103–150. 103d Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 107 Stat 1510. S.J. Res. 19, November 23, 1993.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*



continued oppression and disenfranchisement of Hawaiians.”<sup>28</sup> Despite such criticism, Akaka Bill advocates, including the state-run agency the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and current Governor of Hawai‘i Neil Abercrombie, have continued to support the initiative. Governor Abercrombie’s advocacy of the Akaka Bill was strikingly evident on July 6, 2011, when he signed into law Act 195, which simultaneously recognizes the status of Kānaka Maoli as the sovereign people of Hawai‘i and establishes a five-member Native Hawaiian Roll Commission to prepare and maintain a roll of qualified Native Hawaiians.<sup>29</sup> Importantly, the roll would lay the foundation for organizing a Native Hawaiian governing entity “that is recognized by the State of Hawai‘i, *and can be recognized by the United States.*”<sup>30</sup> Simply put, Act 195 was instituted to help pave the way toward federal recognition.

Other sovereignty groups, like Ka Pākaukau—“pākaukau” meaning a circle of elders who are charged with making important decisions—which was founded by well-respected activist Dr. Kekuni Blaisdell, staunchly uphold the second self-governance model: secession from the United States. Recalling the situation of Kānaka Maoli under U.S. colonialism, Blaisdell states:

We Kanaka Maoli have been so victimized by this oppressive system of de-Kanaka Maoli-nization, westernization, and Americanization that we are *hilahila*—ashamed—to be Kanaka Maoli. We’ve lost confidence in ourselves. We have been taught to hate ourselves, to put ourselves down. And that’s painful and very devastating.<sup>31</sup>

In response to the dire conditions Blaisdell outlines, nothing short of full independence is considered acceptable. Sovereignty, in Blaisdell’s view, is not sovereignty if it is under the jurisdiction of the State. Speaking about Ka Pākaukau’s platform for independence in an online broadcast of Eiko Kosasa’s social justice program *Journey to Justice*, he explained:

We don’t just want whatever land they decide we’re going to have. We have to have it all. . . . And *we* have to . . . restore our own government and *we* have to establish diplomatic relations with the rest of the world. And *we* have to become fully-fledged members of the UN General Assembly. And we’re *not* Americans. And we’re *not* pro-military; we’re anti-military. And we’re *not* capitalists that continue to destroy this

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<sup>28</sup> ‘Ilio‘ulaokalani Coalition, “Petition Online: Akaka Bill Set to Extinguish Hawaiian Rights,” May 4, 2004, <http://www.petitiononline.com/ILIO/petition.html>.

<sup>29</sup> The Commission includes: Former Governor John D. Waihe‘e, Lei Kihoi, Mahealani Perez-Wendt, Na‘alehu Anthony, and Robin Puanani Danner.

<sup>30</sup> Office of Hawaiian Affairs, “Native Hawaiian Roll Commission,” Office of Hawaiian Affairs. <http://www.oha.org/page/native-hawaiian-roll-commission>.

<sup>31</sup> Kekuni Blaisdell in Mast and Mast, *Autobiography of Protest in Hawai‘i*, 373.

sacred environment. We need to become self-sufficient. . . . [And] we're not gonna get out of the bottom unless we're independent.<sup>32</sup>

Other groups—in particular the Council of Regency of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i—seek to *restore* rather than achieve self-governance through the reestablishment of the Hawaiian Kingdom. The premise for doing so is based on the understanding that Hawai‘i remains a sovereign state through the historical precedent of international recognition. In his groundbreaking work regarding the legal status of Hawai‘i, political scientist David Keanu Sai argues that while Kānaka Maoli have experienced the effects of colonization psychologically and physically, legally speaking Hawai‘i was never actually colonized, since its sovereignty had already been established in a number of ways, chief of which being Hawai‘i’s formal recognition by other nations. Sai offers a salient distinction: “*Colonization/de-colonization* is a matter that concerns the internal laws of the colonizing State and presumes the colony is not sovereign, while *occupation/de-occupation* is a matter of international law relating to already existing sovereign States.”<sup>33</sup> Drawing on numerous Western legal and political theories, Sai contends that Hawai‘i’s political path is one of de-occupation rather than decolonization.

As should be clear by now, the Hawaiian sovereignty movement is made up of a myriad array of groups who at times come together in unity and at other times fall into deep divisive cracks. But despite the differences among them, a basic truth prevails. Native sovereignty is not an inert possession but an active praxis. Its contours may be ill defined and continuously contested but, despite the ambiguities, I argue that sovereignty, as it applies to indigenous communities in particular, is fundamentally about inner dignity—the dignity of the individual and the collective—and the ability of a people to manage their lands and other resources on *their own* terms. Sovereignty is not simply an idea but rather a way of moving in the world. Further, drawing on my own experience as a New Zealand Māori, sovereignty is not something that can be lost or ceded. That is perhaps one of the most insidious deceptions that has emanated from the colonial project and which has led to so much confusion and lack of confidence for indigenous peoples the world over. The lie that we have come to believe is that we either do not have sovereignty or that we need to aspire to it. Lands may be confiscated,

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<sup>32</sup> Eiko Kosasa, “A Conversation with Dr. Kekuni Blaisdell: Part 1,” *Journey to Justice* (Honolulu, June 3, 2010). Available online at <http://vimeo.com/44511956>.

<sup>33</sup> David Keanu Sai, “The American Occupation of the Hawaiian Kingdom: Beginning the Transition From Occupied to Restored State” (PhD, Political Science, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2008), 181.

resources may be syphoned off and re-diverted, lives may even be extinguished, but the sovereignty of a people remains unchanged, an inalienable fact of being. For Kānaka Maoli, the path to determining what sovereignty means for them has already begun. The sails of many wa‘a (canoes) have been raised and multiple courses have been set, some converging, some wildly divergent. The ultimate destination remains on some distant horizon, yet to be realized. Perhaps Robert Allen Warrior sums it up the best: “It is a decision, a decision we make in our minds, in our hearts, and in our bodies to be sovereign and to find out what that means in the process.”<sup>34</sup>

### **III. Aloha ‘Āina and Sovereignty Landmarks**

The issue of land has been and continues to be at the forefront of Kanaka Maoli sovereignty and self-determination efforts. For indigenous peoples throughout the globe, land is not seen as a possession but rather as an ancestor to which the collective belongs. It is a place to put one’s feet and stand with confidence. In Māori culture, we refer to this kind of belonging as tūrangawaewae. In the Kanaka Maoli context, the relationship between land and people is best articulated in the words “‘āina” and “kama‘āina”—“that which feeds [i.e., land]” and “child of the land,” respectively. On the one hand, the land takes care of the people by feeding them, but implicit in that nurturing is the understanding that the people, the children of the land, will also take care of their parent, a process referred to as mālama ‘āina (to care for the land). As Haunani-Kay Trask points out, “Thus is the Hawaiian relationship to land both familial and reciprocal.”<sup>35</sup>

The familial relationship between Kānaka Maoli and the land is rooted in a Kanaka Maoli epistemological framework and stems from the sacred union of Wākea (Sky father) and his daughter Ho‘ohōkūkālani (The-heavenly-one-who-made-the-stars). In Hawaiian oral tradition, Hāloa-naka (Quivering stalk with long breath) was the stillborn son of Wākea and Ho‘ohōkūkālani. From the soil where his body was laid to rest emerged the first kalo, the staple food of the Hawaiian people. When Ho‘ohōkūkālani gave birth to a second son, she named him Hāloa in honor of the child that died. It is this lastborn child—the kaikaina or younger male sibling—who is recognized as being the progenitor of Kānaka Maoli and therefore the genealogical link between the people and the land.

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<sup>34</sup> Robert Allen Warrior, “Intellectual Sovereignty and the Struggle for an American Indian Future. Chapter 3 of *Tribal Secrets: Vine Deloria, John Joseph Mathews, and the Recovery of American Indian Intellectual Traditions*,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 8, no. 1 (1992): 18.

<sup>35</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 141.

The phrase “aloha ‘āina” has been invoked in the contemporary period in many ways, mostly in its translation as “love for the land.” But the meaning, as Noenoe Silva argues, goes much deeper than simply emotional love. In her discussion of nineteenth-century political figure Joseph Nāwahī, Silva examines a series of articles written by the Kanaka Maoli leader on the subject of aloha ‘āina and its meaning. In one such article, Nāwahī wrote,

Thus, love for your mother, the land, the place where you were born, that is what will make the days and years of your life long. Therefore, Hawaiian People, let us increase the love for our birth land, the Islands of Hawai‘i; then, you and your descendants will live long upon the land of Hawai‘i which God has given to you.<sup>36</sup>

In her own reading of Nāwahī’s vast body of written work in which he addresses the question of aloha ‘āina, Silva concludes that while for Kānaka Maoli the phrase certainly alluded to the abstract love they felt for their homeland, in a more fundamental way it implied “that people must strive to control their own government in order to provide life to the people and to care for their land properly.”<sup>37</sup> It should come as no surprise, then, that contemporary sovereignty struggles in Hawai‘i have run parallel with Kanaka Maoli claims to their stolen land. Although there are many recent historic examples in which Kānaka Maoli have mounted vigorous forms of protest and resistance with land at the center, in the following section I focus on two “seed” events—the occupation of Kalama Valley and the occupation of Kaho‘olawe—out of which emerged the Native Hawaiian sovereignty movement.

### *Kalama Valley*

In his poem “A Poem for Kalama Valley,” ‘Īmaikalani Kalāhele writes:

In the beginning  
there was a word.  
And the word was good.  
And that word was

“Huli.”

And that, my brothers,  
was the beginning.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Cited in Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 141. The original article appeared in the June 8, 1895 edition of *Ke Aloha Aina*, a weekly newspaper established by Nāwahī and his wife Emma ‘A‘ima Nāwahī in that same year. The original text appeared in the Hawaiian language. Here I use the English translation given by Silva.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>38</sup> ‘Īmaikalani Kalāhele, “A Poem for Kalama Valley,” *‘Ōiwi* 1, no. 1 (1998): 35.

Translated, the word “huli” means “to turn, reverse; to curl over, as a breaker.”<sup>39</sup> The land evictions that occurred at Kalama Valley in 1970 constituted a revolutionary wave of change that was to birth the modern Hawaiian sovereignty movement.

For many residents of Hawai‘i, Kalama Valley was virtually unknown until the circumstances of history propelled it into public view. Nestled in the windswept drylands of Hawai‘i Kai on the southeast side of O‘ahu, the valley was home to over one hundred families—Kānaka Maoli and local non-Kānaka Maoli—many of whom had lived in the area for generations, leasing the land from the largest private property owner in Hawai‘i, Bishop Estate.<sup>40</sup> A people of humble means, the Kalama Valley residents earned their living principally as pig farmers, auto repair mechanics, and spare parts dealers. They lived a simple life on the land, eschewing, as Trask states, “the suburbanite’s desire for neat lawns, fancy houses, expensive cars, big fences, and unseen neighbors.”<sup>41</sup> As was stated by four Kalama residents in an open letter to the *Hawaii Free People’s Press*: “We live ‘Hawaiian style’ in the fresh air and under the trees. Maybe the houses are old but we like it.”<sup>42</sup> Kalama Valley was the “last undeveloped valley between the rapidly growing city of Honolulu and the rural, windward side of O‘ahu.”<sup>43</sup> However, as the ever-expanding, ever-encroaching development industry cut a swathe through places like Waikīkī, Ala Moana, and Chinatown, anonymous outlying areas like Kalama could not avoid being caught up in the manic march of “progress.”

On October 31, 1968, the City and County of Honolulu re-zoned Kalama Valley and the nearby parcel known as Queen’s Beach from agricultural to urban land. The community living there had no knowledge of the hearings that preceded the ratification and therefore had no opportunity to register their protest. With the re-zoning, Bishop Estate shifted its lease agreement from its long-time Kalama lessees to Kaiser Hawai‘i-Kai Development Corporation—one of the most powerful construction companies in

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<sup>39</sup> That is, a breaking wave. See Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel E. Elbert, *Hawaiian Dictionary*, Revised and Enlarged Edition (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), 88.

<sup>40</sup> Haunani Kay Trask, “The Birth of the Modern Hawaiian Movement: Kalama Valley, Oahu,” *The Hawaiian Journal of History* 21 (1987): 151. Created out of the will of Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop in 1894, the multi-million dollar charitable trust Bishop Estate diverts the majority of its funds—millions of dollars gained primarily through land deals—toward the education of Kanaka Maoli children, primarily at the elite private educational institution of The Kamehameha Schools.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>42</sup> Robert K. Liu et al., “Open Letter for Kokua,” *Hawaii Free People’s Press*, 1970, August edition. “Kokua” in the Hawaiian language translates as “help.”

<sup>43</sup> Trask, “The Birth of the Modern Hawaiian Movement” 129.

Hawai‘i—for the development of high- and low-rise apartment buildings, hotels, restaurants, and a golf course.<sup>44</sup> The goal of the project was to gentrify Kalama Valley for the affluent of Hawai‘i, an impulse that necessarily required the stamping out of a way of life that was antithetical to the Western goal of progress. In a display of racist arrogance, Ed Michael, an official of Bishop Estate, declared, “In today’s modern world the Hawaiian life-style should be illegal.”<sup>45</sup> In December 1968, Kalama Valley residents received eviction notices and were ordered to vacate their homes by the deadline of June 1970.

In the intervening months, scores of families packed up their belongings and relocated elsewhere, some finding shelter with relatives, others moving into rental accommodation that was exorbitantly expensive. Many more, as Wayne Hayashi revealed in an exposé on the evictions, had to make do with living “in station wagons and cars piled high with personal belongings and humanity.”<sup>46</sup> For many Kalama residents, the big-business plans of a powerful corporate elite (i.e., Kaiser and Bishop Estate) literally forced them into a state of homelessness—and joblessness. Pig farmers—with no land on which to feed and raise their animals—were forced to liquidate their operations. This woeful detail was noted with acerbic insight by residents: “Big shots eat kalua pig but it looks like they got no aloha for people who raise the pigs.”<sup>47</sup>

The evictions at Kalama coincided with the emergence of a succession of multiethnic social justice movements in Hawai‘i that included antiwar and environmental activism and several groups, such as Students for a Democratic Society, The Resistance, and Youth Action, all of which rallied to support the valley residents under the collective title Kōkua Kalama (“Help Kalama,” which later evolved into Kōkua Hawai‘i as the struggle expanded). Activist John Witeck recalls: “With Kalama Valley, talk of Hawaiian sovereignty and independence was first put into action with the idea that people should refuse to move, should occupy land, and develop new alternatives for the use of that land.”<sup>48</sup> With the support of Kōkua Kalama—which

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>46</sup> Wayne Hayashi cited in Pamela S. Kido, “Becoming Local: Social Movement and Literary Production in Late-Twentieth Century Hawai‘i” (PhD, History of Consciousness, University of Santa Cruz, 2008), 34.

<sup>47</sup> Liu et al., “Open Letter for Kokua,” 2. Kālua pig is pork that has been cooked in an imu (underground oven).

<sup>48</sup> Mast and Mast, *Autobiography of Protest in Hawai‘i*, 345.

organized protests within and outside of the valley—the remaining residents who refused to leave mounted their opposition.

In July 1970, Bishop Estate began bulldozing the dwellings at Kalama Valley. Many of the occupants were not present at the time because, as Witeck notes, they were out looking for alternative places to live.<sup>49</sup> Witeck and a handful of other activists climbed on top of one house in the hope of temporarily halting the destruction. He relates:

The Bishop Estate spokesman ordered the bulldozer operator to knock the house down on us. I was with a woman who was six months pregnant. The Hawaiian bulldozer operator—a huge guy named Tiny—roared the bulldozer within a foot of the house, stopped it, got out, threw the keys in the grass, and said, “I ain’t gonna do it!”<sup>50</sup>

Witeck’s recollection of the above incident underscores how Kānaka Maoli themselves became unwittingly entangled in the scheme of unscrupulous capitalists. During the course of the occupation, many more Kānaka Maoli—such as police officers and State representatives—were pitted against their own.<sup>51</sup> Lori Hayashi, one of the many non-Kanaka Maoli activists who rallied to support the Kalama residents, remarked, “I felt so sick! Those damn Estate bastards, sending out Hawaiians to do their dirty work.”<sup>52</sup> Despite successfully occupying the valley for over a year, in May 11, 1971, with the aid of three hundred armed police personnel, the last remaining residents of Kalama Valley finally left the area.<sup>53</sup>

While Kalama Valley was a rallying point around which Hawai‘i residents from various ethnic and social backgrounds protested the injustices leveled against both “local” people and Kānaka Maoli, the struggle gradually shifted from local land eviction issues to the more specific land claims Kānaka Maoli were making as the distinct and sovereign people of Hawai‘i. This necessarily included identifying more clearly the link between U.S. colonialism and the social, economic, and cultural hardships confronting Hawaiians. In a discussion among members of the Kōkua Kalama Committee, which was subsequently published in the *Hawaii Free People’s Press*, Kehau Lee observed:

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 345–346.

<sup>51</sup> Such was the case during the famous occupation by Māori of Bastion Point in 1978. Many of the police officers that were dispatched to remove the occupiers were themselves Māori.

<sup>52</sup> Cited in Trask, “The Birth of the Modern Hawaiian Movement,” 135.

<sup>53</sup> 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): 155.

Everything we've talked about leads to one simple conclusion: Colonization and its consequences. Hawai'i is a colony of the imperialist United States. Loss of cultural identity, bi-culturalism, half-ass conformity, imposed standards, and the kind of despair we see are natural results of colonialism and imperialism.<sup>54</sup>

Kalama Valley, although by no means the only struggle of its kind, constituted the tip of the spear in terms of Hawaiians asserting their claim as the sovereign people of Hawai'i and it provided the foundation for a new phase of Native resistance that was to grow into a dynamic political, cultural, and social movement.

### *Kaho'olawe*

Although the struggle over Kalama Valley ultimately resulted in the eviction of its residents, as Kyle Kajihiro points out, it nevertheless “sowed the seeds of leadership, inspiration, strategy, and momentum for other struggles to take root and grow.”<sup>55</sup> Significantly, the most important struggle was the one being carried out by Kānaka Maoli in their efforts to revive their culture and regain control over their lands and lives after decades of colonial oppression. The Island of Kaho'olawe was without doubt one of the most crucial catalysts in terms of stimulating political consciousness and motivating Kānaka Maoli to take action against U.S. colonial abuses, particularly as they related to the theft, destruction, and occupation of Native lands.

Comprising 45 square miles of rugged terrain, Kaho'olawe—also known to Kānaka Maoli as Kohe Malamalama o Kanaloa (Sacred Refuge of Kanaloa)<sup>56</sup>—is the smallest island in the Hawaiian Islands chain. The red windblown complexion of its landscape may at first sight appear uninhabitable, but beginning about 1000 A.D. the island supported small but sustained communities of Polynesian inhabitants who subsisted on the abundant marine and birdlife in the area. The archaeological record—which consists of numerous inland and coastal shrines, petroglyphs, temples, and other sites of cultural and religious significance—shows that during the pre-contact period, the island was used in various capacities as a fishing settlement, a navigational center for the training of wayfinders, and as a landmark for charting voyages from Hawai'i to Tahiti. The survival of oral traditions in the form of chants that link Kaho'olawe to the deities of

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<sup>54</sup> Cited in Trask, “The Birth of the Modern Hawaiian Movement,” 141.

<sup>55</sup> Kyle Kajihiro, “The Militarizing of Hawai'i,” 179.

<sup>56</sup> Kanaloa is one of four major gods in the Hawaiian pantheon who presides over the oceans. Kaho'olawe is viewed by Kānaka Maoli as being a kinolau (physical manifestation) of Kanaloa.



Kanaloa and Pele also provide important insight into the significance of the island as both a wahi pana (legendary place) and pu‘uhonua (place of refuge).<sup>57</sup>

In the wake of Western contact between 1826 and 1853 the island was used as a penal colony, and between 1858 and 1910 it supported sheep and cattle ranching.<sup>58</sup> The destructive effects of the latter resulted in mass deforestation and erosion. However, the most prolonged and injurious impact on Kaho‘olawe was rendered over a period of five decades during which the island was used as a U.S. military target complex. From 1941, when it was appropriated by the military, to 1990, Kaho‘olawe was used as a practice range for ship-to-shore and air-to-ground missiles, bombs, and torpedoes.<sup>59</sup> Over the fifty-year period that Kaho‘olawe was being laid to waste, residents of the neighboring islands of Maui, Lana‘i, Moloka‘i, and Hawai‘i routinely observed the explosive flashes of light that emanated from the detonated ordnances. Those flashing discharges not only denoted the desecration of Native land but also connoted the corruption of the island’s very name. Another interpretation of Kohe Malama o Kanaloa is the Shining or Illuminated Womb of Kanaloa.<sup>60</sup> Here, where the word “malama” alludes to the magnificence of the sacred life-giving locus of the womb, but when considered in the context of the flashes of light from the military exercises, the symbolic meaning shifts to that of disfigurement and annihilation.

On January 3, 1976, Hawaiian political consciousness coalesced when a group of protestors made an illegal landing on Kaho‘olawe. Their aims were two-pronged: to draw national attention to Native demands for justice concerning the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and to shed light on the serious issues confronting Kānaka Maoli, most specifically in relation to the destruction of their ‘āina.<sup>61</sup> The occupation of Kaho‘olawe was principally inspired by the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee by the Oglala Lakota peoples and the American Indian Movement. Recalls Davianna McGregor: “Hawaiians needed our own Wounded Knee to get national attention.”<sup>62</sup> The nine protestors included George Helm, Walter Ritte Jr., and Dr. Noa Emmitt Aluli—who were members of the Moloka‘i-based Hui Alaloa [Group of the Long

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<sup>57</sup> Noa Emmett Aluli and Davianna Pōmaika‘i McGregor, “Mai Ke Kai Mai Ola, From the Ocean Comes Life: Hawaiian Customs, Uses, and Practices on Kaho‘olawe Relating to the Surrounding Ocean,” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 26 (1992): 238–243.

<sup>58</sup> Peter MacDonald, “Fixed in Time: A Brief History of Kahoolawe,” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 6 (1972): 73.

<sup>59</sup> Kaho‘olawe’s use as a target range earned it the debased title of “Target Island.”

<sup>60</sup> Aluli and McGregor, “Mai Ke Kai Mai Ola, From the Ocean Comes Life,” 240.

<sup>61</sup> Since its appropriation by the U.S. Navy in 1941, Kaho‘olawe had been off limits to civilians. This was particularly problematic for fishermen who had previously fished its bountiful waters.

<sup>62</sup> Rodney Morales, ed., *Ho‘iho‘i Hou: A Tribute to George Helm and Kimo Mitchell* (Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge Press, 1984), 72.

Trail]—Ellen Miles, Karla Villalba, Kimo Aluli, Ian Lind, Kawaipuna Prejean, and Stephen Morse.<sup>63</sup> The U.S. Coast Guard arrested all but two of the protestors; Ritte and Aluli managed to evade authorities and spent two days exploring the island before turning themselves in.

The experience of being on the island profoundly affected the group, in particular Ritte, Aluli, and Helm, who were to become the core members of the Protect Kaho‘olawe Association (later to be renamed Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana [PKO] [‘ohana meaning family]).<sup>64</sup> Over a period of eighteen months, PKO members and their supporters occupied Kaho‘olawe several more times—the goal being to make five symbolic landings on the island to represent the five fingers of *limahana* [the working hand]—to stop the military destruction and to raise public awareness about the struggle of Kānaka Maoli. Kaho‘olawe may have been geographically small in size but it was monumental in terms of the meaning it carried for Kānaka Maoli as a symbol of the “many wrongs afflicting Hawaiians as well as the catalyst for solving them.”<sup>65</sup> The military activity on the island was also being linked to the wider problem of American imperialism. In January 1977, during his fourth occupation of Kaho‘olawe, George Helm wrote in his diary:

The occupation of the military reservation is not so much a defiance as it is a responsibility to express our legitimate concern for the land of the Hawaiian . . . We are against warfare but more so against imperialism. Imperialism suffocates the growth of individual ethnicity.<sup>66</sup>

The will to express concern for the land was expressed as “*aloha ‘āina*,” the phrase used by Hawaiians during the overthrow of Kingdom in 1893. It was revived during the fight for Kaho‘olawe and became a political lynchpin. Speaking about Kaho‘olawe, Helm noted that it served as a critical lesson to “teach the rest of the world *aloha ‘aina* and save us from becoming evolutionary dropouts.”<sup>67</sup>

On January 30, 1977, Walter Ritte Jr. and Richard Sawyer made another illegal landing on Kaho‘olawe in order to take up permanent occupation there. The occupation was joined by a series of legislative and legal actions by PKO. On February 11, 1977, Helm addressed the Hawai‘i State Legislature, requesting that the members support a

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<sup>63</sup> Hui Alaloa was a grassroots group formed in the mid-1970s by Moloka‘i Island natives Helm, Ritte, and Aluli in opposition to the unchecked development projects that were being carried out on the island. Hui Alaloa sought to reinstate access to roads, trails, and beaches that had been cut off by development activities.

<sup>64</sup> Henceforth, I use Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana.

<sup>65</sup> Morales, *Ho ‘iho ‘i Hou*, 19.

<sup>66</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>67</sup> Cited in Morales, *Ho ‘iho ‘i Hou*, 28; emphasis in original.

resolution that would end the bombing of the island. The resolution was passed but it required more weight behind it to become a reality. Three days later, Helm and PKO member Francis Kauhane flew to Washington, D.C., to petition President Jimmy Carter for his support. Twelve days before leaving, they issued a telegram to the president outlining the issues they wanted to raise with him:

Dear Mr. President,

United States Navy has suspended bombing of target island of Kaho‘olawe here in Hawaii because of our invasion. Two Native Hawaiians Walter Ritte and Richard Sawyer remain on this island sacred to us Hawaiians and will continue to occupy it until bombing of our heiaus (shrines) and destruction of our culture is permanently stopped.

As President you have authority to rescind executive order 10436 allowing bombing. As Native Hawaiians we invaded Kaho‘olawe to protest this desecration.<sup>68</sup>

The two men were not granted a meeting with the president—who was at the time on vacation—nor could they find anyone on Capitol Hill who even knew about the political issues surrounding Kaho‘olawe and Kanaka Maoli efforts to protect it. Rodney Morales writes, “Hawaiians did not exist in the nation’s capital, Helm and Kauhane discovered.”<sup>69</sup> Less than one month after returning to Hawai‘i, tragedy hit. Helm and fellow PKO member Kimo Mitchell disappeared while trying to cross the channel between Kaho‘olawe and the island of Maui. While many believe they were overwhelmed by heavy surf conditions, others suspect that they were assassinated because they posed a threat to the military and the larger colonial establishment. Whatever happened during that fateful crossing, the loss of Hawai‘i’s Native sons did not halt the breaking wave of political change.

In September 1977, PKO filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court civil suit 76-0380 *Aluli et al v. Brown*) against the navy on the basis of alleged environmental and cultural preservation law violations. Under District Judge Richard Wong, the navy was found to be in violation of the National Environment Policy Act of 1969 and Executive Order 11593, the latter of which entailed the protection of cultural sites on the island. The ruling was bittersweet, however. Although the judge ordered the navy to file an environmental impact statement and cooperate with the Hawai‘i Office of Historic Preservation regarding the identification, inventory, and protection of historic Hawaiian sites, bombing on the island was permitted to continue.

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<sup>68</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 25–26.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the PKO continued to agitate for cessation of military activities on Kaho‘olawe. In 1981, through consent decree and in recognition of the significant number and range of archaeological findings made on the island, Kaho‘olawe was placed on the National Register for Historic Places and declared an Archaeological District. Cultural access to the island was also granted to Kānaka Maoli for a limited number of times a year. On October 22, 1990, President George H.W. Bush issued a Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense:

You are directed to discontinue use of Kaho‘olawe as a weapons range effective immediately. This directive extends to use of the island for small arms, artillery, naval gunfire support, and aerial ordnance training. In addition, you are directed to establish a joint Department of Defense-State of Hawaii commission to examine the future status of Kaho‘olawe and related issues.<sup>70</sup>

With the assault on Kaho‘olawe successfully halted, in 1994 the navy conveyed deed of ownership of the island to the State of Hawai‘i, and along with it an appropriations of \$400 million dollars for the removal of military waste, including millions of pounds of metal, hundreds of vehicles, thousands of tires, and countless tons of unexploded ordnances.<sup>71</sup> Today Kaho‘olawe is in the process of being rehabilitated and restored. Its scarred landscape, pockmarked by years of abuse by the military, is beginning to heal, despite the fact that unexploded bombs and shells remain embedded in large tracts of the island remain. Native flora planted by volunteers to re-vegetate the island are in the process of taking root in the dusty soil, and several times a year groups of Kānaka Maoli make the pilgrimage to the island to ho‘okupu (confer gifts), engage in cultural practices, and reconnect with the land. Historian Tom Coffman notes that the significance of Kaho‘olawe lay in the way it “altered the nature of the Hawaiian movement,” transforming it into “a spiritual and nationalistic movement.”<sup>72</sup> Kaho‘olawe, used in ancestral times as a place to train navigators and to launch vessels bound for Tahiti, during the contemporary period of Hawaiian history functions in a similar way—this time to help a people, a *nation*, navigate its way back to itself.

Kalama Valley and Kaho‘olawe were landmark struggles during the formation of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, but they were part of a much larger constellation of Native self-determination efforts that were taking place in Hawai‘i during the 1970s

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<sup>70</sup> Cited in Joel E. August, *Comprehensive Legal Research Memorandum* (Honolulu: Kaho‘olawe Island Conveyance Commission, October 12, 1992), 4.

<sup>71</sup> The military halted the cleanup process in 2004, leaving 30% of the task incomplete. Today, hundreds of unexploded ordnances remain embedded in the soil.

<sup>72</sup> Tom Coffman, *The Island Edge of America* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003), 304.

and 1980s. The efflorescence of collective cultural pride in the 1970s through the revitalization of the Hawaiian language, the resurgence and celebration of traditional and contemporary forms of music, poetry, art, dance, and the milestone sailing of the Hawaiian vessel *Hōkūle‘a* converged with Native resistance enterprises that took the form of demonstrations, occupations, and lawsuits. Such enactments of sovereignty were mirrored in other parts of the world where indigenous groups were asserting their status as *tāngata whenua* (rightful people of the land), including but not limited to the Māori of Aotearoa, the Aboriginals of Australia, and the Native American and First Nations tribes of the United States and Canada, respectively. These global struggles included such critical events as the occupation of Alcatraz by Native Americans in 1969, the establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the grounds of Old Parliament House in Canberra in 1972, and the occupation of Bastion Point by Māori in 1978. All of these efforts emanated from the belief by indigenous communities that their sovereignty, despite being strained under the weight of colonialism, was never relinquished or extinguished, but remained—and *still* remains—alive in the people.

### **Native-based Approaches to Sovereignty**

In her introduction to *Sovereign Subjects: Indigenous Sovereignty Matters*, Australian Aboriginal (Geonpul) scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson makes a sharp distinction between indigenous-based sovereignty and Western approaches:

Our sovereignty is embodied, it is ontological (our being) and epistemological (our way of knowing), and it is grounded within complex relations derived from the intersubstantiation of ancestral beings, humans and land. In this sense, sovereignty is carried by the body and differs from Western constructions of sovereignty, which are predicated on the social contract model, the idea of a unified supreme authority, territorial integrity and individual rights.<sup>73</sup>

In previous passages I considered Western-based notions of sovereignty and the eventual adoption of it by Kānaka Maoli as a way to survive and, indeed, compete in a rapidly changing world. Between the 1970s and 1980s, Kānaka Maoli deployed Western political paradigms as part of an ongoing effort to restore sovereignty to the *lāhui*. However, the term “sovereignty” as understood in a Western sense is, as Moreton-Robinson suggests above, qualitatively different from indigenous notions. Indeed, Moreton-Robinson argues that sovereignty based on a Western paradigm falls

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<sup>73</sup> Aileen Moreton-Robinson, ed., *Sovereign Subjects: Indigenous Sovereignty Matters* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2007), 2.

short of providing the grounds necessary for Native peoples to obtain full control over their lives, lands, and futures because it “operates to ensure its continued investments in itself.”<sup>74</sup> She expands on the Australian Aboriginal situation as it pertains to sovereignty rights vis-à-vis an Australian state-based sovereignty framework:

What Indigenous people have been given, by way of white benevolence, is a white-constructed form of “Indigenous” proprietary rights that are not epistemologically and ontologically grounded in Indigenous conceptions of sovereignty. Indigenous land ownership, under these legislative regimes, amounts to little more than a mode of land tenure that enables a circumscribed form of autonomy and governance with minimum control and ownership of resources.<sup>75</sup>

From this perspective, the restrictive nature of a Western-based sovereignty model is viewed, and rightly so, as an impediment to Aborigines exercising the fullness of their sovereign rights under conditions where autonomy and governance is limited by the State. Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor bluntly observes that the presence of such limitations “is not sovereignty.”<sup>76</sup> This begs the question, then: What does indigenous-based sovereignty look like and how does it differ to Western formulations?

In *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence* (1998), Vizenor equates Native sovereignty with “transmotion,” a term he defines as the “sense of native motion and an active presence” that is infused with a Native worldview.<sup>77</sup> Of sovereignty, Vizenor states,

Sovereignty is in the visions of transformation: the humor of motion as survivance over dominance; the communal movement to traditional food sources; dreams and memories as sources of shared consciousness; the stories of reincarnation, out of body travel; the myths and metaphors of flying; communal nicknames and memories of migration; the spiritual and herbal powers to heal and locate lost souls. These are evidence of natural reason and the personal power of creation; the native names and remembrance of motion and sovereignty.<sup>78</sup>

Here, Native sovereignty eschews modernist reasoning and is grounded instead in what Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred calls the “partnership principle,”<sup>79</sup> which is characterized by intragroup collaboration and connection, spirituality, and stewardship of the land. The partnership principle entails as well the unity among all things, human

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 186.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 184–185.

<sup>79</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, “Sovereignty,” in *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*, ed. Joanne Barker (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 45.

and non-human, of persons and things, subjects and objects. The kind of Native sovereignty that Moreton-Robinson, Vizenor, and Alfred allude to is embodied, in motion, and rooted in a timeless belonging to place that is articulated through stories of cosmic origin. It is grounded in human relations and in human connection to the land, the wider environment, the ancestors, and the ancestral deities. Significantly, it is this understanding of sovereignty that was at work in the Kālama Valley and Kaho‘olawe Island land occupations.

In Māori cultural terms, the concept of tino rangatiratanga, while frequently viewed as being synonymous with sovereignty, is first and foremost rooted in a Māori-centered view of the world. Tino rangatiratanga is made up of two words: the particle “tino” functions as an intensifier and translates variously as very, absolute, full, total, while “rangatiratanga,” in reference to chieftainship, means sovereignty, right to exercise authority, and control. When combined, tino rangatiratanga approximates to absolute sovereignty over all aspects of life. Significantly, tino rangatiratanga (or in its abbreviated form rangatiratanga) entails not only the rights but moreover the *responsibilities* of the leader (rangatira) to uphold the mana (power/prestige) of his or her people and of the people as a collective to concomitantly uphold the mana of their lands and resources.<sup>80</sup> In the contemporary period, tino rangatiratanga is based on three fundamental precepts that are at once distinct but imbricated. Mason Durie describes them:

Mana whenua—the security of relationships with land and other physical resources and the authority of tribes to exercise control over their own resources; mana tangata—individual well-being, citizenship rights, and freedom from financial dependence on governments; mana ariki—the authority of ariki (chiefs) to lead and guide their own and other peoples.<sup>81</sup>

Because of the distinct differences between Western assertions of sovereignty and indigenous-based perspectives of it, misunderstandings and tensions have naturally arisen. A case in point comes from the historical signing of the Treaty of Waitangi between representatives of the British Crown and Māori tribal leaders on February 6, 1840.

The twin dragons of misunderstanding and mistranslation have featured as a leitmotif in Māori-Pākehā relations. We have a long history of talking past each other

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<sup>80</sup> For an insightful cross-cultural perspective of mana as it is used across the Pacific region, see *New Mana: Transformations of the Class Concept in Pacific Languages and Cultures*, edited by Matt Tomlinson and Ty Kāwika Tengan (forthcoming).

<sup>81</sup> Durie, *Te Mana, Te Kāwanatanga*, 229.

in the rather messy and unpredictable process of intercultural exchange. Where there has been common ground, it has been shaky and tenuous, and where there has been written agreement—as with the Treaty of Waitangi—the intentions of both sides have been lost in translation, quite literally. Two days before the Treaty of Waitangi was to be officially signed, Henry Williams—a missionary with the Protestant-sponsored Church Missionary Society (CMS)—and his 21-year old son were commissioned by British consul William Hobson to translate the English version of the treaty into Māori. Their unfamiliarity with the nuances of the language and a tendency on their part to draw on missionary concepts of sovereignty led to what Ranginui Walker argues was the “inappropriate translations of key words,”<sup>82</sup> specifically rangatiratanga (sovereignty) and kāwanatanga (governership). Consider the English version of the first article of the Treaty of Waitangi:

absolutely and without reservation all the rights and powers of *Sovereignty* which the said Confederation or Individual chiefs respectively exercise or possess, or may be supposed to exercise or possess over their respective Territories as the sole Sovereigns thereof.<sup>83</sup>

And now the Māori version of the first article:

ake tonu atu te *Kawanatanga* katoa o o ratou wenua.<sup>84</sup>

One of the major differences between the two versions is that while the English text explicates the transfer of Māori sovereignty to the Crown, in the Māori text it was merely governance (kāwanatanga) that was being ceded, thus leaving the chiefs' rangatiratanga status unchanged. As Walker offers, the term “kāwanatanga” would have been “understood as a benign term” and would certainly not have been confused with rangatiratanga.<sup>85</sup> For Māori, the treaty entailed a *sharing* of power with the Crown rather than a *ceding* of their ultimate authority over their lands, the latter of which would render them mere subjects of the British Empire.

Using a Māori philosophical framework to analyze how tribal leaders would have approached the idea of signing away of their rangatiratanga, Hugh Kawharu makes the following statement:

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<sup>82</sup> Ranginui Walker, “The Genesis of Maori Activism,” *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 93, no. 3 (1984): 268.

<sup>83</sup> Claudia Orange, *The Story of the Treaty* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books Limited, 1996), 31.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>85</sup> Ranginui Walker, “The Treaty of Waitangi as the Focus of Māori Protest,” in *Waitangi: Maori and Pakeha Perspectives of the Treaty of Waitangi*, ed. I H Kawharu (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1989), 264.



It is totally against the run of evidence to imagine that they would have wittingly divested themselves of all their spiritually sanctioned powers—most of which powers, indeed, they wanted protected. They would have believed that they were retaining their rangatiratanga intact.<sup>86</sup>

As Kawharu illuminates in the above statement, rangatiratanga constituted an inalienable and spiritually sanctioned state of being. For Māori, their sovereignty could no more be ceded to the British Crown than their genealogical connections to their ancestors could be severed. That Māori assumed they retained rangatiratanga over their lands was underscored by Kaitaia chief Nopera Panakareao's proclamation after he signed the treaty in Kaitaia: "Ko te atakau o te whenua i riro i a te Kuini, ko te tinana o te whenua waiho ki a tātou" (The shadow of the land has passed to the Queen, the substance has remained with us.)<sup>87</sup>

Similarly, in Hawai'i, a consideration of a Kānaka Maoli-based understanding of sovereignty is in order. Nalani Minton notes:

The word sovereignty is a term which is foreign to our own language and definition of ourselves. Many Kanaka Maoli think in terms of an "inherent sovereignty," which arises through thousands of years of existence. The dictionary definition that comes closest to that derives from Latin and Old French, but does not include the variable of time: "the quality or state of having independent power, status, authority." This European derivation, if nothing else, makes the word culturally nonequivalent in translation.<sup>88</sup>

In similar vein, Kilipaka Ontai argues that Kānaka Maoli have placed too much reliance on foreign sovereignty models and calls for the formulation of a Native-based sovereignty that is defined "by the epochal journey of its native people over a millennium of spiritual, historical, and cultural landmarks."<sup>89</sup> Ontai offers the Kanaka Maoli word "ea" as an alternative to the Western concept of sovereignty.

When celebrated Hawaiian scholar Mary Kawena Pukui compiled the first Hawaiian dictionary, she included two distinct translations of ea that reflected both Western and Native worldviews. In the first instance she defined it as "sovereignty, rule, independence." This Western-inflected interpretation can be found in the statement

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<sup>86</sup> Cited in Paul McHugh, *The Māori Magna Carta: New Zealand Law and the Treaty of Waitangi* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1991), 4.

<sup>87</sup> Cited in Walker, "The Genesis of Maori Activism," 269.

<sup>88</sup> Nalani Minton cited in Mast and Mast, *Autobiography of Protest in Hawai'i*, 357.

<sup>89</sup> Kilipaka Kawaihonu Nahili Pae Ontai, "A Spiritual Definition of Sovereignty from a Kanaka Maoli Perspective," in *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 154.

made by Kauhikaouli when Hawai‘i’s sovereignty was restored after the king was forced to temporarily cede it to British warship commander Lord George Paulet in 1843: “Ua mau ka ea o ka ‘āina i ka pono” (“The sovereignty of the land has been continued because it is just”).<sup>90</sup> In the second definition of ea, Pukui drew on the more traditional translation: “life, air, breath, or respiration.” In this way, the king’s statement could be reinterpreted as reading, “The *life* of the land has been continued because it is just.” In its use as intransitive verb, ea can also mean “to rise, to go up, raise, become erect.” Ea, particularly as it relates to its indigenous-rooted meanings, connotes strength, potency, and potential. To return to Gerald Vizenor’s definition of sovereignty, it is a word that is in motion and that sets things in motion.

In his discussion of ea as an alternative for theorizing contemporary articulations of sovereignty from a Native perspective, Ontai notes that Kauhikaouli’s deployment of the word in his historical statement—although routinely equated with the Western definition of sovereignty—is nevertheless grounded in Kanaka Maoli concepts of kuleana (responsibility/obligation) to the land and other resources rather than dominion over it, as is implied in the Western sovereignty paradigm. Ontai offers:

Ancestral rulers governed with the mandate of family gods to malama the ‘aina for the good of all. The land and sea were protected and preserved, yet the system was skillfully organized to provide sustenance for all, with everyone contributing to maintain this order. The spirits of primeval forests, the purity of mountain waters, the life-giving powers of the ocean, the healing powers of native flora, and the ancestral voices of native fauna were all part of native sovereignty.<sup>91</sup>

Here, from a Kanaka Maoli perspective, sovereignty is situated in a unique knowledge base that promotes pono—that is, balance—through constantly affirming the connection between people, the gods, the land, the ocean, and the wider environment of plants and animals. Further, at the heart of the ea principle is the obligation of human stewards to protect these relationships. The significance of ea in this context was a topic of much discussion during the proceedings that framed the Peoples’ International Tribunal in 1993 (mentioned previously), as was cited in the section titled “A Concept of Self-Determination” in the interim report published on the event:

At a fundamental level, ea is life, any life. The sanctity of life places upon the people an obligation to protect and maintain the state of pono

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<sup>90</sup> Here, I draw partly from the translation provided by Silva in *Aloha Betrayed*, 37. As occurred in 1840 with the drafting of the Treaty of Waitangi, there have been mistranslations of the mō‘ī’s original declaration. Appropriated as the Hawai‘i State motto, “Ua mau ka ea o ka ‘āina i ka pono” has been assigned a more Christian translation, which reads: “The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness.” For more on the Paulet Affair, see Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 36–37.

<sup>91</sup> Ontai, “A Spiritual Definition of Sovereignty from a Kanaka Maoli Perspective,” 165.

within which it exists. *This obligation is a supreme, sovereign duty.* When exercised through the politicoreligious [*sic*] sanctions of the people it denoted a constitutional authority and state of independence. When exercised within the total collective relationship, it denoted the mana or divine power to move heaven and earth: the ultimate constitutional authority.<sup>92</sup>

In a presentation he gave at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa’s William S. Richardson School of Law in 2012, respected Māori law and philosophy scholar Moana Jackson noted that every Native people has a concept of power, a way in which it chooses how to exercise authority, but that such concepts have been forgotten through the process of colonization. The first step toward reclaiming authority, Jackson advised, is to reclaim the memory of how authority and self-governance was originally conceived and put into practice. He stated that such memories as they relate to a people’s ability to self-govern have “been left in the land for us.”<sup>93</sup> In other words, the path to empowerment and liberation is located in the philosophical principles that lie at the heart of all Native cultures, including that of Kānaka Maoli. Such a return to culturally grounded understandings of power and governance is advanced by Taiaiake Alfred in his publication *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (1999), which advocates the recovery of and return to Native-based political traditions: “In a very real sense, to remain Native . . . our politics must shift to give primacy to concepts grounded in our own cultures.”<sup>94</sup>

Kanaka Maoli indigenous politics scholar Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua argues that although Kānaka Maoli have made some inroads to addressing the colonial injustices of the last almost century and a half, nevertheless, “little concrete political gain has been secured in the last sixteen years. We still do not control our national lands, the Crown and Government lands of the Hawaiian Kingdom that comprise nearly half the total land area in our archipelago.”<sup>95</sup> She suggests that rather than Kānaka Maoli working within a Western-centric system to achieve self-sufficiency—a system in which she argues they are forced to “seek sanction within an already assimilative, disempowering

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<sup>92</sup> The Tribunal, “Ka Ho‘okolokolonui Kānaka Maoli.” August 12–21, 1993. *Interim Report: People’s International Tribunal*, 1993; emphasis added. Unpaginated.

<sup>93</sup> Jackson Moana, “‘Elele Pono” (William S. Richardson School of Law, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, June 6, 2012).

<sup>94</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (Ontario: Oxford University Press, 1999), xiv.

<sup>95</sup> Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, “Kuleana Lāhui: Collective Responsibility for Hawaiian Nationhood in Activists’ Praxis,” ed. Glen Coulthard et al., *Affinities: A Journal of Radical Theory, Culture, and Action* 5, no. 1 (2011): 131.

and unequal framework”<sup>96</sup>—there rather needs to be a shift toward practices of Native authority that “put the interdependence of land and people at the center.”<sup>97</sup> Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua offers the concepts of kuleana and lāhui (nation/people)—which she defines as “authority and obligation based in interdependence and community” and “peoplehood,” respectively—as Kanaka Maoli-grounded approaches to practicing collective autonomy and moving toward a post-colonial future.<sup>98</sup> Drawing on ancestral values, Ontai’s privileging of ea as a coherent form of indigenous-based sovereignty and Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua’s theorization of kuleana and lāhui as principles that enact and advance Native authority constitute empowering alternatives for restoring pono (balance/justice) to the people and the land. For Native communities—whether Kānaka Maoli, Māori, or others—stewardship of the land is central to their well-being. People and land are inextricably intertwined, bound by genealogical connections and co-reliant on each other for sustenance. For Kānaka Maoli in particular, the principle of aloha ‘āina (love for the land) has long been at the heart of their struggles to assert their right to care for the lands and resources in their homeland.

### **Art and Sovereignty**

In 1993, as the centennial observances of the overthrow progressed, seven Kanaka Maoli artists united to stage an exhibition in Bishop Museum’s Hawaiian Hall. The central idea was for each artist to reflect on the impact of the overthrow on Hawai‘i and its Native people.<sup>99</sup> In the flyer promoting “Ho‘opāna‘i: An Exhibition of Contemporary Art”—“ho‘opāna‘i” meaning “to seek revenge, reciprocity, reward” or alternatively “to fit one onto another, splice, graft, lengthen”—the show was framed by the following statement:

These contemporary works are about pain, hurt, mistrust, and the betrayal of a friendship between two peoples, Hawaiians and Americans. What we see here are expressions of a people rooted in 2,000 years of making gods to worship and using art to speak.

We gather here at this time to demonstrate our great pain, ‘eha‘eha, caused by the American invasion of the Hawaiian Nation, an act leading to the immoral overthrow of its sovereign, Her Majesty, Lili‘u Kamaka‘eha.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>99</sup> The seven artists included: ‘Īmaikalani Kalahēle, Bob Freitas, Kawaikaula‘au Aona-Ueoka, Sean K.L. Browne, Samuel Chung-Hoon, Charlie Dickson, Kawena Young.

<sup>100</sup> Council of Contemporary Hawaiian Artist and Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, *Ho‘opāna‘i: An Exhibition of Contemporary Art Presented on the Occasion of the Centennial of the*

“Ho‘opāna‘i” was the first show of its kind in Hawai‘i to feature ancestral and contemporary works alongside one another in an exhibition setting. This coalescing of the past and the present was powerful in that it showed that Kanaka Maoli art was still alive and thriving but of equal significance was the fact that within the context of the centenary, the exhibition showed how Kānaka Maoli were using art to speak back to colonial power and assert Native sovereignty. In reference to his own work, ‘Īmaikalani Kalāhele stated:

To defend and fight against racism, colonialism and imperialistic domination of my people’s mind, philosophy, economics, spirituality and homelands has been a driving force in my work.<sup>101</sup>

As I have shown in this and the previous chapters, Kānaka Maoli have been politically engaged with issues concerning their sovereignty for over 120 years. And, as evidenced in Kalāhele’s statement, contemporary art expressions are a critical part of the ongoing campaign to affirm and assert Native authority in the face of colonial oppression.

A central goal of mine is to consider sovereignty beyond its legal-political application and to explore how it finds expression through the visual arts. In “Visualizing Sovereignty in the Time of Biometric Sensors” (2011), Jolene Rickard offers the term “visual sovereignty” as a conceptual tool for analyzing the work of indigenous artists, who she contends are as “crucial to the sovereigntist’s agenda as legal reform is within the debate.”<sup>102</sup> Here, she underscores the many strategies indigenous peoples deploy in their affirmation and assertion of sovereignty. The struggle for sovereignty takes place on many fronts, certainly the political but also the intellectual, cultural and, as I argue, the artistic.

In Chapter One I showed how visual representations of Hawai‘i by outsiders have transformed a place of indigenous belonging into a site of colonial possession. Such images have not only drawn a curtain over the historical, cultural, and spiritual connections Kānaka Maoli have to their homeland as the rightful and sovereign claimants but they have also obfuscated the gnawing reality of colonialism. However, Kanaka Maoli art—which in the context of this thesis is read as an articulation of visual sovereignty—seeks to reclaim Hawai‘i as indigenous space by offering counterframes

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*Overthrow of the Hawaiian Nation*, exhibition flyer. Bishop Museum. Honolulu. January 8–February 28, 1993.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Jolene Rickard, “Visualizing Sovereignty in the Time of Biometric Sensors,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 110, no. 2 (2011): 478.

to the dominant colonial narrative. As Jolene Rickard contends, “Today, sovereignty is taking shape in visual thought as indigenous artists negotiate cultural space.”<sup>103</sup>

As cited earlier in this thesis, in the introduction to *Contesting Art: Art, Politics and Identity in the Modern World* (1997), Jeremy McClancy asserts that, “art is not a decorative border to the anticolonialist and antiracist struggles, but an integral, essential part of them.”<sup>104</sup> The link between the production of art and the struggle against power that McClancy talks about was underscored in a compelling way by contemporary Kanaka Maoli graduate student and artist Herman Pi‘ikea Clark in his 1996 Master of Fine Arts thesis exhibition *Ho‘okumu Hou [Re-creation]* at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM). In both the written component of his 1996 thesis—titled “Ho‘okumu Hou: The Reassertion of Native Hawaiian Culture in Visual Art”—and the accompanying exhibition, Clark leveled a scathing critique of the UHM Art Department, citing its lack of Kanaka Maoli representation within the faculty (of twenty-seven members only one was Kanaka Maoli) and the absence of a Hawaiian perspective in the curriculum. In a more substantive way, however, Clark was—in effect—drawing attention to the pervasiveness of U.S. colonialism in Hawai‘i and the systematic suppression of Kanaka Maoli ways of seeing. Importantly, the artist positioned his work within Kanaka Maoli sovereignty discourse, presenting his thesis exhibition as an “assertion of independence, sovereignty and self-determination, in the context of [c]ontemporary Hawaiian Art.”<sup>105</sup>

The exhibition was a dual-sited, multi-formatted endeavor, consisting of an installation and hula performance (accompanied by music) and a collaborative display of art produced by members of Ka Maka o Ka Ihe (Tip of the Spear). Located on the roof of the UHM Art Department Art Gallery to “symbolically position Hawaiian Art beyond the limitations of a ‘ceiling’ that acceptable western art practice would impose,”<sup>106</sup> the installation depicted the genesis of Kānaka Maoli in the Islands through the creation of the first man and woman—Kanehulihonua and Keakahulilani—by the gods Kū, Kāne, Kanaloa, and Lono. The installation included a twenty-foot-wide by twenty-foot-long outline of a petroglyphic figure on the ground, which was rendered with black and red volcanic cinder procured from Mōkapu Point, once the ancient burial grounds of iwi kūpuna (ancestral remains) but now the site of the Kāne‘ohe U.S.

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<sup>103</sup> Jolene Rickard, “Sovereignty: A Line in the Sand,” *Aperture* 139 (1995): 51.

<sup>104</sup> McClancy, *Contesting Art*, 10.

<sup>105</sup> Herman Pi‘ikea Clark, “Ho‘okumu Hou, The Reassertion of Native Hawaiian Culture in Visual Art” (Master of Fine Arts, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 1996), 22.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

Marine Corps Air Station (Fig 2.1). Four fourteen-foot anu‘u or oracle towers—each representing one of the four gods—were positioned at the terminal ends of the principal figure’s extremities. Handmade kapa (barkcloth) imprinted with stylized abstractions of the gods served as the mantle or “skin” that covered the individual structures. Bundles of tī leaf (*Cordyline fruticosa*)—used customarily by Kānaka Maoli to demarcate kapu or sacred space—enclosed the entire exhibit.

Clark also included a live hula performance in collaboration with hula instructor and tattoo artist Keone Nunes (Fig 2.2), underscoring the multi-generic and overlapping ways Kānaka Maoli express sovereignty through a range of art forms. The interfacing of the visual elements with those of the hula performance was purposefully conceived to “awaken and invite the spirits of [the] gods into the present,”<sup>107</sup> underscoring the artist’s assertion that rather than constituting a mere work of art, the installation was an instance of “contemporary Hawaiian ‘ritual’.”<sup>108</sup>

The ritualistic intent of the installation was complemented by the exhibit held at the UHM Art Department’s Commons Gallery. This collaborative show between Clark and twenty-four members of Ka Maka o Ka Ihe—a group of undergraduate and graduate art students, all of Kanaka Maoli ancestry—was designed to confront the “racial and cultural imbalance” in the art department.<sup>109</sup> At Clark’s request, the artists created close-up photographic portraits of themselves, each image showing the artist-subject staring expressionless into the camera, while from the top of the frame a pair of disembodied hands encircled and squeezed their heads. The inclusion of the hands was notable in that they signified “‘white’ domination in arts education.”<sup>110</sup> Two sections of text accompanied each artist’s photograph, one expressing their aspirations as a Kanaka Maoli artist and the other offering their critique of the UHM Art Department’s biased hiring and curriculum policies. These texts were fixed underneath the images with Band-Aids. A piece of woven sennit cord extended the length of the gallery, linking the photographs and texts together and signifying the inviolable connection of Kānaka Maoli to their land and each other. While one end of the cord terminated at an ahu (altar) outside, the other was attached to a tī plant stalk to denote “a hopeful future.”<sup>111</sup> In the final paragraph of Clark’s exhibition statement, the artist issued a spirited challenge:

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 24.

In this my graduate thesis exhibition, I, along with the members of Ka Maka O Ka Ihe, request that the University of Hawaii take steps to end its colonist practices by hiring Native Hawaiian teaching faculty and develop courses in Native Hawaiian Contemporary Art and Design. For the first time in the history of the University of Hawaii Art Department, Native Hawaiian artist[s] have gathered to speak out. *In this expression of Hawaiian sovereignty, we of Ka Maka O Ka Ihe challenge you who are in power to respond.*<sup>112</sup>

The last sentence in Clark's statement clearly underscored the sovereign impetus behind the exhibition, which was for all intents and purposes an historic moment in terms of contemporary Kanaka Maoli art activism at the University of Hawai'i.

Art constitutes one of many tools Kānaka Maoli deploy to challenge U.S. colonial occupation and affirm Native sovereignty. My brief discussion of Pi'ikea Clark's thesis exhibition—read here as an articulation of visual sovereignty—is but one example. In the next chapter I mount a more sustained examination of contemporary Kanaka Maoli visual sovereignty as it is manifested in the works of three artists.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 25–26.





Figure 2.1: *Ho'okumu Hou [Re-creation]* (1996) by Herman Pi'ikea Clark. Handmade kapa, red and black volcanic cinder, tī, wood, and printing ink. University of Hawai'i Art Department Art Gallery. (Photograph courtesy of the artist).



Figure 2.2: Hula performance during the opening of *Ho'okumu Hou*. (Photograph courtesy of the artist).

## Chapter Three

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### Visual Sovereignty Frames and Counterframes

Art is never created in a vacuum and it both reflects and comes face to face with contemporary social, economic, and political issues.

——Nancy Parezo<sup>1</sup>

In her essay “When Is a Photograph Worth a Thousand Words?” Native American photographer/videographer Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie writes, “It was a beautiful day when the scales fell from my eyes and I first encountered photographic sovereignty.”<sup>2</sup> For Tsinhnahjinnie, the sovereignty to which she refers relates to indigenous resistance and resilience in the face of American colonialism as expressed through Native American creative visual expression. Her allusion to “photographic sovereignty” is inspired by the broader term “visual sovereignty,” as pioneered by Jolene Rickard, wherein Native visual representations function as declarations of inherent sovereignty and are tied to political, intellectual, and cultural acts of resistance in the face of advancing colonialism.<sup>3</sup> Closely aligned with the visual sovereignty framework Rickard offers is Gerald Vizenor’s formulation of Native “survivance,” which he defines as “an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction, however pertinent.”<sup>4</sup>

The creative productions of Kanaka Maoli artists—which I argue constitute articulations of visual sovereignty and survivance—transcend such limiting and banal designations as “art for art’s sake.” As Cherokee poet Marilou Awiakta contends, Native artistic creations more generally are nothing less than an expression of “art for *Life’s* sake.”<sup>5</sup> They announce the ongoing existence and persistence of Native peoples, despite the theft of their homelands, the attempted extinguishment of their culture and

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Parezo, “Indigenous Art: Creating Value and Sharing Beauty,” in *A Companion to American Indian History*, ed. Deloria Philip J. and Neal Salisbury (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 223.

<sup>2</sup> Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie, “When Is a Photograph Worth a Thousand Words,” in *Photography’s Other Histories*, ed. Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 44.

<sup>3</sup> Rickard, “Sovereignty: A Line in the Sand,” 51–54.

<sup>4</sup> Gerald Vizenor, “Aesthetics of Survivance: Literary Theory and Survivance,” in *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Cited in Daniel Heath Justice, “Seeing (and Reading) Red: Indian Outlaws in the Ivory Tower,” in *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*, ed. Devon Abbott Mihesua and Angela Cavender Wilson (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 109; emphasis added.

languages, and, in some cases, the destruction of their bodies through genocide. They are the unyielding survivors of settler colonialism’s “logic of elimination”—the human ‘opihi (limpets) that cling defiantly to the metaphorical rock that is life.<sup>6</sup> Celebrated artist, filmmaker, and educator Meleanna Aluli Meyer echoes Awiakta’s notion of art as a life-sustaining conduit in connection with Kanaka Maoli creative engagement:

[The arts] are the soul of us . . . it’s the lifeblood. It’s as important as food. . . *because when we can vision our world we can heal*. So I know the arts are the answer. They’re the answer, they’re the answer. I will stand on any rock, on any soapbox, in any place and say that till the last breath I take.<sup>7</sup>

“Because when we can vision our world we can heal.” Meyer’s stirring testimony underscores in a profound way the vital necessity of indigenous communities to represent themselves on their own terms. For Kānaka Maoli, as for other indigenous communities throughout the globe, the ability to self-represent—or, in other words, to frame who they are from their own grounded perspective—is a crucial counterpart to the restoration of their histories, cultural traditions, and, ultimately, their dignity. The late Stuart Hall writes that for those living on the margins of power, representation is one of the most profound cultural revolutions to take place in the contemporary period:

Our lives have been transformed by the struggle of the margins to come into representation. Not just to be placed by the regime of some other, or imperializing eye but to reclaim some form of representation for themselves.<sup>8</sup>

Beginning with the emergence of the Kanaka Maoli art collective Hale Nauā III in the 1970s and expanding to include offshoot initiatives such as Uhane Noa Foundation,<sup>9</sup> the Council of Contemporary Hawaiian Artists, Maoli Arts Month (MAMo),<sup>10</sup> and Maoli Art in Real Time (MAiRT),<sup>11</sup> Kānaka Maoli have been actively reclaiming art as a tool of representation. In a strategy that I term indigenous “counterframing,” which entails the production of images that subvert the distorted simulations circulated through

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<sup>6</sup> Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387.

<sup>7</sup> Meleanna Aluli Meyer, interview, October 12, 2012; emphasis added.

<sup>8</sup> Stuart Hall, “The Local and the Global,” 34.

<sup>9</sup> The Uhane Noa Foundation was led by Ipō and Kūnani Nihipali.

<sup>10</sup> Established in 2005, MAMo is a month-long event that celebrates Native Hawaiian art in Hawai‘i. It encompasses numerous events, including an award ceremony to honor senior artists, exhibitions in galleries throughout Honolulu, a wearable art show, art markets, and the Keiki Arts Festival (the latter held at the Bishop Museum).

<sup>11</sup> MAiRT is an art initiative that is part of the annual MAMo celebrations. Led by Maile Aluli Meyer and other volunteers, MAiRT is a large exhibition of Native Hawaiian art that focuses on promoting and selling Native Hawaiian art to private and corporate collectors.

colonialist imagery—such countervisual creations, as Mirzoeff states, being in a fundamental way the “claim [by indigenous peoples] of the right to the real”<sup>12</sup>—Kānaka Maoli have been visioning their world in ways that challenge and resist the “imperializing eye,” critique ongoing colonialism and occupation, and redefine indigenous identity from the perspective of their own epistemological foundations and experience. Today, contemporary Kanaka Maoli art is found in a range of different spaces—including galleries and museums, tourist resorts, and public walls—and is manifested through multiple artistic genres, including but not limited to painting, sculpture, muralism, glasswork, textiles (such as weaving and quilting), photography, and so on. For Kānaka Maoli, it has been a slow but gradual process of creative growth. Notes activist artist and poet ‘Īmaikalani Kalahahele, a founding member of Hale Nauā III:

Fo’ us guys in contemporary times, it’s been a trip. From the ‘70s Hawaiians have been redefining who we are. So things started changing. The cultural view of our people, the ‘ono [good taste], all of a sudden became something that we wanted to define, not the ‘ono of da *haole*. When we talk about ‘art,’ what dat ‘art’ as *maoli* [native] people? What is our taste? What feel good to us?<sup>13</sup>

In seeking to understand what the ‘ono of Kanaka Maoli art that Kalahahele speaks of looks like, visual sovereignty offers a valuable framework for analytical enquiry. Although Native Hawaiians have been asserting visual sovereignty for over 100 years, its articulation in scholarly and art critical terms has not yet been advanced. Yet a growing body of scholarship by Native American and First Nations academics and art practitioners indicates the indispensability of opening up a discussion that attends to Kanaka Maoli visual culture “within a framework of sovereignty” and this thesis is simply my attempt to begin to explore the parameters of that framework.<sup>14</sup> In their 2006 publication *Our People, Our Land, Our Images*, Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie and art historian/curator Veronica Passalacqua feature the work of twenty-six indigenous photographers from all over the world, including the United States, Canada, Peru, Aotearoa, and Palestine, using the overarching theme of visual sovereignty as a theoretical platform.<sup>15</sup> Visual sovereignty as a paradigmatic tool surfaced even more

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<sup>12</sup> Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look*, 25.

<sup>13</sup> Cited in D. Māhealani Dudoit, “Carving a Hawaiian Aesthetic,” *‘Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal* 1, no. 1 (1998): 22; italics in original.

<sup>14</sup> Rickard, “Visualizing Sovereignty in the Time of Biometric Sensors,” 471.

<sup>15</sup> The publication grew out of the 2009 International Indigenous Photographers Conference held at the University of California, Davis. The conference included an exhibition of indigenous photographic work at the university’s C.N. Gorman Museum.

prominently three years later at the 2009 “Visual Sovereignty Indigenous Photography Conference” held at the University of California, Davis, which culminated in a collaborative exhibition at the university’s C.N. Gorman Museum titled “Visual Sovereignty: International Indigenous Photography Gathering.” Over the last several years, the term has gained traction in indigenous film studies scholarship. In *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans in Film* (2010), for instance, Michelle Raheja used visual sovereignty as a framework for examining Native American engagements in the film industry as filmmakers and as actors:

Visual sovereignty simultaneously addresses the settler population by creating self-representations [in film] that interact with older stereotypes but also, more importantly, connects film production to larger aesthetic practices that work toward strengthening treaty claims and more traditional (although by no means static) modes of cultural understanding.<sup>16</sup>

Importantly, the term visual sovereignty not only relates to the material fact of the artwork itself—that is, the end product—but more broadly speaking it encompasses the embodied action of indigenous artists to assert their right to practice their culture and claim their genealogical belonging to place. This was illustrated in 2007 at the PIKO Gathering of Indigenous Visual Artists, which was held on the island of Hawai‘i and included 115 established and emerging indigenous artists from across the globe.<sup>17</sup> One of the events planned during the ten-day long gathering was a trip to Mauna Ulu volcano to give the artists an opportunity to pay homage to Pele, a deity revered by Hawaiians. During the drive to the mountain, U.S. National Park Service rangers stopped the group and instructed them to turn back because of the dangerous conditions—a series of earthquakes had occurred over the course of the day making the area unpredictable. The Kanaka Maoli artists in the group challenged the rangers, arguing that it was their indigenous right to continue their journey to the mountain so that they could make their cultural offerings to their ancestress. After an hour-long

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<sup>16</sup> Michelle H. Raheja, *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans in Film* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 19.

<sup>17</sup> Organized under the auspices of the Keomailani Hanapi Foundation (KHF), the PIKO Gathering was held at the Hawai‘i Preparatory Academy in Waimea, Big Island, between June 13 and 23, 2007. Native artists attended the gathering from Hawai‘i, North America, Aotearoa, the wider Pacific Islands, and Mauritius. The fifth indigenous artist gathering of its kind since it began in Aotearoa in 1995, PIKO is the largest to date. The event included cultural exchanges, art making, exhibits, and artist demonstrations.

deliberation, the rangers acquiesced and the group proceeded to their destination.

Reflecting on the event, Hawaiian watercolor artist Kauanoelehua Chang states:

You know, the volcano is such a special, special place. There was no way that we would not put our foot on that ground. So, just the manner in which we were able to enter what is rightfully our place to enter, it created sort of a tension. But it was a very good tension . . . and I think Tutu [grandmother] Pele knew we were there.<sup>18</sup>

Importantly, Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie, one of the participating artists who made the trip to the mountain, cited the interlocking relationship between aesthetic and political expressions of indigenous will:

It was an exercise of religious freedom and so that was incredible. *So it's like visual sovereignty, talking about issues of religious freedom, because it all connects with art.*<sup>19</sup>

In this chapter I examine how visual sovereignty is borne out in key bodies of work by three celebrated Kanaka Maoli artists: Kaili Chun,<sup>20</sup> Carl F.K. Pao, and Solomon Enos.<sup>21</sup> Although each of the artists is distinctly different in terms of the materials they use, the media they engage with, and the themes they address, as I show, the overarching motif of visual sovereignty—defined here as the creative expression of indigenous cultural traditions, stories, beliefs, political concerns, and ancestral connection to place—links them together in a common purpose of Native empowerment.

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<sup>18</sup> In Puhipau and Joan Lander, *PIKO: A Gathering of Indigenous Artists* DVD (Nā Maka o ka 'Āina, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*; emphasis added.

<sup>20</sup> As acknowledged in the introduction to this thesis, in January 2014 Chun formally withdrew from my research. In accordance with the code of ethics outlined by the Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007), I have removed all direct quotes relating to interviews I conducted with the artist over a one-year period. However, in recognizing the importance of *Veritas II* as a cogent example of contemporary Kanaka Maoli visual sovereignty and after sustained discussion with my supervisory committee, I have chosen to retain my analysis of the installation in this chapter, relying on my own embodied experience of the artwork, secondary resources (i.e., newspaper items and essays), and statements made by the artist during two public presentations that I attended.

<sup>21</sup> My choice to focus on these three particular individuals is principally borne out of necessity. Rather than provide a comprehensive analysis of the vast suite of Kanaka Maoli artists, I have judiciously opted to instead narrow my attention to artists that I believe are not only representative of the larger community but who also exhibit visual sovereignty in different but intersecting ways.

————Frames on the Land————  
Containment and Liberation in Kaili Chun’s *Veritas II*

[T]his behavior [of the colonizer] betrays a determination to objectify, to confine, to imprison, to harden.

————Frantz Fanon<sup>22</sup>

DECEMBER 1, 2012: 5:30AM. The bright orb of a full moon perforates the pre-dawn sky as my family and I make our way toward the beach. The only sound as we approach is the steady cadence of waves as they break on the shoreline and the melodic *shish, shish* of sand as it shifts with the surging current. A passing cloud obscures the moon making it difficult to see what lies ahead. Adjusting my eyes to the dark I begin to discern the faint outline of what look like human figures—and there are many—standing at the water’s edge. The vertical silhouette of their spectral bodies is stark against the horizon. They do not move. A sudden beam of light from the moon as it bursts from behind the cloud penetrates the tenebrous scene and brings into clearer view the objects of my attention. What at first appeared to be the stoic forms of flesh and blood now take on a more structural quality as discretely erected cells that emerge from the earth to stand antagonistically against the dark skyline. The solid materiality of the objects along with the prison motif they signify evoke a sense of tension and conflict between the hard lines of steel and the natural elements of sand and water. An hour passes and in the east, as the sun begins to make its steady ascent into the sky, this artifact of rust-red steel—*Veritas II*—continues to transform before my eyes, taking on a multitude of significations that mingle and merge with the swirling tide.

The destructive impact of American colonialism on Kanaka Maoli lives, culture, and land and the ability of Kānaka Maoli to prevail in spite of it are key themes in both Kanaka Maoli literature and visual artistic expression. In the final stanza of her poem “Kumulipo Remix,” Sage U’ilani Takehiro uses the metaphor of the prison to allude to the enclosure of Kānaka Maoli within an American system of power. Simultaneously, however, she draws attention to the fact that despite their colonial captivity, Kānaka Maoli continue to assert their status as a sovereign and self-determining people by projecting their “song” *beyond* the prison walls:

Born are the prisons of our world  
and the oli [chants, poems] we conceive in them  
they cage a voice singing poems  
to the ‘Ō‘ō birds, who are off somewhere breeding.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1988), 34.

<sup>23</sup> Sage U’ilani Takehiro, *Honua: A Collection of Poetry* (Honolulu: Kahuaomānoa Press, 2007), 39.

While Kānaka Maoli are constrained by the assimilating apparatus of American colonialism, Takehiro reveals that the sung poem—read here as a euphemism for political resistance—has the power to transcend the “cage” to reach the “‘Ō‘ō birds, who are off somewhere breeding.” In her own analysis of “Kumulipo Remix,” Kanaka Maoli poet Brandy Nālani McDougall notes that the last line of the poem “stresses the mana of the singing to revitalize, reaffirm and sustain [Kanaka Maoli] sovereignty” in the same way that the ‘Ō‘ō are breeding “themselves out of extinction, offering the hope of a revitalized native governance.”<sup>24</sup>

Takehiro’s poetic narrativization of colonial imprisonment and indigenous resistance to it is visually transposed in sculptor and installation artist Kaili Chun’s installation *Veritas II*. In this work Chun addresses the theme of containment, both in the sense of it constituting a set of social, political, ideological, economic, and cultural structures imposed from the outside, as well as in the sense of *self*-containment, that is, the internalization of America’s master narrative at the level of the individual. As the artist queries, “Are we subject to the boundaries defined by others, or do we delineate the boundaries that explicate our situation? The lines are not always so clear cut.”<sup>25</sup> In my own reading of the work, at the same time that Chun deals with the multiple layers of what it means to be contained, in an important way she also explores the points at which the walls of limitation are breached and the captive subject, exerting its own agency on the dominant frame, is liberated.

Chun’s discovery of art as a life passion came relatively late in life. From her undergraduate forays in pre-med studies and engineering to her decision to pursue a degree in architecture at Princeton University,<sup>26</sup> art was always an interest but it remained on the periphery. The opportunity to study under Hawai‘i-born Japanese ceramic artist Toshiko Takaezu at Princeton during her undergraduate years gave Chun a valuable opportunity to engage with the process of making art, but it was not until she completed an MFA in Ceramics at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa in 1999 that her practice began to open up to a viable career path. Chun’s emergence as an artist coincided with her growing sense of identity as a Kanaka Maoli and the understanding that her art could function as a tool to, in the words of curator James Jensen, “make

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<sup>24</sup> Brandy Nālani McDougall, “‘O Ka Lipo O Ka Lā, ‘O Ka Lipo O Ka Pō: Cosmogenic Kaona in Contemporary Kanaka Maoli Literature” (PhD, English, University of Hawai‘i, 2011), 156.

<sup>25</sup> Lynn Cook, “Towering Insights,” *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, November 24, 2013, sec. Art, G7.

<sup>26</sup> Chun was awarded a B.A. degree in Architecture in 1986.



native Hawaiian culture more visible, more distinct, more autonomous.”<sup>27</sup> As Chun experimented with artmaking, she turned to wood as a medium, seeking the expertise of master canoe builder and woodworker Wright Elemakule Bowman, Sr. It was the beginning of a long and fruitful working relationship with a mentor who taught her how to take a slab of wood and turn it into a thing of beauty and power. To date, Chun’s most notable wood-based installation was *E hana mua a pa‘a ke kahua mamua o ke a‘o ana aku ia ha‘i* (Build yourself a firm foundation before teaching others) (2003), which comprised six beautifully crafted koa wood vitrines, each filled with an object of cultural meaning. Inspired by the “cabinets of curiosity” found in ethnographic museums, like so much of Chun’s work *E hana mua* addressed the idea of containment. States Chun:

It’s about containment. It’s about being in the box and being in a very beautiful box, western-centric box, very columnar and it’s meant to seduce you. . . .But, I want you to take a look at what’s inside, what does this mean?<sup>28</sup>

Chun’s desire to provoke questions about the deeper significance of what it means to be a Hawaiian living in a “western-centric box” has found expression through materials beyond the medium of wood, most notably stone and steel. Chun’s installations in stone include *Nau ka wae* (The choice is yours) (2006) and *The Irony of Trust* (2006), and, in steel, *Janus* (2009). In *Veritas II*, perhaps her most captivating creation in steel, Chun offers further artistic insight that critically interrogates colonial containment while simultaneously signaling the possibility of hope and liberation.

### ***Veritas II: From Colonial Frames to a Native Stand***

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said writes, “We must not minimize the shattering importance of that initial insight—peoples being conscious of themselves as prisoners in their own land—for it returns again and again in the literature of the imperialized world.”<sup>29</sup> I would like to expand on Said’s statement by offering that the subaltern’s recognition of being imprisoned in his or her own homeland is not simply the purview of literary pundits such as novelists, poets, and academic writers, but it is expressed through the work of visual artists—art, after all, being a form of literature—as well.

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<sup>27</sup> James Jensen, *The Contemporary Museum Biennial of Hawai‘i Artists* catalog (Honolulu: The Contemporary Museum, 2003), 4.

<sup>28</sup> Chun in FSR Maui Arts Channel, “E Hana mua—Kaili Chun,” Youtube, February 14, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkUbNA5Hq4M>.

<sup>29</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 214.

Such is the case with Kaili Chun, who explores the inherent tensions between colonial containment and indigenous liberation in her installation *Veritas II*.

*Veritas II* first featured in the Schaefer International Gallery at the Maui Arts and Cultural Center (MACC) as part of the all women exhibition *I Kēia Manawa (In this Time)* (2011). In September 2012, it was relocated to the newly constructed Ka‘iwakīloumoku Hawaiian Cultural Center at Kamehameha Schools—Chun’s alma mater—and in December of that year it was once again on the move, this time to be temporarily erected on Waimānalo Beach, O‘ahu, as part of a 24-hour site-specific installation.<sup>30</sup> Setting up the installation took place the day before with the help of a group of volunteers, of which I was fortunate to be a part. Chun camped on the beach overnight near the installation to safeguard it and to document the changes it underwent as it was exposed to the natural elements. The significance of *Veritas II*’s Waimānalo display lies in the thought-provoking and often unintentional ways it occupied and was occupied by the environment, about which I will say more presently.

*Veritas II*—“veritas” being the Latin word for “truth”—comprises fifty eight-foot-high by eight-inch-wide free-standing rectangular stainless steel cells organized on a grid of roughly five rows (Fig. 3.1). Each cell or cage comprises sixteen vertical bars, which serve as functional and metaphorical elements of containment. Incorporated into a select number of the structures are doors that open and close on their hinges. The individual cells—each of which weighs approximately sixty pounds—were erected and packed at their base into the sand at the beach’s shoreline. The installation—a blend of Chun’s art and architectural aesthetic sensibilities—when seen in its industrial-looking, sleek-lined entirety stands out like a foreign object on the soft contours of land- and ocean-scape. *Veritas II* has the appearance of a miniature Manhattan having erupted out of the sand, a disruptive assemblage of sharp-edged metal towers jutting out from the surface of on an otherwise unobstructed stretch of beach.<sup>31</sup> In its vertical, phallocratic

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<sup>30</sup> Elements of Chun’s installation also featured in the exhibition *Veritas II* at ii gallery in Kaka‘ako, Honolulu, from November 14 to December 14, 2013. The show comprised a select number of cells from the Waimānalo installation as well as cells from Chun’s 2009 *Janus* series. The three-dimensional sculptures were complemented by the inclusion of six digital photographs by Erin Yuasa of *Veritas II* during its installation on the beach.

<sup>31</sup> The vertical theatricality of *Veritas II* bears a striking visual similarity with American artist Walter de Maria’s best-known land art creation, *The Lightning Field* (1977). Located on the high plateau of Catron County, New Mexico, the installation comprises 400 vertical stainless steel poles—each ranging from fifteen to twenty-six feet in height—arranged on a one-mile by one-kilometer grid.

assertiveness, it is redolent of Henri Lefebvre's critical observation: "Verticality and great height have ever been the spatial expression of potentially violent power."<sup>32</sup>

The installation is a dramatic commentary on containment, both in the sense of the extant colonial structures in Hawai'i as well as the internalized colonial structures of thought, or as Ngúgí Wa Thiongo and other scholars have more economically referred to it, the colonization of the mind. The control and manipulation of land to facilitate the process of containment is a critical concern in *Veritas II*. In terms of the installation's spatial orientation, the gridded layout of the cells connotes what Chun observes as "the tensions that persist between Western and indigenous ways of knowing and understanding the world,"<sup>33</sup> particularly in relation to land. From a Western perspective, land is viewed as a commodity to be domesticated, organized, and ultimately dominated, while for Kānaka Maoli it is a cherished ancestor to be cared for and respected. Such a sharp distinction between these two epistemologically divergent frames of understanding is especially notable when one considers the seizure of indigenous lands by the United States for military use.

Only three miles down the same stretch of beach from the installation site is the Marine Corps Training Area Bellows. Bellows occupies 1,495 acres of land, 97% of which are ceded lands that belong to the Hawaiian people. The U.S. military uses the area to conduct amphibious, helicopter, and motorized exercises, as well as troop beach landings. Further, since Bellows is located on a stretch of desirable oceanfront real estate, it also serves as an R & R getaway for active-duty and retired military personnel. Although the military provides public access to the popular beach on holidays and weekends, on weekdays armed marines guard the entrance. So proximate to Chun's *Veritas II* installation, Bellows is a stark reminder of the link between military expropriation of Native lands and the larger colonial project. As Adria Imada notes and as I highlighted in Chapter One, "The consolidation of US military power and the colonization of Hawai'i are intimately connected."<sup>34</sup> From the fraudulent annexation of the Islands in 1898 and the equally unlawful admission of Hawai'i as the fiftieth U.S. state in 1959, Kanaka Maoli lands have been politically quarantined within the imposed territorial borders of the United States.

The exploitation of Waimānalo by the U.S. military is made more complex by the fact that it constitutes one of many areas throughout the Islands where Native

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<sup>32</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 98.

<sup>33</sup> Cited in Interisland Terminal, "Veritas II," Interisland Terminal.  
<http://www.interislandterminal.org/exhibitions/previous/veritas-ii/>.

<sup>34</sup> Imada, "The Army Learns to Luau," 332.

Hawaiians were able to regain a modicum of control over formally ceded Crown lands. This was made possible through the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1921 (HHCA), which Prince Jonah Kūhiō and other Native political leaders championed as a measure to uplift or “rehabilitate” Kānaka Maoli communities that were struggling socially, economically, and physically during the first two decades of colonization.<sup>35</sup> One of the chief goals of the Act—which involved the creation of Hawaiian Homestead Lands—was to return Kānaka Maoli back to the land as the leases on ceded Crown lands (many of them held by plantation owners) approached expiration.<sup>36</sup> Beginning in 1921, rural Waimānalo was one of many locations on O‘ahu where Kānaka Maoli were resettled as “homesteaders.” As Kēhaulani Kauanui points out, however, despite repatriating many Kānaka Maoli back to the land, the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act nevertheless possessed a significant compromise: that is, to be eligible for land, applicants had to be confirmed as being at least 50 percent Hawaiian blood. States Kauanui,

In the quest to control Hawaiian land and assets, blood quantum classification emerged as a way to undermine Kānaka Maoli sovereignty claims—by not only explicitly limiting the number who could lay claim to the land but also reframing the Native connection to the land itself from a legal claim to one based on charity.<sup>37</sup>

In reading *Veritas II* from this perspective, then, one might interpret the discrete steel cells of the installation and their specific placement just across the road from Hawaiian Homestead properties as a possible critique of the settler colonial framework from which such race-based, deracinating policies emanated—policies that continue to distort and arrest, at a fundamental level, determinations of who counts as Hawaiian. Indeed, in this instance, an alternative signification for the cells might lie in their word association with *blood cells*, the very substance used by the dominant culture to reframe Hawaiian identity.

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<sup>35</sup> For more on Hawaiian Homestead Lands, see Davianna Pōmaika‘i McGregor, “‘Āina Ho‘opulapula: Hawaiian Homesteading,” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 24 (1990): 1–38 and Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood*.

<sup>36</sup> McGregor, “‘Āina Ho‘opulapula: Hawaiian Homesteading,” 8. It should be noted here that the allotment of land through Hawaiian Homestead Lands is limited by a number of conditions. Only individuals who can prove they are at least 50 percent Hawaiian are eligible for lands; allotted land can only be leased, not purchased fee simple; such lands can only be passed on to descendants who can prove they are one-fourth Hawaiian ancestry. Further, as Kehaulani Kauanui writes, due to the mismanagement of trust lands by the State of Hawai‘i, only 8,000 Hawaiians have been awarded leases since 1921. Currently, 20,000 applications for land remain pending. See Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood*, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood*, 9.

One of the features of the Waimānalo installation of *Veritas II* that was perhaps most compelling was the way the natural elements, in particular light and the water, affected the structures. In terms of the former, depending on the angle of the sun, some cells were illuminated with a shimmer so bright it was almost blinding (Fig. 3.2). Further, at many points during my own experience of the installation, what I knew to be solid frames of steel simply vanished from sight (Fig. 3.3). The effect, of course, was a trick of the eyes and mind, an optical illusion. When the light of the sun hit the metallic surface of the cells in just the right way, it rendered them invisible to the naked eye.

In interpreting the blinding and veiled quality of the cells through the effect of light we might consider such a phenomenon as offering abstract insight into the way colonialism in Hawai‘i tends to go unseen, particularly as it relates to settler inhabitants. As mentioned earlier, Karen Kosasa has written extensively on settler blindness and colonial invisibility noting that, “The colonial culture . . . engages, entangles, and embeds its participants in the production and reproduction of uneven relations of power, naturalizing the subjugation of the indigenous people, the expropriation of their land, and the appropriation of their culture and space in everyday life.”<sup>38</sup> In the same way that the cells had the capacity to blind and become invisible through a trick of light, colonialism in Hawai‘i works to naturalize its cultural, economic, and political features and in so doing so blends without trace into the fabric of life. To return to Derrida’s “Parergon” as invoked in Chapter One, the colonial frame operating in Hawai‘i disappears, sinks in, and obliterates itself, even as it expends its greatest energy.

As much as *Veritas II* offers a critical commentary on colonial containment, it equally communicates a message of liberation. For example, the metaphorical hā or breath of Kānaka Maoli was connoted in the fluid form of ocean water that moved unimpeded through the bars of the steel structures (Fig. 3.4). Further, although the towering frames of *Veritas II* as witnessed from the shoreline had the appearance of constituting an immovable fortress, the tenuous location of the installation in the tidal zone—that ever-shifting, ever-changing space where land meets ocean—functioned to foreshadow its collapse, in a very literal sense. During the night when the tide came in, the powerful motion of the ocean waves knocked four of the cells down. Two were carried 100 to 200 feet down the beach—these Chun re-erected to “mark the place they had been taken to”<sup>39</sup>—and the current pulled two out into the water. In many ways, the potent ability of the ocean to affect the structures could be read as a sign of the strength

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<sup>38</sup> Kosasa, “Critical Sight/Sites,” 7.

<sup>39</sup> Kaili Chun, “Veritas II.” Panel discussion (ii gallery, Honolulu, December 6, 2013).

of Kānaka Maoli to continue surging forward despite the obstacles and hardships they face as a result of the colonial occupation of their homeland.

As well, while most of the cells were created as closed structures, Chun ingeniously welded doors into a select few (Fig 3.5). An important feature of the doors' design was that none of them could be locked, thus countermanding any power they had to confine in any absolute sense. The openings, I would like to suggest, operate as a metaphor for change, hope, and opportunity. They represent the potential for Kānaka Maoli to break free of colonial oppression. But they also connote action on the part of the individual. After all, doors do not open of their own accord. They must be made to do so through an act of agency and choice. In Chun's broader work, the theme of choice is as equally prevalent as containment, and *Veritas II* is no exception. In the cell doors, a choice is being presented to Kānaka Maoli to either open them and be free or remain contained. The choice is theirs.

As with any work of art, *Veritas II* produces meaning that is at its core polysemic. Although Chun at first viewed the cells as foreign objects, the more time she spent observing and interacting with them the more she began to see that they could also be perceived as a metaphor for Kānaka Maoli. During a 2013 public panel discussion about *Veritas II*, Chun discerned how each cell stood kū [erect, upright].<sup>40</sup> Rather than symbolizing structures of dominance, the cells became a metaphor for Kānaka Maoli themselves. Stated Chun, "they changed from being this representation of what I'd intended, to us [i.e., Kānaka Maoli]."<sup>41</sup> Here, the artist's initial objective developed in an unforeseen but critically significant way. What Chun originally conceived to be frames on the land morphed in meaning into *a people's stand on the land*. During a particularly salient moment, I happened to be present when Chun's uncle arrived on the beach after having paddled in from the ocean on his single-man canoe. He had come to offer support to the artist and to view her latest creation. Standing on the beach talking to Chun, he shared how, from a distance as he paddled toward land, he mistook the cells for a gathering of people. Only when he came closer to shore could he see that they were, in fact, structures of steel.

Despite being hedged in by powerful structures of American domination, Kānaka Maoli continue to "stand kū" in their plight for self-determination and liberation. Educator and cultural practitioner Luana Palapala Busby-Neff describes this process as one of "stripping away the façade to face our own paths to freedom and liberation.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

There's a movement going on! There's a brightness glowing on the horizon."<sup>42</sup> *Veritas II*—in its own way a “brightness glowing on the horizon”—constitutes a powerful indigenous truth that refuses to be obscured.

### **“Songs” Beyond the Cage**

For a brief period of 24 hours, a section of Waimānalo Beach was dramatically transformed by the overnight emergence of a small “city” on the shoreline. When locals woke up and took their early Saturday morning walk along the beach the next day they were confronted by an unfamiliar sight: an assemblage of vertical steel frames embedded in the sand. As both an observer of and participant in the event, what I found both interesting and informative was how people reacted as they encountered *Veritas II*. I watched as one couple, with their two dogs in tow, walked right passed it, seemingly oblivious to its outrageous presence on the beach. They did not stop to inspect the structures as some early birders had done but simply walked by with an air of indifference. I could not help but think that they were purposefully ignoring the fact of *Veritas II*'s existence—a difficult task since it was so striking and obvious in its bearing and location. How, I thought, could they not stop to give it a cursory inspection at the very least?

If the couple with the dogs seemed unmoved by the installation, a passing Waimānalo man of Hawaiian ancestry was so provoked by its presence he approached my husband and me to ask why it was there. His initial reaction was one of irritation as he encountered the hulking structures that loomed as an unwelcome disruption to his daily walk. Fortunately, Chun was nearby and lost no time in sharing the meaning of the cells with him. I observed that as he listened he began to understand the significance and the importance of the work and, remarkably, his attitude toward them changed from aggravation to recognition and understanding.

I mentioned earlier that four of the cells were felled by the waves. The current dragged two of them down the beach, while the remaining two were taken out by the water. My husband literally bumped into one while he was body surfing. When he stood up in the white water he felt it protruding from the sand under his feet. The other was discovered by a non-Hawaiian man—none of us could determine if he was a local haole or a tourist—who, after dragging the 60-pound structure out of the water, angrily dumped it on the beach in front of me and a group of Kanaka Maoli artists who had

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<sup>42</sup> Manulani Aluli Meyer, *Ho‘oulu: Our Time of Becoming: Hawaiian Epistemology and Early Writings* (Honolulu: ‘Ai Pōhaku Press, 2003), xii.

come to support Chun. After some ill-tempered words about the cells being a danger to beachgoers, he stormed off. Later on when we relayed the story to Chun (who had not been present at the time) it not only generated laughter—after all, the man’s reaction seemed comically puerile—but it also provoked thoughtful reflection about the deeper meaning behind his reaction. Here—on a beach that is for all intents and purposes indigenous land—Kānaka Maoli cannot even erect an art installation without attracting negative attention from non-Natives. In response to—and, indeed, in defiance of—the system that has for over one hundred years methodically marginalized and controlled Kānaka Maoli, Chun purposefully chose not to obtain a permit for the installation. During the course of this research, I came across a *Honolulu Civil Beat* blog entry, the headline of which caught my attention: “Artist Goes Rogue at Waimanalo [*sic*] Beach.” A line from the article read, “Asked if she needed a permit, she said no, she was going ‘guerilla style.’”<sup>43</sup> The “she” of course was Chun and her statement of “going ‘guerilla style’” illuminates in a critical way the kinds of strategies indigenous artists in particular and indigenous peoples in general deploy in their efforts to intervene in and disrupt systems of oppression. Indeed, the genre of site-specific installations is intrinsically well suited to such interventionist practice. Miwon Kwon suggests that one of the underlying purposes of site-specific art is to unearth “repressed histories, provide support for greater visibility of marginalized groups and issues, and initiate the re(dis)covery of ‘minor’ places so far ignored by the dominant culture.”<sup>44</sup> Thus, site-oriented art is not merely an aesthetic creation but—and this is important insofar as Chun’s work is concerned—it is inherently *ethical* in its orientation. *Veritas II*, with its towering architectural frames gleaming in the sun is a sublime *sight*, but more powerful than its aesthetic qualities is its significance as a discursive *site* of indigenous political and social activism.

*Veritas II* solicited more than just a passive viewing; it warranted engaged interaction. Mark Rosenthal writes that the relationship between an installation and the viewer is one of cohabitation.<sup>45</sup> There is something appealing about the idea of cohabitating with a work of art. It suggests a sort of intimacy that tends to get lost when one is restricted to the act of simply looking with an objectifying eye rather than

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<sup>43</sup> *Honolulu Civil Beat*, “Artist Goes Rogue at Waimanalo Beach,” December 1, 2012, <http://hawaii.land.blogs.civilbeat.com/post/37017841359/artist-goes-rogue-at-waimanalo-beach>.

<sup>44</sup> Miwon Kwon, “One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity,” *October* 80, no. Spring (1997): 105.

<sup>45</sup> Mark Rosenthal, *Understanding Installation Art: From Duchamp to Holzer* (Munich: Prestel, 2003), 62.



experiencing with all of the senses. It implies the ability to dwell with the work and to touch what might otherwise be contained behind glass or a rope barrier.

Members of the public negotiated the piece through a range of varying “cohabitations”: completely ignoring it, scrutinizing it and then recognizing its intrinsic value as a statement of Native resistance, angrily flinging part of it to the ground. There were others who engaged with the piece enthusiastically, meandering or running between the cells, every now and then stopping to run their hands over the bars. Some participants played with the cell doors, opening and closing them, while a number of people discovered to their surprise that the installation could “sing.” When the metal structures were slapped on their sides, the resulting vibrations caused the bars to emit a low, steady hum. I wonder now if that same sound does not bear some relationship to the sung poem of Takehiro’s “Kumulipo Remix” being released from the cage. Certainly, the “prisons of our world” will never really cease to exist, but through the subversive, rogue work of contemporary Native artists like Chun those prisons will also never always be able to contain completely. They will always be breachable.

—————Raising Masculinity and Sovereignty—————  
Carl F.K. Pao’s Ule Series and *Waikāne*

Kū ka ule, he‘e ka laho. (The penis stands, the scrotum sags.)

————Mary Kawena Pukui<sup>46</sup>

Alani Apio’s critically acclaimed play *Kāmau* (1994)—*kāmau* meaning to continue on, to persevere—focuses on three male cousins, all of whom struggle with the limiting life options they are faced with as Kanaka Maoli men living in settler colonial Hawai‘i. Alika Kealoha, the central protagonist, is a tour guide; Michael Mahekona is barely able to make a living as a fisherman; and George Mahekona—who appears as a ghost throughout the play—committed suicide because he was unable to deal with the life circumstances that confronted him. Caught in a system from which they seem never to be able to break free, Alika and Michael resort to daily alcohol binges as a temporary release from their woeful daily realities. The situation is made untenable when the land they have been living on for generations is sold and they and other members of their family are forced to leave. The play reaches a climatic juncture when Michael is

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<sup>46</sup> Mary Kawena Pukui, *‘Ōlelo No ‘eau: Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1983), 204.

imprisoned for attacking the security guard in charge of making sure they vacate the premises. Apio writes, “This implosion and explosion of rage is one of the sad legacies of the Kanaka’s forced assimilation into American society.”<sup>47</sup>

In 1996, Carl F.K. Pao began producing the first of several monumental phallic sculptures as part of his Ule (phallic) series. In similar vein to Apio’s *Kāmau*, Pao’s artistic creations addressed the abysmal status of Kanaka Maoli men in Hawai‘i—a status that he argues began with the removal of male genitalia from Hawaiian god images by missionaries when they first arrived in Hawai‘i in 1820. In Pao’s view, this historical emasculation was tantamount to a “symbolic-spiritual stripping” of Kanaka Maoli masculinity, which has produced a range of male-related social pathologies.<sup>48</sup> Pao notes, “We’re [i.e., Kanaka Maoli men] at the top of all the lists that you don’t want to be on: unemployment, crime, incarceration, domestic violence, alcohol and substance abuse, suicide.”<sup>49</sup> These abysmal statistics are reflected in the lives of the three cousins in Apio’s play: Michael is incarcerated for attempted murder, George has taken his own life, and Alika turns to alcohol to stave off his misery. But, where *Kāmau* “explores the feeling of loss and the everyday struggle of Hawaiian men,”<sup>50</sup> Pao’s Ule series represents a revitalized and reinstated Native masculinity. In addition, the works not only affirm Kanaka Maoli manhood, but they also declare indigenous sovereign power in the face of ongoing colonialism.

Carl Franklin Ka‘ailā‘au Pao always wanted to be an artist. When he was a young boy, he would lie under his maternal grandparents’ coffee table with pen or crayon and draw whatever happened to emerge from his young and fertile imagination. From “abstract stuff to dinosaurs,”<sup>51</sup> Pao was prolific in his nascent artistic expression. Even the lure of sports when he got to elementary school did not deter him from his passion. When he was 10 years old he wrote a short essay titled, “When I Grow Up I’ll be A...?” In it, he charted out in simple but definitive terms the shape his destiny would take:

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<sup>47</sup> Alani Apio, “Kanaka Lament: Once a Proud Nation, Hawaiians Today Are Just Defined As a Race,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, March 25, 2001, <http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2001/Mar/25/op/op05a.html>.

<sup>48</sup> This quote is taken from a copy of a letter Pao wrote to Daisy and William Dung of Nu‘uanu, O‘ahu, who purchased the phallic sculpture *Ulemano 3* (one of the pieces discussed in his section) in October 2000. In the letter Pao explained the meaning of the artwork for the couple. I use the quote here with the kind permission of the artist.

<sup>49</sup> Carl F.K. Pao, interview, April 4, 2013.

<sup>50</sup> Alani Apio cited in Vincenzo Bavaro, “Satisfied with the Stones: Notes on Masculinity, Land, and Family in Alani Apio’s *Kāmau*,” *Anglistica* 14, no. 2 (2010): 77.

<sup>51</sup> Carl F.K. Pao, interview, April 14, 2013.

“When I grow up and be an adult I will be a artist. . . . At first I’ll take art lessons of all kinds of art works. Then I’ll sell my good pictures and paint more.”<sup>52</sup>

Pao went on to take “art lessons of all kinds” and in 1994 graduated from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa with a BFA in Ceramics. In 1999 he was the first Hawaiian to receive an MFA from the prestigious Elam School of Fine Arts at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. Today Pao’s artwork can be found in both public and private collections throughout Hawai‘i as well as internationally. His work has featured in numerous exhibitions at home and abroad, and he has been awarded several high-profile commissions throughout his career.

The year 1993 marked a watershed moment for Pao in terms of his politicization as a Kanaka Maoli and his recognition that art could serve as a vehicle for highlighting critical issues pertaining to the struggles of Kānaka Maoli. The artist notes that it was a period of his life when he was “consciously decolonizing” and reorienting himself to his cultural roots.<sup>53</sup> In 1993, during the 100<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, Pao joined with thousands of other Kanaka Maoli men, women, and children to voice his protest and pride in his cultural heritage. His political consciousness was further inspired by the message of self-determination, the fervent activism of individuals like Dennis “Bumpy” Kanahēle, and the critical scholarship of indigenous academics like Noenoe Silva, whose work on recovering the Kū‘ē petitions of the 1890s provided clear evidence of the unremitting resistance of Kānaka Maoli to the fraudulent annexation of their homeland in 1898.

It was also in 1993 that Pao attended *Te Waka Toi*, an exhibition of contemporary Māori art held at the University of Hawai‘i Art Gallery in Honolulu. The artist reflects that although he was becoming politicized as a Kanaka Maoli at that time, he was still “searching for his voice as an artist.”<sup>54</sup> Seeing the Māori artworks, which confidently asserted indigenous pride and identity, was a defining moment for Pao: “They were choosing to identify themselves as Māori first and not as New Zealanders or people under the British Empire . . . . Here you had a group of artists who were not confused about who they were.”<sup>55</sup> Pao candidly attributes confusion about his own identity as a Native artist to the lack of support he received as an undergraduate student in the University of Hawai‘i Art Department, stating that the department “viewed contemporary Kanaka Maoli art as having no theoretical, technical, or aesthetic

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<sup>52</sup> (Carl F.K. Pao, unpublished essay). Author’s files.

<sup>53</sup> Carl F.K. Pao, interview, April 13, 2013.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

merit.”<sup>56</sup> For Pao, *Te Waka Toi* constituted a critical locus of self-reclamation and provided a platform for him to recognize the value of his own Kanaka Maoli-grounded work. Today, as an art instructor at Kamehameha Schools, Pao imparts to his students the importance of expressing themselves as Kānaka Maoli through art. He states, “There’s no disconnect between them and their ancestors, and the art that they produce is part of the thread that connects them to the past and the future as Kānaka Maoli.”<sup>57</sup>

### **Erecting Sovereign Resistance**

In their analysis of Hawaiian figurative wood images in *Hawaiian Sculpture* (1988), J. Halley Cox and William H. Davenport write, “Of the religious images, only three are clearly male, and eight, all of which are ‘aumakua images, are clearly female.”<sup>58</sup> The problem with the authors’ evaluation of the ancestral works—which ranged from large temple images to smaller, portable akua kā‘ai and ‘aumakua images—is not so much what they claim to have observed, that the images were “clearly male” or “clearly female,” but rather what they failed to report—that is, that a great many of the sculptures they appraised as part of the publication were unclear in terms of their sex because the genitals had been removed. In one particular photographic reproduction of an akua kā‘ai (literally “god with a sash”) included in the publication (Fig. 3.6),<sup>59</sup> the damage is shockingly evident.<sup>60</sup>

A lithe anthropomorphic figure stands on a carved head that is in turn connected to a support peg. Its stance is one of vigor and vitality. With hands at rest on the front of bent knees, the figure exudes an air of patient anticipation. Its face is symmetrical and, while delicately carved, reveals an imposing personality: furrowed brow, high cheekbones, slanted eyes that seem defiant in their gaze, flared nostrils, and an opened mouth pulled back in the shape of a horizontal figure “8.” The image when seen from the side reveals a distinctive laryngeal prominence, indicating its maleness. The pectoral muscles on the upper torso are flexed, implying a powerful athleticism, while the abdomen is pulled in as if the figure were in the process of inhaling a long, deep breath. But the scene below the waist disrupts the viewer’s aesthetic reverie of appreciation and

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. Karen Kosasa has forwarded a compelling critique about the marginalization of contemporary Kanaka Maoli visual arts knowledge by the University of Hawai‘i Art Department in her 2002 doctoral thesis “Critical Sight/Sites: Art Pedagogy and Settler Colonialism in Hawai‘i.”

<sup>57</sup> Carl F.K. Pao, interview, April 14, 2013.

<sup>58</sup> Cox, J. Halley and William H. Davenport, *Hawaiian Sculpture*, Revised edition (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), 109.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>60</sup> Shockingly evident, yet left unacknowledged by the authors.

provokes an immediate sense of horror and pathos. The male organ has been crudely cut away, leaving behind a mass of chaotic striations to the groin and quadriceps. Speaking about the destruction of male genitalia on carved representations of Māori gods and ancestors, Robert Sullivan writes, “The wholesale destruction of carved penises was quite literally an attack on the mana of the ancestors represented in carvings, and of their descent-lines.”<sup>61</sup> As Sullivan observes, such acts of vandalism are never simply contained to the physical but reach deep down into the psyche of a people. For Pao, the violent castration of Hawaiian gods and ancestors marked the starting point for Hawaiian men’s losing their sense of identity and it provoked him to create a body of work that would recuperate Kanaka Maoli male mana in a powerful way.

The series of monumental freestanding wood ule sculptures Pao produced between 1996 and 2001 were exhibited variously in Sāmoa, Aotearoa, and Hawai‘i in a range of different gallery spaces. For Pao, the idea was for them to be viewed by a large community of people, in a fashion similar to the monumental god images erected at heiau (temple) sites in the past. One of his earliest pieces, titled *Ulekiha* (Lizard phallus) (1999) (Fig. 3.7)—created in Te Awamutu, Aotearoa, during a 3-day workshop—combines elements of the male sex organ with the kiha, a supernatural lizard-like creature that was worshiped as a deity by Hawaiians.

Carved out of a single block of pine, *Ulekiha* stands 4 feet high. The natural linearity of the wood provides the piece with a strong sense of verticality. The bulbous head, which bears analogous relationship to the glans or head of a penis, projects skyward. A natural knot in the wood forms an eye, which is outlined in black paint in a design similar to that of the Egyptian wedjat or Eye of Horus. The slender body (or shaft) of the sculpture is carved in low relief on the front to delineate the torso area (part of which is outlined in black to make it more visible) and to produce two three-fingered “hands,” which wrap around the anterior of the figure (Fig. 3.8). Viewed from the front, the figure appears to be suspended in an eternal self-embrace.

What is probably most striking about *Ulekiha* is the profusion of black painted graphic symbols that adorn the body of the work like tattoos on a human body. The carved hands are embellished with three elongated triangles. The geometric patterns connote shark teeth, which in turn function as a synecdoche for the protective power of the shark as one of the artist’s ‘aumakua (ancestral protectors). Two thin rectangles on

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<sup>61</sup> Robert Sullivan, “Essay in Response to Professor Zipes and Professor Waziyatawin.” Paper presented at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa International Symposium “Folktales and Fairy Tales: Translation, Colonialism, and Cinema,” Honolulu, September 23, 2008), 3. Available at <http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10125/16454>.

the head and at the base connote an abstracted arm and foot, respectively. Situated just under the left carved hand is a spiral motif of three concentric circles, the tail end of which separates from the central form and descends in a downward direction. The spiral is appropriated from similar designs found in Hawaiian petroglyphs and, for the artist, represents the piko or the navel and umbilical cord.<sup>62</sup> The appearance of the piko announces the fecundity and generative power of the piece and serves to remind the viewer of the perpetual connection between generations of Kānaka Maoli that span the temporal domains of past, present, and future. Here, Pao underscores the procreative power of the phallus.

By far the most conspicuously phallic of Pao's Ule series is *Ulemanō 1* (Shark phallus) (1999) (Fig. 3.9). As with *Ulekiha*, *Ulemanō 1* was crafted in Aotearoa while the artist was a graduate student at the University of Auckland, and it was exhibited at Te Taumata Gallery.<sup>63</sup> At 5 feet high, the sculpture exudes an impressive aura. Where *Ulekiha* was characterized by a strong linear bearing, *Ulemanō 1* is hewn out of a massive block of pōhutukawa—a tree native to Aotearoa and related to the Hawaiian ohī'a (both *Metrosideros* spp.)—which possesses naturally occurring twists and curves in the wood. The thick base of the sculpture gently arches away from the ground and tapers out to a solid shaft of wood that effloresces into a rounded, circumcised cap at the distal end. The linseed oil finish brings out the red-golden luster of the native hardwood and gives definition to its undulating grain. As with *Ulekiha*, the artist has “tattooed” *Ulemanō 1* but with a more restrained and focused repertoire of symbols. Pao used prefabricated stencils of his own unique graphic writing style to render the title of the work at the sculpture's base. At the back of the phallic shaft the artist included a piko, indicated by a black circle, which is enclosed by a single ring of the same color around its external circumference. Prefabricated triangular stencils were used to create a triangular-patterned series of shark teeth—again alluding to ancestral protection—that cover the front of the sculpture's glans (Fig. 3.10).

The year 2000 marked the first time an all-Kanaka Maoli art exhibition was held at the University of Hawai'i Art Gallery. The show, *Mai Nā Kupuna Mai, Ho'i i Ka*

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<sup>62</sup> For Kānaka Maoli, the piko bears significant cultural meaning. As Mary Kawena Pukui has written, the human body possesses, “Three *piko*, the crown of the head or posterior fontanel, the umbilicus and cord, and the genitals.” These “triple piko” connected human generations across time and “defined man as living link with the past and the future.” See Mary Kawena Pukui, E.W. Haertig, and Catherine A. Lee, *Nānā i Ke Kumu: Look to The Source*, vol. 2 (Honolulu: Hui Hānai, 2002), 180.

<sup>63</sup> Based in Auckland, Te Taumata Gallery specializes in showcasing Māori and Pacific Islander art.

*Pū'olo* (“That which comes from the ancestors is returned as gifts”) included Pao’s 5-foot phallic sculpture *Ulemanō 3* (2000) (Fig. 3.11). Significantly, the entire head of the piece was embedded with sixteen bone-white shark teeth, which the artist fabricated out of acrylic resin (Fig. 3.12). Based on the dental physiology of the niuhi or tiger shark, the teeth were a direct reference to the leiomanō, a shark-tooth encrusted weapon that was in the past used by Hawaiians for hand-to-hand combat engagements. For Pao, the teeth were not merely included for aesthetic purposes; rather, they functioned to “transform the phallus into a weapon.”<sup>64</sup> Such a transformation need not be read as a misogynistic endorsement of masculine violence, martial or otherwise. Rather, the intent behind Pao’s “phallic weapon” was that it would serve as a beacon of masculine resistance to the processes of emasculation that have negatively affected Kanaka Maoli men, both in the past and the present. Says Pao, it was to reestablish “the Hawaiian male essence and for Hawaiian men to understand the importance of our place and our role in Hawaiian society.”<sup>65</sup>

Kanaka Maoli academic Ty Kāwika Tengan, who has written extensively on issues relating to Hawaiian masculinity, contends that the place of Hawaiian men in society has been grossly undermined by tourism, colonial domination, and Western figurations of race, class, and gender.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, the discursive formation of what Tengan terms “the emasculated Hawaiian male” has been produced on a number of fronts, not the least of which has been the visual arts. Here, non-Native artists have routinely characterized Kanaka Maoli men in a variety of diminishing ways: as the jovial Hawaiian male singing, dancing, playing music, or surfing or—alternatively—as an irrational and violent malefactor.<sup>67</sup>

Concerning the reduction of Hawaiian men to “happy-go-lucky” subjects of empire in particular, Dutch-born American artist Hubert Vos’s famous painting titled *Kolomona: Hawaiian Troubadour* (1898) is worth considering. The painting is of a

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<sup>64</sup> Carl F.K. Pao, interview, April 4, 2013.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Tengan, *Native Men Remade*, 3.

<sup>67</sup> It should be pointed out that although Hawaiian surfers were romanticized in colonialist imagery and literature (see, for instance, Jack London’s idealized description of Native surfers as neoclassical “brown Mercurys” in *The Cruise of the Snark* [1911]), Isaiah Helekunihi Walker argues that in reality Kanaka Maoli surfers “simultaneously defined themselves as active and resistant Natives in a colonial history that regularly wrote them as otherwise” (89). See Isaiah Helekunihi Walker, “Hui Nalu, Beachboys, and the Surfing Boarder-Lands of Hawai‘i.” *The Contemporary Pacific*, Special issue: Re-membering Oceanic Masculinities, edited by Margaret Jolly, 20, no. 1 (2008): 89–113. For a more encompassing historiographic and cross-cultural overview of indigenous masculinities in Oceania, see Margaret Jolly, “Moving Masculinities: Memories and Bodies Across Oceania.” *The Contemporary Pacific*, Special issue: Re-membering Oceanic Masculinities, edited by Margaret Jolly, 20, no. 1 (2008): 1–24.

Hawaiian man—Kolomona (the Hawaiianized equivalent of “Solomon”)—depicted in the act of singing and playing a ‘ukulele. As a work of art the painting is masterfully rendered and captures the sitter’s gestural and expressive qualities in a compelling way. But the painting is inherently idealistic in its approach, conflating Hawaiian masculinity with the troubadours of old, wandering minstrels charged with entertaining and cultivating feelings of romance and cheerfulness in royal courts across the French countryside. If the painting of Kolomona interpolated Hawaiian men as singing, strumming merrymakers, literary critic Charles De Kay’s analysis of the work in 1900 provided the supportive text:

Solomon, as he was baptized, shows the jovial, pleasure-loving features of his race as he holds the ukulele. . . . He is a civilized native, and the son of one, and his raiment is not like that which Captain Cook found there a century and more ago. He is a minstrel, a cab-driver, leader of sports and merriment.<sup>68</sup>

That the painting was produced in the same year as the illegal annexation of the Hawaiian Kingdom, and the article written only two years later, is significant in terms of how both may have contributed to the smoothing over of the colonial seizure of the Islands. In this stereotype of the jovial Hawaiian male—which falls squarely in the realm of colonial visibility—image and word collude to create the idea of passive masculinity. As the political events of the 1890s have shown, however, such acquiescence was not at all the case. Indigenous men, far from being the “leader[s] of sports and merriment,” were in fact truculent torchbearers of Native resistance across the Islands.<sup>69</sup>

To return to Pao’s Ule series, it is important to note that his reworking of Kanaka Maoli male identity is not isolated but rather linked to a much larger constellation of male-oriented “anticolonial projects of reclamation” that include “dance, tattooing, ocean voyaging, martial art forms and warrior traditions.”<sup>70</sup> Here, the reinvigoration of male cultural activities is linked to the broader project of Hawaiian cultural nationalism.<sup>71</sup> Pao’s phallic sculptures—which invoke the traditions of tattooing and warrior culture through the painted motifs and shark teeth, respectively—are artistic interventions that feed into this nationalist, indigenous sovereignty framework. Further,

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<sup>68</sup> Charles De Kay, “Painting Racial Types,” *The Century Magazine* 60, no. 2 (1900): 164.

<sup>69</sup> Including but not limited to Hui Aloha ‘Āina presidents James Kauila and David Kalauokalani, and their secretary J.M. Kaneakua, who were charged with leading the anti-annexation movement.

<sup>70</sup> Ty Kāwika Tengan, “(En)gendering Colonialism: Masculinities in Hawai‘i and Aotearoa,” *Cultural Values* 6, no. 3 (2002): 250.

<sup>71</sup> See, for instance, Tengan, *Native Men Remade*.



they are works of indigenous resistance that declare the un-extinguished sovereignty of Kanaka Maoli men: “We are present. In the past we’ve been emasculated, we’ve been removed, we’ve been pushed to the periphery, we’ve been spoken for, we’ve been misrepresented, but this is who we are. We are reclaiming it, we are restating who we are as men and as sovereign people.”<sup>72</sup>

Given the nature of Pao’s ule series, featuring as it does larger-than-life penises, it is not unrealistic to expect that he would encounter criticism for creating works that are overtly male-centric in their orientation, particularly insofar as they are entwined with articulations of sovereign identity. As Tengan points out, for Kanaka Maoli women (and Māori women, in the case of Aotearoa), such assertions of masculine identity in concert with claims to sovereignty are highly problematic and represent a “double colonization for indigenous women as they become disempowered by both larger white society and their own men.”<sup>73</sup> However, from Pao’s perspective, privileging the phallus as a symbol of an empowered indigenous masculinity as well as a statement of sovereignty is not to imply that the sovereignty struggle is a solely male undertaking. Indeed, he acknowledges the role of powerful women like Haunani-Kay Trask, Mililani Trask, Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa, and others who have served as staunch sovereignty warriors. In Pao’s view, however, the phallic works are a reflection of his own personhood, grounded as it is in a masculine consciousness: “I work on the ule because I’m representing myself as well.”<sup>74</sup> While the artist does not consider his ule series to be problematic in the way it locks in on Hawaiian masculinity, throughout the years the series has undergone various transformations, manifesting in different media—in particular paintings—and integrating a feminine element. The graduation of Pao’s ule series toward this state of pono or balance might be seen to circumvent some of the gender disparities acknowledged by Tengan. Here, pono not only entails fairness and equality but it also alludes to the equilibrium between the generative powers of Kū (male) and Hina (female).

### **Ule, Kohe, and Fertile Flows**

As an extension of Pao’s ule series, *Waikāne* (Waters of Kāne) (1999) (Fig. 3.13) constitutes a potent expression of Hawaiian masculinity. The four male deities Kū, Lono, Kāne, and Kanaloa preside at the top of the painting in the realm of Wākea, Sky

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<sup>72</sup> Carl F.K. Pao, interview, April 4, 2013.

<sup>73</sup> Tengan, “(En)gendering Colonialism,” 251.

<sup>74</sup> Carl F.K. Pao, interview, April 4, 2013.

Father, their bodies linked to form bolts of lightning that connect the world of humans to the world of the gods. Kāne's o'ō or digging stick—transformed here into a phallic spear—plummets from the heavens to enter Papa, Earth Mother. But this is perhaps where the singular nature of male potency ends and continues on in co-present union with the equally puissant female strand. The generative coupling between Kāne's o'ō and Papa's fecund body generates the release of blood-red magma and the fresh waters of Wai'ololi (narrow, male waters) and Wai'olola (broad, female waters). Transported by these fertile flows are the contrasting but complementary elements of male and female seed, which surge along wide tributaries to feed the valleys of Waikāne and Waiahole, which are expressed as towering mountain ranges in the background at the top of the painting.<sup>75</sup> In *Waikāne*, earth and sky, ova and semen, magma and lightening, female and male waters that run together and course apart—all connote the dialectic relationship between masculine and feminine elements. Brought together in balanced union, they serve as powerful symbols that celebrate the inherent duality of life and the Universe.<sup>76</sup>

Where Pao's phallic sculptures represented his personal response and reflection on Hawaiian masculinity, in *Waikāne* the artist speaks to the broader issue of collective Hawaiian sovereignty, particularly as it relates to water rights. In 1999, his painting *Waikāne* featured in *Ho'i Ka Wai* (The waters returning), an all-Kanaka Maoli exhibition held at the East-West Center Gallery, Honolulu. The motivation behind the show was to raise awareness about the importance of water in Hawaiian culture and in so doing draw attention to the pernicious state-sanctioned diversion of the resource from the windward side of O'ahu—specifically the Waikāne and Waiahole valleys—to the drier, leeward side of the island. In *Waikāne*, Pao deploys the Hawaiian mo'olelo of Kāne opening up the waters not only to provide an historical account of where the waters began and therefore belong, but also to assert the fact that Kanaka Maoli are the rightful stewards of that critical resource:

It's not so much that we own the water, but more importantly we're responsible for the water and its protection and looking after it so it can do what it needs to do. . . . We understood the importance of keeping our water clean and keeping those waterways open. Like veins. . . . We

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<sup>75</sup> For readers unfamiliar with the geography of O'ahu, Waikāne and Waiahole are the windward valleys located within the Ko'olau Mountain Range, which stretches from the southernmost point at Makapu'u to the northernmost point at Kahuku.

<sup>76</sup> For a powerfully evocative and compelling description of the painting *Waikāne*, see Jolly, "Moving Masculinities," 1.

connect with our environment not just as resources but they are our ancestors. . . . So we have a familial duty.<sup>77</sup>

The struggle of Kānaka Maoli to protect water based on its status as a loved ancestor to be cared for rather than as an asset to be controlled and exploited is mirrored in other settler colonial contexts where indigenous water politics is of central concern. In the case of New Zealand Māori, for instance, issues over the protection and use of both fresh and salt-water resources have been a long-standing source of conflict between iwi (tribes) and the Crown, as indicated by several high-profile Waitangi Tribunal cases over the last three decades.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, the principal value of water to Māori is contained within the whakatauaki (proverb), “Ko te wai te ora ngā mea katoa” (“Water is the life giver of all things”). The significance of this oft-cited proverb took on poignant meaning in 2007 at the 52<sup>nd</sup> Venice Biennale, during which Māori artists Rachel Rakena’s and Brett Graham’s collaborative installation *Aniwaniwa* was featured. In *Aniwaniwa*—which comprised a multimedia complex of disc-shaped screens, moving images, and digital audio elements—the artists invoked themes of history and memory, submersion and surfacing to relay how the powerful Waikato River of New Zealand’s North Island was transformed from giver of life to destroyer when in 1947 its flow was purposefully diverted to flood the village of Horahora in order to create a hydroelectric power station. Writes Jonathan Mane-Wheoki:

The community’s sense of belonging to this specific place and the local Māori tribe’s more ancient connection to the valley’s sacred landmarks were to be sacrificed in the interests of ‘progress.’<sup>79</sup>

Despite the destruction of the village and the displacement of its inhabitants (which included members of Graham’s own family), the work is principally about a people’s resilience and persistence in the face of overwhelming loss. Commenting on the moving images she produced for the installation, Rakena notes:

I wanted to acknowledge peoples lives, the repeated activities of the people suspended forever as a memory floating, immersed in the lake of a disrupted river. They are not dead. They are symbols of a community

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<sup>77</sup> Carl F.K. Pao, interview, April 4, 2013.

<sup>78</sup> Including but not limited to the Te Ati Awa case (1983); the Kaituna River case (1984); the Manukau Harbor case (1985); and the Mangonui case. For more on Māori legal disputes concerning water rights, see Durie, *Te Mana, Te Kāwanatanga*, 24–27. In addition, see Dame Anne Salmond’s “Tears of Rangi: Water, People, and Power in New Zealand,” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 285–309.

<sup>79</sup> Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, “Wakas on the Grand Canal: Contemporary New Zealand Māori Artists in Venice,” in *Aniwaniwa: Brett Graham and Rachel Rakena*. Catalog published on the occasion of the 52<sup>nd</sup> International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, June 10–September 30, 2007; 10.

still alive, still engaged in the activities of living, struggling to maintain their claim to the area. The repetition of actions that never achieve their goal shows the determination and continuation yet.<sup>80</sup>

Similarly, Pao's *Waikāne* invokes indigenous determination and continuation. In the painting, Kāne's o'ō transforms from a digging stick to an explosive spear of resistance that delivers a deadly thrust. Though phallic in appearance, a closer reading of the implement reveals that its potency lies in the fact that it harnesses both male and female streams of power, as signified in the shaft by the color black, which represents the masculine principle, and the color white, which represents the female principle. Further, as Pao notes, the spear, when inverted, becomes a kohe or vagina. Thus, the multivalent symbol of the spear connotes the dual essences of male and female and in so doing visually illustrates the shared role of Kanaka Maoli men and women in the struggle toward sovereignty and self-determination.

Pao's raising of masculinity and sovereignty in his ule series and *Waikāne* warrants a return to the epigraph at the beginning of this section. The 'ōlelo no'eau "Kū ka ule, he'e ka laho" (The penis stands, the scrotum sags) refers to the fruiting of ulu or breadfruit, an important source of sustenance for Kānaka Maoli, particularly in the past during times of famine. The ulu also constitutes an important cultural symbol as one of the many kinolau (physical manifestations) of the god Kū. As Mary Kawena Pukui notes, in the early stages as the breadfruit blossoms it appears erect ("kū ka ule"). As the fruit matures, its increasing weight causes the stem to bend until the full-grown ulu hangs down like a sagging scrotum ("he'e ka lalo").<sup>81</sup> I would like to propose that the 'ōlelo no'eau of the developing ulu from a state of uprightness to a state of ripened abundance serves as a metaphor for indigenous sovereignty in Hawai'i, whereby the blossom of resistance leads to the fullness of Native self-determination. Pao's work is a proactive and procreative act of resistance to colonialism in artistic form, serving as both semiotic weapon and life-giving source for Native hope and renewal.

#### —————Visual Mo'olelo—————

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<sup>80</sup> Alice Huchison, "Introduction," in *Aniwaniwa: Brett Graham and Rachel Rakena*. Catalog published on the occasion of the 52nd International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, June 10 –September 30, 2007; 4.

<sup>81</sup> Pukui, *'Ōlelo No'eau*, 204.

## Stories of Survivance in Solomon Enos's *Polyfantastica* and *From Stars to Stars*

The visions we offer our children shape the future. It *matters* what those visions are. Often they become self-fulfilling prophecies. Dreams are maps.

—Carl Sagan<sup>82</sup>

Sometimes art has to lie to help us understand the truth, as does the storyteller embed wisdom within the most outlandish tales.

—Solomon Enos<sup>83</sup>

IN NU‘UANU, the section of Honolulu where Solomon Enos and his family live and where I have come to conduct my final interview with him, the light casts a resplendent clarity on everything it touches, while the breeze pushing down from the valley mingles with the sun to produce a soft, thermal breath of calm and tranquility that seems even to rise from the grass under my feet. It is light-years away from the urban roar of Downtown Honolulu from where I have just come. As I make my way down the driveway, in the near distance Enos emerges from his art studio, a side garage just off the main house, and waves me over. After greeting each other with a *hongī*,<sup>84</sup> the artist leads me into the inner sanctum of his creative domain where shelves lined along an entire wall are packed with plastic containers holding paint and other art supplies. Beside them large jars accommodate an array of different kinds of paintbrushes, all tightly packed together. The smell of turpentine with its heady, piney notes pervades the garage, invoking a visceral response of the senses.

By far the majority of space on the shelves is taken up by hundreds of action figures of dragons, demon lords, wizards, and other assorted characters related to the iconic fantasy game *Dungeons and Dragons*. Even the most untrained of eyes would be able to intuit the link of inspiration between these miniature creations and the world Enos brings to life in his visual epic “*Polyfantastica*.” Taking up most of the floor space is a large table, the surface of which is a work of art in itself in that it is completely covered with the unintentional drips and splatters of paint that have fallen from the artist’s brush over the years. Enos, inspecting one of those inadvertent patches, jokingly muses about what worlds or galaxies someone might find if they were to microscopically excavate the layers of his tabletop. These are the kinds of questions that emanate from a mind that is absorbed with things of the impossible, implausible, and fantastic.

What lies on top of Enos’s table is what truly draws my attention and excitement. Hundreds of sheets of pencil sketches and gouache illustrations are either piled one on top of the other or lie dispersed

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<sup>82</sup> Carl Sagan, *Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space*, Reprint (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1997), 69.

<sup>83</sup> Excerpt from email, Solomon Enos in correspondence with Mathew Corry, March 14, 2012. Reproduced here with the artist’s permission.

<sup>84</sup> The pressing of noses together, as is customary in Māori and Hawaiian cultures when greeting a person. (“*Honi*” is the Hawaiian language equivalent).

across the surface. Enos apologizes for not being more organized, but for a researcher such as myself, the opportunity to see the raw material out of which a body of work has manifested requires no orderly, studied arrangement. As the artist sifts through his collection of preliminary pieces he begins to select random samples for me to look at, from which emerges an otherworldly milieu of futuristic places and beings. This is the embryonic starting point of Enos's oeuvre, "Polyfantastica." This is where the artist's visual map to the future begins.

For Native peoples, ancestral stories form the bedrock of society. They relay origins and histories and define the collective's place in the world. They are at once didactic and deeply enigmatic. Stories help make sense of human experience, bringing coherence where there might otherwise be chaos. They provide entertainment as well as lessons and wisdom for life. Stories function as vessels that relay cultural wisdom and knowledge across temporal and spatial boundaries. On this point, Kanaka Maoli scholar Ku'ualoha Ho'omanawanui likens Hawaiian mo'olelo (stories/histories) to wa'a or canoes, "transporting our ancestors and ancestral knowledge across space and time to us today to continue to enlighten and inspire us, reminding us who they were, and by extension, who we are as a lāhui [people/nation]." <sup>85</sup> This continuity between past and present generations of Kānaka Maoli as rendered through the telling of mo'olelo is explicitly borne out in the root word "mo'o," which translates as "succession, series, especially a genealogical line, lineage." <sup>86</sup>

Stories provide continuity with the past, but they are also in constant motion moving forward into the future, transforming incrementally as a result of societal shifts and innovations. Here, continuity and change are co-present realities in the indigenous cultural universe, providing both point of origin and anticipated destination. For Native peoples who have experienced the trauma of colonization, stories and storytelling are also acts of survivance, providing an "active sense of presence over absence, deracination, oblivion." <sup>87</sup> The literary, academic, and creative productions of contemporary Kanaka Maoli writers, performers, and artists are imbued with this liberatory principle, wherein Native presence is manifested through a constellation of storied words, actions, and images. Visual artist Solomon Enos's contribution to this powerful praxis in the form of his experimental visual epic titled "Polyfantastica"—an amalgamation of futuristic-based artistic works that span a diverse range of media,

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<sup>85</sup> Sherilyn Ku'ualoha Ho'omanawanui, "Pele's Appeal: Mo'olelo, Kaona, and Huluhia in 'Pele and Hi'iaka' Literature (1860-1928)" (PhD, English, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2007), 29.

<sup>86</sup> Mary Kawena Pukui and Samuel E. Elbert, *Hawaiian Dictionary*, revised and enlarged edition (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), 253.

<sup>87</sup> Vizenor, "Aesthetics of Survivance," 1.

including a graphic novel, paintings, miniature sculptures, and a website—is worthy to consider in this regard. In this section, I examine two works in Enos’s “Polyfantastica” oeuvre: his graphic novel *Polyfantastica* (2009) and his series of paintings *From Stars to Stars: An Indigenous Perspective on Human Evolution* (2012), which featured at The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu, as part of the 2012 “Biennial X” show. To focus my analysis, I use the interface of cultural continuity and change as a basis for distinguishing the bold trace of survivance that is present in both works.

From an early age, self-taught artist Solomon Robert Nui Enos was provided with all the necessary ingredients to create art: a supportive family, an artistic father who was able to impart his technical knowledge to his son, access to an abundance of art supplies, and raw talent, lots of it. Solomon’s father Eric, who founded Ka‘ala Farm Learning Center in Wai‘anae Valley on the leeward coast of O‘ahu thirty years ago,<sup>88</sup> has arguably been one of the principal influences in the younger Enos’s life. Eric Enos earned a BFA at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa in the late 1960s and might have gone on to build a productive career in the visual arts. However, his energies were redirected when he “realized that his passion . . . his canvas was the community.”<sup>89</sup> In many ways, Solomon Enos has managed to bring his father’s passion for art and community building together in his own practice, as evidenced by the numerous community art initiatives he has been involved in over the years. Such projects include working on collaborative murals and projects with students at Makaha Elementary School, Nanakuli Intermediate School, and with organizations like MA‘O Organic Farms, Ka‘ala Cultural Learning Center, Hoa‘aina O Makaha, and Wai‘anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center.

Importantly, for Enos the kuleana (responsibility/obligation) to share his artistic talent, whether it be in the form of producing an actual piece of work or in his capacity as a grassroots art educator working predominantly with at-risk youth and adults, is no light matter:

I like to think of one of the things that Uncle Eddie Ka‘anana would share, is that, when you’re given a gift . . . if you don’t share it, if you don’t pass on your blessings, the things that were given to you will make you sick. If you don’t share it, if you don’t pass on the mana [power/prestige] . . . So, I’m finding any way I can, balancing my roles as a father and a husband and then giving whatever I can back to making

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<sup>88</sup> Ka‘ala Farm Learning Center is a nonprofit organization that uses the ‘āina (land) as a platform for educating the community about the importance of caring for the environment and the value of Hawaiian cultural and ancestral traditions.

<sup>89</sup> Solomon Enos, interview, January 16, 2013.

that kind of fertile soil for other [people] to discover who they are through art and other related kinds of media.<sup>90</sup>

The artist's allusion to making "fertile soil" is not merely a figurative description for the work he does with some of the most vulnerable members of his community; it has literal significance in terms of his connection to the land—specifically the verdant farmlands of Ka‘ala where he grew up and where he regularly returns to spend time with his family—and how it informs his art practice and his identity as a Kanaka Maoli:

So going up to Ka‘ala on a Saturday and working in the lo‘i and the rain would start to come in.<sup>91</sup> Up in the mountains being surrounded and embraced by such a sense of identity. It's like, 'Yeah, I'm totally where I need to be and where I belong. And this *is* me: Those clouds, this forest, these rocks here, this lo‘i that I'm sitting in.' So a real strong sense of identity, I think, is what that's given me.<sup>92</sup>

Enos merges this strong sense of Hawaiian cultural identity as shaped by the land, the environment, and his family upbringing with his longtime interest in science, sci-fi, and, fantasy—of the latter, the staple influences being such notable luminaries as Carl Sagan, Kurt Vonnegut, Robert E. Howard, Frank Herbert, Arthur C. Clark, Ursula K. Le Guin, and the inimitable J.R.R. Tolkien—to create his own brand of visual indigenous science fiction. Here, Enos draws on the cultural sensibilities embedded in a Kanaka Maoli worldview, while at the same time adding a noteworthy innovation by incorporating a Western science fiction flare to imagine and image an indigenous future.

Of his peers, Enos is perhaps the most diverse in terms of the different genres of art and projects he has engaged in over the years. He has maintained a busy work schedule (as one of only a few Kānaka Maoli who has been able to work full-time as an artist in the Islands), producing several book illustrations,<sup>93</sup> large-scale collaborative murals, and numerous commissions in public venues such as the Sheraton Waikīkī and the Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa. He has also exhibited widely in Hawai‘i in solo and group shows. Importantly, Enos sees these artistic and project-based activities as “all versions of storytelling,” and he cites the possibility that maybe even the title of being an artist is too narrow in terms of how he perceives his own role: “I almost like to think that I’m a little bit . . . like a storyteller.”<sup>94</sup> Literary and art commentator Dean Rader

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<sup>90</sup> Solomon Enos, interview, May 14, 2012.

<sup>91</sup> Irrigated terrace in which kalo is grown.

<sup>92</sup> Solomon Enos, interview, January 16, 2013.

<sup>93</sup> Most significant of which includes *The Epic Tale of Hi‘iakaikapoliopole: Woman of the Sunrise, Lightning-Skirted Beauty of Halema‘uma‘u* (2006).

<sup>94</sup> Solomon Enos, interview, January 16, 2013.



observes that “the world comes to us in stories.”<sup>95</sup> That being the case, as an artist-storyteller, Enos brings the Hawaiian world to us in new ways through a multitude of visual mo‘olelo, which at once narrate and declare Kanaka Maoli presence—past, present, and, most significantly, future.

### **Wayfinders of the Future: Cosmic Journeys From *Polyfantastica* to *Stars to Stars***

*Polyfantastica* is an experimental, 50-page graphic novel that combines text and image to create a world populated by futuristic wayfinders who inhabit the watery continent of Moananui, located on the planet Honua forty thousand years in the future. The forty millennia that Enos sketches and paints into existence are divided into four 10,000-year epochs or wā—Kuu (Wā I), Lono (Wā II), Kanaloa (Wā III), and Kaane (Wā IV)—each of which relays a significant phase in the civilization’s evolution, including war, a collective awakening, voyages to outer galaxies, and a final, triumphant reunion with “life across the Multiverse.”<sup>96</sup>

As Enos explains, *Polyfantastica* “talks about a world completely untainted by Western influence, completely left alone. But it’s not necessarily hunky dory. There’s also strife, there’s also war. . . . You don’t have the same pan-epidemics but you have spiritual epidemics.”<sup>97</sup> The deliberate exclusion of references to Western influence and, by extension, colonization is significant. Rather than focus on changes wrought through the transformative process of encounter, Enos’s storyline emphasizes the independent development of a civilization that has been charting its own direction and making its own mistakes for millennia. Far from being the products of contact, the characters in *Polyfantastica* are the creations of *their own* in situ making.

This orientation toward the indigenous Self rather than the outside Other has important implications when it comes to acknowledging Hawai‘i’s real-life colonial history. In Enos’s view, *Polyfantastica* constitutes the restarting of a conversation and a shift in consciousness that requires the unpicking of and reframing of history:

Sometimes when you’re weaving, kūpuna [ancestors/older generations] will tell you, “There’s a mistake; you passed it already, a couple of inches.” Not only do you take that mistake out but you go back another couple of inches . . . and restart all over again. Maybe even undo the whole thing and restart all over again. So it’s almost like this idea of not continuing history where we left off . . . but to pick up history as if we

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<sup>95</sup> Dean Rader, *Engaged Resistance*, 172.

<sup>96</sup> *This IS Hawai‘i*. Brochure published in conjunction with the exhibition “This IS Hawai‘i” at Transformer Gallery, and the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., May 19–July 4, 2011.

<sup>97</sup> Solomon Enos, interview, January 16, 2013.

were never colonized.<sup>98</sup>

To “pick up history as if we were never colonized” is a statement that could understandably be interpreted as overly idealistic and naïve or at worst dismissive of the very real and ongoing effects of U.S. colonialism in Hawai‘i. However, Enos is quick to add that this act of unpicking does not imply a forgetting of what has occurred or an ignoring of the profound ‘eha or pain that Kānaka Maoli experience under U.S. occupation. Rather, it is an acknowledgment of the “need to get back on that path that our ancestors were on a thousand years ago. It’s getting back to that and *that* being our true alignment.”<sup>99</sup> *Polyfantastica* therefore, might be seen as—and here I signal Carl Sagan’s epigraph at the start of this section—an attempt to envision an alternate reality of how things *could* be—a dream, perhaps, that maps the future.

The theme of cultural continuity in *Polyfantastica* is evident in the fact that it constitutes an extension of the Hawaiian Kumulipo, an eighteen-century cosmological and genealogical chant that recounts the creation of all living things in sixteen epic wā or epochs. To these sixteen wā, *Polyfantastica* constitutes the addition of twenty more. Enos states:

I like the idea of looking at the Kumulipo as the beginnings of a pattern, and now when you read it, close the book, you’re, like, if there were blank pages in the book, how would we define the seventeenth wā?<sup>100</sup>

From Enos’s perspective, the Kumulipo serves as both a foundation of tradition and a platform for creative elaboration. It exists as “a living prophesy, not a dead prophesy” to which new epochs should be added as Kānaka Maoli continue to evolve and change culturally.<sup>101</sup> Using the contemporary format of the graphic novel to continue where the composer of the Kumulipo left off, Enos fills in the “blank pages” with his own visual chant across the universe.

Change is wrought large in *Polyfantastica*—large on an evolutionary scale. Over the period of forty millennia, Kānaka Maoli take on radically new physical forms:

The idea was to try to visually interpret what humans would look like in the fortieth millennium based on the formula that is “Polyfantastica.” And this idea that we become as strange and as varied as what we would normally associate with aliens or non-human forms. And this idea that our form as we are now, with our hands and our fingers and our hair is just one of many, many forms that we’re going to take on. And that as an

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

organism if we're successful and we thrive galactically . . . we're going to take on all these forms.<sup>102</sup>

On the front cover of *Polyfantastica*, readers are immediately introduced to Enos's interpretation of what humans might look like in the future. A two-horned, multi-tentacled Leviathan strides across an expansive landscape (Fig. 3.14). Emerging from an opening in the creature's abdomen, a humanoid figure appears, its own stomach hollowed out to resemble a gaping mouth, similar in form to a Hawaiian ki'i (temple image). Following in the wake of these two astonishing beings, a phalanx of warriors clothed in exoskeleton suits stride forward with determined purpose. The image evokes a sense of impending apocalypse, calling to mind battle scenes from Tolkien's Middle Earth trilogy. Shaped by cosmic forces over millennia, these life forms are the progeny of Kānaka Maoli today. While no doubt inspired by the sci-fi classics Enos has immersed himself in over the years, these future descendants are linked to a much older tradition of Hawaiian storytelling that features the kapua or shape shifter. In Hawaiian tradition, shape shifters are gods or the offspring of a god and mortal union. Famous shapeshifters in the Hawaiian pantheon include Pele (goddess of fire and volcanoes), Hi'iakaikapoliopole (patron goddess of hula), and Kamapua'a (the pig god). Importantly, in his work Enos draws on the traditional shape shifter archetype as a strategy for alluding to the strategic ways real-life indigenous communities navigate the changing world in which they live. Enos recounts the story of Kamapua'a and links it with contemporary indigenous adaptations:

I like the idea of the shape shifter. In Hawaiian culture we have Kamapua'a coming down the hillside being chased by Pele. If he doesn't do something he's going to die, so he transforms into a humuhumu [i.e., humuhumunukunukuapua'a, a species of triggerfish]. . . . He transforms into a fish but he's still Kamapua'a. But, he's taken on another form and it's like an adaptation. So, indigenous peoples need to take on a new form . . . so their singular culture, singular languages can survive in a globalized reality.<sup>103</sup>

Just as Kamapua'a's shape-shifting performance saved him from Pele's wrath, the ability of indigenous communities to change shape—to adapt in the face of crisis—also ensures their continued presence in the world.

The emphasis on shape shifting is repeated in *From Stars to Stars: An Indigenous Perspective on Human Evolution*, where Enos takes evolution several steps further.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Solomon Enos, "Biennial of Hawai'i Artists X." Panel discussion, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Art Auditorium, Honolulu, February 21, 2012.

Comprising eleven abstract paintings, each of which measures 9 feet high by 3 feet wide, *From Stars to Stars* (Fig. 3.15) is based on the evolutionary thesis presented in the Kumulipo chant that humankind began life as stars and evolved into humans. However, Enos adds an innovative twist. He conceives of a scenario where humans are freed of their biological, Earth-bound moorings and return to being stars.

For Enos, the artist's many "canvases" are not so much "structured as frames, but as windows."<sup>104</sup> In much the same way, to look at *From Stars to Stars* is to gaze through a window into multiple realities. Each painting is designed to challenge and expand perception, in one instance seeming to depict an insect, plant, animal, or human, in the next moment morphing into an organ of the human body, a mechanical structure, or a gaseous ball of galactic particles. Here, Enos emphasizes the concept of kaona, a traditional literary and rhetorical device that roughly translates as "hidden meaning" and is featured in Hawaiian poetry, stories, songs, dances, and art. The artist packs the paintings with imagery that can be accessed by a range of different viewers, depending on their level of perception. In *The Sourcer* (2011) (Fig. 3.16), for instance, the "head" of the figure could be interpreted as that of an insect, while below is what looks like a human lung, replete with dangling ventricles and bright splashes of blood red paint. The figure might also represent a plant with its dendrites hanging down or a microscopic phytoplankton floating on the surface of the water. All of these potential possibilities that coexist in the space of a single painting underscore the Hawaiian philosophy that all things are connected. The humans of Enos's proposed future are the fully integrated vessels of all life.

In *The Trillionth Sister* (2011) (Fig. 3.17), the abstract figure takes on an almost sculptural quality, reminiscent of Hawaiian carvings. Enos uses a variation of tone, shadow, and highlight to "chisel" out sharp edges and gouge hollows to create an anthropomorphic form. Different shades of blue wash give the illusion of undulating wood grain on the surface. The allusion to carving is significant because one way of interpreting the works is as ki'i, the carved images of gods and ancestors. Recalling my own experience of the exhibition, the large scale of the works and their prominent elevated display several feet up on the gallery wall invoked a feeling of what it might have been like to enter a heiau (temple) complex occupied by towering mana-filled effigies. In similar vein, the paintings exuded their own powerful presence not simply as works of art but as portraits of honored deities.

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<sup>104</sup> Enos, "Biennial of Hawai'i Artists X."

Enos's longtime interest in Hawaiian voyaging traditions also finds expression in the paintings. From the artist's perspective, in the world of the future, Hawaiians would expand their voyaging capabilities and "leap into their destiny as intergalactic explorers."<sup>105</sup> Rather than journeying from island to island, says Enos, "we can go from stars to stars."<sup>106</sup> Thus, in *The Guardian of the Words* (2011) (Fig. 3.18), soft washes of blue, green, pink, purple, and orange suggest the gaseous clouds of a swirling galaxy, within which is what looks to be a titanic spaceship, its elongated body a continuous, structural spine that in turn connects to what might be the circular construction of a flight deck. As it moves through bursts of interstellar color formations, streams of extraterrestrial matter—space particles, energy protons—seem to deflect off the front of the ship. Like their ancestors before them, the voyagers of the future who sail these ships have developed the technology to ply the waters of a new frontier: the expanding reaches of a cosmic ocean.

Key to Enos's work is the idea that in the distant future humans will evolve into "consciousness engines," which "are positioned throughout the galaxy as synapses for a galactic consciousness."<sup>107</sup> This complex and highly conceptual proposal is perhaps represented most clearly in *The Thought Gardener* (2011) (Fig. 3.19). In the human nervous system, neurons are the building blocks of human consciousness and thought, but it is the synapses that create the "spark." In the painting, the viewer comes face-to-face with what initially looks like a humanoid figure suspended in a matrix of rust-colored wash. As with *The Trillionth Sister*, this figure could be a revered deity or the effigy of a futuristic ancestor. However, imagined from a microscopic perspective, the enigmatic form shifts shape before our very eyes. Now the image takes on the anatomical characteristics of a human synapse, composed as it is of a bulbous synaptic knob as the "head" and an axon as the "body." Even the six protruding nodules could be read as the abstracted sites where neurotransmission takes place—where human thought and consciousness explode into reality. In *The Thought Gardener*, Enos takes us on a journey into the inner reaches of human consciousness where humanity evolves into a unified consciousness of hope and peace. Notes Enos, "Nothing is impossible,

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<sup>105</sup> Excerpt from email, Solomon Enos in correspondence with Mathew Corry, March 14, 2012. Reproduced here with the artist's permission.

<sup>106</sup> Solomon Enos, interview, January 16, 2013.

<sup>107</sup> Excerpt from email, Solomon Enos in correspondence with Mathew Corry, March 14, 2012. Used here with the artist's permission.

improbable yes, not impossible. And . . . there can be a time after war and strife and . . . we are not doomed to an eternity of human conflict.”<sup>108</sup>

*Polyfantastica* and *From Stars to Stars* are a continuation of the grand tradition that is Hawaiian storytelling. Brandy Nālani McDougall insightfully observes that “by giving life to our mo‘olelo we are, in turn, giving life to ourselves.”<sup>109</sup> Certainly, mo‘olelo live on through being told and retold to succeeding generations, but they also live on through elaboration and change. The visual mo‘olelo that Enos creates give life to contemporary generations of Kānaka Maoli by offering an empowering vision of the future. Here, Kānaka Maoli determine their own destiny in their new incarnations as voyagers of the stars, and then as stars themselves. Like his visual creations, Enos himself shifts shape as an artist through a process of cultural hybridity: “Art allows me to borrow elements from my culture, borrow elements from Western science and kind of bring these things together to create these new hybrid perspectives.”<sup>110</sup> Such cultural admixture, Joe Lockard notes, is an intrinsic characteristic of survivance, which “emerges from hybrid, syncretic mixed-blood stories, whose conscious cultural borrowings assemble strength from a multiplicity of sources.”<sup>111</sup>

Hawai‘i has undergone profound and bitter changes over the last 120 years. That short duration of time has witnessed the systematic alienation of Kānaka Maoli from their lands and their forced assimilation into mainstream American culture. As Haunani-Kay Trask has put it, through the colonial occupation of their homeland, Kānaka Maoli have been relegated to “an imposed life of never ending struggle in a losing war.”<sup>112</sup> In her poem “The Broken Gourd,” Trask uses the metaphor of a broken ipu or gourd to describe the kind of destructive impact U.S. colonialism has had on Kanaka Maoli lives and their homeland: “toward our aching earth/a cracked ipu/whispers, bloody water/on its broken lip.”<sup>113</sup>

For Enos, however, the significance of the ipu—which in his view stands for the totality of what it means to be Maoli: the people, the culture, and the ancestral lands—is not in simply recognizing that it is broken, but in determining how to mend it. This privileging of the mending over the brokenness offers a hopeful perspective, avoiding

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Solomon Enos, interview, May 14, 2012.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Joe Lockard, “Facing the Wiindigoo: Gerald Vizenor and Primo Levi,” in *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*, ed. Gerald Vizenor (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 211.

<sup>112</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 20.

<sup>113</sup> Trask, *Night Is a Sharkskin Drum*, 11.

what Gerald Vizenor refers to as “an aesthetic victimry.”<sup>114</sup> Art, according to Enos, can provide the adhesive, “a way for us to get reconnected with the profundity of what it means to be Hawaiian. . . . And [provide ways] to reknit pukas [holes] in our understanding. Ways . . . to put something back together again.”<sup>115</sup> Enos elaborates further and invites us to imagine what he sees:

An ipu, a large ipu carved out, delicate, beautifully designed, beautiful etching on this ipu . . . It’s huge and it’s beautiful and it’s dropped and it’s broken, pieces are missing. In putting [it] back together there are parts that are rotten, that we’re going have to patch with contemporary art, we’re going to have to patch our understandings of what it means to be Hawaiians with a space to experiment, a space to be, like, “We don’t really know, maybe this area of our ‘ōlelo no‘eau [proverbs]” . . . and so because of that we have to . . . try to piece these things back together again. With the understanding that that ‘umeke [container] that has represented who we are for thousands of years is amazing. It is truly our identity. And looking at art as a way to bring the pewa [rectangular patch for bowls], [to] patch up those pukas.<sup>116</sup>

The visual mo‘olelo that Enos advances in *Polyfantastica* and *From Stars to Stars* offer a frame of reference that privileges a Native worldview both grounded in tradition and open to change. As an artist-storyteller Enos tells the most outrageous tales, which are themselves embedded with the most profound truths.

In “Hawaiian Art: A Doorway to Knowing,” Manulani Aluli Meyer stresses the importance of Kānaka Maoli representing themselves through modes of indigenous-centered knowledge and creativity:

[W]e must write . . . we must paint . . . we must create our own ways of understanding. We are re-writing, re-scripting, re-imagining history. It is simply our version of the truth and when we speak it we are changing our future because we are able to define our past and present.<sup>117</sup>

Meyer’s statement is critical to consider. The visual arts constitute an empowering vehicle through which Kānaka Maoli are able to represent their own “version of the truth”—indeed their own version of veritas—to themselves and to others. The specific term I have used to read such creative assertions is visual sovereignty, which is manifested in the distinct but connected bodies of work by Kaili Chun, Carl F.K. Pao, and Solomon Enos. In the next chapter I turn my attention to contemporary Kanaka Maoli art at the Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa. Here, I seek to complicate the more

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<sup>114</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 21.

<sup>115</sup> Solomon Enos, interview, January 16, 2013.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Manulani Aluli Meyer, “Hawaiian Art: A Doorway to Knowing,” in *Nā Maka Hou: New Visions*, ed. Momi Cazimero (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 2001), 13.

conventional understanding of visual sovereignty as inherently related to Native artists working *against* and *outside* of colonial power by expanding its definition to include the process by which they work *with* and *within* it.



*Figures: Chapter Three*



Figure 3.1: *Veritas II* (2012) by Kaili Chun. Welded steel cells. Each cell measures 8 feet by 8 inches. Waimānalo Beach, O‘ahu, Hawai‘i. (Photograph by author, 2012).

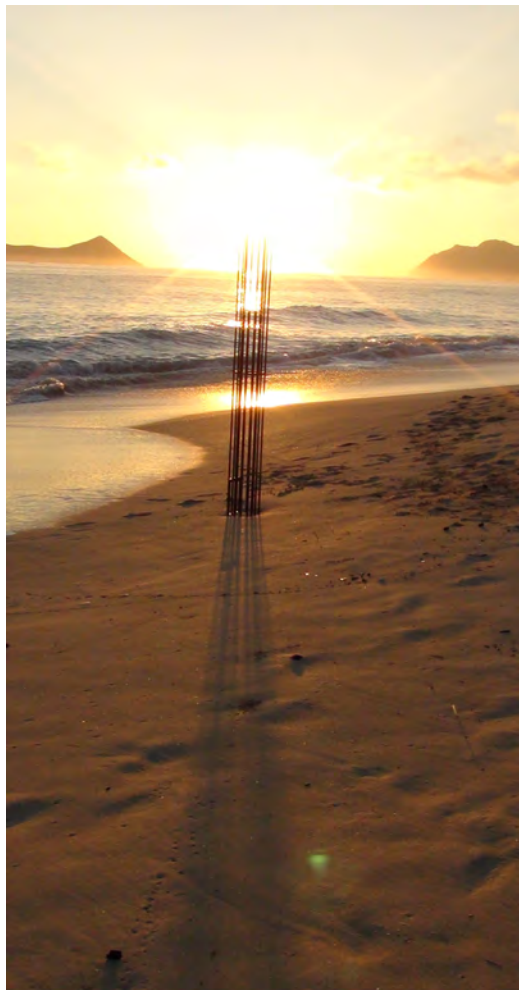


Figure 3.2: The morning sun casting rays on one of the cells in *Veritas II*. (Photograph by author, 2012).



Figure 3.3: Parts of *Veritas II* disappearing.  
(Photograph by author, 2012).



Figure 3.4: Ocean water moving through *Veritas II*  
like hā or breath. (Photograph by author, 2012).

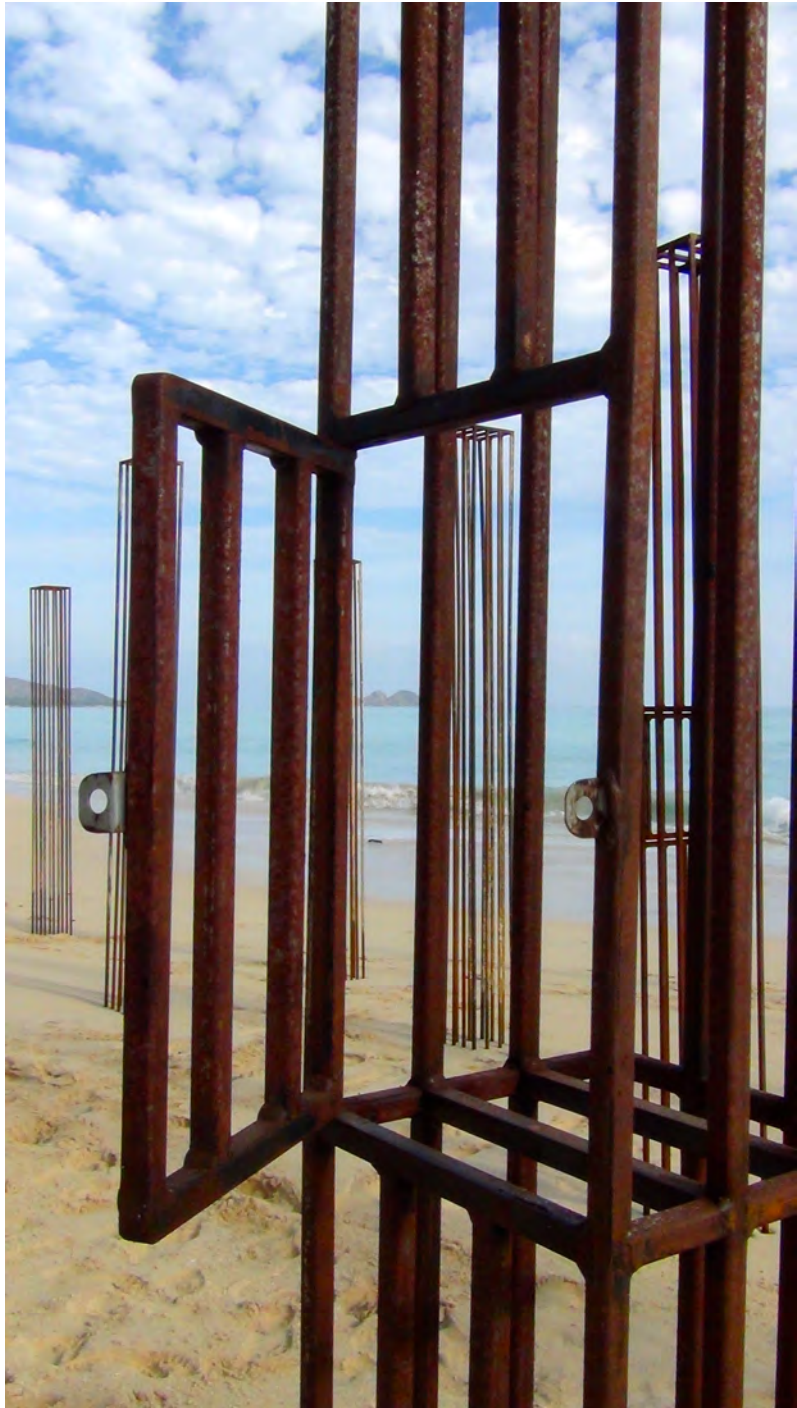


Figure 3.5: *Veritas II* detail of cell door. (Photograph by author, 2012).





Figure 3.6: Akua kā'ai. (Image from J. Halley Cox with William H. Davenport, *Hawaiian Sculpture*, 1988).



Figure 3.7: *Ulekiha* (back view)  
(1999) by Carl F.K. Pao.  
(Photograph courtesy of the artist).



Figure 3.8: *Ulekiha* (front  
view). (Photograph courtesy  
of the artist).



Figure 3.9: *Ulemanō I* (1999) by Carl F.K. Pao. (Photograph courtesy of the artist).

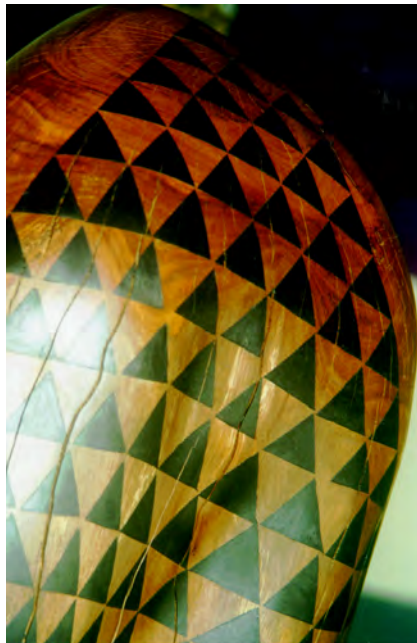


Figure 3.10: *Ulemanō I* (detail). (Photograph courtesy of the artist).



Figure 3.11: *Ulemanō 3* (2000) by Carl F.K. Pao. (Photograph courtesy of the artist).



Figure 3.12: *Ulemanō 3* (detail of resin "teeth"). (Photograph courtesy of the artist).





Figure 3.13: *Waikāne* (1999) by Carl F.K. Pao. (Photograph courtesy of the artist).





Figure 3.14: '*Oro'ino* (2011) by Solomon Enos. Gouache on bristol board. 11 inches by 14 inches. (Image courtesy of the artist).



Figure 3.15: *From Stars to Stars: An Indigenous Perspective on Human Evolution* (2012) by Solomon Enos. Acrylic, enamel, China markers on asphalt saturated felt. Each of the works measures 9 feet by 3 feet. The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu. (Photograph courtesy of the artist).



Figure 3.16: *The Sourcer*.  
(Photograph courtesy of the  
artist).



Figure 3.17: *The Trillionth  
Sister*. (Photograph courtesy  
of the artist).





Figure 3.18: *The Guardian of the Words*. (Photograph courtesy of the artist).



Figure 3.19: *The Thought Gardener*. (Photograph courtesy of the artist).

Alice: [looking through the Doorknob’s keyhole] There he is! I simply must get through.

Doorknob: Sorry. You’re much too big. Simply impassable.

Alice: You mean impossible.

Doorknob: No, impassable. Nothing’s impossible.

—*Alice in Wonderland*<sup>1</sup>

I like to think of Aulani as a portal to Hawai‘i.

—Djuan Rivers, Vice-President of Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa<sup>2</sup>

### Through the Keyhole

In Disney’s 1951 animated film *Alice in Wonderland*, the heroine Alice gains entry to an alternate world by way of a small keyhole, which she is able to pass through after imbibing an enchanted liquid that causes her to shrink. Once on the other side of the keyhole, she encounters Wonderland, a place of topsy-turvy madness where reality is stretched and altered to zany proportions. It is a liminal realm, within which the young girl embarks on an otherworldly odyssey of adventure.

When peering through a keyhole, the viewer’s visual field is necessarily restricted by the physical fact of the surrounding frame. One can observe and hear what is happening directly ahead, but once the action moves outside the margins of the keyhole, it is beyond the viewer’s purview. In this chapter, I appropriate the idea of the keyhole as a useful metaphor for thinking about Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa, Disney’s first family resort endeavor in Hawai‘i. I suggest that the resort functions as a kind of “keyhole” or—to use Disney executive Djuan Rivers’s own description of the place—a “portal to Hawai‘i” that has its own points of focus and zones of limitation.

The principal focal point at Aulani is Hawaiian culture. Indeed, the very name “Aulani” translates as “messenger of the chief.” Implied in this strategic naming is the idea that through Aulani, Disney assumes the authority to speak on behalf of Hawaiians. The key message being conveyed to guests is that they can access and experience Hawaiian culture by immersing themselves “in the legends of the islands” and

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<sup>1</sup> Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, and Hamilton Luske, *Alice in Wonderland*, DVD (Walt Disney Productions, 1951).

<sup>2</sup> Cited in George Pennacchio, “Disney’s New Aulani Resort Brings Out Unique Side of Hawaii,” *KABC-TV Los Angeles*, September 22, 2011, <http://abclocal.go.com/kabc/story?section=news/entertainment&id=8363995>.

discovering “the true enchantment of Hawai‘i.”<sup>3</sup> Here, the “stamp of authenticity to experience” that is communicated through Disney’s message-bearing enterprise follows a familiar “Hawaiian idyll” paradigm, whereby the enigma that is Hawai‘i awaits discovery by the happy traveler.<sup>4</sup> For scholars Brandy McDougall and Georganne Nordstrom, the self-styled positioning of Disney as a messenger of the chief entails the transmission of *false* messages:

The multitude of messages being sent has the convoluted effect of situating Disney as an authority on everything Hawaiian, which problematically adds credence to the distorted Disneyfied narrative it weaves about this place, its people, and Disney’s role.<sup>5</sup>

Disney’s particular brand of messaging has relied on preexisting romanticized notions of “the Native” as a culture-bearing/sharing host and their homeland as a Utopian getaway to be discovered. The result is a concealment of the fraught political realities and structural inequalities that confront Kānaka Maoli, who exist on the less-visible margins of Disney’s utopic keyhole. Utopia, we are told after all, “never admits anything exterior to itself; Utopia is for itself its own reality.”<sup>6</sup>

As I established in Chapter One, tourism is a particularly virulent and specific component of the colonial enterprise in Hawai‘i. Haunani-Kay Trask writes in her poem “Dispossessions of Empire” that Hawai‘i has been turned into a “tourist archipelago,” which entails “for the foreigner, romances/of ‘Aloha’” and “for Hawaiians,/dispossessions of empire.”<sup>7</sup> The deleterious impact of tourism on Native lives is, of course, not unique to Hawai‘i but is equally evident in other Pacific homelands. In her own critique of tourism, Tongan scholar Konai Helu Thaman refers to it as a “process of cultural invasion” with links to colonialism.<sup>8</sup> The parallel Thaman makes between tourism and colonialism is a salient one when thinking about the situation of Hawai‘i as a colonized and occupied land under the United States. Having lived in the Islands for over a decade now, I find it is often difficult to see where

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<sup>3</sup> Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa, “The Aulani Story,” Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa. <http://resorts.disney.go.com/aulani-hawaii-resort/about-aulani/story/>.

<sup>4</sup> John R. Eperjesi, *The Imperialist Imaginary: Visions of Asia and the Pacific in American Culture* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2005), 121.

<sup>5</sup> Brandy Nālani McDougall and Georganne Nordstrom. Forthcoming. “Stealing the Piko: (Re)Placing Kānaka Maoli at Disney’s Aulani Resort.” In *Huihui: Navigating Art and Literature in the Pacific*, ed. Jeffrey Carroll, Brandy Nālani McDougall, and Georganne Nordstrom (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2014), unpaginated.

<sup>6</sup> Louis Marin, *Utopics*, 102.

<sup>7</sup> Trask, “Dispossessions of Empire,” in *Night Is a Sharkskin Drum*, 36.

<sup>8</sup> Konai Helu-Thaman, “Beyond Hula, Hotels, and Handicrafts: A Pacific Islander’s Perspective of Tourism Development,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 5, no. 1 (1993): 104.

tourism begins and American colonialism ends because they are so tightly intertwined. What is also difficult to discern is where indigenous engagement with the tourist industry constitutes complicity with the broader hegemonic power structure and where it functions as a form of strategic intervention. Here, the situation at the Aulani resort is a crucial case to consider, given that dozens of Kānaka Maoli were involved in its conceptualization and development.

In what follows, rather than simply analyzing Aulani as a site of colonial power in an absolute sense, I argue that it is more fruitful to think about it as a “space of colonial encounters”—a “contact zone”—where two cultures, Disney and Kānaka Maoli, converge with one another.<sup>9</sup> Mary Louise Pratt expands on her theorization of the “contact zone”:

A “contact” perspective emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other. It treats the relations among colonizers and colonized . . . not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power.<sup>10</sup>

The emphasis on co-presence and interaction as principal modes of engagement between asymmetrically positioned groups that the “contact zone” approach promulgates is commensurate with my own view that even in the context of unequal relations of power, there exists a space for negotiation and the possibility for indigenous counter-colonial agency. Thus, even if, as the name “Aulani” suggests, Disney has assumed the role of messenger, the question then becomes: how do Hawaiians intervene to control the message being told?

While I do not deny the destructive impact that corporate tourism has had in the Islands through the expropriation of Kanaka Maoli land and the exploitation of their culture, I argue that Aulani offers a useful case study for thinking about Native engagements with the industry in more complex, nuanced ways. In this regard, I take as inspiration Adria L. Imada’s critical approach in *Aloha America: Hula Circuits through the U.S. Empire* (2012). In her astute examination of Hawaiian hula circuits and hula performers in the context of U.S. colonial enterprise and militarism in Hawai‘i during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Imada makes the important observation that “Hawaiian performers were not merely passive objects in Euro-American tourist economies, but resisted and negotiated with colonization through their own ‘traveling

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<sup>9</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 7.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

cultures' and consumer practices.”<sup>11</sup> In applying this perspective to my own analysis, I advance the idea that the Kānaka Maoli who participated in the Aulani project—and here I pay particular attention to Kanaka Maoli artists whose works are prominently displayed throughout the resort—were also not passive objects. Rather, they were active participants who negotiated their way as best they could between the predatory corporate agendas of Disney, one of the largest megacorporations in the world, and their own sense of obligation to ensure the story of Hawai‘i was told from a Kanaka Maoli perspective.

### **Pixie Dust over Hawai‘i**

On September 22, 2011, after three years of planning and construction and an expenditure of US\$800 million,<sup>12</sup> Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa officially opened its doors to the public with a twilight ceremony that included a theatrical extravaganza of oli (Hawaiian chant), hula, a performance by Hawaiian singer/songwriter Keali‘i Reichel, and the presentation of a ceremonial ‘umeke (bowl), into which the Chairman and CEO of Walt Disney Company Bob Iger and the Chairman of Walt Disney Parks and Resorts Tom Staggs poured sand and “pixie dust” to symbolize the joining of two cultures, Hawai‘i and Disney, respectively.<sup>13</sup> Before the vessel was formally transferred into the care of the Vice President and Managing Director of Aulani, Iger proclaimed, “We are now and for all time ‘ohana, one family.”<sup>14</sup> Aulani’s opening was not only experienced by the audience that was present but it was also beamed into people’s living rooms across the U.S. Continent on two of ABC’s top rating shows, *Live! With Kelly* and *Good Morning America*.

As a master of storytelling and fantasy creation, Disney has been a major contributor to the packaging of Hawai‘i for global consumption with films like *Hawaiian Holiday* (1937), *The Parent Trap: Hawaiian Honeymoon* (1989), *Johnny Tsunami* (1999), *Rip Girls* (2000), and the animated feature *Lilo and Stitch* (2002). In these films, Hawaiian land, culture, and identity are Disneyfied out of existence, the distorting processes through which they are represented colluding to create a narrative closure that replaces the real with a series of simulations. While I do not want to

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<sup>11</sup> Imada, *Aloha America*, 19.

<sup>12</sup> At US\$800 million, Aulani is the most expensive commercial project to be carried out in Hawai‘i.

<sup>13</sup> Aulani had already been open to guests for almost a month prior to the official opening. The resort opened to guests on August 29, 2011 with reservations being available on August 2, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> To view the opening ceremony, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UnINYe1jfc8>.



introduce a distraction to the broader focus of this chapter on Aulani, a brief consideration of some of these films might be of value for understanding the role Disney played in misrepresenting Kānaka Maoli and their culture prior to the resort's opening.

Take for example the 8-minute cartoon *Hawaiian Holiday*, the opening scene of which begins with a cinematic pan of an island beachscape, replete with white sand, surf, and groves of coconut trees. The iconic Diamond Head Mountain (known to Kānaka Maoli as Lē‘ahi)—a landscape image that features ubiquitously on postcards and tourist promotional materials—is visible in the distance. On the beach Minnie Mouse dances “hula” to the strains of a slack-key guitar played by Mickey and an ‘ukulele played by Donald Duck, who is perched on a canoe. A “little grass shack” is positioned as an architectural backdrop to complete the jocular scene. Minnie’s hips wiggle animatedly, while her white-gloved hands flow in random, untutored motion. She dons stereotypical hula attire: a lei and a grass skirt. In a separate scene, Donald Duck wears similar garb and carries out his own rendition of the hula. He gesticulates wildly and includes in his slapstick repertoire movements stereotypically associated with Egyptian dance (think: “Walk Like an Egyptian”). Donald’s parody ends abruptly when his tail ignites after he dances too close to a fire pit.

In *The Parent Trap: Hawaiian Honeymoon*, dysmorphic signs of Hawaiian identity serve as the material substance out of which comedic farce is generated. In one scene, for example, the father in the film comes down a flight of stairs wearing a tī-leaf skirt, a kukui-nut lei, a headband (faux lei haku), and ankle bands (faux kūpe‘e). As he descends he performs a mock Hawaiian chant, which involves shouting out a string of nonsensical words, each of which is theatrically punctuated by the shaking of a pair of ‘ulī‘ulī (gourd rattles). As the scene unfolds, we learn that the man is on his way to the “‘Ulī‘ulī Hula Festival” where he is to “perform.” In both films, non-Hawaiian—and in the case of *Hawaiian Holiday*, non-human—characters play at “being Native” through an assortment of hackneyed cultural motifs and performances saturated with blatant racist overtones.

In the film *Lilo and Stitch*, a young orphan Hawaiian girl (Lilo Pelekai), yearning for companionship after the death of her parents, adopts what she believes is a dog. As she gradually begins to discover, however, the animal she has selected (Stitch) is in fact a fugitive alien from outer space who is being hunted by authorities from the United Galactic Federation. Together, the duo embarks on a journey that follows the archetypal narrative trajectory of Disney storytelling: life lessons are learned through a series of

trials and tribulations. The film is replete with stereotypical signs of Hawaiian culture: surfing, fire dancing, and hula performances. More significantly, the storyline pivots around the Hawaiian concept of ‘ohana (family), which is evident throughout the film. In one scene, for instance, during which Stitch begins to exhibit destructive, antisocial behavior in his new home, Lilo’s older sister Nani informs her that she has to return him to the animal shelter. Distraught by the thought of taking her new pet back to where he would most certainly be euthanized, Lilo declares: “What about ‘ohana! ‘Ohana means nobody gets left behind or forgotten.” While on the surface such allusions to family allegiance seem unproblematic and even something to celebrate, as Hawaiian scholar Ku‘ualoha Ho‘omanawanui argues, through the Disney lens the very essence of ‘ohana as rooted in collectivity is distorted:

[T]ranslated by Disney, Lilo exists as an *individual* who has no deep connections to place, community, or even family—there are no other siblings besides Nani, no parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins, important relationships within the complex and intricate web of Native Hawaiian kinship. . . . Reframing the story within the western context of individualism erodes the strength, beauty, and complexity of the ‘ohana concept, and does a great disservice to Hawaiian culture.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, although “‘ohana” features as a key word throughout the movie, it has been stripped of its cultural meaning to enable non-Hawaiian audiences to connect with it more readily and “sit back and feel confident that because they watched *Lilo and Stitch*, they now understand what Hawaiian culture is all about.”<sup>16</sup>

Disney also provoked the ire of Kānaka Maoli when it misappropriated two mele inoa (sacred name chants)—composed to honor the last two monarchs of the Hawaiian Kingdom, King David Kalākaua and Queen Lili‘uokalani—and rearranged them to create a song for Lilo.<sup>17</sup> In an eloquent critique of what he describes as “cultural trampling,” respected Kanaka Maoli scholar and cultural practitioner Kīhei de Silva insightfully observes, “Thanks to Disney, a generation of children knows ‘He Mele no

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<sup>15</sup> Ku‘ualoha Ho‘omanawanui, “Mo‘olelo as Social and Political Action: Responding to Jack Zipes (De-Disneyfying Disney) and Waziyatawin (From the Clay We Rise).” Paper presented at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa International Symposium “Folk Tales and Fairy Tales: Translation, Colonialism, and Cinema,” University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Honolulu, September 23, 2008), 7–8. Available at <http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10125/16454>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Mantilla, “The New Hawaiian Model,” 26.

Lilo’ but not the originals from which it was ripped: ‘Kalākaua he Inoa’ and ‘Ka Wohi Kū i ka Moku.’ Through Disney, we honor a toon and displace a king and queen.”<sup>18</sup>

Such thefts of cultural heritage together with the racist and reductive representations of Kānaka Maoli make up what Gerald Vizenor refers to as an “archive of victimry,”<sup>19</sup> the likes of which has been stockpiling in Hawai‘i for over one hundred years.<sup>20</sup> Strategically generated by capitalist motives, stereotypes of Hawai‘i and Kanaka Maoli culture are designed to spark in the American imagination a sense of what is “theirs” to experience in the “Aloha State”: sun, sand, surfing, Aloha shirts, ‘ukulele-strumming Natives, hip-swaying hula girls, and the ever-present welcoming Hawaiian host ready with a lei to bestow on the inbound guest—all to the strains of a slack-key guitar. As I showed in Chapter One, stereotypes of this kind feature in countless examples of colonialist imagery, from cartoon illustrations to photography and painting. Disney is an intrinsic part of this genealogy of misrepresentation, where cultural difference is portrayed as trivial, leisurely fun into which the viewer or guest might enter to escape reality.

It is noteworthy, then, that in 2008 when the Aulani resort was first being conceptualized by Disney’s team of Imagineers (“designers” in the Disney lexicon), the question of how to responsibly and respectfully incorporate a Kanaka Maoli worldview into the fabricated, imaginary world of Disney became one of pressing concern. Rather than relying on its own authority to weave a story around Aulani, Disney took a different, more strategic approach: to draw from already present Native perspectives of culture and place. In one of many interviews he gave to promote the resort, Senior Vice President of Walt Disney Imagineering Joe Rohde stated, “The look and feel of Aulani is inspired directly by Hawaiian culture itself. People come to these islands and what gives Hawai‘i its identity except the Hawaiians. So we went directly to Hawaiian art, Hawaiian tradition, and Hawaiian story.”<sup>21</sup>

The strategy to foreground Native culture to advance corporate tourist business agendas is nothing new. In *Reimagining the American Pacific*, Rob Wilson notes that

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<sup>18</sup> Kīhei de Silva, “Stitch Has a Glitch,” *Ka ‘iwakīloumoku Hawaiian Cultural Center, Kamehameha Schools*.

<http://apps.ksbe.edu/kaiwakiloumoku/makalii/reviews/movie/stitchglitch>.

<sup>19</sup> Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*, 59.

<sup>20</sup> In my use of the term “archive of victimry,” I want to clarify that I do not seek to perpetuate the idea that Kānaka Maoli are victims of circumstance. In fact, I categorically do not believe this to be the case. What I do want to emphasize, however, is the deleterious impact such misrepresentations have had and continue to have on Kānaka Maoli.

<sup>21</sup> Joe Rohde, “Orbitz exclusive interview with Joe Rohde, Senior Vice President of Walt Disney Imagineering.” Orbitz. September 23, 2011, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2stKOSSRF4&feature=player\\_detailpage](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2stKOSSRF4&feature=player_detailpage).

“[t]ourism, for Hawai‘i if not for Pacific sites more generally, depends on the globalization-of-the-local into a marketable image with lasting appeal, with enduring charm and mysterious claim to uniqueness.”<sup>22</sup> Hawaiian culture sells, offering visitors the “authentic” Hawaiian experience they seek when they come to the Islands. But, while a focus on the transformation of Native heritage into tourist commodity is critically important for illuminating the exploitative nature of tourism—and there is a large body of engaging scholarship that deals with this—of equal value is the acknowledgment of indigenous involvement in this complex and negotiable process of exchange. In my analysis of Aulani I seek to find a balance between these two narratives.

### **Touring Aulani**

Experiencing Aulani in person as I did shortly after it opened, I found it hard not to be impressed by the grand scope of the place. The huge complex is easily visible from the motorway with its towering architecture jutting up out of the surrounding landscape like a small mountain range (Fig. 4.1). Turning off the H-1 freeway to Ali‘i Nui Drive—the only road leading to and from Aulani—visitors enter the Ko Olina Resort Community and Marina, 640 acres of prime oceanfront real estate on the Leeward southwest coast of O‘ahu.<sup>23</sup> Ko Olina comprises several resorts—including Aulani—as well as a world-class 18-hole golf course, a marina, and a collection of exclusive gated residential communities. Driving past the guarded security booth at the entranceway to the massive complex is like crossing over a liminal threshold of sorts, one that demarcates the boundary between the world outside and the world being entered. It is the first of many “keyholes” visitors will pass through during their sojourn to Aulani. Even the landscape of the two “realms” is different. Ko Olina is a flourishing oasis—a vibrant swathe of green—compared to the tawny, parched land outside its gates. The healthy, well-hydrated foliage of the sprawling complex is made possible by the millions of gallons of water that are pumped in each day from the diverted waterways of the Windward side of the island.

Travelling up the winding lane that leads to Aulani, visitors officially begin their “Hawaiian experience” at the resort with Native Hawaiian art. Located on a tract of well-manicured grass just past the main entrance, three contemporary ki‘i (sculpted

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<sup>22</sup> Rob Wilson, *Reimagining the American Pacific: From South Pacific to Bamboo Ridge and Beyond* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2000), xv.

<sup>23</sup> The name Ko Olina (more accurately spelled, “Ko‘olina”) was an ancient designation for the area on which the development complex was built. The name means “Fulfillment of Joy.”

images)—carved by Rocky Jensen, Pat Pine, and Jordan Souza—are arranged in triangular formation facing one another (Fig. 4.2). Beyond the sculptures, two of Carl F.K. Pao’s monumental bas-reliefs located on the mountain-facing walls of the resort’s two main buildings loom into view (Fig. 4.3). Next, guests encounter the terraced walls of a lo‘i (irrigated terrace), which is filled with kalo (i.e., taro), a plant that holds significant cultural value for Kānaka Maoli and has sustained them for millennia (Fig. 4.4). As visitors pull up to the portico, a crew of valets snap to attention, helping guests with their luggage and whisking their vehicles away to the nearby parking lot. “Cultural greeters” (or “Cast Members” as Disney refers to its employees)—attired in beautifully patterned kīhei (cape-like garments worn over one shoulder) welcome visitors into the resort with the well-worn greeting of “Aloha” and a lei (kukui nut for men, tuberose and purple orchid for women, and fabricated “Menehune” necklaces for children).

Once inside the lobby—named Maka‘ala (meaning to be vigilant, watchful, or alert)—guests enter a world of creative virtuosity in which Native cultural motifs feature prominently in both the visual and audio design of the space. The lobby is flooded with the sound of music and songs written especially for Aulani by celebrated Hawaiian kumu hula (hula teacher) and musician Keali‘i Reichel. The compositions are a mixture of contemporary orchestral arrangement and traditional Hawaiian chant and instrumentation. One of the ballads, which are all sung entirely in Hawaiian, reads in part: “He lei aloha kēia, e kipa mai iā ‘oe i ka malu o Aulani ē. [Here is the lei of affection, welcoming you to the peacefulness of Aulani].” The cinematic quality of the music induces the feeling that one has stepped into a Hawaiian place of gathering, albeit within the framework of a resort.

Visually, Aulani’s interior is arresting. The architecture opens up to a vaulted ceiling that soars at least 20 feet high, which is modeled after the traditional halau wa‘a (canoe house).<sup>24</sup> Native Hawaiian-inspired building design is seamlessly intertwined with Western architectural traditions in the lobby. The grandeur of the space is also reminiscent of a medieval cathedral, the central area resembling an arcade flanked by two transverse arches, which include on their surface wood friezes by McD Philpotts (Fig. 4.5). As well, stained-glass windows on the side of the lobby facing the mountains and the side facing the ocean contain symbols relating to the environs of land and water. There is even a compass rose embedded in the lobby’s flagstone floor, a feature found in many of the great cathedrals of the world. At Aulani, the compass has been creatively indigenized and features four lau (leaves) from the kalo plant and the Native ‘iwa bird.

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<sup>24</sup> The allusion to the architectural features of the halau wa‘a is repeated in Aulani’s arch logo.

Returning to the ceiling's apex, a large chandelier designed to resemble a cluster of gourds casts subdued light on the interior environment. At ground level, two contemporary wood sculptures by Hawaiian carver Rocky Jensen are located on either side of the entranceway, while the more traditional kahili (feather standards) made by members of the Kapolei Civic Club are assembled in various areas throughout the lobby. Wrapping around the entire wall of the main lobby is local haole artist Martin Charlot's 200-foot mural and above it Kanaka Maoli artist Dalani Tanahy's series of kapa prints (Fig. 4.6).<sup>25</sup> Encompassing the space like a monumental lei, Charlot's mural depicts everyday life in Hawai'i from the past to the present. Colorful vignettes of traditional Hawaiian domestic activities include scenes of boar hunting, bird catching, feather-cape making, weaving, and kapa making. The contemporary period is depicted by images of adults and children engaging in ocean activities, such as fishing, swimming, and surfing. Beneath the visual representations are the painted lyrics of the Aulani theme song. One line in particular acknowledges La'akona, a famous chief of the 'Ewa District where Aulani is located. Bordering the top of the mural, Tanahy's kapa designs depict the different kinolau (physical manifestations) of the deities Kū and Hina.

Behind the main reception area, the Rainbow Wall—which comprises 138 photographs portraying various elements of Island life that were taken by elementary and high school students from schools in the nearby Wai'anae area—provides a visually vibrant point of interest. Two painted murals by Hawaiian artist Doug Tolentino showing the gods Kāne and Kanaloa cracking open the land with their 'ō'ō (digging sticks) to unleash life-giving water, and the goddesses Pele and Hi'iaka embarking on a voyaging expedition are prominently situated at the top of the entranceways to the two central accommodation buildings, Wai'anae and 'Ewa Towers, respectively (Figs. 4.7 and 4.8). The works of fine art in the lobby are contrasted with the more whimsical elements that make Disney beloved by youngsters the world over. Secret keyholes are hidden throughout the lobby for children to discover (Fig. 4.9). They contain miniature worlds of undersea environments and one, in particular, shows a menehune character dancing by firelight. Since these are stationed at the height of a child, adults are forced to crouch down on their knees if they too want to experience the imaginary worlds that exist on the other side of these keyholes.

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<sup>25</sup> Martin Charlot is non-Hawaiian and is the son of the late well-known Hawai'i-based artist Jean Charlot.

Walking through the center of the lobby, visitors are drawn toward the large lanai (veranda), which offers a vista of the state-of-the-art themed water park below, named Waikolohe (Mischievous Water) Valley (Fig. 4.10). The valley comprises a complex of pools, a meandering “river”—around which guests can leisurely float in inner tubes—and slides. The entire water park abuts a mound of heaving lava called “Pu‘u Kino.”<sup>26</sup> At predetermined times Pu‘u Kino becomes an active volcano, discharging guttural grumbles as well as faux steam and “flames.” Guests who pay close attention will notice an array of different figures that have been carved into the concrete lava rock with such subtlety that they materialize before the eye quite unexpectedly: Native fauna such as a stingray, a monk seal, and a crab are visible when seen from just the right angle. Artificial stratigraphic layers in the rock create the illusion that the outcrop is an autochthonous feature of the surrounding landscape rather than a human-made artifact. It is as though Aulani has always been here. There is something altogether irresistible, even delightful about the staged wonder that Disney creates at the resort. Everything seems to be coated with a liberal sprinkling of pixie dust magic, and the guest would be forgiven for reveling in the “play of illusions and phantasms” that abound here.<sup>27</sup> Even Stephen M. Fjellman, who has spent much of his scholarly career critically analyzing the Disney franchise, writes with childlike ebullience of his experience at Disney World, “I love it! I could live there.”<sup>28</sup>

The expansive grounds of Aulani are a zone of “tropicality,”<sup>29</sup> populated by ferns, gingers, coconut trees, and other equatorial plant species. They constitute familiar botanical motifs that are strategically used to recreate a visual ideal of the Islands as a lush paradise. A stroll along the main footpath leads to two elevated dioramas, the first of which comprises an assemblage of musical instruments, including pahu (drums) and ipu (gourds) (Fig. 4.11), and the other comprising tools for making kapa (Fig. 4.12). The scenes echo the kinds of ethnographic displays popular in modernist museums where Native culture is represented as being fossilized in time. Although the *mise en scène* implies industrious human activity, it is left up to the guest to imagine the

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<sup>26</sup> “Pu‘u Kino” translates as “Hill of Bodies,” the name alluding to, as I interpret it, the diverse range of animal figures that are carved into the “rock.”

<sup>27</sup> Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 12.

<sup>28</sup> Stephen M. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 16.

<sup>29</sup> I borrow the term “tropicality” from Krista A. Thompson, who writes about the tropicalization of the English speaking Caribbean. Tropicalization “describes the complex visual systems through which the islands were imaged for tourist consumption and the social and political implications of these representations on actual physical space on the islands and their inhabitants.” See Krista A. Thompson, *An Eye For the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 5.

practitioner at work—there is no one there.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the only activity detectable in the exhibit is the prerecorded sounds that emanate from hidden speakers of drums being beaten and kapa beaters being pounded. Accompanying the audio is an automated light show, during which the drums’ interiors flash red.

Further along the path we encounter “Aunty’s Beach House,” where parents can leave their children to be entertained by a cadre of caregivers. It is a world in which children are free to explore every corner of “Aunty’s” and “Uncle’s” house,<sup>31</sup> which is modeled on a stereotypical local-Hawaiian home. Again, as with the animated movie *Lilo and Stitch* discussed earlier, the trope of ‘ohana is deployed prominently. The walls are covered with photographs capturing special moments in the life of “Aunty’s” and “Uncle’s” family, including a portrait of the couple with their fictional children. In this fabricated space, guests are not only prompted to feel at home, they are encouraged to feel, as the Aulani website states, like they are part of “Aunty’s extended ‘ohana.”<sup>32</sup> Such invitations to belonging, as John Eperjesi observes, authorize “a fantasy passage . . . from *malihini* [stranger/visitor] to *kamaaina* [native born],” ultimately relieving the guest of any moral imperative to consider their place as outsiders in the wider scheme of America’s imperial project in Hawai‘i.<sup>33</sup>

The sprawling space of the house—which measures approximately 5,200 square feet—comprises a gaming room, a spacious lounge with a fireplace that produces a faux flame, a garage (“Uncle’s” domain), an area where youngsters can dress up in an array of Disney-production costumes, and a television room. Everywhere there exist the kinds of imagination-inspiring details for which Disney is so well known. Children are encouraged to knock on the door leading up to “Aunty’s” private quarters to see if she is home. The door features the same kind of “magic” keyhole found in spaces throughout the lobby area. A peek through “Aunty’s” keyhole reveals a steep, ascending stairway with a stuffed marlin on the wall, all of it a clever illusion constructed from a miniature replica. In “Uncle’s T.V. Room,” the weather can be controlled. While it may be a bright, sunny day outside, the flick of a switch produces a simulated torrential downpour, thunder, and lightening—the kind of conditions that are perfect for staying indoors and watching your favorite Disney shows. When I encountered the room during one of several visits to Aulani, the children who were

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<sup>30</sup> The patent artificiality of the staged kapa scene is offset by the fact that each week Dalani Tanahy offers kapa-making classes and demonstrations to Aulani guests.

<sup>31</sup> At Aulani, “Aunty” and “Uncle” are fictional characters played by two actors.

<sup>32</sup> Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa, “Aunty’s Beach House.” Accessed March 24, 2013. <http://resorts.disney.go.com/aulani-hawaii-resort/families/auntys-beach-house/>.

<sup>33</sup> Eperjesi, *The Imperialist Imaginary*, 127.



present sat in quiet absorption in kid-sized chairs as the latest Disney movie *Cars 2* played on the wide-screen plasma television in front of them.

For adults, the ‘Ōlelo Bar offers an opportunity to relax with a drink while also being introduced to the Hawaiian language. From floor to ceiling, the bar is a study in Disney-style pedagogy, which in this case takes an overtly linguistic slant in its theme of language immersion. It is like walking into a three-dimensional Hawaiian dictionary where nearly every physical feature in the space is distinguished by its Hawaiian name. For example, all of the backs of the chairs in the restaurant are stamped with the Hawaiian word “noho” (chair) and the tops of the tables bear the word “pākaukau” (table) (Fig. 4.13). Wood sculptures located on shelves behind the bar are carved in the likeness of various objects, flora, and fauna (Fig. 4.14). They are marked with their corresponding Hawaiian names, such as cat: pōpoki; bowl: ‘umeke; dog: ‘ilio (which is represented in the likeness of Pluto); and house: hale (which is represented by the house in the 2009 Disney animated movie *Up*). The language lesson does not end there. All of the bartenders and hosts in this establishment speak Hawaiian and help guests with their pronunciation of words. The attempt to impart the Hawaiian language to visitors is found not only in the ‘Ōlelo Bar but through bilingual signage and text that is displayed throughout the resort. For example, signage outside the elevators includes the number that identifies each floor as well as the Hawaiian language written equivalent (e.g., 3; ‘ekolu). And, while guests wait to be seated for dining, in the foyer of the Makahiki restaurant they can learn about the significance of the Makahiki season through wall text that is written in both Hawaiian and English.

Returning to the outdoors, a glance toward the ocean-facing sides of the two accommodation towers reveals Harinani Orme’s monumental bas-reliefs honoring the goddess Hina (Fig. 4.15) and the demi-god Maui (Fig. 4.16). A leisurely stroll toward the ocean takes guests to “The Circle of ‘Alae Ula” fire pit,<sup>34</sup> where every evening “Uncle” relays the legends of Hawai‘i. As the daily events calendar states:

Ignited by the warmth of the fire, the rich and colorful story of Aulani is brought to life by Uncle. Enjoy the age old [*sic*] stories and traditions that have lived on as they are handed down from generation to generation . . . and now to you.<sup>35</sup>

Just beyond the fire pit, vacationers can sink their feet into fine, white sand or take a dip in Kohalā Lagoon, the protected body of water on which Aulani is located.

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<sup>34</sup> In Hawaiian culture, the ‘alae ula is the bird credited with introducing fire to humans.

<sup>35</sup> Aulani resort events calendar, “The Daily ‘Iwa,” November 4, 2011.

If at any point the guest forgets they are at a Disney resort, frequent appearances by Mickey, Minnie, Chip and Dale, Goofy, and Stitch decked out in “Aloha” attire remind them otherwise.

### **The Aulani Story**

In 2008, the world was reeling from the disastrous impact of the global financial crisis, considered by many economists the worst of its kind since the Great Depression of the 1930s. In Hawai‘i, real estate projects were postponed, people declared bankruptcy, homes were foreclosed, longtime local businesses closed down, people were laid off in the thousands, and tens of thousands of school children were divested of over four weeks of instructional time over a period of two years under the innocuous sounding, money-saving legislative initiative “Furlough Fridays.”<sup>36</sup> The future looked glum and many of Hawai‘i’s people could scarcely afford “the bare necessities” of life, to quote the well-known song of optimism in Disney’s animated feature film *The Jungle Book*. In the midst of this financial and social upheaval, on November 19, 2008, the Walt Disney Company broke ground on its 21-acre oceanfront property—purchased for \$144 million—on the west coast of O‘ahu in preparation for building its first mixed-use family resort in Hawai‘i.<sup>37</sup> Once completed, the resort was projected to comprise 359 hotel rooms, a 481-unit Disney Vacation Club facility, an 18,000-square foot spa, a 12,000-square foot convention center, a wedding lawn, several restaurants, an expansive pool complex, and a children’s club.

The groundbreaking ceremony to launch the mammoth project was replete with displays of Hawaiian culture, the centerpiece of which was a Hawaiian blessing. Conch shells were blown and hula performances were given by two hula halau (hula schools): Ka Lā o Laka i Ka Hikina o Ka Lā, led by kumu hula Kaleo Trinidad, and Halau Hula Olana, led by kumu hula Olana Ai. The ground was ceremonially opened up with ‘ō‘ō created by Hawaiian carver Malama Chun, and Chairman of Walt Disney Parks and Resorts Jay Rasulo cut a wreath of native maile leaves to officially open the space for

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<sup>36</sup> “Furlough Fridays” refers to the mandatory furlough days that were instituted by the Hawai‘i State Board of Education between 2009 and 2011, during which time teachers (and, more broadly, other state employees) were forced to take Fridays off without pay. The legislative measure was imposed in an effort to cut costs and thereby alleviate the state budget crisis. Over a period of two years, the Hawai‘i State Legislature slashed US\$469 million from the Hawai‘i Department of Education and removed over four weeks of teaching days from the annual state school calendar.

<sup>37</sup> An interesting aside: the Aulani groundbreaking ceremony took place a day after Mickey Mouse’s 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. He first appeared in *Steamboat Willie* on November 18, 1928.

development. In his speech during the ceremony, Rasulo drew on Hawaiian concepts to underscore Disney's intentions in the Islands:

In bringing this particular dream to life, we've embraced the traditional Hawaiian idea of "laulima"—bringing many hands together to work as one in order to achieve a common goal.<sup>38</sup>

The Disney project certainly entailed "bringing many hands together" at many levels, most notable of which included high-profile State of Hawai'i political power brokers, who were in attendance at the ceremony, including Lieutenant Governor James "Duke" Aiona, State Senator Colleen Hanabusa, House Representative Mark Takai, and Honolulu City Councilman and Ko Olina Vice President of Corporate Operations Todd Apo.<sup>39</sup> Their presence was a stark indication of the high level of local and state involvement in Disney's expansion into Hawai'i. Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann was a key supporter of the corporation putting down roots in the Islands. He even made a special excursion to California to meet with Disney executives to ensure their choice of O'ahu—in particular the Ko Olina Resort and Community—as a site on which to develop their proposed resort.<sup>40</sup> For officials like Hannemann, the bottom-line benefit of Aulani was the promise that it would generate much-needed economic opportunities for a state dependent on tourism. Apo expressed this sentiment succinctly: "It's about jobs, it's about development, and it's about property tax."<sup>41</sup>

Three years after the groundbreaking ceremony and one month before the resort's grand opening, in a *Midweek* op-ed titled "Disney's Aulani Is Doing It Right," Hannemann outlined some of the economic windfalls Aulani had brought to Hawai'i during the three years it was under construction:

In addition to adding to our hotel room inventory, creating a new attraction, and spurring growth in West Oahu, Aulani generated more than \$600 million in spending, \$59 million in state and county tax revenues and 4,800 jobs during the construction phase.<sup>42</sup>

Aulani is expected to "produce up to \$270 million in salary income and general economic activity and \$33 million in tax revenues a year" and create 2,400 jobs in

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<sup>38</sup> Cited in Ryan Kawailani Ozawa, "Disney Breaks Ground in Hawaii," *Mouse Planet*, November 25, 2008, [http://www.mouseplanet.com/8618/Disney\\_breaks\\_ground\\_in\\_Hawaii](http://www.mouseplanet.com/8618/Disney_breaks_ground_in_Hawaii).

<sup>39</sup> In 2010, Apo was appointed Director of Public Affairs for the Aulani, A Disney Resort and Spa.

<sup>40</sup> Mufi Hannemann, "Disney's Aulani Is Doing It Right," *Midweek*, August 24, 2011, sec. Tourism Matters, [http://archives.midweek.com/content/columns/tourismmatters\\_article/disneys\\_aulani\\_is\\_doing\\_it\\_right/](http://archives.midweek.com/content/columns/tourismmatters_article/disneys_aulani_is_doing_it_right/).

<sup>41</sup> Cited in Ozawa, "Disney Breaks Ground in Hawaii."

<sup>42</sup> Hannemann, "Disney's Aulani Is Doing It Right."

Hawai‘i, half of which will be at Aulani.<sup>43</sup> The projected figures indicate that Aulani promises to bring a welcome infusion of money and jobs into Hawai‘i, where the cost of living is among the highest in the United States. And the resort is still growing. In September 2012, Disney commenced a major expansion project as part of the final build-out of the resort, which adds a themed family pool, a children’s splash zone, and two food-service locations.<sup>44</sup> Besides creating jobs and generating revenue for Hawai‘i, Disney has also revealed its philanthropic side. As part of its self-proclaimed tradition of corporate giving and in an effort to, as Djuan Rivers noted in Aulani’s 2010 Community Report, “touch the local community and make a difference in our newest ‘home’,”<sup>45</sup> Disney donated \$100,000 collectively to four local high schools.<sup>46</sup> The corporation also donated \$25,000 to the Green Sea Turtle Conservation Fund, \$10,000 to the Nature Conservancy, and an undisclosed amount to the nonprofit, Hawaiian-led organization MA‘O Farms.

Despite its success in securing its “newest home” in Hawai‘i, corporate Disney has had its fair share of failure over the years as a result of public opposition. For example, in 1994, just one year after beginning a \$650 million dollar venture to build Disney’s America—a 100-acre theme park in Prince William County, Virginia—the company was forced to abandon the project due to overwhelming objection by the local community. The community’s concerns were two-fold: that Disney’s sprawling development would have a negative environmental impact on the area and that American history would be distorted through “Disney’s sanitised, determinedly cheerful way.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Because Disney is a publicly traded company, I am not able to provide here the specific details relating to the revenue generated by the Aulani because in accordance with U.S. law such information is not available for public disclosure.

<sup>44</sup> The expansion was completed in September 2013 and formally opened to the public on October 19, 2013.

<sup>45</sup> Djuan Rivers, *2010 Community Report* (Honolulu: Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa, 2010). Available at <http://resorts.disney.go.com/aulani-hawaii-resort/about-aulani/community-public-affairs/>.

<sup>46</sup> The four high schools were Campbell High School, Kapolei High School, Nanakuli High School, and Waianae High School. Each received \$25,000 to put toward science, multimedia, and creative performance programs. It is notable that although Disney’s financial contributions to the various initiatives cited—which amount to approximately \$135,000—are a significant boon, when one considers the \$40.9 billion revenue the company generated in 2011, it seems paltry in comparison. To date, Disney still has not released details of its corporate giving for the 2011, 2012, and 2013 fiscal years.

<sup>47</sup> Martin Walker, “Mickey Mouse Culture: Disney Is Proposing to Build a \$650 Million American History Amusement Park. At What Expense to Serious Heritage?,” *The Guardian*, December 28, 1993.

Indeed, when Disney first began making overtures in the Islands, there was the potential for its plans to follow the same fate as Disney's America. Native Hawaiians in particular were highly mistrustful of the megacorporation's intentions in the Islands and the impact the planned development would have on their lands and the wider environment. They were also concerned about the likelihood that they would be excluded from having a say in how their culture would be represented, the authority to do so most likely going to outsiders. One of the most outspoken opponents was businesswoman and entrepreneur Maile Meyer, who recalled the past experiences of Kānaka Maoli with big companies like Disney: "Over and over again, promises have been made that haven't been kept. . . . Companies have built their developments and burned their bridges and Native Hawaiians have retreated."<sup>48</sup> A year before construction began on Aulani, Disney designers floated their preliminary plans for the resort with members of the design firm Philpotts & Associates. Their proposal met with immediate criticism from the Native Hawaiian reviewers—including Meyer—who were asked to weigh in on the proposed plans. Notes Meyer, "They [i.e., Disney] started off wanting to make it [i.e., the resort] multicultural. . . . But, you're kidding. You're in Hawai'i? Believe me, it did not start off Hawaiian."<sup>49</sup>

Native Hawaiian businessman and marketing consultant Ramsey Taum, who was involved in reviewing the initial project proposal, also took issue with Disney's seemingly misguided presumptions about telling Hawai'i's story from *its own* perspective: "They had their design in place and we were asked to fit the story into the place. We said it doesn't work that way—to try and shove the culture into a box does a disservice to the culture."<sup>50</sup> John Condrey, who served as senior project manager for Philpotts & Associates on the Aulani project, notes that when the reviewers' final analysis was submitted to Disney's corporate representatives, the expectation was that the company would seek out a more accommodating group to work with:

We told them what we thought about the initial story and sort of figured we'd never see them again, because it was very frank. It wasn't critiquing, it was critical, to say, "Don't think you should do this. We really wouldn't want to be a part of that" was the message.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Cited in Rob Lovitt, "Disney Breaks the Mold With Aulani Resort," *Today Travel*, accessed August 6, 2013, [http://www.today.com/id/44293251/ns/today-today\\_travel/t/disney-breaks-mold-aulani-resort/#.UgFuuxablG4](http://www.today.com/id/44293251/ns/today-today_travel/t/disney-breaks-mold-aulani-resort/#.UgFuuxablG4).

<sup>49</sup> Maile Aluli Meyer, interview, September 24, 2012.

<sup>50</sup> Cited in Lovitt, "Disney Breaks the Mold With Aulani Resort."

<sup>51</sup> John Condrey, interview, November 2, 2012.

Despite the harsh critique, or perhaps because of it, Disney returned: “Two or three months later they came back and said, ‘Okay. We know what we don’t know and we need help.’”<sup>52</sup>

Through intensive engagement with Native Hawaiian stakeholders and consultants, Disney gradually began to assume a more inclusive, collaborative approach to telling Hawai‘i’s story, building from the ground up, rather than the top down. It started by putting a team together that included Disney designers, local design consultants—i.e., Philpotts & Associates, Design Studio, InSite—and, importantly, Kanaka Maoli cultural consultants.<sup>53</sup> This last group included business leaders and cultural practitioners in the Native Hawaiian community, including, among others, Ramsay Taum, Peter Apo, Maile Meyer, Kahulu De Santos, Auntie Netty Tiffany, and Doug Tolentino, the last two being specifically chosen because of their genealogical ties to the area where Aulani was to be built.<sup>54</sup>

During a weeklong workshop in September 2008, Disney and the Hawai‘i-based consultants met to rethink and redevelop the story that had originally been proposed in order to arrive at a vision that was “uniquely Disney and uniquely Hawaiian.”<sup>55</sup> In terms of creating a uniquely Hawaiian resort, a place-based approach became the centerpiece of discussion. In a PowerPoint presentation he gave to the planning committee, which synthesized the weeklong exchange, Ramsey Taum noted that preserving a

Sense of place guarantees that the traditions, customs, and heritage—those things that defines the place as being unique and are as important to the visitor as they are to the people who live there—are preserved.<sup>56</sup>

Importantly, such an approach, he stated, “does not preclude development. It simply asks that it occurs [*sic*] without sacrificing a community’s ‘sense of place.’”<sup>57</sup> Historically speaking, in the context of tourist-based development in Hawai‘i, creating a Hawaiian “sense of place” for visitors has necessarily entailed the *displacement* of Native communities—i.e., the sacrificing of their “sense of place”—through the destruction of ancestral lands and the desecration of iwi kūpuna (ancestral remains). In

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Mary Philpotts of Philpotts & Associates was responsible for sourcing works for the public art sector of the Aulani project, and Peggy Krantz of Design Studio was responsible for sourcing works for the corridor and room art. Other members of the team were Oren Schlieman, Kim Payton, McD Philpotts, John Staub, Djuan Rivers, Jim Kwaznowski, and Wing Chao.

<sup>54</sup> As noted previously, Tolentino was also one of the artists who produced work for the Aulani.

<sup>55</sup> InSite, *Hawai‘i Disney: A Compendium of Work, June 2008–May 2009* (Honolulu: Insite, 2009).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

the case of Disney's Aulani, creating a sense of place entailed not so much displacement, but rather the strategic *emplacement* of Native culture at the resort to tell the "true" story of Hawai'i. As Djuan Rivers states in a video on the official Aulani website:

Aulani allows us to do something a little different. It allows us to invite our guests to a *real* place, with *real* people, and *real* culture. Here our guests will be able to understand the *true* Hawai'i.<sup>58</sup>

Such claims to authenticity are a consistent thread in the marketing of the resort, on the website and elsewhere, and must be examined in closer detail for the edges at which the proposed "real" slips into carefully crafted artifice. In *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America*, Stephen M. Fjellman writes, "The genius of Disney, obviously, is in the artifice; but this artifice is extremely complicated. The lines between the real and the fake are systematically blurred."<sup>59</sup>

At Aulani, the real and the fictitious are overlaid in ways that are subtle and sometimes hard to detect. For instance, the birds—mainly pigeons and sparrows—are real. They perch in the trees, fly overhead, and congregate around eateries waiting to snatch up scraps of food. Their plaintive coos and chirps are real, as are the droppings they leave on the ground and on the outdoor furniture.<sup>60</sup> A leisurely stroll around the chlorinated waterway is filled with the melodic sound of birdsong, yet it is neither pigeon nor sparrow. But where is the bird? What sounds to the ear to be real can nowhere be seen. To try and locate the actual animal would be fruitless since the sounds are emitted through hidden speakers concealed in the foliage. It is merely a recording of a bird that does not exist, a clever supplement to the tropical habitat that has been created. Here, the line between the real and fake is cleverly obscured, resulting in what Fjellman refers to as "euphoric disorientation," a "kind of giddiness that sets in when the normal parameters people use to define reality become occluded in various ways."<sup>61</sup>

The lo'i mentioned earlier is also deployed in this giddy interchange between the real and the fake. A cursory glance at the kalo terrace on arrival at Aulani shows what appears to be a healthy, thriving crop. Their heart-shaped leaves are a sight worthy of Wordsworthian verse, nodding joyfully in the breeze while the sun lends light to their verdant countenance. However, while undeniably real, the kalo are restricted to plastic

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<sup>58</sup> Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa, "Careers," Accessed June 13, 2013. <http://aulani.jobs/about-aulani/default.aspx>.

<sup>59</sup> Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves*, 255.

<sup>60</sup> A similar observation is made by Stephen Fjellman in his analysis of Walt Disney World in *Vinyl Leaves*.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

pots rather than being planted in the ground. They grow, but not in any way that is sustainable—their roots have nowhere to go. They will not be used to feed the people; they are purely ornamental. A sign blocking the path to the lo‘i further announces the illusion: “Cast Members Only.” As for the beach on which Aulani is located, the fine sand is not natural to the area but rather has been imported from Australia to create the lagoon—one of four artificial ones in the Ko Olina complex—which was blasted and dug out in the 1980s when Ko Olina was first being developed. Indeed, Disney’s invitation to guests on the Aulani website to “Relax on white sands, delight in gentle ocean breezes and play in peaceful ocean waters” met with the odiferous whiff of reality in April 2013 when Aulani was forced to close its lagoon after 1,000 gallons of raw sewerage spilled into the ocean near Ko Olina.<sup>62</sup> Such disruptions to the illusion, however, do not last long. As Joel Achenbach states:

It’s strange as hell out there. There has arisen from this mess a strange form of *comfort* with artifice and falsehood. . . . There may be an actual preference for the unreal.<sup>63</sup>

### **Cultural Landscaping**

From the lanai of the hotel room I stayed in at Aulani, I had an unencumbered view of the Leeward Coast. A short ten miles away, I could see the communities of Nānākuli and Wai‘anae. Predominantly Kanaka Maoli in terms of demography, both places are socially vibrant and rich in Hawaiian culture. However, they are also sites of economic hardship. The stretch of beach on which they are located has in parts been transformed into a string of “tent cities” with families of homeless, many of whom are Kānaka Maoli, struggling to survive in a homeland where they can no longer afford housing. To date, Wai‘anae has the largest homeless encampment in the United States. Further in the distance I could see Mākua Valley, a place that holds significant symbolic and cultural value for Kānaka Maoli and is the habitat of several endangered native plants and animals. Since the 1930s, this important cultural site has been used as a target range for U.S. military live-fire training exercises, resulting in the destruction of numerous sacred sites as well as biota found nowhere else on the planet. It goes without saying that these troubling realities are out of joint with the Aulani narrative of Hawai‘i as an idyllic getaway. The resort is just a few miles from Nānākuli, Wai‘anae, and Mākua Valley, but

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<sup>62</sup> Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa, “The Beach at Aulani,” Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa. <http://resorts.disney.go.com/aulani-hawaii-resort/activities-amenities/pools-beach/beach/>.

<sup>63</sup> Cited in Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves*, 254.



once within the walls of the resort, tourists and local non-Hawaiian and Hawaiian visitors alike are transported to an imaginary world far away.

Creating that imaginary world has necessarily relied on Disney reconstructing “a fantasy world more real than reality.”<sup>64</sup> This state of hyperreality is most notable in the resort’s fabricated ahupua‘a system, the customary Hawaiian land division that extends from the uplands of the mountains to the ocean, and within which numerous and diverse environmental zones once provided food sustenance for thriving Native communities. From a Hawaiian perspective of the surrounding landscape, the Aulani resort is located in the moku (district) of ‘Ewa and in the ahupua‘a of Honouliuli (meaning “dark bay” or “blue bay”). Translated as “crooked” or “unequal,” ‘Ewa takes its meaning from a story relating to the gods Kāne and Kanaloa, who when marking the boundaries of the land threw a stone as far as they could toward the Wai‘anae Ranges. But the stone was thrown off course and was lost. Only later was it found at Pili o Kahe, the “spot where two small hills of the Waianae range come down parallel on the boundary between Honouliuli and Nanakuli (Ewa and Waianae).”<sup>65</sup>

‘Ewa is a storied land, embedded with mo‘olelo (stories) that tell of godly exploits, ancient battles, famous chiefs, wandering spirits, and shapeshifters. It is a place of archaeological significance as well, containing the remnants of ancient fishponds, kalo fields, heiau (temples), and fishing shrines, many of them now destroyed under the heel of development in the form of sugar plantations during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and later housing and business development constructions. ‘Ewa’s natural source of water comes from lesser streams that flow from the Ko‘olau and Wai‘anae Ranges and small natural springs that are located on the broad coastal plains below.<sup>66</sup> Because the Leeward coast tends to be hotter and receives less rain than other parts of the island, the land in the region makes for a mostly dry, scrubby habitat.

During the Hawai‘i sugar boom in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Honouliuli, which encompasses Ko Olina, was transformed into miles upon miles of swaying sugarcane that was fed by artesian wells sourced and dug out by settler landowners like Scottish industrialist James Campbell in the late 1800s. Sugar production ended in the 1960s, but the train tracks that were once used to transport the raw material and products from one point to another still remain and are now used to

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<sup>64</sup> Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, 1st ed. (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 45.

<sup>65</sup> Elspeth P. Sterling and Catherine C. Summers, compilers, *Sites of Oahu* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 1978), 1.

<sup>66</sup> The plains are referred to as ‘Ewa Plains.

convey tourists on historic sugarcane train rides. Of Ko Olina in particular—celebrated as the vacationing place of famous ali‘i (high-ranking individuals), including ‘Ewa chief Kākuhihewa, Kamehameha I, his wife Ka‘ahumanu, and later Queen Lili‘uokalani—during World War II it was used as a site for rest and relaxation by the U.S. military. In the 1980s, local developer Herbert Horita and the Japanese construction group Kumagai Gumi Company began developing the land into a resort and residential community, which Horita—in consultation with Native Hawaiian clergyman Reverend Abraham Kahikina Akaka—named Ko Olina, after the historical site on which the complex was built.<sup>67</sup>

The idea of incorporating an ahupua‘a into the overall design of Aulani as a basis for creating a unique “sense of place” through Hawaiian culture—drawing specifically on indigenous concepts of sustainable resource management and collective stewardship—was decided early on in the planning of the resort. Yet the surrounding area did not fit the archetypal image of the ahupua‘a as a place replete with streams and waterfalls, tropical foliage, kalo patches, and coastal estuaries and fishponds. The land on which Aulani was to be built was, in actuality, a dry open stretch of land waiting to be developed. To counter this dissonant reality, it was necessary for Disney to embark on an excursion into the hyperreal, “where the . . . imagination demands the real thing and, to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake.”<sup>68</sup>

Through a process of “landscape surgery” and masterful engineering,<sup>69</sup> Disney fabricated an artificial ahupua‘a, which includes the lo‘i kalo at the entrance, the Maka‘ala lobby, which symbolizes the peak of the valley, and Waikolohe Valley, whose meandering stream—Waikolohe Stream—metaphorically empties out into the ocean. The accommodation buildings located on the east and west sides of the resort were designed to simulate towering mountain ranges. Further, in keeping with Disney’s obsessive attention to detail, four boundary markers were placed at the four corners of the resort to demarcate the “ahupua‘a’s” perimeter, as was the practice in ancient Hawaiian times. Through the ahupua‘a, guests are invited to imagine Hawai‘i as it might once have been—a Utopia in which ancient Hawaiians labored in harmony with each other and with nature. This hyperrealistic framing of Hawai‘i through the jaundiced lens of “tradition” articulates with what Renato Rosaldo calls “imperial nostalgia.” He writes:

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<sup>67</sup> John R.K. Clark, *Beaches of O‘ahu*, Revised (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2005), 156.

<sup>68</sup> Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, 8.

<sup>69</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *America*, 9th ed. (London: Verso, 1996), 32.

Curiously enough, agents of colonialism . . . often display nostalgia for the colonized culture as it was “traditionally” (that is, when they first encountered it). The peculiarity of their yearning, of course, is that agents of colonialism long for the very forms of life they intentionally altered or destroyed.<sup>70</sup>

Like the boundary markers erected at Aulani to demarcate the imaginary terrain of the invented ahupua‘a, such nostalgic constructions of Hawaiian culture through an idealized landscape serve to enclose people’s imagination and prevent them from seeing past *and* ongoing traumas related to the alienation of Kānaka Maoli from their ‘āina (lands) as a result of colonization. A further contradiction is that while the customary ahupua‘a was a sustainable habitat made possible through innovative feats of Native engineering, the ahupua‘a at Aulani constitutes a system of resource *mis*management and depletion. For nearly twenty years, farmers living on the wetter Windward side have battled to have the waters of Waiahole, Waianu, Waikāne, and Kahana streams returned to them so they can feed their crops, including the culturally significant kalo. Currently, the Waiahole Ditch system diverts up to 12.7 mgd (million gallons of water per day) to the Leeward side to provide not only potable water for human consumption but as well non-potable water for golf course irrigation, corporate agriculture, housing and resort development, and recreational landscaping.

Ko Olina Resort Community and Marina—and by extension Aulani resort, which is part of the development complex—remain beneficiaries of that diversion, part of which keeps Aulani’s 321,000-gallon pool filled, the “ahupua‘a’s” vegetation lush, and the chlorinated Waikolohe Stream flowing. This model of unsustainability, which is carried out across the archipelago, not only places the fragile island habitat of Hawai‘i in a constant state of environmental crisis but also arrogantly disregards the exemplary resource management practices already present in Native Hawaiian culture. As Sharon Zukin argues, Disney landscapes—such as the ahupua‘a at Aulani—are an intrinsic part of its corporate money making agenda. She writes:

The stage-set landscape is a liminal space between nature and artifice, and market and place. It mediates between producer and consumer, a cultural object with real economic effect. The Disney landscape has in fact become a model for establishing both the economic value of cultural goods and the cultural value of consumer products.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Renato Rosaldo, “Imperial Nostalgia,” *Representations* 26, no. Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring) (1989): 107.

<sup>71</sup> Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 231.

Thus, ensconced within Aulani’s Hawaiian-style landscape are retail shops like Kālepa’s (Merchant) Store and Hale Manu (Bird House), which serve as bustling marketplaces where merchandise of all varieties is sold, from tote bags and hats, to Aulani-logoed souvenirs, and t-shirts. From this perspective, the ahupua‘a is at once an invented cultural terrain and a “market-oriented landscape”<sup>72</sup>—a zone of themed commercial enterprise and commodity consumption.

Despite the fakeness of the recreated ahupua‘a and the inherent contradictions it embodies, Aulani nevertheless attempts to offer guests an opportunity to experience the land firsthand and learn about its significance from a Kanaka Maoli perspective. For those who can afford it—adults are charged \$130.00 and children are charged \$104.00—every Friday Aulani transports guests to the North Shore of O‘ahu to introduce them to the restored, ecologically and culturally rich 1,875-acre ahupua‘a of Waimea Valley. There, visitors are taken on a guided walk through the botanical garden and invited to participate in a variety of hands-on activities, including coconut-frond weaving, kapa making, stone carving, and hula. Despite the commodified nature of the experience, the kahu (caretaker) of the area, Butch Helemano, sees the ecotouristic enterprise as a means through which to educate the visiting public about their own responsibility to the land and the idea that Kānaka Maoli are not fixed in the past but rather are squarely rooted in the present:

You can see that our culture is alive and shouldn’t be treated only in a historical sense. . . . The fabric of what we are is that Hawaiian still exists.<sup>73</sup>

The ahupua‘a at Aulani may operate as the backdrop to Disney-endorsed consumer spending, but such excursions as mentioned above—although in their own way embedded in the logic of consumerism—at least provide the basis for a more substantive locus of contact between visitors and a side of Hawai‘i they may not see at the resort.

### **Claiming Space and Meaning at Aulani through Contemporary Kanaka Maoli Art**

In designing Aulani, Disney worked closely with indigenous stakeholders, cultural consultants, and artists to tell Hawai‘i’s story. One of the most notable features of the resort is its rich display of contemporary Kanaka Maoli art. With the guidance of art and cultural consultant Maile Meyer, Disney commissioned more than sixty indigenous

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Dawna L. Robertson, “Waimea Valley: Diamond in the Rough,” *Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa Magazine* 1, no. 1 (2011): 20.

artists to produce works ranging from paintings, sculptures, and murals, to customary pieces such as ‘umeke, poi pounders, and kapa implements. One of the artists, painter Meala Bishop, noted the underlying significance of the works of art being displayed in the resort: “You’re gonna have a glimpse through the Native Hawaiian person’s eye of the epic story of Hawai‘i. What we see our history as. And it’s so different from the commercial, kitschy Hawai‘i that we’re all used to.”<sup>74</sup> Through the involvement of Meyer, Bishop, and other indigenous contributors, a Kanaka Maoli story of the Islands is borne out at Aulani in ways that are both complex and compelling.

The largest works in the collection are eight 15-story-high bas-reliefs. These furnish the exteriors of the two principal towers of the Aulani complex and were created by Carl F. K. Pao and Harinani Orme. In four of the bas-reliefs, Pao employed his own unique graphic writing style to render chants composed by artist and musician Doug Tolentino that relay the genealogical significance of the land on which Aulani stands. In the first two bas-reliefs, the Kanaka Maoli concept of balance between the male (Kū) and female (Hina) principles is invoked through the story of the rising and setting of the masculine sun and feminine moon. The remaining two works by Pao—which face toward the mountains—pay tribute to two historical personalities of the area, respected kupuna (elder) Alice Kamokila Campbell and famous seventeenth-century O‘ahu chief Kākuhihewa (Fig. 4.17).<sup>75</sup> Orme’s bas-reliefs, which look out toward the ocean and the mountains, are graphic representations of the story of Hina the moon goddess (see Fig. 4.15), the famous Polynesian trickster Maui (see Fig. 4.16.), and Hawaiian ocean voyaging (Fig. 4.18). Importantly, in the wake of discussions with the artists and cultural consultants, Disney elected to position the interior and exterior works in an east (male)–west (female) orientation to reflect the gender-encoded cardinal points of reference observed in Kanaka Maoli culture.

At the entrance to the resort, the three ki‘i by Pat Pine (Fig. 4.19), Jordan Souza (Fig. 4.20), and Rocky Jensen (Fig. 4.21) stand like sentinels, each one representing a brother of the demi-god Maui. These 12-foot sculptures are not of the same order as the mass-produced, miniaturized kitsch tikis found in airports, bars, and tourist stores all over Hawai‘i and in other parts of the Pacific. Rather, the inspiration behind these works is rooted in the artists having a genealogical connection to Hawai‘i and a deep

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<sup>74</sup> Disney Parks, “Aulani, a Disney Resort & Spa, Artist Interviews.” <http://www.popscreen.com/v/5W6Tx/Aulani-a-Disney-Resort-Spa-Artist-Interviews>.

<sup>75</sup> Alice Kamokila Campbell was the daughter of sugar baron James Campbell, who developed much of the land surrounding Ko Olina. The Estate of James Campbell (renamed in 2007 as the James Campbell Company) is one of the largest landholders in Hawai‘i.

respect and commitment to promoting their cultural heritage. This is what makes these ki‘i mana-filled representations of contemporary Kanaka Maoli identity as opposed to rootless imitations. Stepping inside the lobby of Aulani, visitors encounter Dalani Tanahy’s kapa murals, a series of prints that symbolize the mutual principles of Kū and Hina, male essence and female essence, respectively. For instance, in one section of the work, Tanahy depicts Hina through three of the goddess’s kinolau (physical manifestations). The top tier represents the different phases of the moon, the tier below represents the feet of the alae (the Hawaiian moorhen, a native bird of the Islands), and the bottom tier represents wana or sea urchin (Fig. 4.22). At the apex of the lobby’s cathedral-like transverse arches, Doug Tolentino’s acrylic creations relay the epic stories of Kanaloa (god of the sea) and Kāne (god of procreation) (see Fig. 4.7) and Pele (goddess of fire) and her sister Hi‘iaka (goddess of hula) (see Fig. 4.8). Kanaka Maoli artworks are not confined to the resort’s central area but also feature in private guest rooms, in the resort’s restaurants, in public hallways, and at elevator alcoves. Aulani currently holds one of the largest—if not *the* largest—collections of contemporary Kanaka Maoli art in the world.

The inclusion of contemporary Kanaka Maoli art at Aulani was premised on the desire for an authentic Maoli presence in the resort. John Condrey explains:

The question was: how do we be authentic? And the response was, well as far as we can be authentic about it and be clear about what *isn’t* authentic so you’re not trying to present the whole thing as the Hawaiian village. Fifteen to eighteen-story buildings are not going to be authentic. So we let that be part of the magic. . . . Art came up early, the art could be authentic. . . . The emphasis on the art just kind of grew exponentially [and] we went from a very small budget to a very generous budget.<sup>76</sup>

Rather than focus on commissioning artists to produce the kinds of artifact-based replicas that are a ubiquitous feature in many resorts throughout Hawai‘i, Disney instead chose to showcase contemporary visual works that celebrated Kanaka Maoli culture as alive and of the present and future, not just the past.<sup>77</sup> Says Condrey, “the idea here was, ‘Let’s look forward’.”<sup>78</sup> Although a modest sum of money had been earmarked for the purchase of contemporary Hawaiian art in Disney’s original budget, as the project developed and it became clear that contemporary art provided the central vehicle through which the past, present, and future of Hawaiian culture could be

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<sup>76</sup> John Condrey, interview, November 2, 2012. Although, as I pointed out earlier, there are cultural replicas present throughout the Aulani, the contemporary works of art predominate.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

represented, the amount increased exponentially to facilitate the inclusion of more artists.

Dispensing with the usual process that would involve issuing a call to artists to submit work for the project, Condrey, Meyer, and John Staub—operating under the direction of the design firm Philpotts & Associates—targeted artists they thought would be best suited to tell Hawai‘i’s story visually. For Meyer, the most obvious resource to draw from was the Kanaka Maoli art community. In terms of bringing Native artists on board the Aulani project, Meyer was instrumental:

I was the one who had the most vested interest in making sure they [i.e., the artists] were Maoli. I was listening for that conversation or else we’d be looking at Dietrich Varez on the walls. Someone had to be present in order to say that there was an alternative and . . . Joe Rohde had to believe that our community could deliver. . . . Joe was looking for authenticity. It’s what he wanted. I mean, there’s no way anything could be authentically Hawaiian today, the only thing that was authentic was intention. . . . So my role was to make sure that as fast as they could they could get to Hawaiians of place. And then I listened for the art because I knew they were going to do a lot of art. And so I stayed in that conversation.<sup>79</sup>

Importantly, the Kanaka Maoli artists who chose to accept the invitation to participate in the project carried with them their own sense of responsibility to represent Hawai‘i and their culture in ways that would not only affirm Native mana (power/prestige), but also serve as a basis for educating the public about the uniqueness of Kānaka Maoli as not merely a host culture serving guests, but as the *root* culture with a genealogical claim to place. In describing her monumental bas-reliefs, Harinani Orme notes:

In creating the murals for Aulani I wanted to invite our guests to share the richness in the myths, legends, and traditions that have been passed down to us through our kūpuna. Each panel allows Aulani’s guests to discover and gain a broader understanding of our people, our history, our traditional and cultural practices, our surrounding lifestyles and aspects of our past and present.<sup>80</sup>

Solomon Enos, though recognizing Disney’s iconic Mickey Mouse as the quintessential euphemism for “fake, junk . . . and without spirit,” was nevertheless quick to acknowledge that at the core of what the Imagineers were trying to do with Aulani was

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<sup>79</sup> Maile Aluli Meyer, interview, September 24, 2012.

<sup>80</sup> Quote reproduced from an on-site mobile device that introduces visitors to the contemporary art at the Aulani. Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa, “Discover Aulani Art Tour,” n.d., accessed January 5, 2013. I would like to acknowledge the kind assistance of Elliot Mills (General Manager for Aulani) and Kahulu De Santos (Cultural Advisor for Aulani) for providing me access to the mobile device during one of several visits to Aulani.

“something truly authentic. Which is why it drew a lot of us [to the project].”<sup>81</sup> Enos suggests, too, that although Aulani may by no means be a perfect representation of Kanaka Maoli culture, it nevertheless provides a useful working model for how Kānaka Maoli might engage with other resort developments in the future:

So any way to then build on that both at Aulani and any new developments that happen in Waikīkī just becomes amazing precedents for making sure that Kanaka Maoli artists are central to any more stories that get told to the world about Hawai‘i.<sup>82</sup>

Such positive testimonies are complicated, however, by the tensions that emerged between Kanaka Maoli artists and corporate Disney over the issue of intellectual rights and copyrights. John Condrey, who was privy to the negotiation process, explains:

Disney’s corporate position was when we buy something we buy everything. And we had to work with Disney and the artists through some of those issues. We got Disney to concede and understand that, in terms of what this art represented culturally, they were not buying cultural rights. If the artist did something that represented Hina [for example], Disney didn’t own Hina or the concept. Nor could Disney ever prevent the artist from recreating Hina again. This was culture, this was public realm. . . . We got them to change the document. But they still, and this was not a point that they were willing to concede, were buying the copyright to the piece. . . . And it really became for some artists whether or not they would participate. The first group of artists that were commissioned went back and renegotiated the percentage fee to buy the copyright.<sup>83</sup>

Disney is well known for such hardball business practice, an approach that Janet Wasko says is symptomatic of “the company’s thirst for control.”<sup>84</sup> She reports that even when it comes to receiving creative ideas from the public, Disney’s claim to ownership over the submissions is spelled out in clear legal terms:

The Submissions shall be deemed, and shall remain, the property of DISNEY. . . . DISNEY shall exclusively own all now known or hereafter existing rights to the Submissions of every kind and nature throughout the universe and shall be entitled to unrestricted use of the Submission for any purpose whatsoever, commercial or otherwise, without compensation to the provider of the Submissions.<sup>85</sup>

For those Kanaka Maoli artists who accepted Disney’s contractual terms, the company has exclusive rights to reproduce their artworks at its own discretion, and any sales

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<sup>81</sup> Solomon Enos, interview, January 16, 2013.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> John Condrey, interview, November 2, 2012.

<sup>84</sup> Janet Wasko, *Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 87.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 86.



generated by those reproductions go directly into Disney's vast corporate coffers (i.e., the artists do not receive royalties).<sup>86</sup> On the subject of the contractual arrangements between Kanaka Maoli artists and Disney, even Pao, who has admitted to feeling ambivalent about participating in the project under such constraining contractual conditions, nevertheless arrived at his own pragmatic resolution:

You think of graphic designers. They sell their rights to their artwork, or sometimes they're able to negotiate with the client. So it's not like this is something new. I just think that fine artists forget that this is a business transaction. The more that I have experience working in the commercial field of art as a fine artist, I'm becoming more and more accustomed to the economic realities of selling my work.<sup>87</sup>

Another point of contractual friction was Disney's insistence that the artists eschew making any mention of the company's name in public presentations of their work or on their resumé's. The rationale for such restrictive measures, which are in effect tantamount to a suppression order, rests on Disney's enduring impulse to both regulate where and how its name is used and to prevent contractors from benefiting any further from their links with the company. When one considers the important place in Hawaiian culture of acknowledging alliances and connections, the conditions of control and constraint placed on the artists by Disney to *not* acknowledge their working relationship to the company make the familial bonds heralded by Iger in his statement at the beginning of this chapter—"We are now and for all time 'ohana, one family"—patently disingenuous.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, the suppression of the artist's voices can be seen in an even more troubling way as articulating with a history of trauma that has witnessed the systematic silencing of Hawaiian voices, most notably through the banning of their mother tongue in schools in the nineteenth century but also through other pernicious institutional policies. Such cycles of silence are directly related to the violent legacy of colonialism in Hawai'i, a legacy that Disney might be seen to be continuing through its contractual restrictions. When taken as a whole, such seemingly inhospitable practice

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<sup>86</sup> That stated, when I visited the resort in February 2014, I noticed that all reproduced works being sold were accompanied by a label informing the purchaser that 10 percent of all sales went toward Native Hawaiian cultural preservation projects and the support of Native Hawaiian art. I have yet to analyze the degree to which this statement is carried out. Further, at least one artist, Rocky Jensen, was able to renegotiate with Disney to retain exclusive rights over his work, the details of which I have not been able to verify.

<sup>87</sup> Carl F.K. Pao, interview, August 18, 2013.

<sup>88</sup> Indeed, the statement brings to mind a similar one made during a significant moment in New Zealand history in 1840 when after signing the Treaty of Waitangi the representative of the British Crown Lieutenant Governor William Hobson declared "He kotahi tātou" ("We are one people"). The signing of the treaty was soon followed by the systematic appropriation of Māori tribal lands.

seems to be at odds with the aura of goodwill that Disney projects to the public. Yet, as Mike Budd asserts in his introduction to *Rethinking Disney: Private Control, Public Dimensions* (2005), “Behind all those cute characters, that family fun, and that nearly impenetrable aura is another avaricious multinational corporation.”<sup>89</sup>

Critics of Aulani have also drawn attention to the problematic nature of Disney omitting the names of the artists from their creative products. In their insightful analysis of the resort, Brandy McDougall and Georganne Nordstrom write that during their visit to Aulani they “were unable to find any descriptors that offered the names of any of the artists, nor the names of their artworks.”<sup>90</sup> The authors’ observations are for the most part correct, although a couple of artists did manage to work their names into their creations. For example, Mark Chai did so by carving his name into the sculptures he was commissioned to make—a konane board and hōlua sled—both of which are located near the stairwell leading down to the Makahiki restaurant. In light of the more widespread exclusion of any kind of identifying text relating to the artist’s or their artworks, it is tempting to conclude that what Disney was endeavoring to do was render the artists anonymous and reduce their creative productions to mere decorations. Indeed, of the artworks themselves, McDougall and Nordstrom mournfully surmise that they have been “subsumed through the magic of Disney.”<sup>91</sup> While I do not deny the legitimacy of such interpretations, based on my own reading of Aulani and the perspective of some of the artists themselves, I would like to add here some details that I believe will clarify the complexity of the situation.

Despite the lack of identification on or in the immediate vicinity of the artworks themselves, there are several important ways that Disney acknowledges the creators and their productions. For instance, some of the artists—including Meala Bishop, Brook Parker, Shannon Weaver, Dalani Tanahy, Carl F.K. Pao, and Rocky Jensen—are each profiled in a three-minute in-house video production that promotes the indigenous art at Aulani. Resort guests can access the show-reel on their in-room televisions, but as well it is available for public viewing on the Internet.<sup>92</sup> Further, every Saturday a free art and culture walking tour is led by an Aulani Cast Member who guides guests to some of the more prominent works of art around the resort. For those who want to explore the

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<sup>89</sup> Mike Budd, “Introduction: Private Disney, Public Disney,” in *Rethinking Disney: Private Control, Public Dimensions*, ed. Mike Budd and Max H. Kirsch (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>90</sup> McDougall and Nordstrom, “Stealing the Piko,” unpaginated.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, unpaginated.

<sup>92</sup> To view the video, go to <http://www.popscreen.com/v/5W6Tx/Aulani-a-Disney-Resort-Spa-Artist-Interviews>.

artworks at their own leisure, they have the option of embarking on a self-guided tour with a mobile device that features images of the art and an audible commentary by Native Hawaiian artist and educator Meleanna Meyer about the artists and the meaning behind their creations.

During one of several visits I made to Aulani, I had the opportunity to join one of the walking tours with my family. The excursion began with a stirring oli of greeting by the young woman who was our guide. Although such performances in the context of a tourist resort could be construed as an exploitative appropriation of Native culture where the deeper significance of the ritual is reduced to a banal scripted production, the oli executed by our guide was sincere and genuine. The tour itself was both informative and respectful of the artists and their works. Carl F.K. Pao, who accompanied me on the tour along with our daughter, was even given the opportunity to talk to the guests about the message behind his works as well as discuss the significance of contemporary Kanaka Maoli art in Hawai‘i more generally. Many of the guests on the tour flooded Pao with questions about his work—questions that were inquisitive, thoughtful, and engaged. In considering their responses, I was left with the view that while Aulani may be rooted in a structure of meaning making that routinely subsumes Native culture under the sign of commodity, one cannot discount the fact that it also functions as a space where visitors can have meaningful encounters and reach a greater level of awareness.

Despite the many critiques that could be mounted against Aulani and its treatment of Kanaka Maoli culture in general and Kanaka Maoli artists in particular, what I believe is important to consider is how the artists, as well as the Kānaka Maoli who liaised on their behalf (specifically Maile Meyer), asserted themselves in the negotiation process. They were not passively following the dictates of Disney but were instead enacting their own agency with considerable adroitness. Maile Meyer viewed the business interactions between Kanaka Maoli artists and the corporate giant as embodying mutuality:

We’re not invisible. We’re coming in as peers because we have something these people want and we can take it with us. . . . We’re entering a relationship that we’re defining and that’s really the shift.<sup>93</sup>

In defining the parameters of their relationship with Disney, for instance, the Kanaka Maoli artists—with the help of Meyer, John Condrey, and other consultants—were unwavering in their position that although Disney may retain the rights to the artworks,

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<sup>93</sup> Maile Aluli Meyer, interview, September 24, 2012.

they would never have the rights to the cultural content of the works, such as symbols, motifs, and cultural figures like Maui, Hina, and so forth. As Condrey states, “We got Disney to concede and understand that in terms of what this art represented culturally . . . they were not buying cultural rights.”<sup>94</sup> Thus, Disney, a company that has long had a reputation for getting its own way, was forced to deviate from its standard business practices and yield to the will of Kānaka Maoli over certain important matters. Meleanna Meyer (sister to Maile Meyer)—one of the artists who produced work for Aulani and who also worked with children from Nanaikapono Elementary School to create an illustrated map of O‘ahu for the resort—acknowledges the fraught reality of working with Disney but concludes that the overall results for Kānaka Maoli were positive:

There’s a great deal of tension, no matter how well they pay you and no matter how beautiful the work looks, there still is a tension, of course there is. But as we’re cognizant and collectively say this is how we want to be represented, there’s a difference because we’re actually part of the conversation in a way that we haven’t been before. And that makes a huge difference.<sup>95</sup>

Even artist ‘Īmaikalani Kalahahe—who has in the past staunchly opposed corporate tourism in Hawai‘i—offers a commendatory evaluation of the inclusion of Kanaka Maoli art at Aulani:

Are we playing with the Devil? Yes. But what the Devil is looking at now is Hawaiian. He’s not looking at a vision of what someone else has of a Hawaiian. . . . One of the things I like about Disney is the scope of the work that is there that is Maoli. And, again, what are they looking at?<sup>96</sup>

In considering the statements by the Meyers and Kalahahe, it becomes clear that inherent in the dealings between Kānaka Maoli and corporate businesses like Disney is the labyrinthian series of delicate, complex, and often fraught negotiations that frame them. The context in which these transactions occur constitutes a contact zone, where ideas, interests and “interlocking understandings and practices” are negotiated and contested.<sup>97</sup> But while the “contact zone” of Aulani may have brought about productive interactions between Kānaka Maoli and Disney representatives, it was also a space of unsettling contradictions. The most glaring was the fact that the artists who participated in the Aulani project necessarily had to work within the very system of power that has

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<sup>94</sup> John Condrey, interview, November 2, 2012.

<sup>95</sup> Meleanna Aluli Meyer, interview, October 12, 2012.

<sup>96</sup> ‘Īmaikalani Kalahahe, interview, October 26, 2012.

<sup>97</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 7.

for decades distorted and reduced their culture for commercial profit. To return to Kalahela's insightful observation, the artists had to play with the Devil in order to intervene in and subvert the status quo. In an unforeseen way, however, such daring action—while laudable in many respects—was not without its consequences. As anti-Disney/anti-Aulani sentiments began to be voiced within the broader Hawaiian community, the artists' role in the project became increasingly tenuous.

### **A Retort to the Resort**

In settler Hawai'i, where Kanaka Maoli artists struggle to find gallery space in which to exhibit their work, the display of such a large assemblage of indigenous art at Aulani constitutes a positive development. Further, that a Kanaka Maoli perspective suffuses the conceptual and physical design of the resort is evidence of Disney's willingness to collaborate with the Native community, something that has been lacking in other tourist venues.<sup>98</sup> Imagineer Joe Rohde, who worked closely with Kanaka Maoli artists and consultants during the Aulani project, highlighted the sincerity with which Disney approached telling Hawai'i's story:

Once we established that we were serious and intentional in our desire to make Aulani a place where Hawai'i would be expressed as it was seen by Hawaiians, the rest became a job of careful listening and co-advising each other. We were as scrupulous as possible that we, Disney, would not interpose ourselves between our guests, who wanted to see the "real" Hawai'i and their hosts, the people who make Hawai'i real.<sup>99</sup>

Despite such earnest and scrupulous efforts by Disney to represent Hawai'i from a Kanaka Maoli perspective, many Hawaiians remain highly critical of Aulani, viewing it as part of the settler colonial project to naturalize Hawai'i as a place to be consumed by tourists and to neutralize the "hard, ugly, and cruel" realities faced by Kānaka Maoli as oppressed people in their own homeland.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, contrary to the jubilant displays of welcome observed at the opening ceremony for the resort in 2011, many Hawaiians (and, indeed, non-Hawaiians) grimaced at Disney's arrival in the Islands. Since its opening, commentary interrogating Aulani's treatment of Hawaiian culture has

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<sup>98</sup> This is not to ignore other positive collaborative enterprises that have taken place between Kanaka Maoli artists and corporate tourist businesses. For example, in 2009 a number of Kanaka Maoli artists were commissioned to produce art for the Sheraton Waikīkī. A significant part of the scheme was a collaborative art project between the commissioned artists and twenty-two Hawai'i-based youths to produce a six-paneled mural honoring the historical location on which the Sheraton is located.

<sup>99</sup> Joe Rohde, email correspondence, November 13, 2012.

<sup>100</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 137.

circulated not only among Kānaka Maoli in everyday spoken discourse, but as well through more sustained, public modes of critical inquiry, including academic writing, symposia, and, more significantly, through art.

In the following pages I turn my attention to an exhibition that took place during the 2013 Maoli Art Month celebrations at the Arts at Mark’s Garage in Honolulu. Comprising works by nine accomplished Kanaka Maoli artists, the exhibition revealed a significant degree of disquiet about Aulani and, more specifically, toward the indigenous artists who participated in the project.

Curated by April Drexel, the aim of ‘*a’ mini retort*’ was to critically examine the “existing implications and nuances associated with ‘imaging’ and ‘imagined’ constructs” in specific relation to the characterization of Hawaiian culture at Aulani.<sup>101</sup> A further goal of the show sought to interrogate the role of artists in constructing notions of Hawai‘i at the resort. The central question here was, “how/when/why/where creative textualities [e.g., Native Hawaiian art] can simultaneously and/or subsequently contribute, complicate, and perhaps, distort understanding.”<sup>102</sup>

The show included works by ‘Īmaikalani Kalahahele, Kaili Chun, Maika‘i Tubbs, Noelle Kahanu, Abigail Romanchak, April Drexel, Kunāne Wooten, Kauka de Silva, and Maile Andrade. Artistic contributions were diverse in terms of the materials used and how each artist approached conceptualizing the key theme. For instance, Kalahahele created a multi-media piece titled *Nana, If You Can See through the Palu, No Blame the Trap* [Look, If You Can See through the Fish Bait, Don’t Blame the Trap] (Fig. 4.23), which comprised a marble and ceramic pedestal, upon which was secured a fish trap woven out of artificial sennet and the artist’s own hair. Hooks and lines holding one-dollar bills were attached at various points on the woven fish trap and painted text on each of the four sides of the ceramic pedestal issued a series of warnings. One section read:

Maka ala [pay attention] Bra [brother]  
Look out  
But no forget geting payed for wat you are doing is good.  
There is noting wrong whit the kala [money]!!!  
You just have to maka ala Bra,  
God damit  
maka ala

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<sup>101</sup> Exhibition introduction, ‘*a’ mini retort*. Arts at Mark’s Garage. Honolulu, Hawai‘i. April 30–June 1, 2013.

<sup>102</sup> Exhibition introduction, ‘*a’ mini retort*.

The work served as a cautionary message to artists who sell their work within the wider commercial tourism milieu and suggested that although there is nothing wrong with making money from one's art, Kānaka Maoli nevertheless need to exercise caution and be alert—maka'ala—in their dealings with corporate entities like Disney.

The hooks and the fish trap indicate the potential dangers of engaging in the commercialization of Kanaka Maoli art, while—and this is important—not eschewing engagement altogether. In many ways, the fact that Kalahale has woven a piece of himself into the artwork—his hair—reveals in a refreshing way his willingness to be reflexive and disclose that he too is faced with the task of making complex and difficult decisions relating to the sale of his art.<sup>103</sup> He himself is not above being caught in potential webs of exploitation.

In a separate piece by the artist titled *No Fight Hawaiians*, two spherical shapes cut from card and incised with intricate designs reminiscent of Hawaiian tattooing were fixed on foam core vertically from one another, while between them was the written message in ink, “NO FIGHT HAWAIIANS.” Here, Kalahale's statement exhorts Hawaiians, specifically in the arts community—which has a long and deep history of internal hostilities—to not fight each other and to maintain unity even in the midst of disagreement. In the context of the exhibition, the message was an important one and helped bring a modicum of balance and perspective to some of the more confronting content that was present in other works.

As with Kalahale's installation, Kaili Chun used the fishing trope as a thematic motif in her own two works titled *'Upena* [Net] and *It's Disney*. In *'Upena*, the artist created an installation of glass balls suspended from the gallery ceiling in nets. The piece alludes to a particular kind of fishing practice whereby glass balls attached to fishing nets function as floats to help keep the nets buoyant so that large numbers of fish can be caught at one time. In her painting titled *It's Disney*, Chun spray-painted an assortment of wall hooks on top of laminate flooring to create negative-space images in the likeness of question marks or fishhooks. In this piece, the question marks seem to impart several corresponding messages relating to Aulani as a site that can be confusing, disconcerting, contradictory, and, ultimately, impenetrable (also perhaps impassable, like the keyhole in *Alice in Wonderland*). Further, the fishhook motif, as in Kalahale's piece, alludes to the potential for Hawaiians to be ensnared and exploited by Disney, specifically in terms of the commercialization of Hawaiian art and culture. The

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<sup>103</sup> Indeed, after the exhibition, Kalahale, in collaboration with Cory Taum, created four paintings that are now installed in the interior of Aulani's new eatery, *Ulu Café*.

artist also included text on the wall caption, which read: “Wonder, joy, family. Pretend. Imagine. Dream. NWSE. Think.”<sup>104</sup> In particular relation to the artist’s reference to the cardinal points of the compass—as evidenced in the initials N (north), W (west), S (south), E (east)—Chun seems here to be petitioning the viewer to think about Aulani in ways that go beyond the set coordinates of fun, family, and magic.

In *Thinking Out Loud #1*, Maika‘i Tubbs manipulated plastic wrap into a seamless thread of words that read, “I am more than my ethnicity.” In the wall caption that accompanied the piece, the artist described the significance of the work as a critical reminder to himself “to not use my ethnicity as a crutch and to keep creating work that is relevant to me and universal in language.”<sup>105</sup> In my own reading of the work, I believe that what Tubbs is flagging here is the identity politics that have long framed indigenous artistic practice in Hawai‘i. While many Kanaka Maoli artists are proud to categorize themselves under the moniker “Kanaka Maoli/Native Hawaiian artist,” many others refuse to be subsumed under what they perceive to be a narrow definition that detracts from their value as artists in their own right. It remains a continuing point of discussion amongst Kanaka Maoli that is often raised at art gatherings and symposia. Read in the context of the overall exhibition, I could not help but wonder if Tubbs was not also critiquing—albeit ever so furtively—the fact that the Native Hawaiian artists who worked on the Aulani project received commissions based on the very fact that they are ethnically Hawaiian.

Noelle Kahanu, one of the founders of the annual Maoli Arts Month celebrations, offered her own perspective on Aulani. In *Maquette # AU-1*, the artist used red and yellow-dyed feathers to create a miniaturized replica of the “Joy Cloak,” a famous Hawaiian cloak (ahu‘ula) that has been exhibited widely and currently resides in the Hawaiian collection at the Bishop Museum in Honolulu. Kahanu’s version, however, is scintillatingly subversive in its intent. Whereas the design of the original eighteenth-century artifact included a series of uniformly spaced circular motifs, in the maquette the artist cleverly rearranged the geometric patterns to form the unmistakable profile of Mickey Mouse (Fig 4.24). The link between Kahanu’s cloak and Disney (via Mickey) is implied in the word “joy,” which not only relates to the name of the actual artifact but, moreover, is a clever pun that points to Disney’s driving quest to produce a culture of

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<sup>104</sup>Wall caption, ‘a’ mini retort.

<sup>105</sup> Wall caption, ‘a’ mini retort.



joy and happiness.<sup>106</sup> (We can recall here the well-known tagline for Disneyland as being the “Happiest Place on Earth.”)

The maquette was also accompanied by a statement, which is written in the same vein as an art proposal:

Created in contemplation of a possible future commission, this maquette is one in a series of artist studies on the famous feathered “Joy Cloak” with its myriad of yellow spots on a red background. Kaona (layered meaning) includes the “joyful” nature of the surroundings, the chiefly history of Hawai‘i, and an ancient tradition whereby cloaks were presented to visitors of high rank. Artist proposes to create a full scale cloak using dyed duck and goose feathers. Colors may vary according to placement and context (i.e., black on yellow, yellow on red).<sup>107</sup>

Far from constituting an actual proposal for a future commission, however, the text, as I interpret it, is more realistically a satirical jab at Aulani. Historically, ahu‘ula were restricted to the proprietorship of the highest-ranking individuals in Hawaiian society—the ali‘i or chiefly class—and were extremely sacred. However, Kahanu’s miniaturized “Joy Cloak” displaces that meaning and shifts it to reside with Mickey Mouse—whose profile on the cloak connotes his prestige—as the new ali‘i (chief) of the land. A further level of interpretation is that Mickey Mouse, the character most closely associated with the Disney franchise, is in fact a metonym for the ascendance of Disney itself.

In another piece, the artist produced a mixed-media sign that read *Café ‘Ole* [Café Not]. The sign is, of course, a witty play on the term “café au lait” or “coffee and milk.” Perhaps here the artist, in vein similar to Romanchak whose work I examine below, is indicating that when it comes to resort spaces like Aulani, the situation is not black-and-white (coffee being black, milk being white, and café au lait being a blend of the two). On closer reflection, I cannot help but wonder if the word “‘ole” was perhaps also an artful truncation by Kahanu of the Hawaiian word “‘iole,” meaning “rat” or “mouse,” to create “Café Rat,” the allusion here obviously once again being to Mickey Mouse.

Maui-based printmaker Abigail Romanchak created a stunning piece titled *i.den.ti.ty* (Fig. 4.25), in which she used hundreds of small, individual marking tags that she organized in an imbricated pattern on pegboard. Compositionally, the work was split into two even horizontal sections, the top section of which was light grey in value and the bottom section of which comprised variations of dark grey. Although it was not

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<sup>106</sup> And let us not forget that the name of the complex on which Aulani is located—Ko Olina—translates as “Fulfillment of Joy.” As an interesting aside, the original “Joy Cloak” had nothing to do with the emotion of joy at all. Rather, it was named after the Bostonian merchant Captain Joy, who, it is said, received the cloak as a gift during his time in the Islands.

<sup>107</sup> Wall caption, ‘a’ *mini retort*.

apparent from a distance, when viewed up close one could better see that the tags bore the unique mark of the artist's own thumbprint (Fig. 4.26). Further examination revealed yet another visual stratum of the work: overlaying the entire piece was the repeated stenciled statement: "NOT SO BLACK AND WHITE." In *i.den.ti.ty*, the artist probes a question that Hawaiians have long grappled with regarding who they are as a people. Hawaiian writer John Dominis Holt, who in 1964 devoted an entire book to interrogating what it means to be a Hawaiian in contemporary times (*On Being Hawaiian* [1964]), drew on his own sense of selfhood to disclose the following: "I am, in depth, a product of Hawaii—an American, yes, who is a citizen of the fiftieth State, but I am also a Hawaiian: somewhat by blood, and in large measure by sentiment. Of this I am proud."<sup>108</sup>

In the same way that Holt embraced the complexity of his own subject position as an American citizen and as a Native Hawaiian, so does Romanchak convey that her own identity—evinced through the use of her thumbprint—is equally contingent on the coalescence of a diverse range of ancestral lines, experiences, and circumstances, none of which need be rejected or denied. The use of punctuation marks in the title of the work, while corresponding to the phonetic transcription of the word itself, also connotes the discrete components that make up each individual—specifically each Hawaiian and, more broadly speaking, each community—to create a whole.

That the central color scheme used in the piece is grey also provides a basis for interpretation. What I believe Romanchak is implying here, specifically in relation to the commercialization of Hawaiian culture and the inclusion of indigenous art at Aulani, is that Hawaiian identity—and importantly *artistic* identity—cannot be reduced to black-and-white categories but it is always already located within the finer gradations of grey.

In *...for the record...*, April Drexel wall-mounted thirty-two vinyl music albums, each one bearing a painted silhouette of Native Hawaiians engaged in various customary modes of activity, such as kalo harvesting and fishing.<sup>109</sup> The artist also stenciled place names—all of which are significant in that they relate to the ancient ahupua'a of Honouliuli where Aulani is located—on a select number of the albums. The names included but were not limited to "Kailikahi," "Kamaipipipi," and "Pualu'u." In

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<sup>108</sup> Cited in Sheldon Hershinow, "John Dominis Holt: Hawaiian-American Traditionalist," *MELUS* 17, no. 2 (1980): 63.

<sup>109</sup> I have heard through associates that Drexel strategically selected certain records because they featured Disney songs, but I have not been able to confirm this with the artist.

the wall caption, Drexel added a poignant poem that underscored the significance of Honouliuli to the Native Hawaiian communities with ancestral connections to the place:

auwe...auwe...auwe...  
“snitches with kānaka mouths”  
conveniently forgot(?)  
NO! ignored!!!!  
elders’ breath

he ‘āina momona [a bountiful land]:  
Honouliuli,  
‘Ewa,  
O‘ahu  
nurtured generations...

skilled—farmers,  
revered—fishermen,  
patient—salt harvesters,  
illustrious—fishpond caregivers,  
proficient—seaweed gatherers  
rich...  
in ancestral ways of knowing  
steeped...  
in historical substance

descendants  
perpetually...  
lift  
your voices  
to  
maintain your stance.<sup>110</sup>

As relayed visually in the installation, in the poem Drexel pays homage to Hawaiian cultural practices and indigenous connection to place, on this last point referring to Honouliuli as a bountiful land that once “nurtured generations” of Kānaka Maoli. But here the underlying tension between the past and the present becomes keenly discernible. Honouliuli—like so many other places of belonging in Hawai‘i—though once a thriving area for Hawaiians, has been irreversibly transformed through development, not the least of which has occurred through the construction of resort hotels, the most recent addition being Aulani.

Drexel’s installation and the accompanying poem in effect point to the ongoing struggle of Kānaka Maoli—specifically those genealogically connected to places besieged by development—to protect their lands against destruction. Further, while in the last stanza of the poem the artist exhorts the descendants of Honouliuli to raise their

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<sup>110</sup> Wall caption, ‘a’ *mini retort*.

voices and maintain their stance, in the very first stanza she indicates that other Hawaiians—she refers to them euphemistically as “snitches with kānaka mouths”—have failed in their obligation to care for the land and heed “elders’ breath.”<sup>111</sup> The implication here is that the well-being of Kānaka Maoli is compromised not so much from without, but from within. Here, I believe the artist is alluding to Kānaka Maoli who participate in touristic circuits in general and more specifically the artists who chose to produce works for the Aulani project.

In *E Hō ‘ai ‘Ole ‘Oukou* [You Will Not Feed] (Fig. 4.27),<sup>112</sup> accomplished carver Kunāne Wooten used a blend of contemporary and customary Hawaiian sculptural traditions to create a stylistically rendered human figure made of wood. Measuring fourteen inches long, the effigy was carved in a prone position, its head tilted up and the arms and legs stretched out on a horizontal axis. The sculpture resembled many of the masterpieces that were produced by carvers in the ancestral past and that now populate museum collections all over the world. Two bowls carved expertly out of two different colored pieces of stone—white and grey—were set in the crook of the hands and feet located at the terminal ends of the figure, while a woven piece of sennit covered its open mouth.

In his artist statement, Wooten noted that the work was a commentary on the obstacles that prevent Hawaiians from “perpetuat[ing] our culture as we need to.”<sup>113</sup> The covering of the figure’s mouth, as I interpret it, alludes to the contractual restrictions—understood here as a particular set of obstacles to the perpetuation of Native culture—to which the Aulani artists consented. In relation to the public disclosure clause, by covering the figure’s mouth, the artist implies the forced silencing of Native voices to speak freely about the works they produced for the resort. Conversely, the title of the work, *E Hō ‘ai ‘Ole ‘Oukou*, also points to the act of feeding or nurturing. Here the covered mouth of the figure takes on another meaning: by preventing the artists from receiving royalties from the reproduction of their works, Disney, in effect, starves them of sustenance. The empty bowls at the terminal ends of the figure represent yet another layer of meaning. Interpreted as vessels for food, they perhaps allude to the idea that not everything that goes into them will be of sustaining value for Kānaka Maoli.

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<sup>111</sup> The line “snitches with kānaka mouths” is a paraphrase of “a snitch with a kanaka’s mouth,” which features in the song “Samuela Texas,” performed by Hawaiian band “Big Island Conspiracy.”

<sup>112</sup>In the wake of the exhibition, this piece was purchased by the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts.

<sup>113</sup>Wall caption, ‘*a*’ *mini retort*.

Ceramist Kauka de Silva produced two large turquoise stoneware vessels, each titled *Shoulders Where Death Comes to Cry* (Fig. 4.28). The pieces were incised with designs reminiscent of ancient Hawaiian petroglyphs, including humanoid figures, an array of different geometric patterns—such as triangles and spheres with a singular point located at their center (the latter typically used to signify the human piko or umbilical cord)—and what looked like the peaks of a mountain range. Although the title of the piece implies a state of mourning,<sup>114</sup> I read it as a statement about the indomitability and resilience of the Hawaiian culture—symbolized as the two vessels—which is strong enough to shoulder even the weight of Death in the throes of weeping. The fact that it took several people to move just one of the vessels emphasizes the incredible robustness of the pieces.

Maile Andrade's wall-mounted triptych titled *In and Out of Kanakaville* included unclothed kewpie dolls cast in high relief on opaque black, white, and grey glass tiles. Two of the tiles had high-relief pebble backgrounds, while the background for the white tile was impressed with numerous shallow pits. The central motif of the kewpie dolls, as I read it, alludes to the way elements of Kanaka Maoli culture are selected, pressed into a "mold," and then distributed for mass production in the tourist industry—just as kewpie dolls were mass produced for Americans in the early and late twentieth centuries. Further, the kewpie dolls might also be understood as connoting the plasticization of Kanaka Maoli culture and its perceived reduction to the sign of "plaything" under tourism.

Photographer Kapulani Landgraf produced a potent retort in her installation titled *Ka Maunu Pololoi? [The Right Bait?]* (Fig. 4.29). The accompanying caption included a quote from Aulani's website, which was followed by the artist's own statement:

Walt Disney Imagineers worked hand in hand with locals to create Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa in Ko Olina—a Hawai'i Resort that celebrates Hawaiian culture, history, and traditions. From contemporary Hawaiian art and design to myriad recreational activities, entertainment, excursions and more, Aulani immerses Guests in the legends of the islands so you can experience the true enchantment of Hawai'i.

"The Aulani Story" DEMANDS a Hawaiian Retort.<sup>115</sup>

The piece itself included over forty spring-mounted ratttraps located on the floor and attached to an entire single wall. Some of the traps were primed with faux money (Fig.

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<sup>114</sup> The title was perhaps inspired by a line in Leonard Cohen's song "Take This Waltz," which reads: "There's a shoulder where death comes to cry."

<sup>115</sup> Wall caption, 'a' *mini retort*.

4.30), while others had ink-jet photographs of the commissioned Kanaka Maoli artworks at Aulani fixed in the “snap.” The printed text on the traps, “LANI”—which in Hawaiian means heavens, sky, elite, or spiritual—constituted a truncated version of the resort’s name. The artist incorporated a stylized arch in the letter “A” in the text, a visual echo of Aulani’s signature marketing logo.

The installation was so startlingly direct in its message that it left little room for misinterpretation for many visitors. Where Kalahale and Chun drew on the motif of the fishhook as a metaphor for the *potential* for entrapment, Landgraf used the rattrap to connote what she perceived to be the *unequivocal* capture of Kanaka Maoli artists by Disney, the money in the traps serving as the “bait” by which the artists were allegedly lured. Landgraf’s depiction of the artists as trapped relates specifically to the contractual restrictions they agreed to, a point that was raised variously in works throughout the exhibition. Different amounts of money were also included in each trap, alluding perhaps to the varying range of compensation each artist negotiated for their commissioned works.

The artist’s statement “‘The Aulani Story’ DEMANDS a Hawaiian Retort” deserves particular attention for the decisive way it frames belonging to and membership in the broader lāhui Hawai‘i (Hawaiian nation/Hawaiian family). Here, the classification of “Hawaiian,” while clearly incorporating the artists who participated in *‘a’ mini retort*, simultaneously disavows the membership of other Hawaiians, specifically those who participated in the Aulani project. Such an atomizing scheme, I argue, feeds into ongoing debates over blood quantum classification in Hawai‘i. However, where the racist logic of blood quantum uses the 50 percent rule “as the authenticating criterion for Hawaiian identity,”<sup>116</sup> in relation to Landgraf’s statement, the authenticating criterion for Hawaiian identity is transferred to where one’s art is displayed. In this regime of value, “tourist art”—or more precisely art in tourist spaces—is viewed as a deplorable corruption of indigenous culture and therefore impure, while art in the space of the gallery is uncontaminated. Such a claim to “purity,” however, by its very nature, eschews alternative possibilities and forces people to take extreme positions—i.e., us/them, authentic/inauthentic, and resistance/complicity—rather than seek to understand the complexities inherent in the production of contemporary indigenous art. To return to Romanchak’s statement, the reasons why Native artists engage with the tourist industry—in this case a resort—are not so black and white.

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<sup>116</sup> Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood*, 5.

Tragically, in the wake of the exhibition, several longtime friendships were strained to the point of breaking over differences, relating in particular to Landgraf's installation. Some, although by no means all, of the Aulani artists who saw the installation at the show's opening were visibly shaken and hurt to see images of their artwork ensnared in traps with money. Other artists whose work featured in the exhibition later argued that it was the right of the artist to express her opinions freely. Conversely, a couple of the artists in the show expressed remorse. Several weeks after the opening, one artist—whom I choose not to name here—conveyed how distressed they were to have unwittingly participated in a show that in part vilified their artist peers. In my own reading of the situation, I must admit to feeling a great deal of ambivalence. On the one hand I believe the exhibition provided an important venue for Native Hawaiians to critique the way their culture and identity has been systematically debased through tourism. Further, that such views were aired in the space of an art gallery is testament to the rich and varied ways Kānaka Maoli enact visual sovereignty in multiple spaces and contexts. But the very public shaming of the Aulani artists only weakened what seems to be a critical element of any movement, indigenous or otherwise: unity.

Even as the exhibition revealed the long-standing struggle of Kānaka Maoli to push back at powerful corporations like Disney—which are seen as part of what Haunani-Kay Trask cites as the systematic “state-encouraged commodification and prostitution” of Kanaka Maoli culture through tourism—it also exposed some of the ideological fault lines that exist within the Kanaka Maoli arts community itself.<sup>117</sup> While much of this dissertation has focused on the collective nature of the indigenous struggle to affirm sovereignty and contest U.S. colonialism through art, the fact remains that—in similar vein to the broader Kanaka Maoli political sovereignty movement—the Kanaka Maoli arts community is not only not a homogenous entity but it is also, on many levels, a divided and even an individualistic enterprise.<sup>118</sup> That is to say, there are multiple overlapping and competing agendas at play.

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<sup>117</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 137.

<sup>118</sup> Such divisions have also been observed in the Hawaiian filmmaking community. In an insightful article he wrote about the inaugural 'Ōiwi Film Festival—established by Ann Marie Nālani Kirk in 2010 to showcase established and emerging Kanaka Maoli filmmakers—Ragnar Carlson offered the following analysis: “Based on my reporting, one of the barriers to the flowering of Hawaiian cinema is serious disagreement among Hawaiians about who represents an authentic Hawaiian voice, which filmmakers should be accepted as legitimate, and how those artists should be compensated and appreciated.” See Ragnar Carlson, “Toward a Native Cinema,” *Honolulu Weekly*, August 11, 2010, 7.

Despite the frequency of showing their work together or collaborating on shared projects, at a fundamental level Kanaka Maoli artists operate as individuals in the art market, often competing with each other for commissions and vying for space to mount their own solo exhibitions. Yet such distinctive individualism in the Kanaka Maoli context goes largely unacknowledged, concealed as it is by the foregrounding of a *collective* Kanaka Maoli identity that has been crucial to counteracting the assimilative forces of the United States. While it is true that Kānaka Maoli are a collective in every sense through shared attachments to place, culture, language, and genealogical origins, it is nevertheless important to consider that behind the appearance of a politically homogenous Kanaka Maoli identity, there exists a multitude of individuals who at any one time work toward and against disparate agendas. In terms of my own broader understanding of the Native Hawaiian art movement, it was only through the exhibition *'a' mini retort* that I began to see the movement as less a single, unified group (which, at the beginning of my research, I had naively thought it was) and more as a collection of shifting alliances, made up of autonomous individuals who at times coalesce as a collective and at other times fragment over contesting viewpoints. Here, competing visions relating to the involvement of Kānaka Maoli in the commercialization of Hawaiian culture—particularly in the context of tourism—became the catalyst for conflict amongst the artists. On the one hand, those who created works for Aulani viewed their engagement with Disney as an important intervention to ensure the proper representation of Hawaiians at the resort. On the other hand, other artists considered such engagements a compromise of Native power and, in a more extreme way, as being complicit in the colonial project. But, can we really conflate the commercialization of art in the tourism context with the selling out of one's culture? I argue that we cannot.

In her illuminating paper “On Sinking, Swimming, Floating, Flying and Dancing: The Potential of Cultural Industries in the Pacific Islands” (2007), Katerina Teaiwa contends that Pacific cultural resources—including the visual and performing arts, heritage goods, literature, audiovisual media, and music—constitute “a genuine source of economic survival” in the Pacific that, if commercialized responsibly, can empower indigenous communities to make a viable living.<sup>119</sup> Importantly, this approach does not reject the commercialization of culture—specifically in the context of the tourism industry—but rather it insists that the process be mitigated by two critical components:

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<sup>119</sup> Katerina Martina Teaiwa, “On Sinking, Swimming, Floating, Flying and Dancing: The Potential of Cultural Industries in the Pacific Islands,” *Pacific Economic Bulletin* 22, no. 2 (2007): 143.



preserving and promoting culture and integrating cultural knowledge.<sup>120</sup> States Teaiwa, “bringing cultural epistemologies, concepts and principles to bear on development is necessary if culture is to be mainstreamed effectively.”<sup>121</sup> I believe the author’s proposal for an ethical model for commercializing Pacific culture opens up a productive avenue for thinking about the conditions under which the Aulani artists sold their work. It is clear that for many of the artists I have either spoken to personally or heard speak about their work at the Aulani approached the task of creating work for the resort with a deep sense of obligation not only to promote Kanaka Maoli culture but also to draw on Hawaiian epistemologies as a way of asserting a Native perspective of *and claim to* place at Aulani. That they earned money from this process of commercial exchange is, in my view, no different from artists showing their art in a gallery and being duly compensated when it sells.<sup>122</sup> Reflecting on the commercialization of Kanaka Maoli art at Aulani, Maile Meyer likens the resort to a loko i‘a (fishpond), a traditional means by which Hawaiians raised fish for food:

For me, I view those people [i.e., Aulani] as fish in a fishpond feeding our people. . . . That’s my metaphor to survive. I think they can be fattened up and feed our people. As long as they stay contained. And, Aulani is a containment to me. As long as they don’t make a left out the gate, to me I’m happy. Because they can stay contained, they can bring their dollars, they can help support our people by working the fishpond and by feeding our families with wages. They helped sustain and grow the arts community because as a result of those commissions at least twenty people in this town made enough money in a year or two to be able to choose to do more art if they wanted to. . . . I know that it’s reordered the universe because more people are making art.<sup>123</sup>

In similar vein, Pi‘ikea Clark—who has himself produced artwork for numerous public spaces in Hawai‘i, including resorts—argues that indigenous artists need to be encouraged to

maintain their access to markets and popular acclaim within the practice of mainstream Art. The world of art needs to be broadened and enriched by the unique vision of indigenous Artists and likewise, indigenous

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<sup>120</sup> Here, Teaiwa draws on economist S. Charusheela’s three-pronged formulation for managing the responsible mainstreaming of Pacific Islander culture for development, which includes “A. creative industries potential (commercialising culture); B. cultural heritage potential (preserving and promoting culture); and C. cultural epistemologies potential (integrating cultural knowledge).” See Teaiwa, 146.

<sup>121</sup> Teaiwa, “On Sinking, Swimming, Floating, Flying and Dancing,” 146.

<sup>122</sup> As many of the artists in *‘a’ mini retort* did, including Landgraf, who sold several of her spring-mounted ratttraps for \$40.00 each.

<sup>123</sup> Maile Aluli Meyer, interview, September 24, 2012.

artists deserve an economic return from their efforts to be able to continue their work.<sup>124</sup>

Drawing on these two perspectives, it becomes clear that partnering with corporate entities like Disney is part of a strategy not only to feed Kānaka Maoli economically but also to give them an affirmative presence in their own homeland through the cultivation and display of Native art.

As I have tried to show throughout this chapter, if not the entire thesis, Kanaka Maoli artists are not passive victims being acted on, but rather they are active agents who work hard to create positive change and opportunities for themselves and their community. Sometimes that agency may be mistaken for complicity with the dominant power. But if seen from another angle, it could also be understood as an act of resistance, which, after all, is “about more than rebuttal. It’s about ability, capacity, energy, and authority.”<sup>125</sup> Resistance can be a pushing back against power *as well as* a strategic engagement with it.

To briefly return to the painful schism that occurred in the Hawaiian arts community, in his analysis of the heated conflicts that erupted between Native Hawaiians during the political upheavals of the nineteenth century, Jonathan Osorio writes, “All of the *kanaka* were patriots. But their political disagreements . . . began to overshadow their sense of kinship with the *lahui* [Hawaiian nation].”<sup>126</sup> I argue that the artists I explore in this chapter—those who collaborated on the Aulani project and those who featured their work in ‘*a’ mini retort*’ exhibition—are, like their forebears, all patriots. All of them share a common aspiration: to preserve the sovereignty of their people and their homeland. For all of them, their art is their voice for speaking back to power. However, not only is it a tragedy that the differences between the artists have overshadowed their sense of kinship, but for a small community that is constantly struggling to define itself, such disruptions to solidarity seem counterproductive to the larger effort to strengthen Kānaka Maoli in the face of ongoing colonialism.

As a Māori woman who has witnessed in my own tribe the detrimental impact of internal conflict, I have often found myself wondering why there is, too, so much dissension amongst Kanaka Maoli at all levels of society, whether it is in the context of politics or creative enterprises like the visual arts. One way to analyze this phenomenon is through the lens of “lateral violence,” which is endemic in Native communities across

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<sup>124</sup> Clark, “Kūkulu Kauhale O Limaloa,” 188.

<sup>125</sup> Dean Rader, *Engaged Resistance*, 2.

<sup>126</sup> Jonathan Kamakawiwo’ole Osorio, “‘What Kine Hawaiian Are You?’,” 367.

the globe. First Nations poet Lee Maracle observes that lateral violence is rooted in an “anti-colonial rage” that works itself “out in an expression of hate for one another.”<sup>127</sup> This internalized hatred is a product of the colonial experience, whereby traumatized indigenous communities, unable to level their own action against the oppressor, instead turn against each other. Colonialism has left indelible marks on Kānaka Maoli, as it has with other parts of the indigenous world. However, since some of these are the result of self-infliction there is a deep urgency for indigenous communities to work toward a resolution so that present and future generations will be empowered to move forward—together.

### **Not So Black and White**

Settler colonialism, Patrick Wolfe argues, is more than an isolated event. Rather, it is a structure of power, which “history does not stop.”<sup>128</sup> This sustained system of dominance, far from being monolithic, is made up of a tangle of interlocked, interdependent forces that regulate everyday life. Whether through the coercive force of military, juridical, or political institutions or through the consent-winning apparatuses of cultural practices, institutions, and texts—including schools, museums, film, television, and the arts—as Raymond Williams writes:

All these forces are involved in a continual making and remaking of an effective dominant culture, and on them, as experienced, as built into our living, its reality depends. If what we learn there were merely an imposed ideology, or if it were only the isolable meanings and practices of the ruling class, or of a section of the ruling class, which gets imposed on others, occupying merely the top of our minds, it would be—and one would be glad—a very much easier thing to overthrow.<sup>129</sup>

There is no denying that for over 120 years the United States has been making and remaking an effective dominant culture in Hawai‘i such that, as Haunani-Kay Trask laments of her own people, “we are colonized to the extent that we are unaware of our oppression.”<sup>130</sup> While the devastating impact of settler colonialism on Kānaka Maoli is irrefutable, to accept that they are unequivocally trapped not only promotes a rhetoric of victimry but also ignores the multiple ways Kānaka Maoli productively move within and against the structures of power in which they are embedded. Despite his acknowledgment of the widespread and permeating capacity of state power and the

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<sup>127</sup> Lee Maracle, *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism* (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1996), 11.

<sup>128</sup> Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 402.

<sup>129</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Materialism: Selected Essays* (London: Verso, 2005), 39.

<sup>130</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 145.

inveigling ways it seeps into individual and collective lives, Williams is quick to point out that we nevertheless “have to think . . . about the sources of *that which is not corporate*; of those practices, experiences, meanings, values which are not part of the effective dominant culture.”<sup>131</sup>

Art critic and scholar Jean Fisher makes a critical distinction that I believe is useful for thinking about the ways Kānaka Maoli productively respond to the legal, political, and ideological enclosures imposed on them through settler colonialism. She notes:

Agency perhaps should not be thought of in terms of individual will but as the fields of activity in which subjects and communities map and position themselves with varying degrees of mobility relative to relations of power.<sup>132</sup>

I argue that the Aulani resort constitutes a particular field of indigenous aesthetic and political activity where Kanaka Maoli artists were able to negotiate, in varying ways and with varying degrees of success, the right to represent Hawai‘i from a uniquely indigenous perspective. Rather than being “subsumed through the magic of Disney” as McDougall and Nordstrom propose, I believe it is more fruitful to interpret the display of Kanaka Maoli art at Aulani as a “strategic occupation of a particular site of power.”<sup>133</sup> Such a reframing is crucial if we are to avoid reducing the complex ways Kānaka Maoli confront asymmetrical power relations to a demoralizing narrative of “fatal impact.”

In so positioning myself, I have benefitted immensely from scholarship that offers a more nuanced and, I believe, more balanced and empathetic analysis of indigenous peoples’ participation in spheres of U.S. colonial power. For instance, in her writing on late-nineteenth and twentieth-century travelling hula shows, Adria L. Imada argues that while Kanaka Maoli involvement in colonial circuits helped legitimize U.S. imperial authority in Hawai‘i by establishing an “imagined intimacy,” it also enabled indigenous dancers to mount political critiques in plain sight through the veiled language of their performances. Imada emphatically observes that Kānaka Maoli were not “abused objects operating under false consciousness” but rather they “negotiated with colonization and tourist commodification as self-aware agents, brokers, and political actors.”<sup>134</sup> Similarly, in *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and*

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<sup>131</sup> Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, 39.

<sup>132</sup> Jean Fisher, “‘New Contact Zones’: A Reflection,” in *Vision, Space, Desire: Global Perspectives and Cultural Hybridity* (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 2006), 45.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> Imada, “The Army Learns to Luau,” 17.

*Representations of Native Americans in Film* (2010), Michelle H. Raheja contends that Native Americans who featured in early Hollywood films and television serials—such as *The Lone Ranger* (1938)—were “not always the victims of corporate interests and ongoing attempts at colonization. Native performers were active agents.”<sup>135</sup> Of particular interest to my own work is Raheja’s use of visual sovereignty as an analytical tool to decode indigenous participation in front of and behind the camera. Offering her own interpretation of the term, she notes:

Visual sovereignty recognizes the complexities of creating media for multiple audiences, critiquing filmic representations of Native Americans, at the same time that it participates in some of the conventions that have produced these representations.<sup>136</sup>

Here, visual sovereignty takes on a more expansive dimension, corresponding to not only the *practice* of indigenous self-representation through creative visual means, but, of equal value, to the *process* of simultaneously working with and against dominant conventions and structures.

In “Ka Muhe‘e, He I‘a Hololua: Kanaka Maoli Art and the Challenge of the Global Market,” Herman Pi‘ikea Clark offers the muhe‘e or squid as a conceptual model to describe how Kanaka Maoli artists engage with corporate and commercial spheres while at the same time remaining true to their “obligation to serve the cultural needs of their communities.”<sup>137</sup> The muhe‘e, Clark explains, is a creature that is clever, can camouflage itself, and is highly skillful at maneuvering “through difficult passages to elude capture.”<sup>138</sup> These characteristics, the author contends, provide a compelling “strategy for survival” for Kānaka Maoli to follow in the midst of ongoing colonialism.<sup>139</sup> I argue that the versatility of the muhe‘e—this canny shapeshifter of the reef—provides an important basis for understanding how the Kanaka Maoli artists involved with the Aulani project maneuvered through the complex and at times fraught series of deliberations with Disney while simultaneously claiming space to represent Kānaka Maoli from an indigenous perspective.

As I listened to some of the artists who were commissioned to produce work for Aulani, it became clear to me that they were operating in ways that were purposefully

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<sup>135</sup> Raheja, *Reservation Reelism*, 5.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>137</sup> Herman Pi‘ikea Clark, “Ka Muhe‘e, He I‘a Hololua: Kanaka Maoli Art and the Challenge of the Global Market,” in *Globalization and Contemporary Art* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 138.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

interventionist. For instance, Carl F.K. Pao notes that although the artists might have been commissioned to produce works that were commensurate with Disney's vision of Hawai'i, this did not prevent them from embedding in the works their own kaona or hidden meaning. For example, in a series of painted panels he produced for one of Aulani's corridors, Pao depicted the god Kū's many kinolau. One of the motifs he used, while it has the appearance of a cloak, is in fact a stylized phallus (Fig. 4.31). The artist states, "It represents one of the manifestations of Kū, but I also use it to symbolize Kanaka Maoli strength and potential in the face of colonialism."<sup>140</sup> From Pao's perspective, his concealed mo'olelo is a strategic intervention in the larger story told by Disney, a Native reality that he believes has potency.

Other Kanaka Maoli artists share Pao's perspective, insisting on Native agency over victimry. Solomon Enos created a vibrant mural for the Makahiki restaurant, which depicts the Makahiki ceremony in Mākua Valley (Fig. 4.32).<sup>141</sup> The work features Mākua Valley in the background, while in the foreground a large gathering of people—arrayed in white kīhei made of kapa and wearing lei po'o (head adornments)—is assembled around an altar to which they are in the process of conveying offerings. As with Pao's work, the mural is densely packed with hidden meaning that may not always be immediately visible to the viewer. Indeed, during a visit to Aulani, a colleague of mine, an art historian, saw Enos's work and later suggested to me that she viewed it as nothing more than another romantic portrayal of Hawaiians that draws from the same tropes as those circulated by the dominant culture: happy Hawaiians shown in traditional dress and engaged in ancient ritual. While such a reading is not wrong in and of itself, it nevertheless fails to intuit the more complex layers of signification in the work.

In fact, as Enos informed me, the mural constitutes a prophesy of sorts, calling into existence a more empowering reality for Mākua than what currently exists:

So you look at [Mākua] being a military reserve and the health and well-being of cultural and environmental ecosystems are threatened in this environment. . . . [By] drawing it as a thriving community, it becomes that much closer to being a thriving community again.<sup>142</sup>

When read more carefully with the aid of the artist himself, the painting becomes a powerful invocation for healing, a plaintive appeal for a thriving Hawaiian future.

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<sup>140</sup> Carl F.K. Pao, interview, August 5, 2012.

<sup>141</sup> The Makahiki is the Hawaiian New Year, which is marked by festivities and a period of peace.

<sup>142</sup> Solomon Enos, interview, January 16, 2013.

In an important way, the artists' deployment of kaona in their work as a strategy for empowerment, renewal, and even resistance articulates with their nineteenth-century forebears who inserted hidden meaning into their aesthetic productions—songs, dances, poetry, or quilts—to address the political turmoil that confronted them. From flag quilts to *The Queen's Quilt* and from the song “Kaulana Nā Pua” to the hula dancers who performed in tourist contexts for non-Hawaiian audiences in Hawai‘i and across the globe, all exemplify a people’s cultural and political will to endure through art. As the works by Pao and Enos demonstrate, kaona now, as then, remains a “productive political tactic” for Hawaiians who choose to operate within the tourism milieu and beyond.<sup>143</sup> Indeed, Enos maintains that working within contested spaces like Aulani, rather than being something to avoid, should instead be embraced:

It gives us the podium as storytellers. . . . By controlling the story, by regaining the story, regaining our identity, we gain our destiny. Because we get to tell the story and we get to dictate reality.<sup>144</sup>

Similarly, almost in anticipation of the critique that was to come from other members of the Kanaka Maoli community regarding the participation of indigenous artists at Aulani, Meleanna Meyer underscored the importance of engaging with corporate institutions like Disney:

You know something? We don't need to make excuses for anything that we do. Because for me, participating in a project like that [i.e., the Aulani project] has given us access. And has given us an opportunity to show work in a different way and to be considered in a different way.<sup>145</sup>

For Disney, the opportunity to collaborate with Kānaka Maoli was only possible because Kānaka Maoli were willing to work with them in the first place and the company was open to learning from Kanaka Maoli. States Joe Rohde:

We were fortunate, simply fortunate, to arrive when there were people ready and willing to talk with us. Fortunate to arrive when our own sensibilities were better attuned to listen. Fortunate to have time to learn slowly. Fortunate that the seeds planted in the late sixties and seventies had multiplied the number of available artists, advisors, consultants so that, out of the given population, there was a significant subset willing and equipped to collaborate with us. . . . That such a subset exists is a credit to the resurgence of the culture. That we have critics among the community is a credit to its own diversity of thought.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Imada, *Aloha America*, 123.

<sup>144</sup> Solomon Enos, interview, January 16, 2013.

<sup>145</sup> Meleanna Aluli Meyer, interview, October 12, 2012.

<sup>146</sup> Joe Rohde, email correspondence, November 13, 2012.

Ultimately, the forging of collaborative relations between Kānaka Maoli and Disney and the capacity of Kānaka Maoli to negotiate the terms of that partnership was the product of a specific historical conjuncture. Kanaka Maoli artists had quality work ready to submit; Maile Meyer advocated tenaciously on the artists' behalf; a cadre of Kanaka Maoli advisors and consultants were present to guide the process; lead Imagineer Joe Rohde and his colleagues were able to build a relationship of mutual respect with Kanaka Maoli artists and the local indigenous community; and Disney's "own sensibilities were better attuned to listen." As Ehito Kimura notes, such conjunctures "can be characterised as periods when particular actors have a wider than normal range of possible options, where the choices they make create a significant impact on subsequent outcomes."<sup>147</sup> It is still too early to determine what those outcomes are or will be. Indeed, such transitions can take years to become fully evident. Thus, future research in this area would be of great value and add to a growing understanding of the complex ways Kānaka Maoli engage with corporate entities and the wider art market.

It is undeniable that through Aulani, Disney provided Kānaka Maoli not only with vital access to the space in which to show their work, but also access to an audience—tourists as well as local Hawaiian and local non-Hawaiian visitors—who might otherwise not have the opportunity to engage with contemporary Kanaka Maoli art. It also enabled individuals like Solomon Enos—one of the few artists to take the leap of faith to pursue a fulltime career in art—to earn money to support his family and cultivate his practice. Equally undeniable is the fact that Aulani is a highly complicated place, which has necessitated—for this researcher at least—getting into conceptually awkward and at times uncomfortable positions in order to better see what was happening on the other side of the "keyhole." Despite my best efforts, I have not been able to cross the threshold of that enigmatic portal entirely. There are many zones of limitation that remain unexplored—zones that I plan to apprehend more thoroughly in future research.

### **Epilogue: Back to Reality**

On the final day of my stay at Aulani, I sit in the lobby waiting for my husband to check us out of our suite. It is the early afternoon and I am looking forward to escaping the world of imagination and getting back to reality. We would never in a million years

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<sup>147</sup> Ehito Kimura, "Changing the Rules: Historical Conjuncture and Transition in Indonesia," *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 51, no. 3 (2010): 249.



have thought to come to this place for a vacation, but my husband, along with several other Kanaka Maoli artists, received a free three-night stay at the resort. While I wait, I take the opportunity to jot down some more notes about this perplexing place, where pixie dust and Native sand are brought together in seemingly artificial combination. As I write, a young man approaches me and introduces himself. He is one of several Kanaka Maoli hosts who welcome guests as they enter the resort. After chatting with him for several minutes I begin to feel comfortable enough to share my own opinions about the resort, touching on the positive aspects as well as the seeming contradictions. In response, the young man leans in, lowers his voice, and murmurs: “There’s a script [here], but no one’s following it.”

At the time, the statement struck me as somewhat incendiary, mutinous even. Thinking about it now, I believe it illustrates one of several empowering ways Kānaka Maoli navigate the tourism milieu in which they find themselves. Whether through not following “the script,” inserting hidden meanings into a visual creation, or “fishing” out resources to feed the people, this kind of agency and enterprise is part of a Native reality that is currently being played out in places like Aulani. At this point in time, the corporate tourism machine seems to have a permanent foothold in Hawai‘i (some might say it is less a foothold and more a stranglehold). Nevertheless, as with all foreign things that have come up on these shores, Kānaka Maoli have found ways to turn recent arrivals like Aulani into a tool of self-empowerment by using the resort as a space in which to tell the story of Hawai‘i from their own perspective, significantly through the visual arts. It remains to be seen, however, just how long they are able to contain the exotic “fish” that has swum into their waters, before it escapes the enclosure and, as Meyer states, “make[s] a left out the gate.”

*Figures: Chapter Four*



Figure 4.1: Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa as seen from the H-1 freeway. (Photograph by author).



Figure 4.2: Ki'i at the front entrance of Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa by Pat Pine (left), Jordan Souza (middle), and Rocky Jensen (right). (Photograph by author, 2012).



Figure 4.3: West-facing bas-reliefs by Carl F.K. Pao. (Photograph by author, 2014).



Figure 4.4: The lo'i kalo at Aulani. (Photograph by author, 2012).





Figure 4.5: Wood friezes above central lobby arch by McD Philpots. (Photograph by author, 2014).



Figure 4.6: Kapa prints by Dalani Tanahy and a section of Martin Charlot's 200-foot mural below. (Photograph by author, 2014).



Figure 4.7: Kāne and Kanaloa by Doug Tolentino. (Photograph by author, 2012).



Figure 4.8: Pele and Hi'iaka by Doug Tolentino. (Photograph by author, 2012).





Figure 4.9: Author's daughter looking through one of many keyholes located in Aulani's lobby. (Photograph by author, 2014).



Figure 4.10: Waikolohe Park from Aulani's central lanai. Pu'u Kino is visible in the distance. (Photograph by author, 2012).





Figure 4.11: Hawaiian musical instrument installation. (Photograph by author, 2012).



Figure 4.12: Kapa-making installation. (Photograph by author, 2012).





Figure 4.13: Table and chairs at the 'Ōlelo Bar. (Photograph by author, 2012).

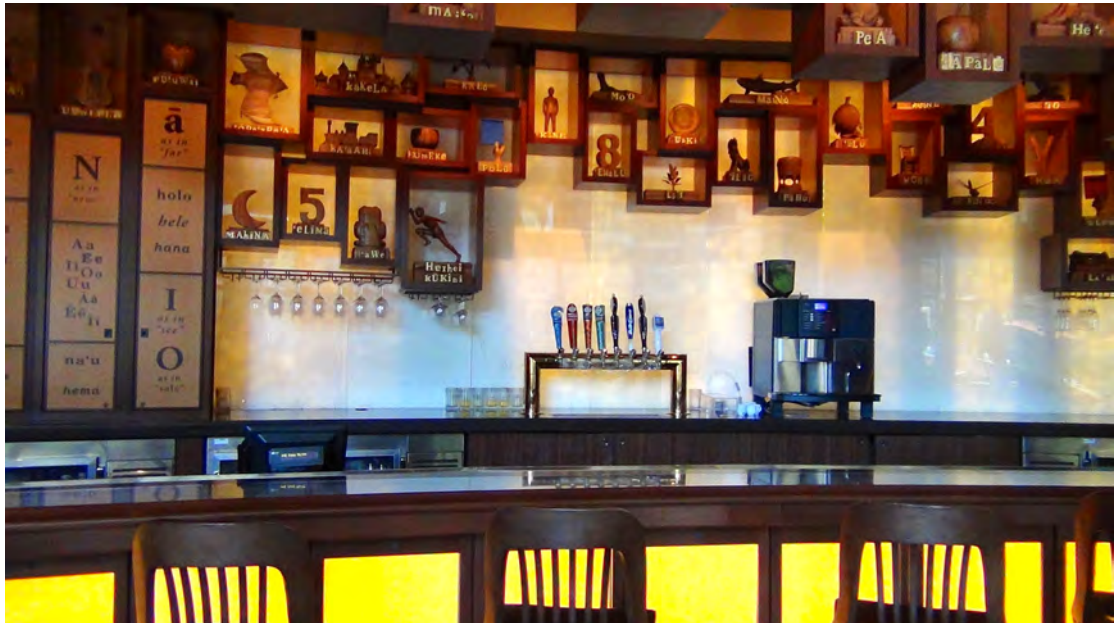


Figure 4.14: 'Ōlelo Bar with carved figurines on the back wall and matching Hawaiian terms. (Photograph by author, 2012).





Figure 4.15: Bas-relief celebrating the goddess Hina by Harinani Orme. (Photograph by author, 2012).



Figure 4.16: Bas-relief celebrating the demi-god Maui by Harinani Orme. (Photograph by author, 2012).



Figure 4.17: Bas-relief honoring the O'ahu chief Kākuhihewa by Carl F.K. Pao. (Photograph by author, 2012).



Figure 4.18: Bas-relief celebrating Hawaiian voyaging traditions by Harinani Orme. (Photograph by author, 2012).



Figure 4.19: Ki'i by Pat Pine.  
(Photograph by author, 2012).



Figure 4.20: Ki'i by Jordan Souza.  
(Photograph by author, 2012).





Figure 4.21: Ki'i by Rocky Jensen. (Photograph by author, 2014).



Figure 4.22: Kapa print of Hina's various kinolau by Dalani Tanahy. (Photograph by author, 2012).



Figure 4.23: Detail of *Nana, If You Can See Through the Palu, No Blame the Trap* by ʻĪmaikalani Kalahēle. (Photograph by author, 2013).



Figure 4.24: *Maquette # AU-1* by Noelle Kahanu. (Photograph by author, 2013).



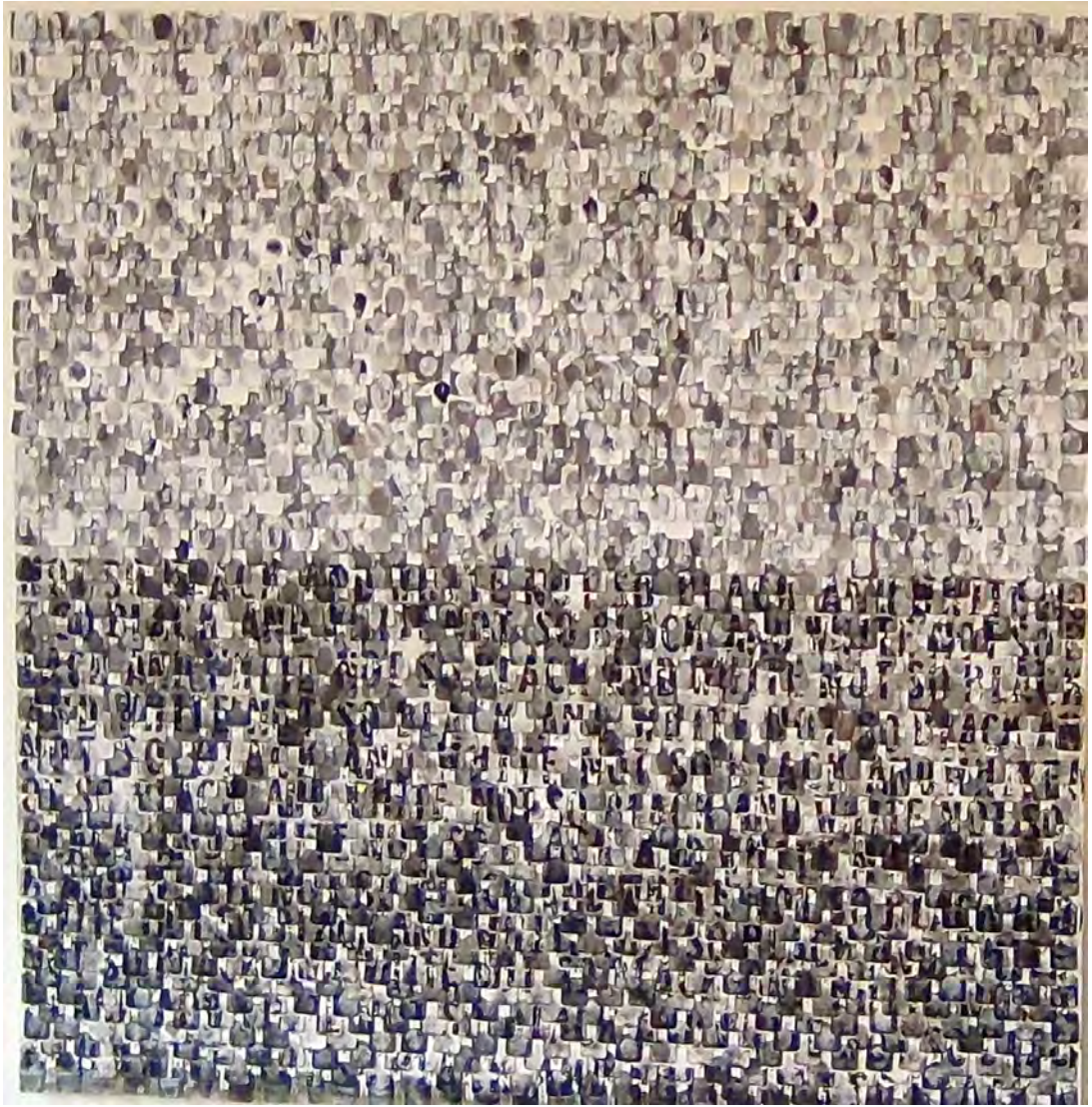


Figure 4.25: *i.den.ti.ty* by Abigail Romanchak. (Photograph by author, 2013).



Figure 4.26: Detail of *i.den.ti.ty* by Abigail Romanchak. (Photograph by author, 2013).





Figure 4.27: *E Hō'ai 'Ole 'Oukou [You Will Not Feed]* by Kunāne Wooten. (Photograph courtesy of Carl F.K. Pao).

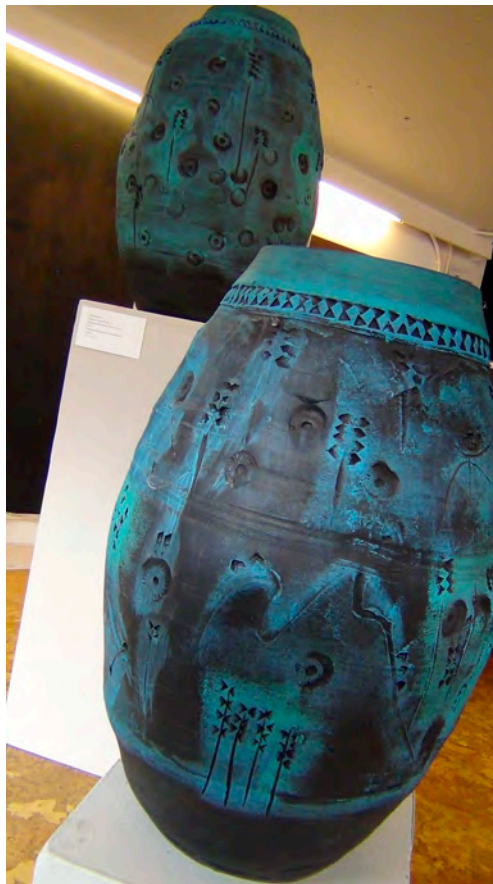


Figure 4.28: *Shoulders Where Death Comes to Cry* by Kauka de Silva. (Photograph by author, 2013).





Figure 4.29: *Ka Maunu Pololoi? [The Right Bait?]* by Kapulani Landgraf. (Photograph by author, 2013).



Figure 4.30: Detail of *Ka Maunu Pololoi?* showing rattrops with money and indigenous artworks at Aulani fastened in the snaps. (Photograph by author, 2013).



Figure 4.31: Phallus/cloak panel in Carl F.K. Pao's Kū mural. (Photograph by author, 2012).

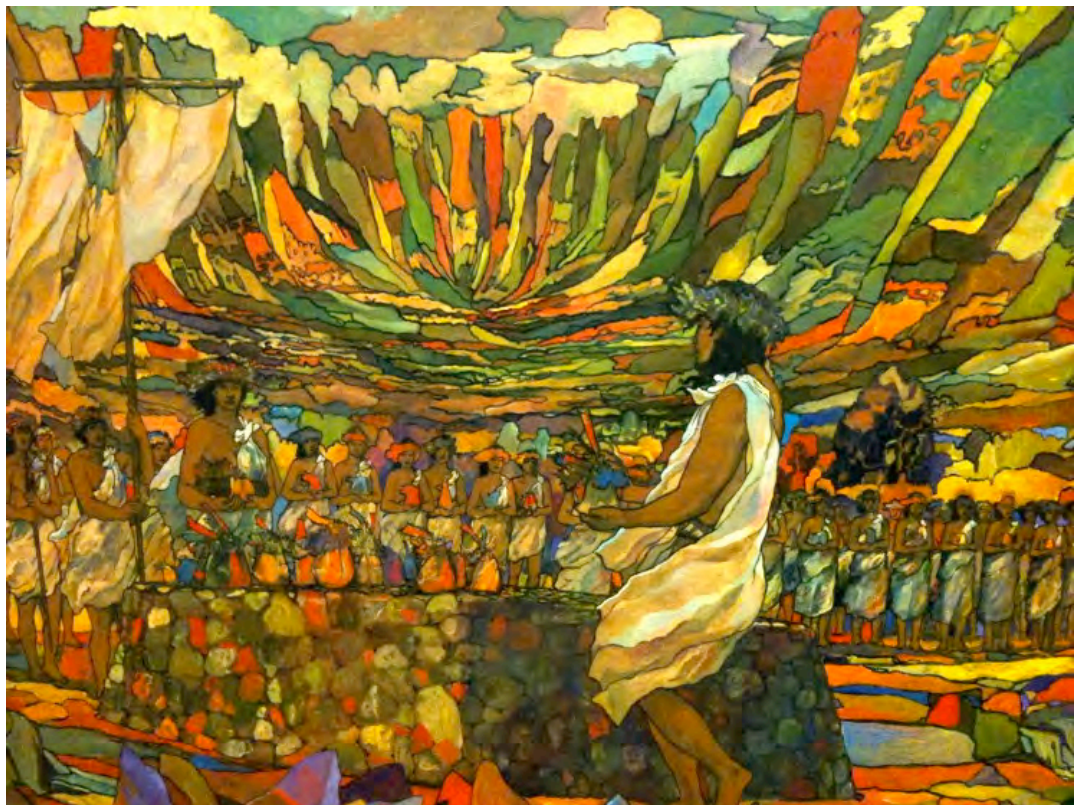


Figure 4.32: A scene from Solomon Enos's Makahiki mural. (Photograph courtesy of the artist).

Visual Sovereignty: Out of the Frame on the Wall

Every wall is a gate

—Ralph Waldo Emerson<sup>1</sup>

**Walls**

Space, Henri Lefebvre writes:

is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics; it has always been political and strategic. If space has an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents and thus seems to be “purely” formal, the epitome of rational abstraction, it is precisely because it has been occupied and used, and has already been the focus of past processes whose traces are not always evident on the landscape. Space has been shaped and molded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies.<sup>2</sup>

As one of many built artifacts that occupy—indeed mold—the physical and social space of human society, walls too are encoded with political and ideological meaning. Beyond their rudimentary function as structures that hold up buildings and that delineate the separate architectural spaces therein, walls—especially in their more monumental manifestation—operate as created boundaries, demarcating territory both physically and symbolically. In *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (2010), Wendy Brown contends that walls constitute “visual signifiers of overwhelming human power and state capacity.”<sup>3</sup> In this regard, the Great Wall of China and Hadrian’s Wall come immediately to mind. These ancient structures of stone and mortar served as ramparts that defended the populations within from the “barbarous” hordes without. Besides their practical role to enclose and secure sovereign space, however, the “arrogant verticality” and range of these constructions announced in abstract the political and military might of the regimes that built them.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from Emerson’s 1844 journal entry reproduced in Lawrence Rosenwald, ed., *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Selected Journals, 1841-1877* (New York, NY: Library of America, 2010), 239.

<sup>2</sup> Henri Lefebvre, “Reflections on the Politics of Space,” trans. Michael J Enders, *Antipode* 8, no. 2 (1976): 31.

<sup>3</sup> Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 2010), 103.

<sup>4</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 98.



In contemporary times, “the wall” remains an enduring symbol of power. On August 13, 1961, for instance, the citizens of Berlin awoke to find their city split in two, crudely bisected by a hastily erected barrier of barbed wire that overnight created an artificial division between the city’s “east” and “west”—the Soviet Communist and German Democratic sides, respectively. Over the next several years what initially began as a makeshift dividing line gradually grew to become a concrete wall of formidable presence and permanence, imposing deep striations on the civic space of the city and, more fundamentally, on the lives of Berliners existing on both sides of the wall. Although the Berlin Wall finally came down in 1990—its concrete mass and the Communist political and ideological principles it represented were not so permanent after all—many more like it have emerged since on terrains across the globe. This includes the Israeli-built Separation Wall. At 25 feet high and by the time of its completion projected to eventually stretch 430 miles, the wall was built to segregate the territories of Palestine from Israel. As a colonial apparatus that places further restrictions on the movement of Palestinians and whose snaking course illegally encloses Palestinian lands, the wall is a physical and symbolic manifestation of Israel’s ongoing occupation of Palestine. Further, with the passing of the Secure Fence Act of 2006, the United States began constructing its own wall—the proposed 700-mile-long United States–Mexican Border Wall—the function of which is to further secure the nearly 2,000-mile border between the two countries by limiting illegal immigration and drug smuggling.

These walls, and others like them,<sup>5</sup> constitute discrete discursive spaces that articulate and proclaim the dominance of one group over another through the sheer power of simply being able to mark and define space and, by extension, control the mobility of individuals and communities. However, as impermeable as walls may seem, as so many of them have attested throughout history, they are inherently unstable. As Marc Silberman and others write in the introduction to *Walls, Borders, Boundaries: Spatial and Cultural Practices in Europe* (2013), “walls are built and then fall.”<sup>6</sup> But walls do not have to be destroyed to be breached. Rather their surfaces can function as a canvas for dissent and resistance by the groups they purport to contain and control. Silberman and others contend that walls (as well as borders and boundaries) are

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<sup>5</sup> Other separation barriers around the world include but are not limited to the Egypt-Gaza barrier, the Malaysia-Thailand barrier, the Saudi-Yemen barrier, and the Turkish-Cyprus barrier.

<sup>6</sup> Marc Silberman, Karen E. Till, and Janet Ward, eds., *Walls, Borders, Boundaries: Spatial and Cultural Practices in Europe* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2012), 1.

dynamic spaces that offer such groups “possibilities of survival and adaptation and the hope of transformation. They may be also understood as *activist markers*.”<sup>7</sup>

In the case of the walls cited above, within years of being erected, their surfaces became semiotic slates for activist markings in the form of wall art—art that challenged and subverted the physical imposition of the partitions on the landscape and the political dominance for which they stood. By the time the Berlin Wall came down, for instance, the west face of the structure was a veritable gallery of graffiti, encoded with visual and textual statements that ranged from the romantic and the inane, to, most notably, the political.<sup>8</sup> In *Borders and Border Politics in a Globalizing World*, Frederick Baker notes that “‘Overcoming the Wall by painting the Wall’ was the crucial ambition of much of the art on the Wall.”<sup>9</sup> One example of how art was used to overcome and, indeed, transgress the authority of the Wall and the power of those who erected it is the wall painting by Russian artist Dmitry Vruble. In it he ridicules the Communist leaders Leonid Brezhnev and Erich Honeker by depicting them engaged in a salacious kiss. The accompanying caption below the image reads: “Mein Gott. Hilf mir diese tödliche liebe zu überleben” (My God. Help me survive this deadly love). A caption above the painting expressed the same statement in Russian. The Separation Wall and the U.S.–Mexican Border Wall have both been covered with similar “painted expressions of defiance” that give voice to the silenced and oppressed communities existing on the “Other” side of power.<sup>10</sup>

I begin this chapter with a discussion about walls, but in truth I am not so much interested in walls as I am in the visual statements that are *on* them and what their significance is in relation to expressions of Kanaka Maoli visual sovereignty. In Hawai‘i, public walls—themselves entrenched in uneven relations of power, specifically as it applies to the relentless drive for development in the Islands whereby new walls are erected on a daily basis—function as sites for creative production that is at once affirming of Native Hawaiian sovereignty and resistant to ongoing colonialism. I am reminded of a photograph I recently came across that showed two large banners attached to a fence (a kind of wall) in Wai‘anae during the fiftieth anniversary

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 5; emphasis added.

<sup>8</sup> While the west face of the Wall was covered in graffiti, such aesthetic expressions were suppressed by the threat of deadly force on the east face.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Ganster and David E. Lorey, eds., *Borders and Border Politics in a Globalizing World* (Lanham, MD: SR Books, 2005), 34.

<sup>10</sup> Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 26.

observations of Hawai‘i being admitted as a state of the American Union (Fig. 5.1). The written message reads:

Shame on KAU INOA,<sup>11</sup>  
Shame on O.H.A.,<sup>12</sup> and  
Shame on the AKAKA bill!  
Working with the Enemy  
to take away our inherent  
sovereignty  
50 years of Lies  
God is Not Happy!  
Shame on you who  
celebrate  
Statehood and honor the  
Thieves!  
Thieves that locked up our  
Queen!  
Thieves that stole our  
Lands!  
Thieves that beat Our  
Ancestors  
for speaking their language!

The text is accompanied by a painted illustration. In the bottom left-hand corner of the banner a Hawaiian man is depicted blowing into a pū (conch shell). His Native identity is self-consciously signified by the cultural motifs he wears: a malo (loincloth worn by males) and a lei haku (head adornment). Aesthetically speaking, it is clear that an experienced hand did not produce the painting. Yet in many ways this hardly seems to matter. The power of the work is not in its merit as an aesthetically pleasing work of art but in the powerful message of sovereignty it relays as a “tool of engaged resistance,”<sup>13</sup> a tool that is used not only to challenge U.S. colonialism but also to call out Native Hawaiian agencies like the state-run Office of Hawaiian Affairs for their perceived support of the Akaka Bill.

In the previous two chapters, I examined contemporary Kanaka Maoli artistic production as it is articulated through the fine arts. In this chapter I turn my attention to community-oriented works that fall under the rubric of “public art,” focusing in

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<sup>11</sup> Established by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs in 2004, Kau Inoa was an initiative that aimed to enroll Hawaiians living in Hawai‘i and abroad on a voter registry as part of a larger scheme to establish a Native Hawaiian governing body. While many Hawaiians signed on to the initiative, many others disputed the use of voters’ names to support the federal recognition proposal, the Akaka Bill. As discussed in Chapter Two (“Sovereignty Frames”), the Akaka Bill entails a limited form of self-governance that is subject to U.S. federal authority. Translated into English, “kau inoa” literally means “place name,” implying the act of placing one’s name on the register.

<sup>12</sup> i.e., Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

<sup>13</sup> Dean Rader, *Engaged Resistance*, 5.

particular on two key collaborative projects undertaken by urban artists Estria Miyashiro and John “Prime” Hina and a controversial mural created by Kanaka Maoli students at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM). Rather than being limited to the conventional and private space of the gallery or museum, these Native muralists transport their message of resistance and cultural affirmation to the walls of freestanding buildings and temporary construction barriers that the public passes by each day, whether on foot or by car. If, as Emerson states, every wall is a gate, then I would like to suggest that the walls painted by Kanaka Maoli writers and community muralists are in effect transformed into portals of visual sovereignty that provide a glimpse into an indigenous consciousness that is grounded in the empowering principle of self-determination.

### **Reading the Walls: Sovereign Graffiti Writing in Two Urban Spaces**

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed the rise of graffiti writing in the United States. Spawned on the rugged streets of Philadelphia and in the subway tunnels of New York City, graffiti writing emerged as a creative response to the wave of destruction that was sweeping through poor minority neighborhoods as entire blocks were demolished to make way for highways and suburban precincts. Acclaimed graffiti photographer Henry Chalfant recounts that in the wake of these urban renewal schemes, “formerly vital communities, displaced and relocated, suffered as if from root shock. The shining towers became notoriously unlivable housing projects.”<sup>14</sup> Out of the harsh conditions of dislocation and dispossession, crews of malcontented inner-city youth took up first magic markers and later aerosol cans to “write” their messages of defiance on the concrete and metallic surfaces of the city. Here, writing served as a creative outlet giving “people from marginalised areas of society the opportunity to ‘be somebody’ . . . You could literally make your mark in the world.”<sup>15</sup> From single-line “tags” to “throw ups” and elaborately rendered “pieces,” by the 1980s writing had evolved into a full-blown art form that was articulating with other emergent artistic urban expressions, including hip-hop, rap, and breakdancing. Amidst this surging flow of creative fomentation, however, writing attracted negative attention as a perceived form of private property vandalism that was symptomatic of a rising gang culture. Graffiti was deemed a social problem that needed to be stamped out. As graffiti scholar Joe Austin remarks, such attitudes were accompanied by highly racialized modes of

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<sup>14</sup> In Cedar Lewisohn, *Street Art: The Graffiti Revolution* (New York, NY: Abrams, 2008), 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

thinking that circulated around fears about urban youths of color: “Amid the rapid economic, demographic, social, and cultural transitions taking place in New York City and the nation during the early 1960s, fears of urban youths intensified as the spectacular visibility of youths within public spaces became strongly associated with the ‘urban crisis.’”<sup>16</sup>

The nation’s solution to eradicating the “graffiti problem” was to criminalize it and run a battery of educational campaigns that were designed to deter young people from taking up the spray can. Urban youth of color from poor working-class backgrounds were, unsurprisingly, the principal targets in this war on graffiti. Ironically, at the same time graffiti on the streets was being vilified by local government, in mainstream high-end galleries and museums it was gaining significant traction as a viable art commodity, such as with the works of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring.

Despite being a criminal offense in many countries,<sup>17</sup> from New York to Nagasaki and from Abu Dhabi to Auckland, writing has achieved a global presence. Walls all over the world have become outdoor galleries for the viewing public to admire and for artists to “get up.”<sup>18</sup> The significance of public walls for urban graffiti and street artists is not lost on British art virtuoso Banksy: “A wall has always been the best place to publish your work.”<sup>19</sup>

For urban Kanaka Maoli youths living in Hawai‘i during the 1980s—many of whom looked to metropolitan centers like New York and Los Angeles for cultural inspiration—writing (along with hip-hop, rap, and breakdancing) provided a platform to express and explore their own identity through an artistic mode they could relate to readily. John “Prime” Hina was part of the first generation of Hawai‘i-based writers to emerge in the early 1980s.<sup>20</sup> For Prime, born and raised in the socioeconomically distressed housing projects of Honolulu, writing was the fundamental medium through which to assert his existence in a society that viewed him primarily as a welfare file number:

Once you write your name on that wall, that’s your political statement.  
That’s letting people know that you exist. . . . And that’s the reason I did  
what I did because I remember, we gotta go to the welfare office and

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<sup>16</sup> Joe Austin, *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban Crisis in New York City* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2001), 34.

<sup>17</sup> Although, as I show, there are many instances where graffiti is also a sanctioned and celebrated form of artistic expression.

<sup>18</sup> “Getting up” is a term in the graffiti lexicon that refers to artists developing a reputation through their writing.

<sup>19</sup> Banksy, *Banksy: Wall and Piece* (London: Century, 2005), 8.

<sup>20</sup> Henceforth I refer to the artist by his tag name, Prime.



we're pretty much just a file number. But it's awesome when you sit in that welfare office and they're talking about this kid that keeps tagging their walls and they're saying my name and I'm listening to them have a conversation about me. And it's like, yep, at least you acknowledge my existence.<sup>21</sup>

Unfortunately for Prime, his illegal tagging and involvement with gangs and drugs attracted the wrong kinds of acknowledgment from the authorities. After several encounters with law enforcement, he decided he needed to make some critical life changes. He left gang life (he had been a member of the notorious Bloods), stopped taking drugs, and although he continued to make his mark on the world through writing, this time it was through sanctioned projects. Today Prime is one of the preeminent writers in Hawai'i and boasts dozens of graffiti art commissions in his portfolio. He is also the director of the Honolulu-based Hawaiian nonprofit arts organization 808 Urban,<sup>22</sup> which he co-founded in 2006 to assist at-risk indigenous and non-indigenous youth to find their voices and channel their energies in positive ways through legal forms of writing. At the heart of the organization's mission is the commitment to helping young people excavate the layers of their own identities to locate their cultural center. "We wanna make sure that they're anchored in culture, they're anchored in Hawai'i where we're from."<sup>23</sup>

Like Prime, Estria Miyashiro discovered writing in the early 1980s, but his entry into the graffiti world followed a slightly different trajectory.<sup>24</sup> Far from the rough urban setting of the housing projects where Prime was raised, Estria grew up in the well-established residential community of Kaimuki and attended one of Hawai'i's prestigious private preparatory academies, 'Iolani High School. It was during his time there as a 16-year old that he developed an interest in graffiti:

My friends were breakers and we saw graffiti on things like the Jelly Bean album, and in the movies *Breakin'*, *Beatstreet*, *Wild Style*, *Style Wars*. Our first piece was with an airbrush and a can of compressed air. We climbed into a canal and tried to airbrush the word "fresh" on raw concrete. People stopped to watch, no one thinking it was illegal. We got to the "R" when the air ran out. It got us juiced enough to get spray paint and try it again. That was the beginning of a life-long love affair.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> John Hina, interview, August 21, 2013.

<sup>22</sup> "808" refers to the international area code for Hawai'i.

<sup>23</sup> *808 Urban: Hawaii Nonprofit Inspires Kids With Graffiti*, accessed November 20, 2013, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4-DKMt7d\\_0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4-DKMt7d_0).

<sup>24</sup> Henceforth, I refer to the artist by his tag name, Estria.

<sup>25</sup> The Estria Foundation, "Estria FAQ." Accessed November 22, 2013. <http://www.estria.com/about-2/faq/>

Estria left Hawai‘i in the latter part of the 1980s and moved to the Bay Area where he subsequently studied art and illustration at the University of San Francisco. But it was on the city streets, under the mentorship of writing legends like Crayone, Risque, and Raevyn that the artist was really able to evolve as a writer. Recalling the value of the experience, he notes, “You couldn’t learn that kind of art in a traditional school.”<sup>26</sup>

After graduating from university, Estria began freelancing as a muralist as well as teaching classes and lecturing at universities on the political power of graffiti. But in 1994 shock waves reverberated through the graffiti community when he was arrested in San Francisco’s Sunset District for “bombing” walls with messages that condemned government corruption.<sup>27</sup> He was the first person to receive a felony conviction for graffiti in San Francisco and his case was covered by media syndications all over the country. Estria was fortunate, however. Rather than receive a jail term, he was sentenced instead to just one year of community service. The artist’s close encounter with the judiciary system did not dissuade him from continuing to use his creative voice to speak truth to power, but it did create the impetus for him to redirect his artistic energies toward strictly sanctioned spaces.

Estria advanced to become an internationally recognized graffiti muralist and has completed over a thousand personal and collaborative murals all over the globe. He is the founder and co-founder of a number of companies and artistic enterprises, most notably the Estria Foundation, for which he is the co-founder and creative director.<sup>28</sup>

Since 2006, Prime and Estria have been pooling their artistic and organizational expertise to collaborate on a number of Hawai‘i-based murals aimed at transforming spaces and people through art. Critical to their methodology is the emphasis on Hawaiian culture and values. However, more than simply being a self-conscious exercise in indigenous identity work, the murals are designed to cultivate a sense of collective kuleana (responsibility/obligation) and to initiate a call to social and political action. Estria elaborates:

Art for art’s sake is like, shit, we don’t need that right now. I think we’re in a critical time; an exciting time where we have more young Kānaka

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<sup>26</sup> Cited in Samson Reiny, “From Punk to Pro,” *Hana Hou!*, February 17, 2012, <http://www.hanahou.com/pages/magazine.asp?MagazineID=66&Action=DrawArticle&ArticleID=1045&Page=1>.

<sup>27</sup> Rachel Swan, “Bomb the Living Word,” *East Bay Express*, October 8, 2008, <http://www.eastbayexpress.com/oakland/bomb-the-living-word/Content?oid=1092006>.

<sup>28</sup> Estria co-founded the Estria Foundation with Jeremy Latrasse in 2010. He was also centrally involved in establishing the following arts initiatives: co-founded Visual Element, a free mural workshop for youth (2000); founded Tumis Design (2002); founded Samurai Graphix (2007); and founded Estria Invitational Graffiti Battle (2007).

identifying as warriors for their people. . . . It's not enough just to raise my kids. I also gotta tell them about the old stories, I gotta tell them what it means to be Hawaiian. And to protect that culture, to carry it on, to carry on the values. But, cannot just let it stagnate . . . you've gotta reinvent it and put a fresh twist [on it]. So it's gotta keep moving forward. It's fluid. . . . I think that it's one thing for us to just paint something Hawaiian . . . but to talk about things like, you know, protecting Mauna-a-Wākea, or taking care of our water and our land in sustainable ways. I think those things are more important. . . . It's like, here's what we need to do. Here's what I think we gotta try. Let's look at these old ways. Look at these new ways. Let's mix those together.<sup>29</sup>

The contemporary visual mixes and flows that Prime and Estria create through their collaborative murals together and with other artists are grounded in what Māhealani Dudoit describes as a Hawaiian aesthetic that “reaches towards the past . . . in order to translate our traditions into the language of today.”<sup>30</sup> Focusing on two mural projects in particular—*Ola Ka Wai*, *Ola Ka Honua* and ‘*Onipa ‘a*—I show how everyday urban walls are transformed into sovereign spaces where Kanaka Maoli epistemological principles coalesce with contemporary visual language in liberating and consciousness-raising ways.

### ***Ola Ka Wai, Ola Ka Honua: Sovereign Flows***

In “Missionary Graveyard,” Haunani-Kay Trask writes, “graveyard Hawai‘i Nei:/coffin buildings, concrete parking lots,/maggot freeways/smell of death/smear across the land/killing in the heart.”<sup>31</sup> Trask’s poem is a deep lamentation for the loss of Hawaiian lands and waterways that have disappeared under tourism, overpopulation through the steady flow of immigrants to Hawai‘i’s shores, and, most prominently, development. Of all the places in Hawai‘i that have perhaps been most discernibly affected by this “disease of the heart” is Honolulu.<sup>32</sup> Encompassing the tourist centers of Waikīkī and Ala Moana, Honolulu is the proverbial “concrete jungle” of the Islands, populated by towering high rises and permeated by roads that are perpetually congested with traffic.

Kokea Street in the Kalihi-Pālama district of Honolulu is a striking example of the city’s industrial-urban sprawl with its rows of warehouses, retail stores, and low-income, low-rise apartments. The only evidence of nature in this dry, asphalt-laden

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<sup>29</sup> Estria Miyashiro, interview, August 22, 2013.

<sup>30</sup> D. Māhealani Dudoit, “Carving a Hawaiian Aesthetic,” ‘*Ōiwi: A Native Hawaiian Journal* 1, no. 1 (1998): 22.

<sup>31</sup> Haunani-Kay Trask, *Light in the Crevice Never Seen* (Corvallis, Oregon: Calyx Books, 1994), 13.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

neighborhood is the trees that were planted in a vain effort to beautify the area and a narrow drainage canal of brown water and a muddy bank that is littered with old tires, plastic bottles and bags, and other discarded trash. Presented with this scene of environmental degradation and industrial pollution, one would be forgiven for not knowing that the area at one time was populated by at least forty-five lo‘i, all of them fed by the once-healthy and free-flowing Kapālama Stream. Kokea Street seems an unlikely place to find visionary artistic enterprise, yet just past a packed parking lot and a large expanse of cleared land marked for development, a wall of vibrant artistry looms into view.

Completed in 2011 and measuring two stories high and almost two hundred feet long, *Ola Ka Wai, Ola Ka Honua (As the Water Lives, the Earth Thrives)* constitutes the third mural in the ten-mural WaterWrites series (Fig. 5.2). Organized under the auspices of the Estria Foundation, WaterWrites is a community-building, social justice initiative that addresses, through the medium of public art, environmental issues relating specifically to water sustainability in cities throughout the globe.<sup>33</sup> *Ola Ka Wai, Ola Ka Honua* was a collaborative effort that involved a multicultural cohort of twenty graffiti writers in total,<sup>34</sup> including Kanaka Maoli artists Estria and Prime, who co-steered the project. The mural took one month to complete and required a staggering 600 cans of spray paint and 30–40 gallons of house paint.

In Hawai‘i, water has long been the subject of intense and ongoing debate. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, streams and rivers across the Islands were diverted from their natural courses, initially to feed the sugar plantations and later to supply emerging suburban communities, businesses, and resorts. Today, despite its status as a public trust resource that is protectable under the Hawai‘i State Constitution and the state’s Water Code, water remains under threat.<sup>35</sup> On the island of O‘ahu alone, the Waiahole Ditch system diverts up to 12.7 mgd (million gallons of water per day) to the drier leeward side to provide not only potable water for human consumption, but as well non-potable water for golf course irrigation, corporate agriculture, housing and

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<sup>33</sup> The other nine cities where WaterWrites murals have been produced include Los Angeles, California; Oakland, California; Gaza Strip, Palestine; Palawan, Philippines; Usulután, El Salvador; Orleans, California; Bogota, Colombia; Cape Town, South Africa; Phoenix, Arizona; Vancouver, British Columbia. For more information on the separate projects, go to <http://www.estria.org/water-writes/>.

<sup>34</sup> The other artists included Vogue TDK, Katch, Rival, Krush TWS, Escape, Dmize225, Krush BS, Eukarezt, Bieste, Quest, Trax, Ohana, Wyte, SMK, CKaweeks, Looks, Sierra Dew, Noize22.

<sup>35</sup> For a more in depth discussion of water rights issues in Hawai‘i, see, for instance, D. Kapua‘ala Sproat, “Water,” in *The Value of Hawai‘i: Knowing the Past, Shaping the Future* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2010), 187–194.

resort development, and recreational landscaping. As Earthjustice attorney Kapua‘ala Sproat notes, “despite laws on the books, large companies—former plantations included—continue to . . . treat public water resources as their private property. Our management system has been reduced to might makes right.”<sup>36</sup> Sproat’s colleague Isaac Moriwake comments further on the negative impact of water diversion on the environment and Native cultural practices:

[The] long period of abuse . . . has devastated the biological and the ecological integrity of the streams but also the cultural system, this native Hawaiian culture that depends on free-flowing streams for the stream life that the stream flows feed, for the near shore marine life and resources that the freshwater entering the streams sustain. Stream flow is also essential for cultivating kalo or taro, which is the native Hawaiian staple and really the symbol of native Hawaiian culture. All these resources over the years declined because of these large-scale plantation diversions.<sup>37</sup>

*Ola Ka Wai, Ola Ka Honua* presents an empowering vision of how things *could* be if the natural flow of the waters was restored and responsible Native-based stewardship of the ‘āina was practiced across the Islands.

The brightly painted mural comprises three principal sections. On the right-hand side, the homeostatic system of a traditional ahupua‘a is shown, each resource zone—kalo terrace, fishpond, and dryland agricultural field—being represented in discrete visual “stills” that are cleverly consolidated into the overall composition. The water from the mountains gushes through the different zones before emptying out into the ocean. Native marine fauna from the various aquatic habitats of stream, shoreline, and deep water are also depicted, such as o‘opu (gobie), oama (goatfish), he‘e (octopus), and honu (turtle).

This representation of past land and water stewardship is complemented on the left-hand side of the mural with images of what an ahupua‘a of the future might look like. A bird’s-eye view of a futuristic Honolulu reveals solar panel–roofed buildings, the walls of which are covered with living plants. Rather than dominate the skyline in a dreary hue of concrete grey, these verdant green mounds crouch unobtrusively on the landscape. The buildings share the space with present-day “green” technologies, such as wind and water turbines, and a catchment water system that feeds a communal garden. In a more whimsical imaging of the future, the artists also include anti-gravitational vehicles, which are operated by their human pilots.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>37</sup> Earthjustice, “Restoring Water Rights in Hawai‘i.” Accessed November 14, 2013, <http://earthjustice.org/features/campaigns/down-to-earth-hawai-i-water>.

Present-day realities are not precluded in this affirmative vision of environmentally balanced, self-sustainable living. Above the city-scape, ‘Īao Stream—one of four streams on Maui that have for over a century been diverted for commercial agricultural interests—is represented in the same kind of “still” used to frame the various ahupua‘a zones. Since 2003, Native Hawaiians have been engaged in a legal battle to have Nā Wai ‘Ehā (The Four Streams) of Maui, which includes ‘Īao Stream, restored and returned to the people.<sup>38</sup> In the visual representation of ‘Īao Stream, the grill through which the water is diverted is clearly apparent. However, what is equally unmistakable is the torrent of water that courses unimpeded through a giant tear in the image. The message is that these waters will not be held back, despite the political tactics of powerful corporate enterprises to control their flow. The words “Flow Mauka to Makai” (“Mountain to Sea”) that stream across the length of the mural function as a cohesive element that ties the entire composition together. Spoken out loud, the words are like a mantra willing the waters to once again flow unimpeded from the top of the mountains to the ocean. Hawaiian cultural values of cooperation and collective well-being are also invoked in the written ‘ōlelo no‘eau located on the left and right-hand side of the mural, respectively:

‘A‘ohe hana nui ke alu ‘ia  
(No task is too big when done together by all)

Mōhala i ka wai ka maka o ka pua.  
(Unfolded by the water are the faces of the flowers)<sup>39</sup>

Native sovereignty is a central theme in the mural and it is most conspicuously cited in the larger-than-life figure of Queen Lili‘uokalani, who is stationed at the center of the mural, between the past and the future. The image is based on a black-and-white photograph taken of the Queen during her reign (1891–1893). In the photograph, she is shown seated on her royal throne, over which is draped an ahu‘ula (feather cloak). In the mural, the cloak is artistically reconceptualized as a lush valley comprising Crown lands—lands that were confiscated during the 1893 overthrow—through which surges a rushing stream that cascades over the Queen’s right shoulder and across her heart to become her royal sash. Estria notes that the orientation of the royal sash over the

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<sup>38</sup> The other three streams include Waihe‘e, Waikapu, and Waiehu. The waters are under the control of Wailuku Agribusiness, which leases the resource to agricultural businesses such as Hawaiian Commercial and Sugar Company and Maui Pineapple Company.

<sup>39</sup> In a more literal sense, “flowers thrive where there is water, as thriving people are found where living conditions are good.” See Pukui, *‘Ōlelo No ‘eau*, 237.

Queen's heart was not only in keeping with the photographic source but also strategically positioned to indicate that "she's still pouring her heart out to help us."<sup>40</sup>

Along with the sash, the mural is saturated with other iconographic elements associated with the Hawaiian monarch, including her personal jewelry: gold bracelets, earrings, a diamond brooch, and, significantly, a butterfly hairpin. In one of many "chicken skin" stories related to the creation of *Ola Ka Wai, Ola Ka Honua*,<sup>41</sup> Estria shares how during the day, while he and the other artists were working on the mural, a yellow butterfly would often visit them, fluttering around before flying away. On one occasion, during a trip to the Queen Lili'uokalani Children's Center, where numerous photographic images of the Queen are held, Estria and Prime mentioned the unusual phenomenon to the staff there. They in turn reported that yellow butterflies had been a particular favorite of the Queen.<sup>42</sup> The two artists read the presence of the butterfly as a sign from the Queen. Says Prime: "It gave us reassurance that we're on the right track. That we're doing the right thing."<sup>43</sup> To honor Lili'uokalani and to acknowledge her message to them through the butterfly, the artists painted the Queen's butterfly hairpin yellow. Another symbol associated with Lili'uokalani is the lavender crown flower depicted in the foreground. Not only was it one of the Queen's favorite blossoming plants but it also served as a natural food source for the butterflies she loved.

Most notably, the Queen is shown holding a scroll of paper in her left hand. Here, Prime and Estria deviated from the historic photograph they were using as a template—which reveals the Queen's hand as clearly empty—to add an element of ambiguity. The goal here was to stimulate multiple interpretations of what the scroll might mean and, importantly, what it might contain. Notes Prime, "We said it shouldn't be our definition. However they want to see it, that's how it should be. So we just left it open. . . . It's not for us. It's for the people."<sup>44</sup> The presence of the scroll in the mural, as I read it, alludes to the ways Kānaka Maoli used the written word to assert themselves in Western systems of law and politics. As Noenoe Silva remarks, Kānaka Maoli "took the tools of the colonizers and made use of them to secure their own national sovereignty and well-

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<sup>40</sup> In Estria Foundation, "Water Writes Honolulu Mural Project" online video. Accessed November 22, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAeYOrZbJtA>.

<sup>41</sup> The term "chicken skin" is used colloquially in Hawai'i to refer to stories or events that are unexplainable or "spooky." The equivalent idiom in Australia would be "goose flesh."

<sup>42</sup> As a point of interest, a close inspection of the Queen's quilt—mentioned in the introduction to this thesis—reveals several yellow butterflies, which are embroidered into select parts of the textile.

<sup>43</sup> Koani Foundation, "Prime Example: A Visit With John "Prime" Hina," *Voices of Truth: One-on-One With Hawai'i's Future*. Accessed November 18, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJVoyCSmk7g>.

<sup>44</sup> John Hina, interview, August 21, 2013.

being.”<sup>45</sup> Writing was one such tool they adopted early on as an instrument to enable them to engage with the rest of the world and later to protect their homeland against colonial aggression. Here, we might be reminded of the Queen’s 1893 Constitution in which she attempted to reinstate monarchical authority and return voting rights to Native and non-Native subjects of the Kingdom, or of the many written protests—such as the Kū‘ē Petitions—that denounced U.S. imperialism. From this perspective, the enigmatic scroll becomes in many ways a metonym for the remarkable volume of writings—by Lili‘uokalani and many other Kānaka Maoli both past and present—that make up the Hawaiian political-literary voice. That artists like Prime and Estria are colloquially referred to as “writers” expands even more the meaning of the scroll as an archive of Native agency and empowerment.

The deliberate inclusion of Queen Lili‘uokalani as the central figure in *Ola Ka Wai, Ola Ka Honua* may best be understood in the context of what Sherry B. Ortner describes as a grammar of “summarizing symbols.” Writes Ortner:

Summarizing symbols are primarily objects of attention and cultural respect; they synthesize or “collapse” complex experience, and relate the respondent to the grounds of the system as a whole. They include most importantly sacred symbols in the traditional sense.<sup>46</sup>

In the case of the mural, the principal symbol of attention and cultural respect is the personage of the Hawaiian Kingdom’s last ruling monarch. Queen Lili‘uokalani’s image bears critical meaning for Kānaka Maoli who revere her as an icon of resistance and unrelinquished Native sovereignty. For instance, during sovereignty marches and protests her image is often used on flyers and posters along with her famous motto: ‘Onipa‘a. For Prime and Estria, the emphasis on the Queen is reflective of their own political conviction that the Hawaiian Kingdom was never terminated and remains in existence to the current day. From Estria’s perspective, the image of Lili‘uokalani “reaffirms for people that are looking at it: I am Hawaiian and we are a Kingdom.”<sup>47</sup> Thus, the Queen’s image functions as a contemporary rallying point for the affirmation of sovereign Hawaiian identity, a symbolic counterpart to the more concrete claims that are being made by Kānaka Maoli in the areas of law and politics.

According to Ortner, one of the key characteristics of a summarizing symbol is “its focusing power, its drawing-together, intensifying, catalyzing impact upon the

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<sup>45</sup> Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 16.

<sup>46</sup> Sherry B. Ortner, “On Key Symbols,” *American Anthropologist* 75, no. 5 (1973): 1344.

<sup>47</sup> Estria Miyashiro, interview, August 22, 2013.



respondent.”<sup>48</sup> As Prime and Estria were to discover, the visual representation of *Lili‘uokalani* catalyzed the public in unexpected but profound ways. Prime relays his encounter with a 12-year old girl who shared her own story with him:

She said, “I just wanna tell you that . . . I brought my grandmother by.” I was like, oh that’s good. And she said, “No, but my grandmother never leaves the house. But when I went home I told my grandmother about the mural and about the Queen. She got off her rocking chair and she walked and that’s the first time I seen my grandmother walk. And she cried for the Queen.”<sup>49</sup>

Estria was also cognizant of the effect the Queen’s image had on people, especially Kānaka Maoli, during the mural’s unveiling on July 7, 2011:

To have the Queen that big, facing a wide-open space. . . . You can see her from Dillingham Boulevard.<sup>50</sup> That was powerful. To see Hawaiians walk up to the Queen—and they’ll be in a middle of a field, one hundred yards, two hundred yards away—and look at the Queen and start crying. You’re like, wow! If all our work could have that much connection with people, we’d be doing pretty good.

As a symbolic display of Native sovereignty the mural was further enhanced at the unveiling—which included a blessing, hula performance, and an appearance by singer-songwriter Palani Vaughan—by the presence of the Hawaiian Royal Guard, who were stationed in front of the Queen’s image for the entire event, despite the intense summertime heat (Fig. 5.3). For Estria, it was a lesson in how seriously Kānaka Maoli viewed the mural and how the Queen continues to resonate as a symbol of Native pride and identity:

The Royal Guard stood in front in . . . full uniform and they’re sweating . . . right? And we’re trying to drive this lift in front [of them] to unveil her. We had this big tarp covering her. And so we’re like, “Oh, excuse me bruddah.” And they’re like, “Oh, I cannot move. You gotta go around me.” And I realized, they think of this [image] as equally important as the Queen herself.<sup>51</sup>

The unveiling of the mural not only revealed the strong feelings of fidelity Kānaka Maoli continue to have for their sovereign, but it also exposed a resolute resistance to U.S. colonialism. To echo Margaret Jolly’s insightful observation regarding Deborah Umiamaka Kakalia’s quilt titled *Lili‘uokalani* (discussed in Chapter One), motifs such

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<sup>48</sup> Ortner, “On Key Symbols,” 1342.

<sup>49</sup> John Hina, interview, August 21, 2013.

<sup>50</sup> Dillingham Boulevard runs diagonal to Kokea Street and is located approximately a quarter of a mile away from the actual site of the mural.

<sup>51</sup> Estria Miyashiro, interview, August 22, 2013.

as the butterfly and crown flower are not merely sentimental evocations of the past but are symbols of an enduring Native sovereignty in the present.<sup>52</sup> In a show of indigenous national pride, Palani Vaughan performed the Hawaiian patriotic song “Kaulana Nā Pua” (Famous Are the Flowers). Written in the wake of the 1893 overthrow,<sup>53</sup> the song was a “statement of rebellion” that pledged loyalty to the Queen and denounced the schemes of the haole annexationists.<sup>54</sup> In a photograph Prime shared with me, he, Estria, and Vaughan are shown standing in front of the Queen’s image during the unveiling celebrations. Flanking the trio are two standard bearers holding flag banners that read, “HAWAIIAN INDEPENDENCE” (Fig. 5.4). The photograph illustrates in a profound way the intersection between Native art and politics in Hawai’i.

Prime and Estria both describe *Ola Ka Wai, Ola Ka Honua* as a landmark moment in their lives because it helped them realize the significance of what they were doing, not just as individual artists but also as artists who are part of a collective effort to assert Hawaiian sovereignty through art: “This is our journey as artists, as people [who are] upholding the culture. And it’s a heavy burden. Not really burden. It’s a heavy honor.”<sup>55</sup>

### **‘Onipa‘a: Holding Strong**

Less than four miles away from Kalihi where *Ola Ka Wai, Ola Ka Honua* is located is the Honolulu district of Kaka‘ako. In ancient times, the area was a thriving landscape of agricultural terraces and oceanfront saltpans and served as the site of several royal residences. During the early 1900s, large numbers of Hawaiians moved from rural communities to the area in search of employment opportunities as their chief livelihood—kalo cultivation—came under threat as a result of the systematic diversion of water to feed the thirsty sugar plantations. The conditions were not optimal—many Kanaka Maoli families lived in small single-detached dwellings or the cramped quarters of workers’ tenements.<sup>56</sup> Those Kānaka Maoli who could not afford to live in permanent structures had to make do by fabricating makeshift shelters out of whatever odds and ends they could find. New zoning edicts in the 1950s saw Kaka‘ako transformed from a working-class neighborhood with a few small businesses to a sprawling urban industrial area. Residential homes, shacks, and shanties were torn

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<sup>52</sup> See Jolly, “The South in Southern Theory,” 11.

<sup>53</sup> The song was written by Ellen Kekoahiwaiikalani Wright Prendergast, a friend of Queen Lili‘uokalani.

<sup>54</sup> Nordyke and Noyes, “Kaulana Nā Pua,” 27.

<sup>55</sup> John Hina, interview, August 21, 2013.

<sup>56</sup> Hawaiians were joined by an ethnically diverse community of migrants—such as Portuguese, Filipino, Chinese, and Japanese—who were also migrating into the city.

down and replaced by large warehouses, forcing Kānaka Maoli and other inhabitants to resettle elsewhere.

Today Kaka‘ako continues to be a site under development, filled with the “coffin buildings” and “concrete parking lots” of Trask’s poem cited earlier in this chapter. And with urban renewal plans underway to convert the area into a high-density, multi-use residential and commercial community, there is still more development to come. But through the work of Estria and Prime,<sup>57</sup> what might otherwise be perceived as an urban quagmire has instead been transformed into a site of cultural vibrancy and indigenous political vigor. Here, the weather-worn walls of the district’s buildings become surfaces on which the artists “write” their visual language of Native pride and sovereignty.

Just two months after the completion of *Ola Ka Wai, Ola Ka Honua*, Kamehameha Schools—one of the major landowner-developers of Kaka‘ako—invited Prime and Estria to create a mural as part of the institution’s long-term strategy to revitalize the area with public art, much of which is currently murals.<sup>58</sup> In September 2011, the duo embarked on the ‘*Onipa‘a* mural, the main task being to reinterpret the Hawaiian national coat of arms (Fig. 5.5), one of many “manifestations of [Hawaiian] nationalist visual culture” used by nineteenth-century Hawaiian rulers like David Kalākaua to help legitimize Hawai‘i’s status as a nation.<sup>59</sup> Through the creative flare of Prime and Estria, the coat of arms is recast with contemporary meaning.

Located at the corner of Pohukaina and Koula streets and taking up a massive 600 square feet of space, ‘*Onipa‘a* is impossible to miss (Fig. 5.6). What was once a featureless and uninspiring beige wall has been brought to life with an array of vibrant colors and flowing lines. Where *Ola Ka Wai, Ola Ka Honua* focused on the feminine potency of the Queen, ‘*Onipa‘a* is grounded in deeply masculinist iconography. Kame‘eaimoku and Kamana‘awa, the chiefly twins who served Kamehameha I, are the central figures in the piece. While in the original coat of arms they are depicted standing at attention on either side of a quartered shield, in ‘*Onipa‘a* they take on an altogether different quality. Clothed in traditional Hawaiian warrior regalia—ahu‘ula (cloaks),

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<sup>57</sup> Prime and Estria are just two of many artists whose work covers the urban walls of Kaka‘ako. As part of its master plan to redevelop and revitalize Kaka‘ako over a 15–20-year period, Kamehameha Schools—one of the principal landowners and developers of the area—established the multipronged initiative “Our Kaka‘ako,” the aim of which is to cultivate and support a thriving arts and culture community there. Part of that initiative has been to work with graffiti artists from Hawai‘i and abroad to produce large-scale murals during the annual culture and arts event, POWWOW! Hawai‘i.

<sup>58</sup> In *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California* (2008), Guisela Latorre uses the term “mural environment” to refer to a series of murals produced in close proximity to one another.

<sup>59</sup> Kamehiro, *The Arts of Kingship*, 25.

mahiole (helmets), and malo (loincloths)—and equipped with assorted weaponry (shark tooth club and a shark tooth-tipped spear) and a kahili (feather standard), the twins are transformed into a dynamic fighting duo that seems to erupt out of the pavement. Indeed, with their bulging muscles and athletic action poses, they resemble comic book superheroes rather than mere mortals. The right side of each man is tattooed with the shark tooth pattern, a well-known Hawaiian symbol of protection.

In keeping with the original coat of arms, a quartered shield located between the figures bears the red, white, and blue stripes of the Hawaiian Flag and two pūlo‘ulo‘u or kapu sticks (ball and stick insignia) that also connote protection. A triangular flag and two crossed spears form the central escutcheon.<sup>60</sup> Atop the shield is the pièce de resistance: the royal crown.

The dramatic effect of the scene is heightened by the charge of electricity that emanates from the lei niho palaoa (whale tooth neck adornment) each of the twins wears. A luminous discharge of ionized air—which is evocative of the Hawaiian principle of mana—arcs across the space between them to terminate at the apex of the crown in a concentrated orb of energy. That same energy is manifested in the eyes of the twins, which glow with spectral incandescence. Located on the right-hand side of the mural, a writhing he‘e (octopus) clasps the sacred bones of Kamehameha I in one of its tentacles. Other elements of the mural include an array of quirky characters rendered by various other contributing artists,<sup>61</sup> such as a surfing bird, a figure donning the skin of a deep-sea fish, a kahili-carrying seahorse, and a phalanx of priest-warriors. To the left of the mural two birds native to Hawai‘i—the red i‘iwi and the yellow ‘akeke‘e—are also featured, alluding to the royal cloaks that were created using their feathers.

Although it is undeniable that ‘*Onipa‘a* helps color an otherwise cheerless urban environment, for Estria and Prime the mural’s meaning is rooted in a deeper desire on their part to assert a Hawaiian presence in an area from which Hawaiians have historically been displaced. Estria describes the impetus behind the piece: “This mural offers deep respect for our kūpuna [ancestors] in the historically strife-laden land

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<sup>60</sup> The deeper significance of the triangular flag and crossed spears was detailed in an May 1845 article in *The Polynesian*: “The triangular flag at the fess point, was an ancient flag of the Hawaiian chiefs which was raised at sea, above the sail of their canoes, and the sail at that time being of a peculiar construction, it presented a very beautiful appearance. It was also placed in a leaning position, across two spears in front of the King’s house, to indicate both tabu and protection. The name of the flag was Puela and the name of the cross on which it lies Alia.” Cited in Thomas G. Thrum, *Hawaiian Almanac and Annual for 1886: The Reference Book of Information and Statistics Relating to the Territory of Hawaii, of Value to Merchants, Tourists and Others* (Honolulu: Thomas G. Thrum, 1886), 38.

<sup>61</sup> The contributing artists included Beaste, Katch, Evolve, Look, and Beak.

section of Kaka‘ako.”<sup>62</sup> The mural is also about indigenous *fortitude* in the face of such strife. Rather than use the phrase that appears on the original coat of arms—“Ua mau ka ea o ka ‘āina i ka pono”—the artists used a single word that they inscribed on the far right-hand corner of the wall: “‘Onipa‘a” (Fig. 5.7). As will be recalled from Chapter Two, “‘Onipa‘a” was the motto Queen Lili‘uokalani used to exhort her people to hold strong in the face of political chaos. In the context of the mural, the message is for Kānaka Maoli to continue to hold strong to their culture, even in a time of continuing change and challenge. Estria elaborates:

Just the word “‘onipa‘a” itself has been a lesson for us. We’ve had to explore it because it’s almost contradictory, right? One half of the word is “stay still” the other half is “move.” So what does that mean for us as a people? . . . And I think what they were meaning by that phrase is, like, hold strong, don’t let go of these things. There’s gonna be a time when we can move forward and I believe that time is now, and I think that we [i.e., Kanaka Maoli artists] have a role in that. And our kuleana is to paint and to teach others how to do this. . . . I think it [i.e., ‘onipa‘a] implies not to retreat. Hold these values . . . hold this aloha [love], hold this ‘ohana [family], hold all that. Keep it strong.<sup>63</sup>

For Prime, the power of the word is not only in its meaning for Hawaiians, but for its utility as a pedagogical tool that can speak to the broader public:

The thing about graffiti: we like to take things and just spin it a little bit. Make it edgier. So we did that and then we just slapped some truth on it. Like what does ‘onipa‘a mean? And then we leave it on the walls. And all the people that pass by, we’re educating them. Like leaving one word next to an icon, the first thing they do is they go online and, like, what does this mean? And then—boom!—Google will just spit out all these articles on ‘onipa‘a and now it starts to go viral. Just from one piece of artwork on the wall. That’s how it goes far.<sup>64</sup>

As highly visible and accessible works of art, graffiti murals are able to reach a much larger volume of people than the creative productions that feature in galleries and museums. This is particularly the case in Hawai‘i where an appreciation of the visual arts is still evolving—especially in relation to art produced by Kānaka Maoli—and the majority of people do not frequent exhibition spaces. But when it comes to graffiti murals, the general public is hard-pressed to avoid them. The murals appear on concrete motorway barriers and underpasses, construction fences, and, as I have shown, the walls

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<sup>62</sup> Murals of Prime and Estria, “Stories of the Kanaka Maoli Through Art in Public.” Accessed November 27, 2013. <http://prime-estria.blogspot.com/2012/02/onipaa-kakaako-2011.html>.

<sup>63</sup> Estria Miyashiro, interview, August 22, 2013.

<sup>64</sup> John Hina, interview, August 21, 2013.

of industrial-commercial neighborhoods. As with *‘Onipa ‘a*, people literally encounter them at every corner. Notes Estria:

When we paint outdoors, hundreds of thousands of people see it in a week. Millions of people see it in a year. You know, academics talk about taking the art—and not just visual art, but dance and performance, and what have you—taking all of those art forms out of the institutions and going into the community where the people are. Because they can’t get the people through the doors. So when you paint outdoors, you can’t help it. You turn the corner, bam! It’s there.<sup>65</sup>

Prime and Estria stress the importance of being inclusive of both Kānaka Maoli and non-Kānaka Maoli in their messaging in order to generate a collective sense of kuleana, particularly as it relates to settlers and visitors recognizing the true value of Hawai‘i as a Native homeland rather than as a possession of empire to be exploited. Hawaiian social, economic, and political issues cannot simply be limited to the purview of Hawaiians, but are of concern to everyone living in the Islands. Solomon Enos, who has produced murals for Kaka‘ako as part of the district’s annual POW WOW! initiative,<sup>66</sup> perhaps states it best:

Any way that we can give them [non-Kanaka Maoli] their responsibilities, the tools necessary for them to understand what it is that Hawai‘i is . . . it kind of gets back to what I was talking about earlier about changing the message on the doormat. Changing the greeting from “Hello! Come in. Help yourself. Take all you want.” To “Hi, we’re all part of the family. Pick up a rake. We’re all working [and] you’re working, too.”<sup>67</sup>

Following on from Enos, for Prime—who used to run with gangs and for whom physical confrontation was the standard solution to dealing with conflict on the streets—educating the non-Kanaka Maoli public about Hawaiian issues is now less about engaging in hostilities and more about nurturing understanding through gentle persuasion:

Our approach . . . is not so much taking on the issue directly and saying that we wanna fight. It’s more like embracing it and saying “Hey, come and let me share this information that I’ve learned with you. And then

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<sup>65</sup> Estria Miyashiro, interview, August 22, 2013.

<sup>66</sup> Founded by Hawai‘i-born artist Jasper Wong in 2009, POWWOW Hawai‘i! is an annual gathering of graffiti artist who take to the streets of Kaka‘ako to create sanctioned murals and other artworks on walls that are donated by Kamehameha Schools. The two-week event also includes gallery exhibitions, artist lectures, music concerts, and local pop-up shops and kitchens.

<sup>67</sup> Solomon Enos, interview, January 16, 2013.

you decide.” . . . If I can change your mind on behalf of the Kingdom without throwing a punch, I done my job.<sup>68</sup>

*Ola Ka Wai, Ola Ka Honua* and ‘*Onipa‘a* remain a testament to the strategic use of art by Kanaka Maoli practitioners in their bid not only to uplift their own people with visual affirmations of Native sovereignty but to also hail settlers as part of a broader call to collective responsibility and action. I argue that this form of inclusive aesthetic engagement could prove to be the most virile antidote to unseating settler ignorance in Hawai‘i. Indeed, it may succeed where political rallies and other high-profile sovereignty initiatives have been unsuccessful.

### **Graffiti Writing and Hawaiian Epistemology**

In *Ho‘oulu: Our Time of Becoming*, Manulani Aluli Meyer writes:

Hawaiian epistemology is intimately tied to the fact that ‘aumākua and kumupa‘a [ancestral guardians and family gods, respectively] guide, inspire and influence their Hawaiian charges.<sup>69</sup>

For Prime and Estria, *Ola Ka Wai, Ola Ka Honua* constituted a landmark moment during which they each realized that the work in which they were individually and collectively engaged was fundamentally grounded in a Hawaiian philosophy of knowing:

That [i.e., *Ola Ka Wai, Ola Ka Honua*] was a magical experience for Prime and I. . . . For one thing, it was the beginning of our spiritual journey side-by-side and becoming aware that, you know, his daughter can see things and have conversations [with those who have passed], and the Queen can visit us [in the form of a butterfly], and all these things made it like, whoa! We have just touched on something. It was the beginning of that spiritual journey.<sup>70</sup>

Commenting on the spiritual dimensions to which Estria refers, Meyer notes that Hawaiian spirituality is “a way of discussing the organic and cultural mediation of experience . . . and . . . knowledge.”<sup>71</sup> Thus, a yellow butterfly frequenting the project site was perceived as something other than a random occurrence; the artists instead understood its presence as a symbolic manifestation of the Queen conveying her approval of their work. Further, the grandmother who was suddenly able to walk after hearing about the Queen’s image from her granddaughter was a further sign for the

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<sup>68</sup> John Hina, interview, August 21, 2013.

<sup>69</sup> Meyer, *Ho‘oulu*, 94.

<sup>70</sup> Estria Miyashiro, interview, August 22, 2013.

<sup>71</sup> Meyer, *Ho‘oulu*, 93.

artists that the ancestors were presiding over their work. Indeed, Prime's own daughter, a kāula (seer), was pivotal in helping the artist's see their larger purpose from a Hawaiian spiritual perspective. Prime recounts the story of what happened during the post-mural debriefing:

When we opened up the conversation, we started talking about what we coulda done better. . . . And then it just started to escalate. There was, like, a lot of finger pointing. Like, "Eh, you know what? If you did this we coulda done this better. If you only did what you supposed to do we coulda done this." And it got to the point where my daughter, who's a seer, just got fed up. And she said, "You guys all need to shut up right now because the Queen is talking to me and telling me to tell you this right now. . . . That night, the night before the unveiling I was sitting here in this chair and I seen my dad and Estria looking up at the Queen and just talking. You know what I could see? I could see the Queen standing behind them with her hands on their back. Behind her was all the ali'i. And they came to tell you, good job. So why are you guys arguing?"<sup>72</sup>

Such experiences with the spiritual realm as they relate to Kanaka Maoli creative process are not uncommon. Indeed, it is a point of significance that emerged in many of my discussions with members of the larger collective of Kanaka Maoli artists I had the privilege of engaging with during the course of my research. Artist and filmmaker Meleanna Aluli Meyer (sister to Manulani Aluli Meyer) describes her own experience:

I've had dream drawings, dream paintings given to me in waking dreams. So when I honor those things . . . I know that that connection to culture and to kūpuna and to 'aumākua is very strong. And so how does that manifest? It manifests in my believing it, and then honoring it, and then working with it. . . . I just believe that everything I am that is Hawaiian is the best that I am. And it shows up in my work in all sorts of interesting ways.<sup>73</sup>

For Carl F.K. Pao, the intersection between art and spirituality is condensed within the elusive but compelling concept of mana (power/prestige):<sup>74</sup>

My work, I believe has a seen and unseen—so a physical and a non-physical—mana. There's a physical presence of the piece that has its own mana that captures the attention of the viewer, that has a presence in a room, whether it be through its bright colors or its physicality, its monumentality, its application of various components. Whatever it might be, it's that physical mana that it possesses. Then there's this unseen mana that the piece is imbued with. So it's all the knowledge that I'm passing through me into the piece. Like with my paintings, everything begins in black, it has my watermark and all these different layers. So

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<sup>72</sup> John Hina, interview, August 21, 2013.

<sup>73</sup> Meleanna Aluli Meyer, interview, October 12, 2012.

<sup>74</sup> For more on the concept of mana, see, again, *New Mana: Transformations of a Classic Concept in Pacific Languages and Cultures* (forthcoming).



there's all that mana there that you may or may not see. Again, there's that spiritual component. My ancestors are speaking through me in my work. So I feel that there's the physical mana that I feel a lot of people address. But then there's other people who say, "Wow, that's got a lot of mana," and they're not talking about the physical. They're talking about the unseen energy.<sup>75</sup>

Visual artist, chanter, and hula dancer Marques Hanalei Marzan emphasizes the spiritual dimension of kaona and mana in his own work:

The whole idea of kaona . . . I think that's it. There's so many layers unconsciously that gets involved in the creation of artwork. It's so rich with mana and ideas . . . even if you're unaware of them, your 'aumākua or ancestors might just come through.<sup>76</sup>

Marzan's statement that "your 'aumākua or ancestors might just come through" underscores what I have been trying to impart throughout this entire thesis: the idea that art functions as both a portal through which deities and ancestors may commune with and uplift the living and where the living—that is, Kānaka Maoli—are empowered to affirm their ongoing presence in their homeland.

### **Wall of Resistance: The Aloha 'Āina Mural**

During the course of my research I became aware of a mural project that was being carried out by a group of Kanaka Maoli students at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Before the mural had even been completed, controversy was already swirling regarding its content, which was perceived by the university administration as overtly political. The ensuing dispute that erupted when the university censored the work garnered widespread attention and was covered by local television and newspaper syndications in Hawai'i and even reached as far abroad as China.

Although throughout this thesis I have chosen to focus on professional, exhibiting artists who are well known within and outside of the Native arts community, in the following section I break with that convention to turn my attention to the grassroots, student-led community mural project that took place at the University of Hawai'i. My central goal is to highlight in sharp relief the politics of creating indigenous public art and to illuminate the obstacles Kānaka Maoli face in their bid to enact visual sovereignty in Hawai'i.

2011 marked the inaugural year of the Ka Leo Arts Festival, an event sponsored by UHM's student-run newspaper *Ka Leo o Hawai'i (The Voice of Hawai'i)*. The annual

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<sup>75</sup> Carl F.K. Pao, interview, April 4, 2013.

<sup>76</sup> Marques Hanalei Marzan, interview, August 28, 2012.

festival was part of the all-American, collegial celebrations of Homecoming Week and included a vibrant program aimed at showcasing the artistic and creative talents of UHM students.<sup>77</sup> As part of the 2013 festivities, *Ka Leo* issued a call for student artists to create murals on one of many temporary construction walls that had been erected around campus as part of a major renovation project at the university. The application process to participate was straightforward: candidates were asked to submit a statement of purpose and an accompanying draft of the proposed composition. Community muralist Haley Kailiehu, a doctoral candidate in the UHM Education Department and a member of HauMĀNA—a pro-Hawaiian independence student group at the University of Hawai‘i—submitted an application, citing HauMĀNA’s intent to use the wall to celebrate the mountain Mauna-a-Wākea (Mountain of Wākea).<sup>78</sup> Located on the island of Hawai‘i, Mauna-a-Wākea is the highest mountain in the Hawaiian Archipelago and is revered by Kānaka Maoli as an ancestor.<sup>79</sup> In her letter of submission Kailiehu underscored the relationship of Kānaka Maoli to the mountain:

We’d like to celebrate and express our love and appreciation for this mountain as the center of our connectedness as a people, our connection to the land and our incredible history of navigation and expertise of the heavens. These connections are relevant and important to many students and faculty on the UHM campus, including Kanaka Maoli students as well as those who have come here to advance and promote the values of mālama ‘āina (caring for the land).<sup>80</sup>

The proposal was approved and on the weekend of October 12 and 13, 2013, Native and non-Native UHM students and faculty, as well as members of the broader community—including kūpuna (elder generation) and keiki (children)—converged at the designated wall to begin sketching out and painting the Aloha ‘Āina Mural. The approximately 8-foot-high by 20-foot-wide mural is a visual retelling of one of many traditional mo‘olelo relating to Mauna-a-Wākea. In the painted scene—made up of earthy hues of brown, crimson, purple, lavender, and green—the deities Wākea (Sky Father),

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<sup>77</sup> “Homecoming” refers to the annual weeklong American tradition of welcoming back college and university alumni to campus. The festivities usually take place in the fall.

<sup>78</sup> Comprised of UHM students, HauMĀNA serves as the student branch of MANA (Movement for Aloha no ka ‘Āina), “a movement-building organization, established to achieve [Native Hawaiian] independence and social justice through direct action, political education, economic development, international diplomacy, and public advocacy, with a cultural and spiritual foundation.” See HauMĀNA’s Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/haumanastudentmovement>.

<sup>79</sup> Mauna-a-Wākea is alternatively known by its abbreviated name Mauna Kea. Here, I choose to invoke its name in full unless cited otherwise.

<sup>80</sup> Haley Kailiehu, cover letter for Kaleo Art Festival mural project. Author’s files. Reproduced here with the author’s kind permission. [October 15, 2013].

Papahānaumoku (Earth Mother), and Ho‘ohokūkalanī (The-heavenly-one-who-made-the-stars) stand out as central figures in the foreground (Fig. 5.8).

Positioned at the bottom-center of the mural, Wākea and Papahānaumoku are shown facing each other in an attitude of connubial affection. Their daughter Ho‘ohokūkalanī stands beside her father, holding in her arms her second-born son, Hāloa. The child—who in Hawaiian oral tradition is recognized as the founding ancestor of the Hawaiian people—was created from the union between Ho‘ohokūkalanī and Wākea. Kalo, revered as an elder sibling by Kānaka Maoli, is a prominent motif in the mural, its green, heart-shaped leaves populating the middle ground to form a metaphorical lo‘i (irrigated terrace). In the piko (center) of the largest kalo, Lake Waiau—the sacred lake located on Mauna-a-Wākea—is depicted in hues of red and blue. Its fluid contents spill out and trickle down to anoint Wākea and Papahānaumoku below.

Taking a step back from the mural, the sedimentary formation of its design becomes easily apparent. At the bottom of the piece, numerous painted rocks make up the first “sedimentary layer”—the rocks being perhaps denotative of the volcanic scoria found on Mauna-a-Wākea. Some of the rocks possess what look like flagella and it is here that they are visually transformed into male reproductive cells. The symbolism is compelling: what at once appears to be a scattering of assorted rocks now evolves into a quivering, converging cluster of semen, with the “tail-less” rocks representing ova. The teeming of so many reproductive cells announces the potent fecundity of Kānaka Maoli. This is underscored by the row of human figures—men and women—which makes up the second layer of the mural. The figures—past, present, and future generations of Kānaka Maoli—are shown holding up the cultivated terrace of kalo above them, which as I interpret it signals the kuleana Kānaka Maoli have to mālama ‘āina (care for the land) and through such reciprocal action thrive into the future.

The mountain itself, Mauna-a-Wākea, looms in the background and makes up the fourth visual layer. Rendered in a shade of soft lavender with its summit capped in white, the mountain functions as a receptacle that encompasses the discrete but related strata of rocks/cells, people, kalo, and gods in a unified matrix. It is as if all of these visual constituents make up the very layers of the mountain itself. Above Mauna-a-Wākea, a celestial network of stars and the moon light up the night sky—the sky being the proverbial realm of Wākea. In one section in particular, just above the second summit of the mountain, the muralists included a cluster of stars that represents the Makali‘i constellation (the Pleiades or Seven Sisters), a significant star formation in

Hawaiian cosmological tradition. To the far right of the night sky is a crescent moon shown in the phase identified in the Hawaiian lunar calendar as Hoaka. As Kailiehu explained to me, in ancient times Hawaiians would often refer to the shape of their Island archipelago in metaphorical terms as resembling this important phase.<sup>81</sup>

While the pictorial aspects of the mural clearly affirm the ongoing cultural and genealogical connections between Kānaka Maoli and Mauna-a-Wākea, in a more critical way the mural functioned as a political forum through which Kanaka Maoli grievances concerning the mountain could be made. For decades, Kānaka Maoli have been engaged in the struggle to protect Mauna-a-Wākea from what they see is the destruction and desecration of their ancestor through its development as an astronomy facility. There are currently thirteen telescopes on the mountain, which are owned and operated by numerous corporations and universities from countries all over the globe.<sup>82</sup> Writing to the editor of the *Minnesota Daily* in 2002, Kealoha Pisciotta—a Hawaiian cultural practitioner who worked for the observatories as a telescope systems specialist for twelve years—articulated the problem:

The upper region of Mauna Kea is considered the highest and most sacred temple of Native Hawaiians, it is the burial ground of our highest born and most sacred ancestors. . . . Corporations pay only \$1 per year in lease rent for the use of our land. They introduce hundreds of thousands of gallons of human waste into the principal aquifer of our island and use hazardous materials such as elemental mercury. . . . Universit[ies] push their developments . . . in the name of “education and research” [but] the technology developed on the telescopes is used to attract military and corporate contracts worth millions of dollars.<sup>83</sup>

In addition, the construction and operation of the observatories is a threat to some ninety-three culturally significant sites known to exist on the mountain (including ancestral burials) and puts numerous flora and fauna living on its slopes—some of them endangered—at risk. Further, the presence of the telescopes has impeded Hawaiians from practicing their religious rituals on the mountain.<sup>84</sup> The controversy surrounding

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<sup>81</sup> Haley Kailiehu, Facebook message to author, October 30, 2013.

<sup>82</sup> Those countries include Canada, France, United Kingdom, Japan, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Netherlands, Taiwan, and the United States.

<sup>83</sup> Winona LaDuke, *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005), 30–31.

<sup>84</sup> The destruction of a six-foot-high lele (wood altar) by vandals in 2006 underscores the challenges Kānaka Maoli face concerning the practice of their culture and religious rites on the mountain.

Mauna-a-Wākea is, as Manulani Aluli Meyer insightfully observed, “a perfect example of clashing cosmologies.”<sup>85</sup>

For the members of HauMĀNA involved in organizing the Aloha ‘Āina Mural, the “clash” involved their own alma mater. Beginning in the 1960s, the University of Hawai‘i has been the leading force behind Mauna-a-Wākea being developed into the Mauna Kea Science Reserve. The reserve comprises 11,288 acres of seized Hawaiian national lands,<sup>86</sup> which are managed by the Hawai‘i State Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) and leased to the University of Hawai‘i. The university in turn subleases the land (as Pisciotta notes above, at the nominal fee of \$1 per year) to other universities, corporations, and foreign governments for development.

The university’s recent decision to lease out eight acres to an international consortium of universities and corporations for the planned construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) has generated the latest chain of opposition from Kānaka Maoli. At eighteen stories high and equipped with a 30-meter lens, the Thirty Meter Telescope will surpass the capabilities of even the Hubble Space Telescope. But for Kānaka Maoli, such advances in astronomy entail a violation of their own connection to the land and the wider environment to which they are genealogically related. In a June 2013 article in the *Big Island Weekly*, Kealoha Pisciotta stated, “If we say yes to more development, we are saying yes to the desecration of our temple and our ancestors, yes to the desecration of our waters, and yes to the possible extinction of life itself.”<sup>87</sup>

As a student-led group committed to upholding the principle of aloha no ka ‘āina (love for the land), HauMĀNA used the Aloha ‘Āina Mural as a site of aesthetic resistance to challenge the university’s continued role in the desecration of Mauna-a-Wākea and to raise awareness about the most recent threat to the mountain. They also drew attention to the insincerity behind the university’s purporting in its 2011–2015 Strategic Plan to be a “Hawaiian Place of Learning” when its policies relating to Mauna-a-Wākea are in clear disregard of Hawaiian values concerning land and sacred places.<sup>88</sup> As lead artist for the project, Kailiehu strategically used black chalkboard paint underneath the mural “to allow the audience to interact with [the] art piece and

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<sup>85</sup> Puhipau and Joan Lander, *Mauna Kea: Temple Under Siege*, DVD (Nā Maka o Ka ‘Āina, 2006).

<sup>86</sup> That is, all the lands on the summit from 11,000 feet up.

<sup>87</sup> Jamie Winpenny, “The Uncertain Future of Mauna Kea,” *Big Island Weekly*, June 26, 2013, <http://bigislandweekly.com/sections/news/uncertain-future-mauna-kea.html>.

<sup>88</sup> See *Achieving Our Destiny: The University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa 2011-2015 Strategic Plan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, n.d).

leave messages.”<sup>89</sup> The black chalkboard also enabled Kailiehu and the other members of HauMĀNA to articulate their own political position. That position was clearly stated in the far left-hand corner of the mural (Fig. 5.9):

UH cannot be a Hawaiian place of learning  
while leading the desecration of Mauna a Wakea.  
Hey UH... Be accountable  
Be a Hawaiian place of learning...  
Stand with the people...  
Stop the desecration...  
Stop the Thirty Meter Telescope!

Members of the UHM Marianas Club also joined in solidarity with Kānaka Maoli, chalking their own sentiments on the wall (see Fig. 5.9):

Hita i taotao Marianas [the people of Marianas] stand in solidarity with  
Kanaka Maoli for the protection of our sacred lands.

and

Pacific Islanders stand together...  
Marshall Islanders stand with Kānaka Maoli.

On the far right, another message read:

Contamination of our waters continues. Hawaiian values R more than  
rhetoric. They R community values manifested through community  
action.

When my husband (Carl F.K. Pao, who is featured in this thesis) and I arrived on the final day of the project to help paint, we learned of the first rumblings of institutional censure. Kailiehu informed us that the day before, *Ka Leo*'s Marketing Director Rob Reilly had approached her and other members of HauMĀNA to inform them that the UH Administration did not approve of the mural's message, specifically as it related to the political content written in chalk. The group was given the option to either cover up the text themselves or risk having it forcibly removed by *Ka Leo* employees. Despite the threat of censorship, HauMĀNA refused to conceal the written sentiments and instead continued painting.

The forecast for the weekend of October 12 and 13 was for thunderstorms and rain, but during the Sunday afternoon that Pao and I had the opportunity to lend our own brush strokes to the mural the dark cumulus plumes in the distance managed to remain at bay. We joined with a cohort of other painters and together we jostled for space at the face of the mural, each of us intent on giving visual life to the wall in front. The

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<sup>89</sup> Kailiehu, cover letter for Kaleo Art Festival mural project. Author's files. [October 15, 2013].

collegial hum of voices in quiet conversation was punctuated every now and then by bursts of laughter and convivial greetings of welcome as people throughout the day continued to arrive to help. But mostly the mood was one of quiet contemplation and focus. A large Hawaiian flag stood next to a table that bore on it a petition calling for the cessation of development on Mauna-a-Wākea. Pao and I added our own names to the long list of signatures that had been collected over the past two days. The flag rippled in the breeze and served as a constant and powerful reminder of the sovereign purpose for which the artistic gathering had been convened: to oppose the ongoing destruction of Native lands in Hawai‘i. By the time I departed, the mural was almost complete. A couple of hours later as the final touches were being made to the piece the first claps of thunder began to resound. Not long after that the sky opened up and emptied its life-giving contents onto the land.

When the mural organizers arrived at the wall the next morning,<sup>90</sup> they discovered the written expressions of sovereignty and solidarity gone. But it was not the downpour from the previous day that had removed them. Rather, individuals working for *Ka Leo* had covered them up, replacing the words with an advertisement for the Ka Leo Arts Festival that read “#Ka Leo Fest.” The rest of the mural had been left intact, but all trace of the political text had been erased. The response by Kānaka Maoli was swift. HauMĀNA shifted their activism from the mural wall to their Facebook wall, where they issued a call to action. Part of it read:

#### ACTION ALERT!

What: Aloha ‘Āina Rally at  
Mauna a Wākea mural.

When and Where:  
Tomorrow, Tuesday,  
October 15th. 10am at the  
Mauna a Wākea mural  
(UHM campus center  
construction boards  
bordering the Art building)

Why: To tell Ka Leo and  
UH that they cannot censor

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<sup>90</sup> In a curious coincidental twist, the very day the mural organizers discovered that the mural had been defaced—i.e., Monday, October 14—marked the official Columbus Day observations in the U.S., a day that for Native Americans in particular and indigenous people in general signifies genocide, invasion, and the attempted erasure of Native histories, traditions, and lifeways.

Kanaka Maoli student  
voice!<sup>91</sup>

Despite receiving less than 24 hours notice, the next day an estimated 300 people—many carrying homemade signs bearing slogans such as “Censorship is Desecration,” “UH Censoring Native Hawaiian Voices,” and “Protect Sacred ‘Āina”—converged at the Aloha ‘Āina Mural to protest the blatant censorship of Kanaka Maoli voices.

Gathered together in a wide circle with hands linked (Fig. 5.10), the crowd was led in an oli (chant) to symbolically open up the space for critical thought and discussion.

Composed as a supplication to the gods for wisdom, the chant read:

E hō mai ka ‘ike mai luna mai ē (Give forth knowledge from above)  
‘O nā mea huna no‘eau o nā mele ē (The hidden secrets of the chants)  
E hō mai, e hō mai, e hō mai ē (Give forth, give forth, oh give forth)

With the protocol completed, a number of the organizers offered their own informed perspective on the situation. Kanaka Maoli activist Andre Perez, a doctoral student at the University of Hawai‘i and a member of HauMĀNA, best articulated the issues at hand:

To be able to disagree is the fundamentals of academics. And yet they’re telling us that we cannot disagree. But instead we must conform to what they think is proper behavior for Hawaiians. We cannot allow that to happen. We have to assert our right to free speech and understand that this is a bigger issue than free speech. The Mauna Kea issue has been ongoing for many years now. It’s a very important part of Hawaiian politics and [the] Hawaiian struggle and we cannot allow the very institution that is at the core of this issue to suppress us right here in this so-called realm, this place of free thought and free speech. So we must always challenge and assert our right to be heard and to express our politics in ways that are dignified. . . . We must kū‘ē (resist) and as our Queen Lili‘u said, we must ‘onipa‘a—we must stand firm.<sup>92</sup>

While Kailiehu re-inscribed HauMĀNA’s original statement of protest on the wall, Perez brought the deeper implication of the cover-up into full focus by drawing direct attention to the newspaper’s—and by extension the university’s—attempt to erase Native voices:

Not only did they paint over our message but they put *their* “stamp” [i.e., the advertisement] over *ours*. . . . They want to render us invisible people with no voices. We’re not going to allow that to happen.<sup>93</sup>

He also illuminated the glaring contradiction of *Ka Leo*’s Hawaiian name (Fig. 5.11):

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<sup>91</sup> “HauMĀNA’s Facebook Page.”

<sup>92</sup> Andre Perez, speech transcribed from video recording (delivered at the Aloha ‘Āina Protest Rally, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Honolulu, October 15, 2013).

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.



The tragic irony is, look at the name of the newspaper that is silencing Hawaiians. *Ka Leo*, The Voice. How ironic that they appropriate and adopt our Native language, our ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i [Hawaiian language], while simultaneously suppressing our voice. Erasing us under their layers of paint.<sup>94</sup>

Doctoral student Kamakaoka‘ilima Seto-Long offered her own compelling testament of the events that unfolded and the fortitude of the HauMĀNA organizers in the face of institutional obstruction:

We think it’s important that we have a voice over what are our stolen Hawaiian lands. But that voice was suppressed because Ka Leo and Rob Reilly made it clear that it was not okay and that if we criticized the University of Hawai‘i that they would paint over it [i.e., the mural]. They told us to take it down, we said “No.” They told us they would paint over it. We said that our message would go up no matter what. And they threatened to charge us with vandalism.<sup>95</sup>

Kailiehu, the final person to speak, reflected on the experience of creating the mural alongside so many supporters from all walks of life and all ages (an estimated eighty people had shown up to help over the two-day period) and underscored the significance of art as a vehicle for Native voices to be heard. She declared:

Through art we can put this issue [i.e., the issue concerning the desecration of Mauna-a-Wākea] to the forefront and allow the . . . public, not just a few people behind closed doors in a meeting to decide whether or not the telescopes should be built.<sup>96</sup>

Her statement regarding the political power of art was made even more poignant by the printed message on her paint-splattered shirt: *Art is the absence of fear*.

During the proceedings the crowd had remained at a distance from the mural to give the speakers space to share their message. However, as soon as Kailiehu invited them to chalk their own sentiments of support on the wall, students, faculty, community members, and children quickly descended on the space (Fig. 5.12). In the short span of fifteen minutes, the wall was transformed into an enormous visual petition, with messages calling for justice, solidarity, and the protection of the ‘āina. I recount some of those statements here:

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Kamakaoka‘ilima Seto-Long, speech transcribed from video recording (delivered at the Aloha ‘Āina Protest Rally, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Honolulu, October 15, 2013).

<sup>96</sup> Haley Kailiehu, speech transcribed from video recording (delivered at the Aloha ‘Āina Protest Rally, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Honolulu, October 15, 2013).

“We will rise, survive, and  
be heard!!!”

“E Aloha ‘Āina.”  
(Love the land.)

“Mai Poina!”  
(“Do not forget!”)

“How much of our land are  
you gonna take UHM?”

“This Little Salmon woman  
from Northern Tutchone  
Territories supports Kanaka  
Maoli.”

“Ka piko o ke kuahiwi, ka  
piko o ka lāhui Hawai‘i.  
Aloha ‘āina.”  
(“The naval of the mountain  
is the naval of the Hawaiian  
people. Love the land.”)

“Tino Rangatiranga!”  
(“Sovereignty!” [in Māori  
language])

In an important way, members of HauMĀNA linked their self-determination efforts of the present with those of the past by invoking the word “‘onipa‘a,” which they interspersed in the red spray-painted message “FREE—‘ONIPA‘A—SPEECH NOW!” (Fig. 5.13). The rally continued with the assembly of supporters marching from the mural through UH campus to *Ka Leo*’s main office. As the procession advanced the crowd chanted, “Free speech now! Eō, Mauna Kea!” Several people carried upside-down Hawaiian flags, while many others bore signs with political messages (Fig. 5.14). On arriving at *Ka Leo*’s headquarters, members of HauMĀNA presented the Board of Publications Chair Rebekah Carroll with a letter of protest<sup>97</sup>—the chief demand of which was that *Ka Leo* issue a public apology for censoring Kanaka Maoli voices—while protesters waited outside (Fig. 5.15).<sup>98</sup> As the rally came to a close, the crowd

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<sup>97</sup> Rob Reilly, the *Ka Leo* employee who initially instructed HauMĀNA to remove the political text, was conspicuously not present at the time.

<sup>98</sup> HauMĀNA leadership received two formal letters of apology in response to their letter of protest. One from Bonnyjean Manini, the Interim Director of the Office of Student Life & Development, and the other from Rebekah Carroll on behalf of the University of Hawai‘i’s Board of Publications.

once again linked hands and a closing prayer in Hawaiian was offered to conclude the gathering.

### **Breaking Down the Walls of Power**

With the mural wall now reclaimed by Kānaka Maoli and their supporters, the virtual wall of Facebook continued to be covered with posts that brought the issues surrounding the censorship of the mural and the ongoing desecration of Mauna-a-Wākea into high relief. One Facebook post by HauMĀNA in particular illuminated the multiple shared and overlapping bastions of struggle that Kānaka Maoli occupy as they fight to simply have their voices heard:

We brought the Mountain to UH Mānoa, we expressed our discontent with the University, just as the Hawai‘i island families fighting for the Mountain are and we were silenced by the university, just as the families of Hawai‘i island are.<sup>99</sup>

The university’s silencing of Native Hawaiian voices through the erasure of sections of the Aloha ‘Āina Mural as well as the silencing of Hawai‘i Island families who are at the forefront of the struggle to protect Mauna-a-Wākea, must be understood as symptomatic of the ongoing oppression of Kānaka Maoli under U.S. settler colonialism. Embedded in what Patrick Wolfe terms the “logic of elimination,” the essential characteristic of settler colonialism is that it “destroys to replace.”<sup>100</sup> Let me recall Perez’s statement above: “Not only did they paint over our message but they put *their* “stamp” over *ours*.”

In her insightful discussion of colonial strategies of erasure in Hawai‘i, Karen Kosasa notes:

Settler colonialism in Hawai‘i is composed of “acts of erasure.” These “erasures” help to maintain the colonization of Native Hawaiians by creating a “settler imaginary” that continuously eliminates all references to colonialism. This process of erasure naturalizes the United States’ illegal presence in Hawai‘i. It also creates a perplexing situation where many settlers are unaware of the existence of colonialism and their participation in it.<sup>101</sup>

The destructive development of Mauna-a-Wākea in the name of corporate, scientific, and military interests is fundamentally rooted in the settler colonial project in Hawai‘i.

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<sup>99</sup> “HauMĀNA’s Facebook Page.”

<sup>100</sup> Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 388.

<sup>101</sup> Karen K. Kosasa, “Sites of Erasure: The Representation of Settler Culture in Hawai‘i,” in *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai‘i*, ed. Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008), 196.

Wolfe reminds us that the acquisition and control of Native lands is the prime motive of settler colonialism. “Territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element.”<sup>102</sup> As mentioned, the very lands that make up the mountain are part of the nearly two million acres that were seized from Hawaiians in 1893 when American businessmen illegally overthrew the Hawaiian Kingdom. Mauna-a-Wākea, along with the lands discussed earlier in this thesis (although there are many more that I have not included)—i.e., Kahana Valley and Kaho‘olawe—is one of many sites where the indigenous struggle to reclaim stolen lands is being waged by Kānaka Maoli.

By erasing the mural’s political message, the University of Hawai‘i was in effect attempting to not only eliminate all references to the reality of colonialism in the Islands—specifically as it relates to the desecration of Mauna-a-Wākea—but to also conceal its own complicity in the settler colonial project through, among other things, its own participation in the abuse of those lands. Lisa Kahaleole Hall writes, “Because colonization relies on forced forgetting and erasure, the need to bring the past forward into our consciousness is ongoing.”<sup>103</sup> In the case of the Aloha ‘Āina Mural, the past was brought forward in two ways: first, by asserting and celebrating the ongoing connection between Kānaka Maoli and their ancestral lands and second, by exposing the colonial past as a system of oppression that continues to operate in Hawai‘i to the present day. The mural was more than a work of art. It was a potent political challenge that unsettled and uncovered settler colonialism in Hawai‘i and the ongoing hegemonic dominance of the United States.

More broadly speaking, the mural also served as a space in which indigenous supporters whose own peoples and lands abroad struggle under colonization could stand in solidarity with Kānaka Maoli. In his address during the rally, Kenneth Gofigan Kuper—a Chamorro whose homeland of Guam has been destructively transformed into a U.S. military outpost—made this statement:

We stand here in solidarity with the Kānaka Maoli who are fighting to protect their sacred places. We need to realize that those of us who are not indigenous peoples of this land, this issue is not something we can simply walk on by. . . . This issue is our issue as well. As temporary dwellers here we have a responsibility to also do our part to help protect this land.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” 388.

<sup>103</sup> Lisa Kahaleole Hall, “Strategies of Erasure: U.S. Colonialism and Native Hawaiian Feminism,” *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2008): 279.

<sup>104</sup> Kenneth Gofigan Kuper, speech transcribed from video recording (delivered at the Aloha ‘Āina Protest Rally, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Honolulu, October 15, 2013).

In relation to Kosasa’s keen observation that “many settlers are unaware of the existence of colonialism and their participation in it,” for those present at the rally whose ancestral home was not Hawai‘i—and I include myself here—Kuper’s exhortation for “temporary dwellers” or settlers to acknowledge their own responsibility to “do their part” in the Kanaka Maoli struggle served to perforate—even if briefly—the wall of epistemological ignorance so pervasive in Hawai‘i.

### **Postscript: From Protest to Celebration**

Less than ten days after the protest march, hauMĀNA organized another gathering, this time at Kamakakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies on UHM campus—itsself a bastion of Kanaka Maoli struggle and resistance—to celebrate the activism and solidarity that was displayed the previous week and to show “what a Hawaiian place of learning really looks like.”<sup>105</sup> The event was titled Aloha ‘Āina Arts Fest and it was strategically set to be held on October 24, the same evening as the UHM-sponsored Ka Leo Arts Fest.

Aloha ‘Āina Arts Fest was attended by approximately one hundred people and constituted a seamless weaving together of creative performance and indigenous political discourse. Kalani Flores—who, along with his wife Pualani Case and a larger coalition of Kānaka Maoli, environmentalists, and Big Island residents, has for decades been committed to stopping the desecration of Mauna-a-Wākea—made the journey from the Big Island where he lives to O‘ahu to share the latest developments in the struggle. He began his address by blowing into a pū three times. The first breath acknowledged the mountain, the second acknowledged the gathering of people, and the third acknowledged Wākea, Sky Father. I watched in transfixed wonder as the children who had previously been running around in raucous delight—my own daughter included—suddenly stopped and stood in stunned silence as the sound of the pū resounded in the air around them. The ritual blowing functioned as both a greeting and, more significantly, as a clarion call to bring everyone in attendance to attention, even the youngest members present.

During the course of the evening, Kanaka Maoli poets and spoken-word artists alighted the stage to share their political perspectives. Poet David Keali‘i underscored the fundamental differences between Western and Hawaiian understandings of Mauna-a-Wākea in his poem “For Mauna Kea”:

You act as if your worldview is the only one that matters,

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<sup>105</sup> HauMĀNA. *Aloha ‘Āina Arts Festival*. Honolulu: HauMĀNA, 2013. Events flyer.

if you only asked we would  
have told you what we see  
in the night:

patterns carved into the sky's dark calabash  
so voyages can be made  
to Kahiki, Hawaiki, Pulotu—  
the thousand islands sewn  
the length of limitless canoes.

But you have decided to build  
and build into the heights  
where Papa and Wākea meet.<sup>106</sup>

The competing visions and understandings of Mauna-a-Wākea as observed by the poet can be understood in relation to what Māori scholar and activist Moana Jackson described in a 2004 presentation he gave at the University of Hawai'i as the collision of two realities:

The reality of tradition and history, which shaped our identity [as indigenous people] and the reality of colonization, which has sought and still seeks to destroy it, to reconceptualize it, to fit it within a paradigm, which is not ours.<sup>107</sup>

Such destructive and reconceptualizing tactics as used by the United States in Hawai'i to undermine and erode Native identity have entailed the long-standing assault on places across the Islands held sacred by Kānaka Maoli, including but not limited to their ancestral mountain Mauna-a-Wākea. As the mural and subsequent protest rally and arts festival reveals, however, such assaults do not go unchallenged by Native stewards. Observes Keali'i at the end of his poem:

But arrogance  
must always be checked.  
We will never consent,  
we will always resist

your bladed  
destruction across  
the 'āina.

While the performances and presentations on stage were the focal point, behind the scenes Kailiehu and a retinue of assistants created works of art in the form of t-shirts that were screen-printed with a monochromatic image of the mural and a caption that

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<sup>106</sup> The unpublished poem is reproduced here with the author's kind permission.

<sup>107</sup> Moana Jackson, "Reality, Identity, and Eating M and Ms," transcribed from DVD recording, (presentation given at the United Nations Global Seminar 1st Hawai'i Session, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Honolulu, 2004).

read, “Eō Mauna A Wākea. Sacred Mountain True Hawaiian Place of Learning” (Fig. 5.16). The artwork, poetry, and political testimonies that featured during the event when considered together demonstrate how Kanaka Maoli aesthetic activism and political engagement converge to produce a multi-pronged discourse of resistance. For over one hundred years Kānaka Maoli have been bringing the symbolic power of the creative arts to bear on their struggle to reclaim and protect their homeland. As I hope I have made clear throughout this writing, that practice continues to be carried out today with the same vigor, conviction, and commitment.

As the dark of night fell, the audience departed the festival venue to begin the half-mile march to the site of the mural. As the procession advanced, the familiar exhortations of solidarity and Kanaka Maoli pride began to rise from the voices of the many: “Aloha ‘āina, Eō Maunakea!” “Kū i ka pono!” “E kū maumau!” At intervals in the journey, Flores issued sonorous blasts from his pū, motivating the marchers on and reminding them of the importance of their undertaking. As the crowd proceeded through the middle of the Ka Leo Arts festival, populated as it was by festivalgoers and vendors, some in the company handed out informational flyers about Mauna-a-Wākea and the need for the university to be accountable for its role in the desecration of the mountain. Many of the attendees cheered and clapped as the procession passed by. Even the band that was playing stopped as the marchers approached. Quite unexpectedly, the lead guitarist, a young man of perhaps 20 years old, raised his fist and declared into his microphone, “Eō! Kū i ka pono!”

When we arrived at the mural, there was barely any lighting but the weak glimmer that was cast by a couple of nearby streetlamps. As the marchers stood around the artwork in a shroud of near darkness, Flores once again took up his pū, this time blowing it as he walked along the entire length of the piece. The releasing of the hā or the breath from the instrument symbolized the breathing of life into the mural as well as the mountain for which it was created. As the rich vibrato of the instrument reverberated in the warm night air I looked up to see my two-year old daughter—who was perched on my husband’s shoulders so she could better see what was happening—once again mesmerized by its sound. I wondered at that moment what calls she will answer as a young Māori-Kanaka Maoli woman in the coming years as she, too, learns to enact her own obligation to aloha ‘āina.

### **Claiming and Transforming**

In this chapter I have presented three case studies of indigenous public art to illuminate

the ways Kanaka Maoli artists use the walls of the built environment as semiotic slates to raise political consciousness and articulate an indigenous-centered, decolonizing frame of self-representation. The three mural projects I have examined serve as important sites of ethical and aesthetic activism that assert Kanaka Maoli sovereignty through themes of survivance, environmental stewardship, and ongoing ancestral connections. They draw on a range of culturally informed symbols and imagery and are grounded in a Hawaiian philosophy of knowing.

In Hawai‘i where Native lands have been converted into commodities of colonial enterprise, the murals—all of which are located on seized Hawaiian lands—constitute a critical reclaiming and reconversion of space from colonial possession to Kanaka Maoli patrimony. In this way, public art offers Kanaka Maoli the opportunity to “influence the shape and content of their surroundings” in ways that are both material and symbolic.<sup>108</sup> However, such a reclaiming of space, as we have seen, does not go unchallenged. As was the case with the Aloha ‘Āina Mural, the political message was crudely censored. The silencing underscores in a clear way the degree to which Kānaka Maoli continue to struggle to have their voices heard in settler Hawai‘i, whether in the halls of government or on the walls of a university campus.

Nevertheless, if as Lisa Kaheleole Hall writes, “colonization relies on a forced forgetting and erasure,” then the murals in this chapter recall and expose colonialism in Hawai‘i through strategies that range from covert allusion to undisguised castigation. Here, public art provides an ideal forum for presenting indigenous concerns and grievances to the wider citizenry of Hawai‘i, many of whom are unaware of colonialism or are at the very least ignorant of the conditions under which Kānaka Maoli must live. The murals reflect a Kanaka Maoli reality and in so doing “function to unscrew the power of the colonizing force by creating a new consciousness.”<sup>109</sup>

And it is perhaps in the work that murals do to create a new consciousness that they make their most lasting mark. Artwork in clay or bronze, on paper or canvas can last for decades and even centuries if properly cared for. However, murals are by nature temporary: the paint by which they are created is exposed to the elements of rain, wind, and light, and the very walls on which they appear are in constant peril of the developer’s wrecking ball. Indeed, the wall on which the ‘*Onipa‘a* mural is located will at some stage in the near future be torn down to accommodate the urban renewal project

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<sup>108</sup> Eva Cockroft, John Weber, and Jim Cockroft, *Toward A People’s Art: The Contemporary Mural Movement* (New York, NY: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1977), 96.

<sup>109</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 90.



currently underway in Kaka‘ako. And while the wall on which *Ola Ka Wai, Ola Ka Honua* features is safe for now, the rapid development of Honolulu means that it will always be at risk of destruction. Recently I revisited the Aloha ‘Āina Mural and was saddened to see that all of the chalked sentiments of solidarity had been removed, this time not through censorship but by the transforming elements of wind and rain. What remained was the ghostly palimpsest of barely legible text that had at one time been so outrageously visible. I felt disheartened until I realized that muralism is perhaps less about the product itself and more about the collective experience of creating the work of art and bearing witness to its message. In relation to at least two of the murals highlighted in this chapter, *Ola Ka Wai, Ola Ka Honua* and the Aloha ‘Āina Mural, the artists and the public were transformed in profound and, one might hope, lasting ways—conscientized as Paulo Freire would say, raised to new levels of awareness. Yes, every wall is a gate. But it is only in comprehending the “writing” on the wall that the gate will open.



Fig. 5.1: A photo of an anti-Akaka Bill banner fixed to a fence in the town of Wai'anae. (Featured on the online Native American news blog *The Buffalo Post* published March 25, 2010).



Figure 5.2: *Ola Ka Wai, Ola Ka Honua (As the Water Lives, the Earth Thrives)* (2011) by Estria Miyashiro and John "Prime" Hina with Vogue TDK, Katch, Rival, Krush TWS, Escape, Dmize225, Krush BS, Eukarezt, Bieste, Quest, Trax, Ohana, Wyte, SMK, CKaweeks, Looks, Sierra Dew, Noize22. (Photograph by author, 2014).





Figure 5.3: Members of the Hawaiian Royal Guard watch over the image of Queen Lili'uokalani. (Photograph by Paula Ota. Courtesy of John "Prime" Hina).



Figure 5.4: John "Prime" Hina (L), Palani Vaughan (M), and Estria Miyashiro (R) stand in front of *Ola Ka Wai, Ola Ka Honua* during the mural's unveiling ceremony. Two men in the background hold Hawaiian Independence banners. (Photograph by Paula Ota. Courtesy of John "Prime" Hina).





Figure 5.5: Hawaiian Coat of Arms located on the front gate of ‘Iolani Palace. The phrase “Ua mau ka ea o ka ‘āina i ka pono” translates as “The sovereignty of the land has been continued because it is just.” (Photograph by author, 2014).



Figure 5.6: *‘Onipa ‘a* (2012) by John “Prime” Hina and Estria Miyashiro with Beaste, Katch, Evolve, Look, and Beak. (Photograph by Paula Ota. Courtesy of John “Prime” Hina).



Figure 5.7: Detail of 'Onipa'ā showing an octopus holding the sacred bones of Kamehameha I in one of its tentacles. (Photograph by Paula Ota. Courtesy of John "Prime" Hina).



Figure 5.8: The Aloha 'Āina Mural. University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2013. Designed by Haley Kailiehu. (Photograph by author, 2013).





Figure 5.9: Chalked statements by members of hauMĀNA and the UHM Marianas Club. (Photograph by author, 2013).



Figure 5.10: Aloha ‘Āina Protest Rally participants linking hands during the opening prayer. (Photograph by author, 2013).



Figure 5.11: Andre Perez speaking at the Aloha 'Āina Mural Protest Rally. (Photograph by author, 2013).



Figure 5.12: Demonstrators chalking their sentiments of support on the Aloha 'Āina Mural. (Photograph by author, 2013).





Figure 5.13: Detail of chalked sentiments with spray-painted message, “Free ‘Onipa‘a Speech Now!” (Photograph by author, 2013).



Figure 5.14: Aloha ‘Āina Rally protesters marching to the *Ka Leo* headquarters. (Photograph by author, 2013).





Figure 5.15: Aloha 'Āina Mural Rally protestors holding upside-down Hawaiian flags and signs while they wait outside *Ka Leo's* headquarters. (Photograph by author, 2013).



Figure 5.16: Aloha 'Āina Mural t-shirts designed and printed by Haley Kailiehu. (Photograph by author, 2013).

We tell our stories, but there is never any closure to them. There is always another sentence to be added to the conversation that we have joined. There is always another slant on the story that we have just told.

—Greg Dening<sup>1</sup>

In *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i*, Haunani-Kay

Trask writes:

Mostly a state of mind, Hawai‘i is the image of escape from the rawness and violence of daily American life. Hawai‘i—the word, the vision, the sound in the mind—is the fragrance and feel of soft kindness.<sup>2</sup>

I began this thesis arguing that the Hawai‘i with which we have all become so familiar—as a place of escape replete with white-sand beaches and populated by carefree Native hosts eager to share their homeland and culture with incoming guests—far from being rooted in reality is instead a carefully crafted simulation, a constructed “state of mind” as Trask puts it, that has been fixed through a framing process that “shapes what people see, or do not see.”<sup>3</sup> The visual arts, I contend, have been a critical component in this strategic shaping of collective consciousness, as evidenced, for example, in the racist and discriminatory cartoons of the nineteenth century and through the idealized tropes propagated in the work of artists such as Eugene Savage, Pegge Hopper, and Kim Taylor Reece (discussed in Chapter One), to cite just a few. As I have shown, this archive of colonial visibility in Hawai‘i is inextricably tied to the promotion, naturalization, and maintenance of U.S. colonialism in the Islands. Here, through the framing power of colonialist imagery, an illegally occupied indigenous homeland is seamlessly transformed into a legitimately acquired U.S. possession. Yet, as we know, Kānaka Maoli never relinquished their sovereignty and for over 120 years have continuously contested the colonial occupation of their country through legal, political, and, significantly, artistic channels.

My central purpose has been to demonstrate how Kānaka Maoli use art as an instrument to affirm Native sovereignty and challenge U.S. colonialism. Throughout

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<sup>1</sup> Greg Dening, “Performing on the Beaches of the Mind: An Essay,” *History and Theory* 41 (2002): 6.

<sup>2</sup> Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 56.

<sup>3</sup> Feagin, *The White Racial Frame*, 10.

this thesis I have used visual sovereignty as a key analytical tool to interpret Native aesthetic production across three discrete contexts: “high” art, commercial art, and public art. Visual sovereignty, I maintain, is inherently multifaceted. It is reflected in the work of Kanaka Maoli artists in ways that are provocative and recalcitrant, as well as furtive and oblique. It is also manifested in multiple venues: on beaches, in galleries, and on urban and temporary walls. Sometimes it appears in seemingly unexpected places, such as in tourist resorts. Here I allude specifically to the indigenous artworks that feature at the Aulani resort, which, as I showed in Chapter Four, attracted strong critique from some members of the Kanaka Maoli community.

It may well be that individuals reading this work will interpret the art at Aulani in a similar way to the critics—as simulations of dominance that accommodate and are complicit with the colonial framing of Hawai‘i rather than as works of indigenous agency and activism. However, if there is anything I have tried to impress more throughout this thesis, it is that to impose narrow definitions of what Kanaka Maoli art *should* look like and—in the case of the art at Aulani—where it *should* be displayed, is to ignore a fundamental fact: the appearance of indigenous art anywhere and in whatever capacity and form constitutes “a strategic occupation of a particular site of power in which the indigenous artist . . . is a potential vector of intervention.”<sup>4</sup> I maintain that Kanaka Maoli artists—as vectors of intervention—are not passive victims of colonial domination but rather they are active, fully aware agents who negotiate the conditions of colonialism in distinct and diverse ways. This, I argue, constitutes the essence of visual sovereignty.

The examples of Kanaka Maoli art I have given throughout this thesis are but a small sampling of a much larger corpus of visual sovereignty articulations by Native artists living both within and outside of Hawai‘i. Emerging from within is a talented group of young upcoming artists, including Cory Taum, Kupa‘a Hee, Drew Broderick, Kahi‘au Beamer, Nicole Naone, and Keoni Pa‘akaula. Many of them have benefitted from the mentorship of artists discussed in this thesis, which I suggest opens up the potential for future scholarship that examines the intergenerational aspects of Kanaka Maoli art production, a task I was unable to carry out here. These young artists are proud of their Kanaka Maoli heritage and express it through their art. Moreover, they are politically “awake” to Hawai‘i’s ongoing colonial situation and use their art as a form of aesthetic activism. States graffiti writer Cory Taum:

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<sup>4</sup> Jean Fisher, “‘New Contact Zones,’” 45.

I guess for myself I would say that I was raised pretty colonized. But just through life I kind of . . . had experiences, was put in places that kind of woke me up. . . . I met Uncle Walter Ritte back in high school and I got to participate in their whole movement to save La‘au Point. That was, I would say, a moment that kind of woke me up. But at the same time I realized that my voice is different from Uncle Walter’s. I can’t speak to people in the same way but I can use my art as a vehicle to speak to people.<sup>5</sup>

Taum’s capacity “to speak to people” through his art takes place in multiple locations—on urban and temporary walls, on motorway underpasses, on water tanks and abandoned military facilities, in galleries and museums, and, now, at the Aulani resort.<sup>6</sup> The artist has even transported a Kanaka Maoli presence to the walls of one of the most artistically rich and dynamic cities in the world—London. In his 2013 mural (Fig. 6.1), Taum produced a larger-than-life stylized portrait of Liholiho (Kamehameha II), the second monarch to rule the Kingdom of Hawai‘i.<sup>7</sup> The artist chose Liholiho as the principal subject because it was in England’s capital that the young ruler died.<sup>8</sup>

In the painting the front-facing profile of Liholiho is shown against a backdrop of loosely rendered black-and-white kalo leaves and flanked by two circular emblems. The artist restrains his palette to black, white, red, and yellow, the two latter colors signifying the ali‘i (chiefly) status of the subject.<sup>9</sup> The numerical figures that feature in the emblem to Liholiho’s right allude to the dates of the king’s brief rule, 1819–1824, while the two crossed symbols represent kahili (feather standards associated with Hawaiian nobility). The emblem to Liholiho’s left presents a somewhat more complex set of semiotic elements. It is made up of five discrete symbols: two upside-down crossing kapu sticks (pūolo), a cross, a dollar sign, a chalice, and a burial casket. Here, the inversion of the kapu sticks in a downward direction alludes to the abolition of the ‘ai kapu system in 1819 (discussed in Chapter One), which took place soon after Liholiho ascended as ruler. The Christian cross refers to the introduction of Christianity

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<sup>5</sup> Cory Taum, interview, June 12, 2012. As noted in Chapter Two, Hawaiian activist Walter Ritte was a core member of the Protect Kaho‘olawe ‘Ohana (PKO). In 2007 Ritte was one of many Native Hawaiians who protested the planned development of La‘au Point, located on the southwestern tip of the island of Moloka‘i.

<sup>6</sup> Taum and his mentor ‘Imaikalani Kalahela collaborated to create four paintings that now grace the interior of Aulani’s new eatery, Ulu Café.

<sup>7</sup> His father, Kamehameha I (also known as Kamehameha the Great) established the Kingdom of Hawai‘i in 1810.

<sup>8</sup> In 1824 Liholiho and his favorite wife, Kamāmalu, arrived in London for the purpose of meeting King George IV. However, while in England both of them contracted and then succumbed to measles. They never had the chance to meet the English king.

<sup>9</sup> Red and yellow feathers taken from native birds were used to make capes that were worn exclusively by people of chiefly status.

to the Islands, while the dollar sign and chalice symbolize the advent of Western capitalism and the destructive influence of alcoholism on Hawaiians, respectively. The casket, as Taum explains, references “the [foreign] diseases that killed so many of our ancestors,” the kind of which ended the life of Liholiho and his favorite wife Kamāmalu.<sup>10</sup> Taum’s mural is both a visual tribute that acknowledges the capacity of Hawaiians—like Liholiho—to engage with the rest of the world by traveling to distant places, as well as a lamentation of the arrival of Western-style ideas, values, and habits on Hawai‘i’s shores. Through this brief foray into Taum’s work abroad, what I want to underscore is the idea that Kanaka Maoli artists are moving beyond their home shores to take their expression of visual sovereignty to the world. I plan to pursue this exciting expansion of Kanaka Maoli art production as a future line of scholarly enquiry.

While my focus in this thesis has been limited to Hawai‘i-based Kanaka Maoli artists, there is a large group of diasporic Hawaiians living away from the Islands who are engaged in the visual arts, including Adrienne Pao (San Francisco), Samia Mirza (Los Angeles), Dana Peresa (Portland), to name just a few. For artists like Adrienne Pao,<sup>11</sup> who was born and raised in California but retains strong connections with her Hawaiian roots, photography has provided her with what I refer to here as a “double-lens perspective” through which to examine and interpret Hawai‘i. States Pao:

I’m definitely part of Hawai‘i and Hawaiian tradition and Hawaiian family and all of the things that go along with that. However, I’m also an outsider. I can see through that lens. I can see the beauty, I can see the paradise, I can see the rapture in that place. Everything for me is always the experience of insider and outsider at the same time.<sup>12</sup>

Pao may see the beauty, the paradise, and the rapture of Hawai‘i, but as an “insider-outsider” she is also keenly aware of another reality that lies just below the surface. This is particularly evident in her photographic series *Hawaiian Cover-ups*, in which Pao literally covers herself in leitmotifs that reference aspects of Hawai‘i—rooster feathers, fish skins, lei, salt, sugar, and so forth—to “understand a buried past” as well as a hidden present,<sup>13</sup> particularly as it relates to the commodification of Hawai‘i. For example, in her captivating piece titled *Sugar Plantation Surrounding Birthing Stones/Kopa‘a Kapa (Hard Sugar Covering)* (2005) (Fig. 6.2), Pao’s supine figure is

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<sup>10</sup> Taum, interview, June 12, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Pao is first cousin to Carl F.K. Pao.

<sup>12</sup> Laura Kina, “Hawaiian Cover-Ups: An Interview with Adrienne Pao,” in *War Baby/Love Child: Mixed Race Asian American Art*, ed. Laura Kina and Wei Ming Dariotis (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), 125.

<sup>13</sup> Adrienne Pao’s official website, “Hawaiian Cover-Ups,” [http://adriennepao.com/?page\\_id=127](http://adriennepao.com/?page_id=127).

naked but for the grains of processed sugar that cover her body. The artist's alabaster skin and the white of the sugar glow incandescently against the dark hues of the surrounding lava boulders. In the ancestral past the Hawaiian chiefly class used these rocks—which are part of Kūkaniloko, one of the most historically significant cultural complexes on the island of O‘ahu—as birthing platforms to deliver the next generation of Hawaiian chiefs into the world.<sup>14</sup>

Beyond Kūkaniloko and, indeed, surrounding it, in the distant background is the site where acres of sugarcane were once cultivated for commercial profit. (As we will recall from Chapter One, it was commercial interests in sugar that precipitated the colonial occupation of Hawai‘i.) In the photograph Pao collapses two distinct histories relating to the area surrounding Kūkaniloko within a single photographic frame: as both a site of sacred parturition and as a site of commercial exploitation. In a tangential way, I suggest too that the image alludes to tourism, which is, in its own way, a “hard sugar covering” that continues to encase Hawai‘i under a veneer of saccharine hospitality. Future research that examines not only the wealth of indigenous artistic talent within Hawai‘i but as well those who live outside of the Islands would be of immense benefit to building a critical discourse on the diversity of contemporary Kanaka Maoli art practice.

Interpreting the multiple and complicated ways Kānaka Maoli enact visual sovereignty—not merely working against U.S. domination but within and beside it—has meant that this thesis has rested, and often uncomfortably so, in the interstitial spaces of complexity, ambivalence, and tension, occupying, as historian Greg Dening writes, “a double-edged space, in-between; an exit space that is also an entry space; a space where edginess rules.”<sup>15</sup> Despite the precariousness of this kind of research, I believe that the “edge” that Dening speaks of is a space where we should all aspire to dwell because it is there that we are able to be fully open and receptive to the unpredictable ways the research endeavor unfolds. Existing on the edge requires that we learn to let go of how we think things will or should be. In terms of my own research, I had to quickly adjust to the unexpected withdrawal of two valued research participants. I also had to reorient my own naïve vision of the contemporary Kanaka Maoli art movement in order to see it more clearly—not so much as the unified group I thought it

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<sup>14</sup> Historians believe that Kūkaniloko was established by the chief Nanakaoka and his wife Kahihokalani in around the twelfth century (for more, see Sterling and Summers, *Sites of Oahu*, 138–140).

<sup>15</sup> Greg Dening, *Beach Crossings: Voyaging Across Times, Cultures, and Self* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 16.

was, but as a collection of shifting alliances, made up of autonomous individuals who at times coalesce as a collective and at other times fragment over contesting viewpoints. My own embodied experience of being wedged between those shifting alliances meant that at many times I thought I was on the verge of sliding off the edge altogether. However, my conviction that Hawaiian art must be analyzed and written about in ways that reveal the complexity of the context in which it is created provided me with a ledge on the edge, a mantel of hope jutting out above the chasm below. I remain there still.

I want to conclude this work by acknowledging its openendedness. As the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter announces, there is never any closure to the stories we tell, only an endless succession of openings that will yield a different perspective on what we thought we already knew. There is much that still needs to be written about contemporary Kanaka Maoli art; there remain a great many puka (holes) in the scholarship that need to be filled. However, I look forward to continuing my pursuit of contemporary Kanaka Maoli art, using the empowering and liberating framework of visual sovereignty as a guide to doing so.





Figure 6.1: Mural of Liholiho (Kamehameha II) by Cory Taum. London, England. (Photograph courtesy of the artist, 2012).



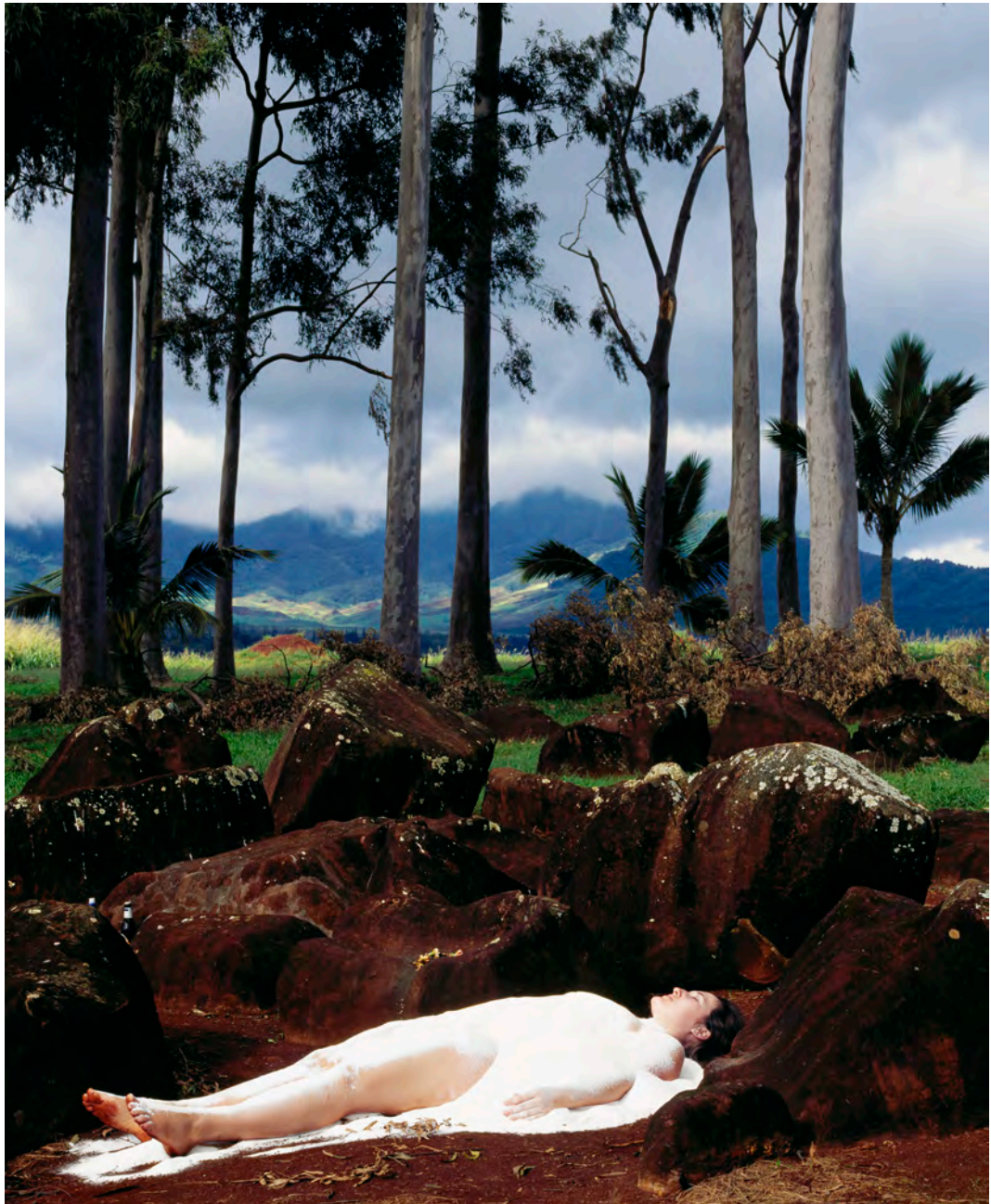


Figure 6.2: *Sugar Plantation Surrounding Birthing Stones/Kopa 'a Kapa (Hard Sugar Covering)* by Adrienne Pao. 2005. 30 inches by 36 inches. (Image courtesy of the artist).

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