

Exhibition Advisory

Exhibition: *Royal Hawaiian Featherwork: Nā Hulu Ali'i*

On View: May 22–August 7, 2016

Location: Resnick Pavilion



Image captions on page 3

(Los Angeles—May 2, 2016) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) is pleased to announce the exhibition *Royal Hawaiian Featherwork: Nā Hulu Ali'i* (May 22–August 7, 2016), comprising nearly 70 featherwork objects in addition to photographs from the museum's permanent collection. Objects in the exhibition include brilliantly colored cloaks and capes that were crafted from the feathers of hundreds of thousands of indigenous birds and carefully attached to woven fiber supports. Developed by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco in collaboration with the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, Honolulu, this exhibition presents the finest examples of these objects.

"Royal Hawaiian Featherwork: Nā Hulu Ali'i highlights LACMA's expanding Art of the Pacific program and reflects the museum's broad interests in the cultures of the Pacific rim," said Nancy Thomas, Senior Deputy Director for Art Administration & Collections at LACMA. "The exhibition marks a rare opportunity to feature the bold abstract compositions and the high degree of technical expertise evidenced by Hawaiian featherwork."

About *Nā Hulu Ali'i*

While featherwork dates back hundreds of years, this presentation of *Nā hulu ali'i*—or royal featherwork—spans the late 18th to the late 19th centuries. During this pivotal period in Hawaiian history, European explorers arrived on the islands, which then erupted in civil war before unification by King Kamehameha I in 1810. After the arrival of missionaries in 1820, and the subsequent widespread conversion to Christianity, the Hawaiian government was overthrown in 1893 and annexed by the United States in 1898.

For centuries, feathers from vibrantly colored endemic birds were valuable cultural resources on the Hawaiian Islands. Spectacular garments painstakingly constructed by hand, including *‘ahu ‘ula* (long cloaks and short capes), *mahiolo* (helmets), and *lei hulu* (leis), masterfully incorporate these feathers and symbolized the divinity and power of the *ali‘i* (chiefs)—ruling men and women who wore them for spiritual protection and to proclaim their identity and social status. *Nā hulu ali‘i* were often used as diplomatic gifts to cement political alliances or were worn as battlefield regalia. Fewer than 300 extant examples of these garments remain; they shape our knowledge about the art form known as *nā hulu ali‘i*.

The rich holdings of four American museums—the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, Honolulu Museum of Art, the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard, and the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution—are the primary institutional lenders to the exhibition.

Exhibition Catalogue

Royal Hawaiian Featherwork, Nā Hulu Ali‘i is accompanied by a fully illustrated, scholarly catalogue published by University of Hawai‘i Press, Honolulu. The 278-page volume is edited by Leah Caldeira, Christina Hellmich, Adrienne L. Kaeppler, Betty Lou Kam, and Roger G. Rose with contributions by Maile Andrade, M. Kamalu du Preez, Samuel M. ‘Ohukani‘ōhi‘a Gon III, Noelle M. K. Y. Kahanu, Stacy L. Kamehiro, Marques Hanalei Marzan, and Noenoe K. Silva. The hardcover catalogue is \$75 and the softcover is \$49.95; both publications are available at the [LACMA Store](#) and [Art Catalogues](#).

Public Programs

Sunday, May 22, 2016

2 pm

Bing Theater, free and open to the public

Christina Hellmich, curator in charge of the arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas and the Jolika Collection of New Guinea Art at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, speaks in conjunction with this special exhibition.

Credit:

This exhibition is organized by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum. Major support is provided by Ann Ziff.

The exhibition is sponsored by Halekulani Corporation.

Additional support is provided by Mark and Carolyn Blackburn, Will and Celeste Hughes, and the Ethnic Arts Council of Los Angeles.

All exhibitions at LACMA are underwritten by the LACMA Exhibition Fund. Major annual support is provided by Kitzia and Richard Goodman, with generous annual funding from Louise and Brad Edgerton, Edgerton Foundation, Emily and Teddy Greenspan, Jenna and Jason Grosfeld, and Lenore and Richard Wayne.

Image Captions:

(Left) Unknown, 'Ahu 'ula (cloak), possibly mid-18th century, red 'i'iwi (*Vestiaria coccinea*) feathers, yellow 'ō'ō (Moho sp.) feathers, and olonā (*Touchardia latifolia*) fiber, 66 3/8 x 111 5/8 in. (168.5 x 283.5 cm), Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, Ethnology Collection, 11094/1913.001, Photo © Bishop Museum

(Center) Unknown, Mahiole (feathered helmet), 18th century, Red 'i'iwi (*Vestiaria coccinea*) feathers, yellow and black 'ō'ō (*Moho nobilis*) feathers, 'ie'ie (*Freycinetia arborea*) fiber, and olonā (*Touchardia latifolia*) fiber, 11 x 6 1/4 x 12 1/4 in. (28 x 16 x 31 cm), Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, Ethnology Collection, D.04593/1968.167, Photo © Bishop Museum, by Hal Lum and Masayo Suzuki.

(Right) Unknown, 'Ahu 'ula (cape), early 19th century, red 'i'iwi (*Vestiaria coccinea*) feathers, yellow and black 'ō'ō (Moho sp.) feathers, and olonā (*Touchardia latifolia*) fiber, 28 x 42 in. (71.12 x 106.68 cm), Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, Ethnology Collection, C.00208/1927.073, Photo © Bishop Museum

About LACMA

Since its inception in 1965, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography, in addition to representing Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection that includes more than 130,000 objects dating from antiquity to the present, encompassing the geographic world and nearly the entire history of art. Among the museum's strengths are its holdings of Asian art; Latin American art, ranging from masterpieces from the Ancient Americas to works by leading modern and contemporary artists; and Islamic art, of which LACMA hosts one of the most significant collections in the world. A museum of international stature as well as a vital part of Southern California, LACMA shares its vast collections through exhibitions, public programs, and research facilities that attract over one million visitors annually, in addition to serving millions through digital initiatives such as online collections, scholarly catalogues, and interactive engagement. LACMA is located in Hancock Park, 30 acres situated at the center of Los Angeles, which also contains the La Brea Tar Pits and Museum and the forthcoming Academy Museum of Motion Pictures. Situated halfway between the ocean and downtown, LACMA is at the heart of Los Angeles.

Location and Contact: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard (at Fairfax Avenue), Los Angeles, CA, 90036 | 323 857-6000 | lacma.org

LACMA press contact: press@lacma.org, 323 857-6522

Connect with LACMA



@lacma