



BISHOP MUSEUM

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Bishop Museum Appoints Two New Cultural Curators

Sarah Kuaiwa and Healoha Johnston join Bishop Museum in its effort to “Build a Pacific Pipeline” of curators and caretakers, to preserve and perpetuate the cultural resources and stories of Hawai‘i and the Pacific.

Honolulu, Hawai‘i — Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum has appointed two new cultural curators to its Ethnology Department, through support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The new additions are part of the Museum’s effort to “Build a Pacific Pipeline” of curators and caretakers, with the goal of preserving and perpetuating the cultural resources and stories of Hawai‘i and the Pacific.

Sarah Kuaiwa has joined the Museum as Curator for Hawai‘i and Pacific Cultural Resources. Kuaiwa is a historian and genealogist specializing in 19th century Hawai‘i. She is currently a fourth-year Ph.D. student at the Sainsbury Research Unit for the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas, at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, U.K. Her thesis looks at creativity and persistence of Hawaiian kapa production in the early Hawaiian Kingdom period (1810-1850).

Kuaiwa’s community work involves organizations such as the Hawai‘i Mission Houses Museum, Nā Mea Hawai‘i and Native Books, and Waiwai Collective. Through her consulting business, she has performed research for numerous individuals and organizations including the Honolulu Triennial Foundation, the Mekia Kealakai Center for Pacific Strings, and Ka Pā ‘o Hūnōhūnūholani. Kuaiwa is a former Collections Technician in Bishop Museum’s Ethnology Department.

“It was always my hope to return to Bishop Museum, and I am excited to rejoin staff now in a larger capacity,” said Kuaiwa. “I am greatly looking forward to continuing the good work of past and current colleagues in caring and researching our mea kūpuna, and forging stronger relationships between the institution, Hawai‘i and Pakipika, and beyond.”

Healoha Johnston joins Bishop Museum on March 8 as Curator for Hawai‘i and Pacific Arts and Culture. Currently, Healoha is Curator, Asian Pacific American Women’s Cultural History, at the Smithsonian Institution's Asian Pacific American Center. As an art historian, her exhibitions and research projects explore connections between historic visual culture and contemporary art. She served as Chief Curator and Curator of the Arts of Hawai‘i, Oceania, Africa, and the Americas at the Honolulu Museum of Art, and worked in contemporary art galleries, arts and culture non-profit organizations, and NOAA’s Pacific National Monument program before joining the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center and the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative. She received her BA and MA in Art History with a focus on Pacific Art from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.

“I look forward to joining Bishop Museum at this exciting time, and am eager to participate in the Museum’s efforts to see Indigenous knowledge and methods impact the field through mentorship, community engagement, and scholarship” said Johnston.

Kuaiwa and Johnston are part of Bishop Museum’s “Building a Pacific Pipeline: Te Rangi Hiroa Curators and Caretakers Program,” named after the Museum’s first Indigenous director.

The Program is supported by a \$1 million grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and aims to diversify the pipeline of future cultural heritage professionals, increase the number of historically underrepresented Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in the field, and demonstrate how museums can change their practices and positively impact their communities. The Program is administered by Marques Marzan, Bishop Museum’s Cultural Advisor / The Wayne Pitluck and Judith Pyle Curator for Cultural Resilience / Acting Ethnology Collection Manager, will be co-led with Healoha Johnston, and includes an International Advisory Group consisting of key partners from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the British Museum, and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

“The ‘Building a Pacific Pipeline: Te Rangi Hiroa Curators and Caretakers Program’ establishes an international network, and local capacity, for the curation of our most precious cultural resources that will have generational change and impact not only at Bishop Museum, but also throughout the Hawaiian and Pacific communities,” said Melanie Ide, president and CEO of Bishop Museum. “We are extremely fortunate to have Sarah and Healoha join us, with the extensive knowledge and experience they bring to our efforts.”

“By curating, activating, and sharing primary source materials, Bishop Museum hopes to help regenerate communities and cultures who have been historically severed by colonialism from their ancestral knowledge and cultural resources. The long-term impact of this program will be the creation of a ‘Pacific pipeline’ of museum professionals trained with an Indigenous perspective for increased representation in the museum field and ultimately, to promote thriving communities and new possibilities for future generations,” said Ide.

“Bishop Museum’s cultural collections are extensive, and include literally tens of thousands of historic items, books, documents, and other priceless cultural treasures – and each has a story to tell,” said Marques Marzan, Bishop Museum cultural advisor / The Wayne Pitluck and Judith Pyle Curator for Cultural Resilience / acting ethnology collection manager. “Through the efforts of the ‘Building a Pacific Pipeline: Te Rangi Hiroa Curators and Caretakers Program,’ and Sarah and Healoha’s expertise, these and other cultural treasures around the globe will not only have experienced museum professionals ensuring their care, but also take an active part in telling their stories to a global audience.”

“The Museum’s mission to perpetuate the natural and cultural heritage of Hawai‘i and the Pacific cannot be fulfilled if its resources lie untouched, static, behind closed doors, and in the dark. It takes people to bring light to collections, and knowledge to life. Bishop Museum’s highest priority is therefore to expand and fuel its knowledge core -- supporting the people who perform research, care for collections, and pursue cultural knowledge,” said Marzan.

As the Wayne Pitluck and Judith Pyle Curator for Cultural Resilience, Marzan’s recent naming as the first endowed chair in Bishop Museum’s endowment campaign is the first of many opportunities across the Museum to be offered for naming in perpetuity, building on the Museum’s legacy of work accomplished over 130 years in many fields of research and practice.

About Bishop Museum’s Cultural Collections

Bishop Museum’s Ethnology Collection consists of over 77,000 items housed in eight collections spaces. It is the largest collection of Hawaiian cultural items in the world, and has deep representation from Polynesia, particularly Sāmoa; Melanesia, including Papua New Guinea; and Micronesia with significant collections from Kiribati.

For more information on Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum and its cultural and natural science collections and research, please visit www.BishopMuseum.org.

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About Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum:

Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum’s mission is to inspire our community and visitors through the exploration, celebration and perpetuation of the extraordinary history, culture, and environment of Hawai‘i and the Pacific. The museum was founded in 1889 by Charles Reed Bishop in memory of his wife Bernice Pauahi Bishop, a royal descendant of King Kamehameha I. Today, the museum thrives as an educational center for the community and is widely regarded as the world’s premier institution for Hawaiian and Pacific content. Its vast collections of more than 25 million objects and specimens represent nine disciplines and include more than 22 million biological specimens, over two million cultural objects, 115,000 historical publications, and one million photographs, films, works of art, audio recordings, and manuscripts. These collections tell the stories of the cultures and biodiversity of Hawai‘i and the Pacific as well as the proud legacy of scholarly research spanning 130 years. Bishop Museum proudly serves more than 200,000 visitors each year, including 20,000 children on school visits. To learn more about the museum’s research, collections, exhibits, and programs, visit BishopMuseum.org, follow @BishopMuseum on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), become a fan of Bishop Museum on [Facebook](#), visit Bishop Museum’s [YouTube channel](#), or call (808) 847-3511. Bishop Museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.