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**Bishop Museum Uplifts the Connections Shared Across Oceania
in New, Original Exhibition, *Ka ‘Ula Wena: Oceanic Red***

Opening May 25 in the Museum’s Castle Memorial Building, the exhibition assembles material culture of Oceania and articulates the multiple uses and understandings of a single color: red.

Honolulu, Hawai‘i — [Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum](#), the State of Hawai‘i Museum of Natural and Cultural History, presents *Ka ‘Ula Wena: Oceanic Red*. Opening in the Museum’s Castle Memorial Building on May 25, this new, original exhibition is the first of its kind to gather material culture of Oceania to articulate the multiple uses and understandings of a single color: **RED**. It is presented simultaneously in ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i and English.

“Ka ‘Ula Wena: Oceanic Red explores manifestations of the color red in the landscapes, memory, and created expressions of Oceania,” said Kamalu du Preez, Bishop Museum cultural resource specialist, and exhibition co-curator. *“It originates in Hawai‘i, but we reach out to embrace our cousins across the Pacific. Ka ‘Ula Wena: Oceanic Red is truly a love letter from Hawai‘i to Oceania, and to the people of its past, present, and future.”*

As further shared by the exhibition’s four co-curators, who collectively worked with a broad community on its development, *“The phrase ‘ka ‘ula wena’ refers to a glowing red, one whose warmth envelops Hawai‘i each day, first at Kumukahi, the storied easternmost point of the Islands. It is the strength of the sun but also the bounty of reds found in the plants and animals it nourishes.”*

“Ka ‘ula wena is a red experienced beyond seeing. This redness is felt in mele (song), mo‘olelo (stories), and the wena (warmth) of kinship. Red conveys a constellation of ideas densely populated by meaning. Red, beyond color, shade, or hue, elevates the senses, shifts emotions, affirms kinships, enlivens passions, consecrates the sacred, and sets apart the profane.”

“Ka ‘Ula Wena: Oceanic Red celebrates the distinctly unique reds of Oceania and the redness of our connection.”

One of the main messages and themes of the exhibition mirrors that of an important aspect of the Museum’s

Mission: community collaboration.

“The significance of red in Oceanic culture is rooted in Indigenous communities and their knowledge bearers,” said Marques Hanalei Marzan, Bishop Museum cultural advisor, the Wayne Pitluck and Judith Pyle curator for cultural resilience, and exhibition co-curator. “This significance expands and thrives through sustained interaction across Oceanic communities. Through a deep desire to ground this exhibition and museum practice in community knowledge, *Ka ‘Ula Wena: Oceanic Red* explores the intersection of Oceanic cultures, histories, and environments through exceptional collections and important loaned materials.”

Ka ‘Ula Wena: Oceanic Red showcases important cultural items and natural science specimens in Bishop Museum’s care alongside loans from around the world. Central to the exhibition will be the Kā‘ei kapu o Līloa, from Moku o Keawe, Hawai‘i (1910.018.001). Few physical objects bring to mind the mana Hawai‘i’s rulers like the sash of Līloa. One of the most important items the Museum stewards, this rarely exhibited, one-of-a-kind feathered garment is associated with high chiefs Līloa and his son, ‘Umialīloa, who ruled on Hawai‘i Island, and successive generations of ali‘i through the monarchical period.

One of the ancestral images traveling to Hawai‘i for *Ka ‘Ula Wena* from the British Museum is of and from Kūki ‘Āirani (Cook Islands). This ancestral image, possibly of a deity, left its homeland over a century ago. It is composed of hanks of coir bound with feathers from a variety of bird species. While Hawai‘i is not its home, the Museum wholeheartedly welcomes this important figure and hope that Kūki ‘Āirani people, both visiting from and living in Hawai‘i, will be able to spend time with their ancestral image. The loan of Oceanic collections from the British Museum is generously supported by Lynne and Marc Benioff with a gift to the American Friends of the British Museum.

Additional highlights from the exhibition include:

Kava magimagi, from Fiji
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Cordage made from soaked, beaten, dried, and twisted husk fibers of the coconut share similar names across Oceania. Called ‘aha, ‘afa, kafa, and kava, these cordages serve important functional and ritual purposes for island communities, literally and figuratively binding the universe. In Fiji, one special kind of coconut cordage is called kava magimagi. Hundreds of meters of cordage may be made to satisfy the needs of ceremonial periods, especially during mourning, when huge rolls of cordage represent the deceased. Reddish-brown strands of flat-plaited braid are wound many times around a central core.

Bilum, from Yaben, Papua New Guinea
01774

Bilum are primarily made by women in Papua New Guinea, using a looping technique handed down through the generations. In many instances, a single continuous cord is used and extended as long as necessary to complete the entire work. These carrying bags are made for personal use, exchange, and, more recently, for commerce. Each bilum is a unique expression of its female maker that can convey tribal affiliation, cultural stories, life stages, and momentous events.

Tevau, from Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands
1971.005

Tevau are customary items of value given to the family of the bride during marriage ceremonies. They are created by a hereditary specialist whose knowledge of the practice came from the spirits. While tevau are often discussed in transactional terms, the creation and exchange of tevau builds and fulfills relationships between the families and communities involved in gathering the special materials required for their construction.

Pātaka whakairo, from the Bay of Plenty area, Aotearoa New Zealand

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In Aotearoa, pātaka (storehouses) are repositories for storing preserved foods and other important items for the community. Highly ornamented pātaka whakairo (carved storehouses) protect the taonga (treasured items) of high-ranking chiefs. Pātaka are still key structures in Māori communities, reflecting the balancing of community needs, preparation for the future, and responsibilities of leadership.

Poho pōhaku, from Hawai‘i
02981

Poho pōhaku, or stone mortar. Implements like these are used to hold materials to be ground into a fine consistency in preparation for adding oil or water, to create pigment to decorate a surface, or to dye materials like barkcloth. Within its bowl sits a small piece of ‘alaea, red ochre found in Hawai‘i. ‘Alaea is a valuable resource for Kānaka ‘Ōiwi, used in medicine, food, and accessing the redness of the land itself.

Also featured in the exhibition is a wooden vessel, hewn by hand, charred with fire, and treated with ‘alaea by Kapalikūokalani Maile, Bishop Museum education programs manager and exhibition co-curator. Maile’s vision for the vessel, intended to be in conversation with a special stone bowl (02981) in the exhibition from Hawai‘i, represents the personal experiences of the curatorial team in developing *Ka ‘Ula Wena* and their hopes of welcoming all of Oceania into the space.

“Pāwela, the name for this vessel, reflects its creation: it was carved with adzes and chisels, then burnt along its surface to evoke the creative and destructive energies associated with fire and heat, which are an integral part of our universe in Oceania,” said Maile. “The interior is covered in ‘alaea from Kaua‘i, generously shared by Carla Dusenberry and her ‘ohana, a reminder of the visibility of red and intensity of redness I feel for *Ka ‘Ula Wena*. Pāwela is an open vessel, representing space for conversation, emotion, relation, and connection for all of us.”

Ka ‘Ula Wena: Oceanic Red coincides with the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture (FestPAC), to be held in Hawai‘i from June 6-16, 2024. FestPAC is the largest single gathering and celebration of Indigenous Oceanic peoples and nations. The timing and location of the festival add significant context to Bishop Museum’s desire to share the impacts of red and reveal the redness of kinship across the Pacific. Drawing from the vast collections stewarded by Bishop Museum along with important loaned objects from around the world, this once-in-a-lifetime exhibition is curated by Kānaka ‘Ōiwi (Native Hawaiians) collaborating with Indigenous peoples around Oceania.

Media Preview Opportunity on Thursday, May 23, 2024:

Bishop Museum invites members of the news media to attend an exclusive, pre-opening, closed-door Media Preview of *Ka ‘Ula Wena: Oceanic Red*:

- Thursday, May 23, 2024
- 1-4 p.m. HST
- Bishop Museum, Castle Memorial Building
- Please RSVP with Lance Aquino via the contact information above

Interview opportunities include three of the exhibition’s curators, Marques Hanalei Marzan, Kamalu du Preez, and Kapalikūokalani Maile, along with Exhibition Designer DeAnne Kennedy and the project’s Hawaiian language specialists.

For more information on *Ka ‘Ula Wena: Oceanic Red*, please visit BishopMuseum.org/KUW.

About Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, the State of Hawai‘i Museum of Natural and Cultural History:

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, 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 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.