



BISHOP MUSEUM

Oct. 25, 2023

MEDIA CONTACT:

Stryker Weiner & Yokota Public Relations, Inc.
Lance Aquino
Ph.: (808) 398-0657
lance@strykerweiner.com

Bishop Museum Invites Media to Its New Exhibition, *Project Banaba*

Project Banaba commemorates the history of Banaba Island, which was destroyed by environmentally devastating phosphate mining and led to the total relocation of its people.

Honolulu, Hawai‘i — Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum invites members of the news media to an exclusive pre-opening, closed-door preview of its new exhibition, [*Project Banaba*](#).

Media Preview of *Project Banaba*

- Thursday, Nov. 2, 2023
- 1-4 p.m. HST
- Bishop Museum, J. M. Long Gallery
- Please RSVP with Lance Aquino via the contact information above

Interview opportunities:

- Banaban Scholar and Artist Katerina Teaiwa
- Exhibition Co-curator Yuki Kihara
- Exhibition Co-curator Joy Enomoto
- Bishop Museum Director of Cultural Resources and Exhibition Co-curator Healoha Johnston
- Bishop Museum Curator of Archaeology and Exhibition Co-curator Pūlama Lima
- Bishop Museum Exhibit Designer Michael Wilson

Project Banaba commemorates the history of Banaba Island in the Pacific Ocean, which was destroyed by environmentally devastating phosphate mining during the 20th century. This led to the total relocation of its people in 1945.

The exhibition features the work of Banaban scholar and artist, Katerina Teaiwa, who has created a contemporary art installation by combining her family’s personal collections with those from state and national archives to shed light on the little-known history of Banaba, and its impact across the Moana (Pacific).

Banabans view their ancestral land, the rock of Banaba, as “te aba,” or “the body of the land, and the body of the people.” *Project Banaba* explores how both lands and lives were transformed by powerful, imperial agricultural interests.

From 1900-1980, a series of companies representing corporate, agricultural, and colonial interests of Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, and the United Kingdom mined the island of Banaba for phosphate. Following Japanese occupation during World War II, the island was deemed uninhabitable and the Banabans were removed to Rabi Island, Fiji, ending a millennium of continuous habitation on Banaba.

For two decades, Teaiwa followed the flows of extracted phosphate, miners, company and government officials, Banabans, and many stories linking Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, Kiribati, Fiji, and Hawai‘i. The *Project Banaba* exhibition is based on her research, interviews, films, photography, and performance work, as well as the scholarship and poetry of her late elder sister, Teresia Kieuea Teaiwa.

Addressing environmental and human trauma caused by the displacement and dispersal of land and ancestors is a central and driving impetus for the exhibition. As Teaiwa explains, “Banabans had been burying their ancestors in those lands for thousands of years; the ancestors have become part of the rock, they’ve become part of the soil. When the soil is removed, so are the ancestors.”

Teaiwa’s art-based research practice traces her Banaban ancestors to the sites of dispersal, by proposing gallery installations in countries where Banaban fertilizer was purchased and integrated with the land. It is noted that Hawai‘i imported fertilizer made from the Banaba mining enterprise for years, to expand industrialized agriculture on large-scale plantations during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The 78th anniversary of the displacement of the Banaban people will be observed on Dec. 15, 2023 during the run of the exhibition.

“Bishop Museum is grateful to present the *Project Banaba* exhibition as it offers us all the chance to learn about complex histories that inform our present reality in the Pacific,” said Healoha Johnston, Bishop Museum director of cultural resources and exhibition co-curator. “Visitors to the Museum will have the opportunity to understand profound lessons that we, collectively, cannot afford to repeat. It also makes visible experiences of displacement, resilience, and resistance, which are familiar experiences to so many Pacific Islanders, yet remain less-seen.”

The *Project Banaba* exhibition will involve three interconnected installations exploring how the people and the land of Banaba were viewed and transformed by imperial phosphate mining and global agricultural interests. Black and white photographs, color photographs documenting political protest and family connections, and textiles made by contemporary artists are remixed by Teaiwa and will be on view in the gallery.

The exhibition is co-curated by Yuki Kihara, Joy Enomoto, and Bishop Museum’s Curator of Archaeology Pūlama Lima and Director of Cultural Resources Healoha Johnston, based on Katerina’s archival research, interviews, film, photographs, and performance work, informed by the flows of phosphate rocks, mining workers, and the Banaban people.

Project Banaba opens to the public in Bishop Museum’s J. M. Long Gallery in Hawaiian Hall on Saturday, Nov. 4, 2023, and runs through Feb. 18, 2024. Additional information and tickets can be found at: BishopMuseum.org/Project-Banaba.

###

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.

Bishop Museum's vast collections of more than 25 million objects and specimens represent nine disciplines and include more than 22 million biological specimens, over 2 million cultural objects, 115,000 historical publications, and 1 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](https://www.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.

Bishop Museum is proud to be an Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action Employer, and welcomes applicants from the military, veterans, and those with disabilities. Learn about careers at Bishop Museum at [BishopMuseum.org/Careers](https://www.bishopmuseum.org/Careers) and on its [LinkedIn](#) page.

[Bishop Museum Press](#) is Hawai'i's oldest book publisher and one of the first scholarly publishers in the Western Hemisphere, and has published over 1,200 titles and distributed over 1 million books in 72 countries worldwide.

Past news releases can be viewed and downloaded at [BishopMuseum.org/NewsRoom](https://www.bishopmuseum.org/NewsRoom).