

He`e Nalu: The Art and Legacy of Hawaiian Surfing exhibition

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MAIN LABEL

He`e Nalu: The Art and Legacy of Hawaiian Surfing

Hō`a`e ka `ike he`e nalu i ka hokua o ka `ale.

(Show your knowledge of surfing on the back of the wave.)

– *‘Ōlelo No`eau: Hawaiian Proverbs & Poetical Sayings #1013* by Mary Kawena Pukui, 1983

The arts and sports of an Indigenous culture are indicators of their society’s prosperity. They are signs that a Native community was thriving to the point where creativity flowed freely and its people were able to pursue happiness through leisurely activities. If the people were in harmony with their natural environment and the families were well fed, then there was no reason for extraneous labor. For the *Kānaka Maoli* (Native Hawaiians), *he`e nalu* (surfing) was an art form and sport wrapped into a beautiful *hula* (dance) with the *kai* (ocean). In *‘Ōlelo Hawai`i* (the Hawaiian language), *kūpuna* (ancestors) called the act of riding the surf for fun “wave sliding” – “he`e” meaning “to slide” and “nalu” being a “wave.”

While other Indigenous communities around the world may have ridden waves in boats on their way in from fishing, the *Kānaka Maoli* were the first and only Indigenous people to slide the surf in the pursuit of pleasure. *He`e nalu* is a testament to *Kānaka Maoli* understanding the balance of work and play. Surfing is Hawai`i’s gift to the world, and this Hawaiian cultural practice keeps on giving to this day. According to a 2012 International Surfing Association (ISA) report that was submitted to the International Olympic Committee (IOC), there are an estimated 35 million surfers in the world, but the roots of this beloved pastime, and its implications for present-day *Kānaka Maoli*, are little known.

Through the lens of *Kānaka Maoli* creatives and cultural practitioners, this exhibition presents a narrative rooted in culture, while addressing the complicated relationship that *Kānaka Maoli* have with the Western-dominated, billion-dollar surf industry today. It is the collective *kuleana* (responsibility and privilege) of these cultural stewards to advance the Indigenous perspective of “wave sliding” within *He`e Nalu: The Art and Legacy of Hawaiian Surfing*.

CURATOR STATEMENT AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Guest Curator Statement

Aloha mai kākou (Greetings from us),

He`e Nalu: The Art and Legacy of Hawaiian Surfing exhibition

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As the *Kānaka Maoli* (Native Hawaiians) creatives and contributors behind the *mo`olelo* (story) of *He`e Nalu: The Art & Legacy of Hawaiian Surfing*, recognizing that we are *malihini* (visitors) to this place, we respectfully acknowledge that our story is being told on the unceded lands of the Akimel O`odham peoples. We acknowledge their elders, both past and present, and their future generations. We extend our thanks and gratitude for their permission to tell our story on their ancestral homelands. Let this acknowledgement serve as an ongoing reminder of the original inhabitants of what is now called Phoenix, Arizona.

He`e Nalu: The Art & Legacy of Hawaiian Surfing has been a labor of *aloha* — love for our culture, our people, and our relationship to the ocean. This exhibition is an intentional, thoughtful mirroring of the continuity of traditional storytelling, as each artist and cultural practitioner carries out their *kuleana*, or their individual responsibilities, to the narrative as a whole. Their personal commitment to the importance of the story provides a path for the group to work together, unified to accomplish the collective mission: *E alu like mai kākou i ka ho`okō`ana i ka kākou* (Let us go together to accomplish our goal).

Ha`ina `ia mai ana ka puana (Let the story be told) of *he`e nalu* (surfing) Hawai`i so our legacy may carry on for many generations to come.

Me ka ha`ah`a (With humility),
Carolyn Melenani Kualii, Guest Curator

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Daniel Ikaika Ito

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