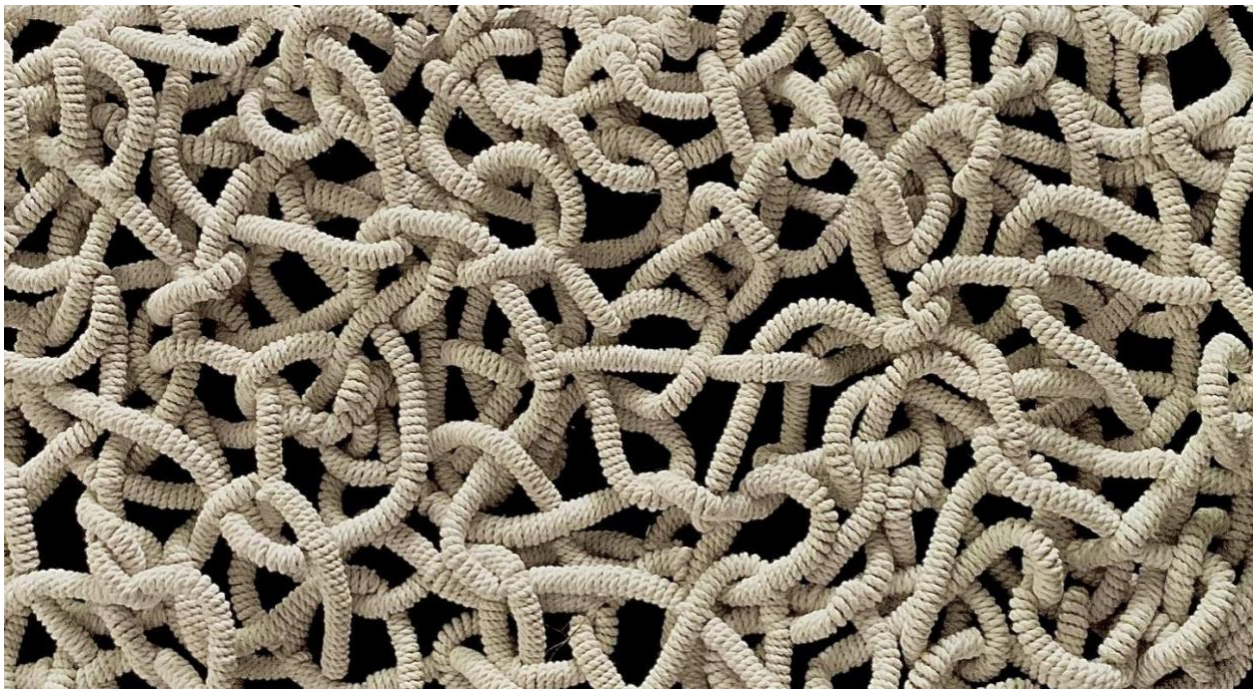

Eia Ka Wai, Ka Wai A Ke Ola

ACTIVATING ANCESTRAL MEMORY IN MODERN LIVING

By

Marques Hanalei Marzan

A THESIS SUPPORT PAPER IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS

EMILY CARR UNIVERSITY OF ART + DESIGN

Abstract

Art-making in Indigenous contexts preserves cultural values, understandings, and frameworks and is uplifted through storytelling. Creating art and perpetuating cultural practices connect me to my ancestral memories, often drawing upon personal moments of joy, trauma, and self-determination. Questioning what is important and relevant is something that we each must choose for ourself and how we preserve the stories we make today for ancestors of tomorrow to recount. Sharing inspirations, creative processes, and journeys of exploration, allow me to express my story and commitment to my family and homelands. Experiencing, embracing, embodying, and empowering Indigenous knowledge, voices, and methodologies are systems I employ in activating customary mindsets in daily life. Acknowledging change through culturally grounded innovation allows long-held stories to persist and maintain connections to new adaptations and forms. Through these practices, I play my part in creating opportunities for the next generation to engage with the diversity and intricacies of my storied histories, places, and people. Perpetuating the values and cultural frameworks that allowed my forebearers to survive and flourish need to be lived every day, in turn providing opportunities for the next generation to be inspired. This is how I honor my past, celebrate the present, and safeguard the future.

‘Ike maka ke kumu kukui i luna nei o ke ao honua

Mai ke kumupa‘a kaula piko a ka wēlau lālani

Ki‘eki‘e lā‘au, kua makani

He umauma i pā ‘ia e ke A‘e Loa

Laulaha ka manamana ulu nui

Ohaoha ka papa kaupoku e pale aku nā mu‘o kū honua

He kahu lau pāola ke kumu mauli ola

He kahu ‘āina ho‘ōla

He kahu leo Kānewaiola

He kahu pālulu wela haulalapa o ka lani

Ke kū nei he lau o Makawiliwili

Noho mālie i ka malu o Keahiakahoe ka mauna kū pololei kia‘i o Lo‘e

Ho‘oulu ‘ia i ka wai limu kele ka punawai kamali‘i

Kukawowo ka ‘eleao lālani

Ke kūnou lau kapalili

E pale mai

Marques Hanalei Marzan
https://youtu.be/OhoJn9FicUw

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

I would not be who I am today if it were not for these pillars in my life. Mahalo palena ʻole no kā ʻoukou kākoʻo ʻana mai iaʻu. E ola, e ola, e ola nō e.

- Kay Leiko and Ricky Esprecion Marzan
- Anne Koisa Lokomaikaʻi Lipscomb
- Pamela Ruriko and John Randall Lipscomb
- Mary Kilikina Hoʻokiʻekiʻe Kaʻanāʻanā Kalohi
- John Keolamakaʻāinanakalāhuiokalaninokamehamehaʻekolu Lake
- Julia Minerva (Minewa) Kaʻawa
- Esther Kakalia Westomoreland
- Ivy Hāliʻimaile (Maile) Andrade
- Patricia Hickman

Ke Welina Mai Nei: Living One's Cultural Paradigms

I began this thesis paper with a chant of my own composition and below I offer a literal translation of those words. Even though the layered meanings expressed in the ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, Hawaiian text, isn't fully conveyed here, it is the entry point into my exploration of activating ancestral memory and mana, inherent spiritual power.

Seen is the kukui tree above the realm of existence

From the firm foundation along the ancestral line to the ordered tips above

Oh majestic tree, wind-blown back

Breast blown upon by the Aʻe Loa wind

Your lush branches spread far and grow profusely

Dense is your canopy that protects the young shoots of the understory

A guardian for herbal medicine, a source of healing

A guardian for the fertile grounds

A guardian for the life-giving waters of Kāne

A guardian from the relentless heat of the heavens

Here I stand, a leaf of Makawiliwili

Residing in the shadow of Keahiakahoe, the mountain sentinel of Loʻe

Nurtured in Kalimukele, the waters of my youth

The daylight prayers reach fruition

This quivering leaf bows

Please shield me

In 2022, I embarked on a journey of introspection, art-making possibilities, and opportunities. Through process - the creation of this body of work - and supplementary engagements with my community and surroundings, I was afforded the ability to situate key Hawaiian concepts and frameworks, that are important to me, in a scholarly context. Framing these enduring understandings from time in memorial in this way is my attempt at elevating and validating Indigenous wisdom in academia and more importantly within my community.

ALOHA AKU, ALOHA MAI, ALOHA E: ACKNOWLEDGING TRADITIONS

Figure 1. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Nā ʻau (Seat of Emotion), 2008. Mixed media. Dimensions variable. Courtesy: Koji Hirano. Garment I made with pig intestine and natural fibers.

In Hawai‘i, asking for permission and acknowledgement from the hosts and spirits of a place prior to entering and engaging with the land and its community is a rooted generational process. This practice typifies the importance of respect and recognition of responsibility in Hawaiian culture. This mindset forms the basis of my approach to observing, learning, embodying, and empowering Indigenous knowledge, voices, and methodologies. A work that speaks directly to this concept is a garment that I created using pig intestine and natural fibers (*Figure 1*). In Hawaiian understanding, the nā‘au, intestine, is where an individual's emotions and spiritual self reside. Sharing this intimate part of oneself is typically done only with close relations and trusted friends, because at that point the individual is unguarded and vulnerable. My decision to use nā‘au in this way, as an external garment, was my declaration to the world that I walk without armor, defenses, and fear and freely present my full and true self. Dr. Kamana‘opono Crabbe writes, "Mana helps us have the determination to thrive in the face of fear….we connect with our ancestral wisdom and knowledge, which then gives us greater confidence and courage to act and face challenges" (256).

In Mary Kawena Pukui's publication*, ‘Ōlelo No‘eau, Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings*, she records a customary saying, "I ka ‘ōlelo no ke ola, i ka ‘ōlelo no ka make" which translates to, "Life is in speech; death is in speech"[1] (128). What we say and more importantly how we say it affects the direction and outcome of an interaction. Beginning

[1] This is only one of thousands of proverbs recorded by Pukui, each with layers of meaning and interpretation depending on the listeners knowledge base.

a task with intentionality and mindfulness is a model that acknowledges the spirit of both the initiator and the engaged. To me, this is an act of decolonization. In approaching an art practice this way, we challenge colonial frameworks in our world, return to our cultural values, and reassess and re-Indigenize our mindsets. In Emalani Case's book, Everything Ancient Was Once New, she recalls a moment with elders, "I watched some of them weep and heard the urgency in their voices: their stories needed to be recorded, told, heard, and, perhaps most importantly, used to help us understand ourselves, how far we've come as people, and where we want to go" (67). Embracing and championing ancestral legacies that are intergenerationally entwined are challenges that some people find difficult to accept, as they often become life-long commitments. These complex frameworks and understandings are upheld by members in the community, as a conscious choice to safeguard, perpetuate, and stimulate cultural awareness and stewardship. This is my chosen path, my passion, and drive to ensure that these insights and understandings remain available to the next seven generations in forms that are lived and culturally accessible. Internalizing these concepts and ingraining them in daily living are steps in reshaping a just future.

Look beyond the horizon

Where in the unseen lands rise

Inspiration and brilliance

Bind cultural resilience

Marques Hanalei Marzan

E ULU: BORNE ON THE BACKS OF ANCESTORS

Figure 2. Marques Hanalei Marzan, 'A 'ahu Aloha, 2022. Coconut rope. 16" x 30" x 1". Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan. Detail of a contemporary cape I made combining both plaiting and knotting techniques.

Many forms and techniques in Hawaiian art practices like plaiting, netting, and twining have few, if any, living practitioners. My great-grandmother was the last

Hawaiian materials knowledge bearer in my family and she passed away long before I was born. When I developed an interest in learning these skills during my youth, I sought out opportunities to learn these fiber arts processes from the remaining cultural experts within my community, most of whom were elderly at that time. One of my teachers, Gladys Grace, once said, "Weaving lau hala [pandanus leaves] is like weaving a relationship….It is weaving together the older with the younger generation….We are all connected through weaving"[2] (Keawe 12). Today as many of my teachers have crossed the veil, I have made it my personal mission to uphold their unique methods, styles, and values by sharing their insights and wisdom in meaningful, relevant and appropriate ways. The role of caring for this knowledge can at times be a challenge, especially when elements come from different ancestral legacies, genealogies, and traditions. When combining teachings from different sources into new forms (*Figure 2*), it provides opportunities to honor the customary techniques as well as expand creative designs in lived practices. When sharing these gifts with others, conveying the understanding, weight, and responsibility connected to these practices reinforces the need for care and perpetuation that are intended to build a stronger cultural and spiritual foundation for the benefit of future generations. Today, these insights are generally learned through direct transmission from person to person or indirect "re-search" processes, the idea of reawakening knowledge within a generation through action, providing a solid foundation of research. Through acknowledgement and perpetuation, the sources of knowledge

[2] Gladys Grace is one of 7 teachers that taught me how to weave Hawaiian lau hala. The weaving organization she started, Ulana Me Ka Lokomaikaʻi, continues to perpetuate her teachings within the community.

conveyed through these means are uplifted and maintained. However, this also includes the challenging work of acknowledging societal difficulties and trauma through open dialogue and offering support that strengthens cultural resilience. Through the act of stewardship, my goal is to create a positive outlook for our collective future.

Figure 3. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Piko, 2022. Mixed fibers. 144" x 144" x 4". Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan. Detail of my work illustrating multiple fibers used in customary Hawaiian house construction in a contemporary form.

My approach to art-making draws heavily upon Hawaiian traditions and customs. Many things have influenced me and my art practice, from rain falling through the canopy of a mountain rainforest, intimate conversations with friends over tea regarding

the importance of art, to the sensations of how materials feel in my hands as I gather, prepare, and work them. I refuse to describe Hawaiian art as "traditional" or "contemporary," as distinctions between these terms are often used to separate the past from the present, or to segregate work into pre-defined categories. For example, if a Hawaiian barkcloth maker made a piece of barkcloth using customary fibers and techniques and decorated the work with designs consistent with examples from the 18th century, but then fashioned it into a sewn wallet, how would one describe it? If a practice is living, it is ever changing and because of this, I intentionally use the term customary to blur the boundaries typically set be time. This term also preserves the cultural frameworks and values of culture that transcend time. My work (*Figure 3*) often uses longstanding Hawaiian customary fibers and techniques, but in modern configurations. Through these juxtapositions of materials and processes, I am able to convey stories that address contemporary issues which helps expand Indigeneity of practice and not relegate the work to a specific period in time. Nālani Wilson-Hokowhitu writes in her book, The Past Before Us, "All involved in the research process must purposefully choose to walk the narrow trail of honor and responsibility to ensure that all aspects of the research journey are ethical, or pono, and congruent with Hawaiian cultural values and beliefs" (10). My approach focuses on creativity being the unifier across generations. Time passes, but techniques, processes, and the practice of innovation that builds upon and reinforces the experiences of previous generations remain consistent. Through these approaches, ideas, stories, and values important to a particular moment, people, and place are

maintained. I draw upon visual motifs, materials, and techniques passed down through generations, to acknowledge and reaffirm ancestral wisdom, stories, and values.

Figure 4. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Selfie, 2024. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan. Photograph of me with students and fellow artists in Tahiti, after a week-long community intervention.

I engage with my community in ways that nurture empowerment of cultural practice, education, and interaction. Teaching others to redefine for themselves what is important within their stories, while preserving ancestral knowledge, is my way of perpetuating self-determination within my community. I conduct workshops and demonstrations of my practice (*Figure 4*), teaching material preparation methods and

fabrication techniques to expand the awareness of these seldom seen cultural processes. I also offer presentations and mentoring sessions to encourage my community to reconnect with ancestral mindsets, materials, and cultural values. These training moments inspire me to find new ways to ensure the customs, cultural perspectives, and disciplines I steward have relevance today. Community learning, re-search and cultural exchanges, like Indigenous art gatherings hosted by Te Atinga, a Maori visual arts organization in Aotearoa New Zealand are also foundational to my professional and creative artistic development. These engagements reaffirm ancestral relationships, provide opportunities for collaboration, and create channels for cross-cultural networking. For me the act of research is a "re-search". That is, I focus on the belief that everything exists, and in re-searching, we are merely reconnecting, or rather, relearning, how all life is connected. To approach re-search in this way, one needs to actively search – the processes of "doing", "making", and "creating" are integral to seeing anew. Understanding re-search in this way has parallels with my own artistic approach. I allow the processes of making to be my guide. The journey is the measure of success, not the outcome. The process of making, enacting the techniques of my ancestors, is how I share the wisdom of my teachers and forebearers. My creative approach in turn speaks back to my community. This is how I preserve their memory and I take this responsibility seriously. My hope is to elevate this fiber legacy to a new level of cultural significance in my community and for it to be acknowledged and better understood within the wider art world.

A Kupu Mai La Kupu: Ensuring Potential Is Nurtured

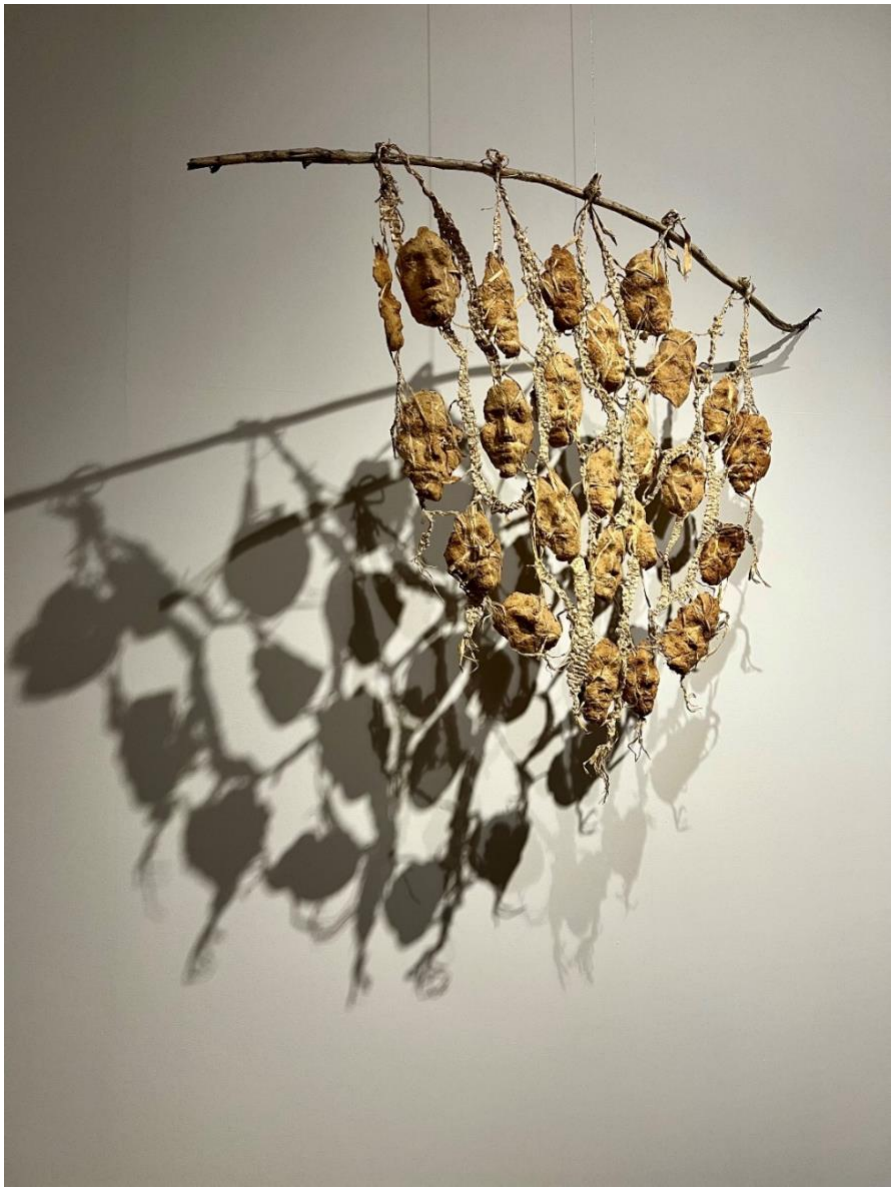

Figure 5. Maile Andrade, Ancestor Cape, 1994. Paper mulberry and wood. 48" x 48" x 3". Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

Cultural awareness is a foundational element in my artistic practice and decision-making process. It guides my process of maintaining relevance and connection to

contemporary matters and allows for artistic freedom and exploration to take place. The history of a people is found in their stories, practices, and worldview. Being raised in Hawai‘i, the ancestral homeland of my maternal grandfather, I feel blessed to have grown up in the landscape that nurtured my family for generations. Having learned about my culture from family experiences, community knowledge bearers, and the environment, I understand the importance of interconnectivity and balance. One of the insights that was regularly shared with me by my professor Maile Andrade was, “Follow your nā‘au.” Andrade always encouraged me to experiment and build off of my personal life experiences when creating work, as she did in her piece that incorporates paper cast faces of her family netted together (*Figure 5*).

Kūkulu ka ‘ike i ka ‘ōpua
Insights are built in the clouds

Kāhiko o ke kua e lū lehua
Adornment of the gods, the scattered lehua

Kahe ka wai
The water flows

Iho ke awāwa
Down the valley

Kolokolo ka lo‘i
The taro terraces move gently

He‘ehe‘e ka loko
The fishponds flow

E koli‘i
Evaporate

E koli‘i
Evaporate

Noe
Mist

Marques Hanalei Marzan
https://youtu.be/N5TAJSvroa8

Figure 6. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Nā ʻū Nā Kala, 2013. Pandanus leaves. 12" x 7" x 3". Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

In Martha Beckwith's publication, The Kumulipo: A Hawaiian Creation Chant, she responds to a 2,000-line cosmological chant that was composed and passed down orally from one generation to the next. Beckwith states, "The work of weaving genealogies into a hymnlike chant commemorating the family antecedents was the work of a *Haku-mele* or 'Master-of-song,' attached to the court of a chief, one who occupied also the special post

of a Kuʻauhau or genealogist" (35). The knowledge preserved in this manner offers a glimpse into a Hawaiian worldview from an earlier time, an invaluable resource to understanding the adaptation of Hawaiian culture. The introduction of writing by the first missionaries to Hawaiʻi, Protestants from New England in 1820, allowed for many Hawaiian compositions to be preserved in a written form. Their arrival to the islands were welcomed and supported by the ruling chiefs of the time. Learning to read and write were skills that most Hawaiians eagerly desired to learn regardless of the colonial implications of religious conversion. My work, Nāʻū Nā Kala (*Figure 6*) was inspired by a unique Hawaiian mat that was completed in 1874 and is commonly known as the "Protest Mat." In his article, *Patterns of Protest*, anthroplogist Dr. Roger Rose states that the maker, Kalaʻiokamalino, plaited an entire petition for tax relief onto the mat's upper surface intended for the King of Hawaiʻi (91) . Kalaʻiokamalino's work closes with the line, "NAU NA KALA," a typical form of closing that ends with the writer's name, but in this instance, the name is incomplete. Or was it? In Hawaiian, the word kala means to ask for forgiveness. To identify oneself through the concept of forgiveness is significant, especially when addressing a monarch. It speaks to her cultural integrity, affording respect and honor to the king even through a form of criticism and grievance. Thinking about kaona, layered meanings, expressed in the use of this single word representing the maker, made me realize that the stories and depth that can be embued into work can be profound. Writing became crucial in preserving Hawaiian history as Western diseases decimated the Hawaiian community from an estimated population size of 400,000 to 1,000,000 people in 1778 to roughly 40,000 one hundred years later (ref) . This drastic loss

of Hawaiian life also severed the widespread generational transmissions of knowledge, experience, history, and relationships, sending these cherished insights into hibernation, which are only now showing optimistic signs of reawakening in younger generations.

Figure 7. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Kōkō pu ʻupu ʻu (chiefly net carrier), 2015. Cotton and wood. 20" x 11" x 11". Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

In my Hawaiian cultural journey, I am fortunate to have found mentors that not only taught me the processes, values, and protocols on how to practice various customary art forms appropriately, but also how to create new works that preserve the essence and understanding of Hawaiian visual and oral language and convey stories and issues relevant to daily life of Hawaiians today. This is at the heart of my method for making art. For example, I learned to make kōkō puʻupuʻu (*Figure 7*), chiefly nets, from an elder in my community, Sally Ladao. Kōkō puʻupuʻu is a practice that produces utilitarian net carriers historically used within the chiefly class of Hawaiʻi to transport and protect their personal possessions and food resources when traveling. An ancestral story that speaks of carrying nets is the story of the greedy chief Makaliʻi and the great food net suspended in the heavens connected to the Pleiades constellation. Long ago Makaliʻi ordered all the food in the land to be given to him and he travelled to the heavens where he hung his net filled with all the food. With no food left for the people, they began to starve and die. A little mouse agreed to free the food and climbed up to the strong net, gnawed through the rope, and released the food back to the people. Through this story, the time of feasting, harvest celebrations, and abundance is commemorated each year during the season of Lono known as Makahiki. The knots used in this artform incorporate analogous wrapping sequences that produce knots of diverse shapes and forms. The techniques that create these elaborate knotted nets provide each piece with a functional durability over time, a layer of protection for each container, as well as a unique aesthetic. With practice and years of study in Museum collections around the world, I revived techniques that hadn't been taught for generations. To spark interest in my community, I began to introduce

these knotting techniques in non-conventional forms to encourage others to engage these skills and practices through alternative viewpoints. I invited them to consider what it means to use these techniques in wearable art (*Figure 8*) and how they could make this practice meaningful and important in their personal lives and lifestyle. Being trained from the start to know these basic steps and learn how to innovate and create new forms are gifts that few creatives are afforded in their educational training. I look at this re-search of knowing as something not necessarily just for me, my community, and our present society, but for the future, and all those who will inherit the effects of our actions.

Figure 8. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Kōkō series, 2018. Cotton, silk, indigo, and aluminum. Dimensions variable. Courtesy: Koji Hirano.

"Process," to me, is the most important part in the creation of my work. I believe that ancestral memory resides in our very being and reawakens when needed or appropriately requested. This then allows the materials and the environment to shape the outcome of a piece. In some ways, my unconscious connection to the spirit world is brought forth, and insights that were previously unknown, manifest in the act of art-making. In my artwork, titled Kōkō series (*Figure 8*), I had no idea of its outcome. I cleared my mind and allowed my hands and the materials to interact. This process may seem like experimentation or "play", but when I put myself in a clear mental state, I feel my ancestors move through me and manifest a piece with the materials around me. My search for re-discovery is based on an inward gaze of outward perceptions of community identity and my ability to facilitate meaningful transmissions of knowing. This approach is my way of honoring those that have come before us and how I can maintain a connection with them. We need to re-train ourselves to understand how to tap into this knowledge-well that slumbers in every generation.

A Muʻo Mai La Muʻo: Building Enduring Relationships

Figure 9. Marques Hanalei Marzan, ʻAʻahu, 2023. Mixed fiber. 20" x 36" x 4". Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan. My work emphasizing the character of materials and various binding techniques.

The methods I use in making art are truly conversations between my multicultural upbringing and my surroundings. It's motivated by my belief in honoring family history, ancestral memory, and dreams paired with my interest in Nature, materials, and collaborations. My work (*Figure 9*) speaks to universal issues of interconnectivity, perseverance and our collective responsibility to care for our communities and the environment. Using natural fibers reminds me of my responsibility to maintain sustainable gathering practices and continue conservation management of our natural

resources. I believe that finding ways to reconnect with our environment and return to sustainable practices are essential to our survival. Integrating materials responsibly gathered into my work imbues them with inherent stories and connections, sometimes not obviously conveyed to a viewer. But, strengthening physical, mental, and social relationships within the environment and community is a personal commitment I strive to embed into my work. Uplifting this interconnectivity with Nature and my community is vital to my process.

NĀNĀ I KE KUMU: INTERCONNECTED TRUST

Figure 10. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Kōkō series, 2023. Cotton. Dimensions variable. Courtesy: PA ʻI Foundation. A cotton cord garment constructed utilizing techniques found in kōkō pu ʻupu ʻu, Hawaiian fancy knot-making, but applied in a new configuration.

This garment (*Figure 10*) made in 2022 has an asymmetrical zigzag opening running down the front, off to one side. It also has an undulating hemline that skims the floor in the front and becomes a dragging train in the back. I see this piece as an example of how my creative re-search is manifested as an interconnected observation. For example, the interconnected form is achieved by drawing on Hawaiian netting techniques used to begin a kōkō puʻupuʻu, but manipulated in a manner that allowed the line proportions and connecting points to be determined by the material and not me. It is constructed using white multi-plied cotton cordage and presented on a model with a black fabric boat neck dress. The cordage is wrapped onto itself and attached to neighboring sections following a seemingly random path, creating organically shaped negative spaces. The density of the work is consistent over the surface of the garment even though the spaces created by the overlapping rope sections are of different sizes. The sinuous line employed in its composition overlaps itself at numerous spots throughout the work, providing the connecting points where they are bound to one another, creating a stable structural framework. The movement and fluidity captured in the knotted structure keeps the eye moving over the entire surface.

The work evokes the qualities of durability and structure through the visual and physical weight of the cord used and its positive space density. The Hawaiian understanding of duality acknowledges differences, but also recognizes that those opposing differences reside in everything and everyone, helping to define one's character. Through this, the Hawaiian belief of duality existing in all things is visualized, having both the structure and flow of the cord evident. The heaviness of the piece is visually

assumed based on the amount of cordage utilized as well as the cord's thickness. This assumption adds to the interpretation of the garment's durability and permanence. The layered cords overlapping one another also produces a dimensional surface reminiscent of a 3-D topographic map. This effect pulls the viewer's gaze to particular areas to invite deeper engagement and analysis while also providing a sense of movement and energy. The depth that is created through the interplay of large and small shapes over the surface and the physically raised areas that are formed from the layers of overlapping cords helps communicate a sense of arresting strength and complexity. Both dynamism and calm are found in the work, while the visual flow of its construction helps to convey a sense of power, energy and potentiality. Through the depth and breadth of design, execution, and presentation, viewers are offered entry points into the work that build on their own unique life experiences and perspectives, allowing the work to connect to people in personal ways.

The figurative qualities embodied in these forms serve as the meaningful intentions overlaid onto this garment, helping to imbue these distinguishing characteristics into the work in a manner that recognizes the human form as a cherished vessel of unique experiences and knowledge. The specific technique used to make this garment is an element of the knotting process that provides an additional buffer and protection to the vessels customarily held within each kōkō puʻupuʻu. The use of this specific technique highlights the concept that sits at the heart of its creative inception to its completion.

A Liko Mai La Liko: Unlocking Our Capacity

Figure 11. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Pā ʻū ʻAha, 2017. Coconut rope. 35" x 60" x 3". Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

Often, Indigenous cultures make choices for the long-term betterment of community and not necessarily for individuals. Colonialism has shifted that paradigm, making community members believe that individuals are at the center, going against the understanding that we are part of a larger and greater whole. Efforts to re-Indigenize our community mindsets are supported by scholars like Stephanie Nohelani Teves who writes, "The power of Indigenous performativity is its ability to create, modify, alter, and

revive practices or to make completely new ones out of a reverence for your culture while also critiquing the need to perform a pure indigeneity" (10).

Creative expression is only limited to one's imagination. Culture by definition is built on this creativity and is the cumulative understanding of a people that resides in each community member. Therefore, communities are groups of similar-minded people that celebrate the preservation and adaptation of beliefs while being anchored in ancestral values and practices. The sharing of these perspectives is what guides me in my creation of cord regalia (*Figure 11*). Living ancestral values in daily life helps preserve long-held generational awareness and knowing while allowing for new stories and interpretations to manifest and have relevance in present day practice and design conversations. Making these engagements part of everyday living helps reawaken my intimate ancestral connections to place and reminds me of my role in caring for this creative expression.

HE MAU NĪNAU KAʻU: RE-SEARCH

1. What steps can I take to impart to my community, the meaningful and intentional relevance of customary mindsets and methodologies through my art practice?

2. Why is place important in the creation of new expressions and forms that support contemporary storytelling practices?

3. What is the cultural context in which my art resides and does it support growth?

4. What separates my creative process from the cultural foundation and communal intelligence that I am based in?

Dr. Jonathan Osorio states in Kanaka ʻŌiwi Methodologies,

> "There is a right way to get at any question that you deserve to ask. Part of the issue for Kānaka is that there are some questions that are not for us to ask. That is another thing, something that westerners do not believe. In fact, they find this kind of statement really frightening. There are things that people feel are a family possession. And that sharing it even within the family, if it means that if that story gets out to everyone in the public, they are not going to share it. As Kānaka we need to be mindful and completely respectful of that" (Oliveira 154).

A Lau Mai La Lau: Focused Intention

E kuhikuhi pono i na au iki a me na au nui o ka ʻike
Instruct well in the little and the large currents of knowledge.

In teaching, do it well; the small details are as important as the large ones.[3]
Mary Kawena Pukui

KŪKĀKŪKĀ: KEYS TO SUCCESS

The concepts of inspiration and change are firmly grounded in the understanding that we are each the living embodiment of all the choices and actions of our ancestors.

[3] Pukui, Mary Kawena. *ʻŌlelo Noʻeau: Hawaiian Proverbs & Poetical Sayings*. Bishop Museum Press, 1983, p. 40.

Privileges. Atrocities. Indifference. I am not in control of what was and the heritage that I descend from, however I am in control of the decisions I make for myself and the things important to me. These actions and beliefs I choose to support are reflections of my commitment to safeguarding the knowledge, insights, and experiences shared with me and uplifting our collective understanding we hold in trust for the future. When we strive to be our best selves and implement best practices, we affect the possibilities for a brighter tomorrow and afford future generations a stronger basis to develop and prosper. Dr. Taupōuri Tangarō wrote so beautifully in his book, Malaehaʻakoʻa: The Dancing Priest, "I share this personal scope of the sacred as a means to build dialogue on the subject of the sacred. I share this perspective because someone of the previous generation refused to take this process to the cave, deciding to leave it in the light for further inquiry into the divine" (vii-viii). We cannot expect to be treated with dignity and respect if we ourselves cannot reciprocate accordingly. The following points below are insights that ground my practice and are central to how I interact with my heritage, community, and the world.

- Inspiring communal engagement and interaction
- Activating and reflecting of individual experience
- Mindful observation and acknowledgement of surroundings
- Tradition is innovation
- Creativity is a means of continuity

A Lālā Mai La Lālā: Representation And Inspiration

Historically, within Hawaiian society, the act of recognizing and celebrating individual skilled makers within a discipline was uncommon. Rather, the excellency of an art form or particular style from a region was celebrated as a collective community skill and practice. This perspective uplifted and valued the entire industry, giving every maker the chance to produce works considered valuable. This also meant that everyone was responsible for the success or downfall of a practice. This mindset of collective recognition versus individual recognition encourages a greater commitment to sustainable practices as everyone needs to work together to succeed. Much like others artists that support creative networks within their community, I see myself as one tree in an interconnected forest. Forests and ecosystems thrive when the environment in which they are living is healthy and life sustaining.

Figure 12. Ruth Asawa, Untitled (S.272), c.1954. Copper and iron wire. 111” x 14” x 14”. Figure removed due to copyright restrictions. https://ruthasawa.com/art/sculpture/#bwg6/42

Ruth Asawa (1926-2013) is a noted American sculptor and multi-disciplinary artist of Japanese descent. Asawa’s work, *Untitled* (S.272) (*Figure 12*), made in 1955 with copper and iron wire, is representative of a series of looped wire-work that she created throughout her lifetime. Her elongated organic forms define space with exceptional beauty, movement, and complexity. The openness of the work, due to her material choice, provides a sense of lightness and allows light to cast striking shadows that expands the dimension and visual presentation of the work. The fluid movement conveyed in her work gives her work an energy and life typically found in Nature.

Figure 13. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Huewai, 2023. Gourd and coconut rope. 16" x 11" x 11". Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan. Hawaiian water gourd container.

Asawa's silhouettes remind me of a Hawaiian cultural form, a huewai, Hawaiian water gourd container (*Figure 13)*. Huewai were essential implements of daily life and provided a means to store and transport water for future use. In Peter Buck's publication, Arts and Crafts of Hawaii, he said that Hawai'i had a richer variety of form than elsewhere in the Pacific. To me, gourds evoke feelings of abundance, life, and endless possibility as one of the many physical manifestations of Lono, Hawaiian god of peace, harvest, and

abundance. Physical manifestations, kino lau in Hawaiian, are a means for the divine to engage with humanity and reinforce personal relationships and interactions. Incorporating cultural associations and knowing, in this way, are important aspects of my artistic practice that connect me to my ancestors and community. Even though Asawa's designs stem from a different context from my own work, her integration of personal experiences and the use of both the physical form alongside the cast shadows are fundamental to my process (*Figure 14*).

Figure 14. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Pilina, 2023. Paper. 50" x 48" x 2". Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan. Illustrating how cast shadows are equally important to the physical work in this presentation.

Figure 15. Marques Hanalei Marzan, ʻAʻahu series, 2024. Kibiso silk and coton. Dimensions variable. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

These forms also resonate with me through my Japanese heritage (*Figure 15*). Growing up, my maternal grandmother would share with me stories of our family being silk weavers. Her aesthetic became my foundation for my appreciation of Japanese form and design. To me, the interlocking shapes suspended in one another honors the values

central to Zen ideals. The emphasis of simple form and the work's ability to provoke being present, aware, and in the moment are key to this way of being and understanding. I appreciate the simplicity of Asawa's work as well as the complexity that is hidden in plain sight, through the labor-intensive looping technique used in its execution.

Figure 16. Pat Hickman, Net of the Pleiades, 1994. Image of Pat Hickman with her work. Figure removed due to copyright restrictions. https://www.pathickman.com/images/Pat_at_gate576.jpg

Pat Hickman[4] and her artwork, *Nets of Makali'i – Nets of the Pleiades* (*Figure 16*), is an artist and artwork that continues to influence my practice. This work in Kahului, Maui

[4] Pat Hickman was my professor when I pursued my undergraduate degree at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I was intrigued and inspired from the moment I was exposed to her work.

fills five gateways at the front entrance of the Maui Arts and Culture Center. Hickman created large netted forms in the design of the work, paying tribute to the historical fishing village context of the venue's site. Two sections of the work are fixed panels and three are paired gates that open in the center. They are all made of aluminum, weighing nearly 5,000 pounds in total, and were sand casted in Tasmania in 1994.

This work is a great example of how she pays close attention to cultural context, as the Hawaiian term for the negative spaces in the net are called maka. Maka also can mean eyes, eye of a needle, face, countenance, presence, sight, view, beloved ones, a point, bud, protuberance, uncooked, unripe, a seaweed, and a variety of sweet potato as recorded in the Hawaiian Dictionary by Mary Kawena Pukui. The balance between the airy quality / lightness and the weight of visual form is fundamental in her work and speaks to my own desires of responding to positive and negative space relationalities. The use of this one form through her work draws upon all of these definitions that deepens the engagement with the work when one is knowledgeable of these interpretations. The reference of the term Makali'i in the work's title also alludes to the story of Makali'i and his net and the season of abundance. I regularly utilize knots and netting in my work (*Figure 17*) that draw upon this richly layered and nuanced technique to embed these concepts and stories into the literal framework of my art, which I then expand on, with additional layers of meaning and story. This example uses copper mesh as the primary material which is manipulated in different ways to spotlight the strengths and character of the material.

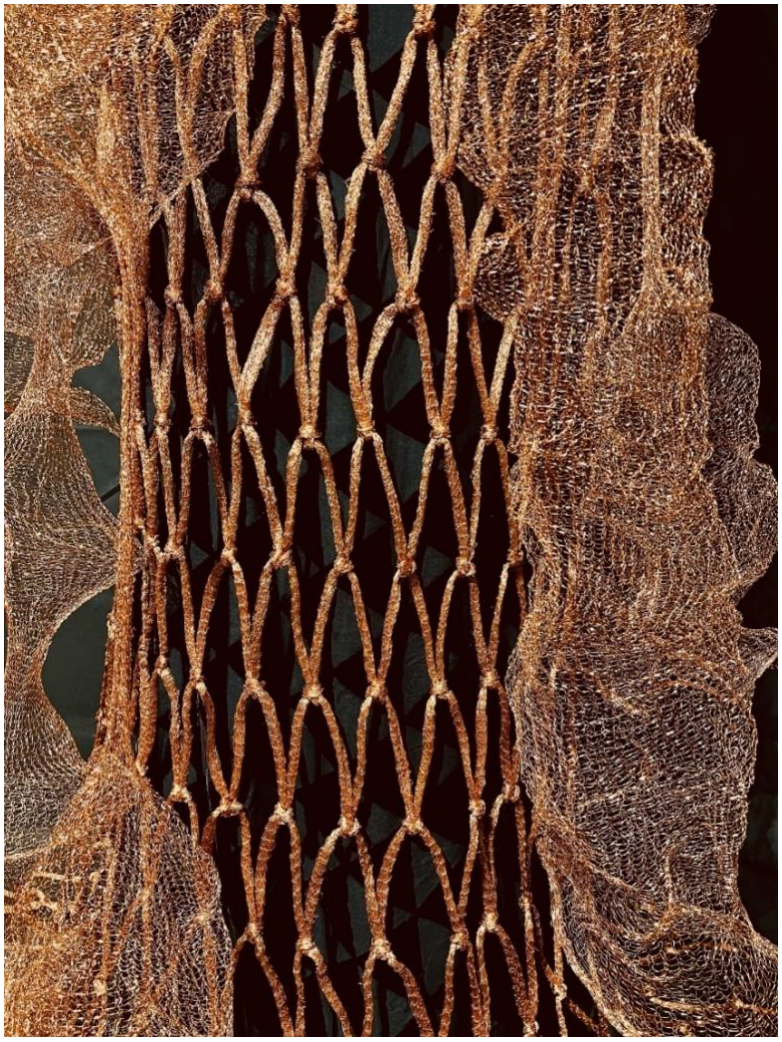

Figure 17. Marques Hanalei Marzan, ʻAʻahu series, 2023. Copper. Dimensions variable. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan. Detail of netted garment highlighting material possibilities.

Depending on form, color, and material usage, complex relationships can be built with simple elements. The kaona, layered meanings, of a work and the depth of its interpretation will never be conveyed fully to everyone, reinforcing the understanding that we will only comprehend what we know and that we each bring our own experiences to viewing art. In this way, cultural knowledge is often veiled in plain sight. The meaning of a simple flower lei is generally understood as a gesture of aloha, but if you knew where

the flowers were collected from, when they were gathered, who made the lei, and knew the significance of each of those elements, the story one would know would be far more complex and nuanced. Even if you were well-versed and knew all those things, the secret meanings and intentions, that only the maker intended, would be unknown to you. These layered meanings are inherent to any work and continue to expose their subleties when the viewer gains more knowledge.

Figure 18. Mata Aho Collective, AKA, 2019. Marine rope. Figure removed due to copyright restrictions. https://www.mataahocollective.com/art-works/aka

Mata Aho Collective is a group of four female Maori visual artists, Erena Baker, Sarah Hudson, Bridget Reweti, and Terri Te Tau based in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Their work utilizes fiber-based weaving techniques as a framework to convey the intricacies of Maori culture and its interrelationships with other communities. The large-scale formats of their installations help to push their work outside the realm of mere utility and deeper into a contemplative space that provokes internal reflection (*Figure 18*). Scale has been an element I have also engaged with in my own work when I wished to impress the importance of a concept or message, like cultural stewardship or protecting the environment. Instinctually, large-scale works project an air of significance and grandeur and when used strategically it can be a powerful tool. The Collective's use of industrial grade materials to produce many of their work is also an impactful process. The techniques typically used in Maori weaving are executed with delicate and fine materials, producing soft, but durable and flexible textiles. When imposed onto industrial grade ropes and materials, the techniques take on a different affect, diminishing the delicate quality they normally exhibit and projecting a monumental rigidity and presence.

The aesthetic balance that the Collective achieves between grandeur, flexibility, and intricacy speaks to the continuum that I strive for in my work. Material selection and techniques strengthen the associations between the opposing concepts juxtaposed, but it also takes the right balance of elements to produce successful work. The Collective is methodical and meticulous in their planning and execution, which is in stark contrast to my own process. Contrary to this, I find it difficult to impose a design and plan on a work from its inception, as I feel that the materials guide me to the balance of techniques and

methods that they want to be involved in during the process (*Figure 19*). When I create work for myself, I clear my mind and allow the work to manifest itself through the materials. I generally don't see myself as the maker, rather the facilitator assisting the materials gather together.

Figure 19. Marques Hanalei Marzan, 'A'ahu series, 2023. Coconut rope. Dimensions variable. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan. Detail of knotted garment made with 'aha, coconut fibers.

Figure 20. NUNO, Patched Paper fabric by Reiko Sudo, 1997. Figure removed due to copyright restrictions. [*https://www.nuno.com/en/textile/patched-paper/*](https://www.nuno.com/en/textile/patched-paper/)

Reiko Sudo, co-founder and CEO of NUNO Corporation, is an acclaimed Japanese textile designer. Her work blurs the lines between past, present, and future and are central to the conversations that Sudo evokes through each of her designs. Her work ethic and process celebrate the use of natural fibers and customary practices in conjunction with modern technology. Customary practices that Sudo employs in her work draw upon Japan's rich textile heritage including papermaking, silk weaving, natural dyes, and labor-

intensive surface design methods. These materials and processes are then often paired with cutting edge technologies that give the final product a modern look and feel, while retaining a time-honored aesthetic. In an example of her work that speaks to this approach, Sudo cuts Japanese washi paper into thin strips and irregularly inserts them into a sheer textile as it is being woven, leaving the ends hanging loosely, creating a shaggy quality to the finished fabric (*Figure 20*). This aesthetic is innovative in comparison to classic Japanese textiles, but through the use of thin strips of washi paper, it references a Japanese technique of weaving durable cloth from paper known as Shifu. Connecting with the past through fresh approaches of execution is what I also attempt to achieve in my work. The realization that many hands and many generations have touched natural fibers and transformed them into functional products for use sometimes gets forgotten when demand and production are the primary drivers of a practice. At times, the speed at which pieces need to be made often makes the process a transactional one rather than a transformational act. Demand will always exist when there is desire, but we need to remember that creativity and innovation don't flourish in confinement.

Sudo is also a fierce proponent for small scale family-run producers of textiles, fibers, and dyes throughout Japan. The new designs she develops often require multiple producers from across Japan to work together, a network of relationships she has nurtured over her career to bring her ideas to life. Much like Sudo, I too look for ways to support, promote, and patronize local fiber producers in my area. The public's increased awareness and education of these culturally significant processes help encourage demand for these products and afford makers a means of income that gives them a reason to

continue to produce these richly storied products. It also gives them time to learn from the materials they work with and naturally create stronger bonds with the work. When I am able to incorporate locally or regionally sourced materials into my work, it helps deepen the narrative of my work, overlaying cultural genealogies and stories that build on my own layered stories and ideas. Through this process of acknowledgement and recognition of materials, places, and people, I can uplift everyone's story, not just my own.

A Kumu Mai La Kumu: Spotlighting Needs

Traditions, to me, are the innovations of the past and likewise, innovations today will be the traditions of the future. The term innovation has a lot of colonial modernist implications, but in a Hawaiian cultural context, innovation is used to build on the practices of the past and not to separate oneself from it. It is the execution and adaptation of customary techniques and aesthetics that take into account modern contexts. Through this continuity of history, intention and creativity across time, today's stories and practices preserve the wisdom of the past. Nothing we create is ever truly new, as everything already exists, and only reveals itself to us at the right time. Stories come alive because of our lived experiences and conveying that energy to someone is the definition of culture and creativity.

HE ALO Ā HE ALO: REFLECTIONS

As a final summation, the things that matter to me most in my art creation and practice are that stories get remembered, shared, and created through a process that

ensures the physical and spiritual relationships that bind cultures together are never forgotten. How this is accomplished is just as important as its execution, with respect and recognition of responsibility. Ancestral memory lives in every person and acknowledging that wisdom is a cornerstone in Hawaiian culture.

Decolonizing colonial practices and mindsets are difficult processes for communities, especially those that have endured generations of social trauma and mental, physical, and spiritual abuse. Structures of support are essential elements in rebuilding a viable community and culture. For example, a series of contemporary art exhibitions curated from 2014 to 2019 in Hawai'i focused on the different perspectives of the word, "contact." These exhibitions helped bring to light the issues of Hawaiian representation, cultural misappropriation, self-determination, as well as the disconnect between Hawaiians and their land because of today's astronomical land valuations and cost of living that force families to leave their ancestral homes. However, processes like rematriation, i.e., the restoration of one's spiritual connection to the land and reverence for Nature, provide paths to reaffirm the strength of Indigenous Hawaiian voice and empower communities to reclaim their self-worth and dignity. Re-search wisdom plays a vital role in facilitating vital interactions between cultures.

All I can do is strive to be a good ancestor for the future. Sharing the knowledge passed to me, teaching others the values of respectfully caring for the environment, and imparting the importance of ethical and sustainable gathering practices are steps I am passionate in conveying to the next generation. I had the privilege of learning from amazing individuals, creative works, and spaces that I want to pass on to others. I also

acknowledge I am not perfect and have shortcomings. I know my place and what I need to do, which is to uplift my own community and culture in any and all means that also respects our collective society. If we can each play our part in this story of life, we offer hope to our future. Small actions are equally important to large actions, as they are all necessary in uplifting and celebrating the vibrancy and diversity we tell. We all must decide how to do this for ourselves.

A Kumu Paʻa Hina ʻOle E: Being A Role Model

I acknowledge that I am a living manifestation of all my ancestors that have come before me and a unique knowledge bearer of insights that have been shared with me through Nature herself, family members, cultural leaders and practitioners, artists, colleagues, and ancestral handmade creations. These moments and stories have interwoven to become the foundation from which I draw my strength and inspiration. The conversations and explorations that support this diversity of experiences continue to evolve with each new artwork. Through all of this, what remains constant is my process of engaging materials in alternative ways that build off methods used in previous generations, inspiring future creatives, and continuing these interconnections within the present. To me, this is the definition of perpetuating a cultural practice, the ability to thrive in the face of change and to meet the needs of the present, all the while maintaining the core values of the practice.

Through the course of my visual thesis development, I learned a great deal during the creation of the work, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint (*Figure 21)* and from

being mindful of the materials and their nature. I also found the process of gallery design, installation, and the activation of the space through Hawaiian protocols of chant and dance to be deeply reflective and meaning-filled activities, much like meditation sessions and communings with ancestors. The layering of stories I attempted to imbue into the final work drew from multiple sources, one in particular being the Kumulipo, a Hawaiian creation chant that celebrates the relationships and delicate balance that makes up the basis of the Hawaiian world. Recognizing that stories like this carry the mana, inherent spiritual power, and worldview of Hawai‘i, it was my hope that the work was able to convey these sentiments or feelings, if only in part, to those viewing the work. The work doesn't depict specific stories in its presentation, more the concepts, sentiments, and intentions that the stories illuminate.

Figure 21. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Mixed media. 156" x 300" x 150". Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

Figure 22. Marques Hanaelei Marzan. Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint. 2024. Mixed media. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

Mana is something that exists in everything and everyone. Mana can be imparted or diminished through purposeful actions, associations, and time. The materials used in my installation *(Figures 21 – 38)* utilize the mana inherent to the natural elements as a basis for the interconnectivity being addressed. Techniques essential to kōkō puʻupuʻu, chiefly net carriers, and ʻupena, netting, were employed to reinforce the correlations of binding and coming together in the work's narrative intent. The juxtaposition of concepts like density and openness, darkness and light, and durability and ephemerality visually present in the installation's execution emphasizes the complex nature and balance of our world. Each garment in the installation speaks to different facets of this greater

understanding. Creating an environmental context in the installation through the vertical elements and cedar wood slivers at the base of each garment bolsters the collectiveness of the work and present a visual cohesion to the work.

I also believe that works designed for the body only fully come to life when they are worn. Prior to their installation in the 2024 Emily Carr State of Practice exhibition, A Piece of the Sky, each garment came to life in Honolulu in a presentation during the 2024 MAMo Wearable Art Show. I designed each garment to be worn by a specific person which also added to the mana of the work. The individuals I envisioned in each piece brought life, experience, and personality to each garment that inextricably changed the work to be embodied vessels through their mana.

Figure 23. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Mixed media. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

Figure 24. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Split reed, coconut rope, barkcloth, cedar wood, and velvet. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

Figure 25. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Split reed, coconut rope, and barkcloth. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

Figure 26. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Stainless steel, cotton, cedar wood, velvet, and teeth. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

Figure 27. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Stainless steel and cotton. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

Figure 28. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Copper, cedar wood, and velvet. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

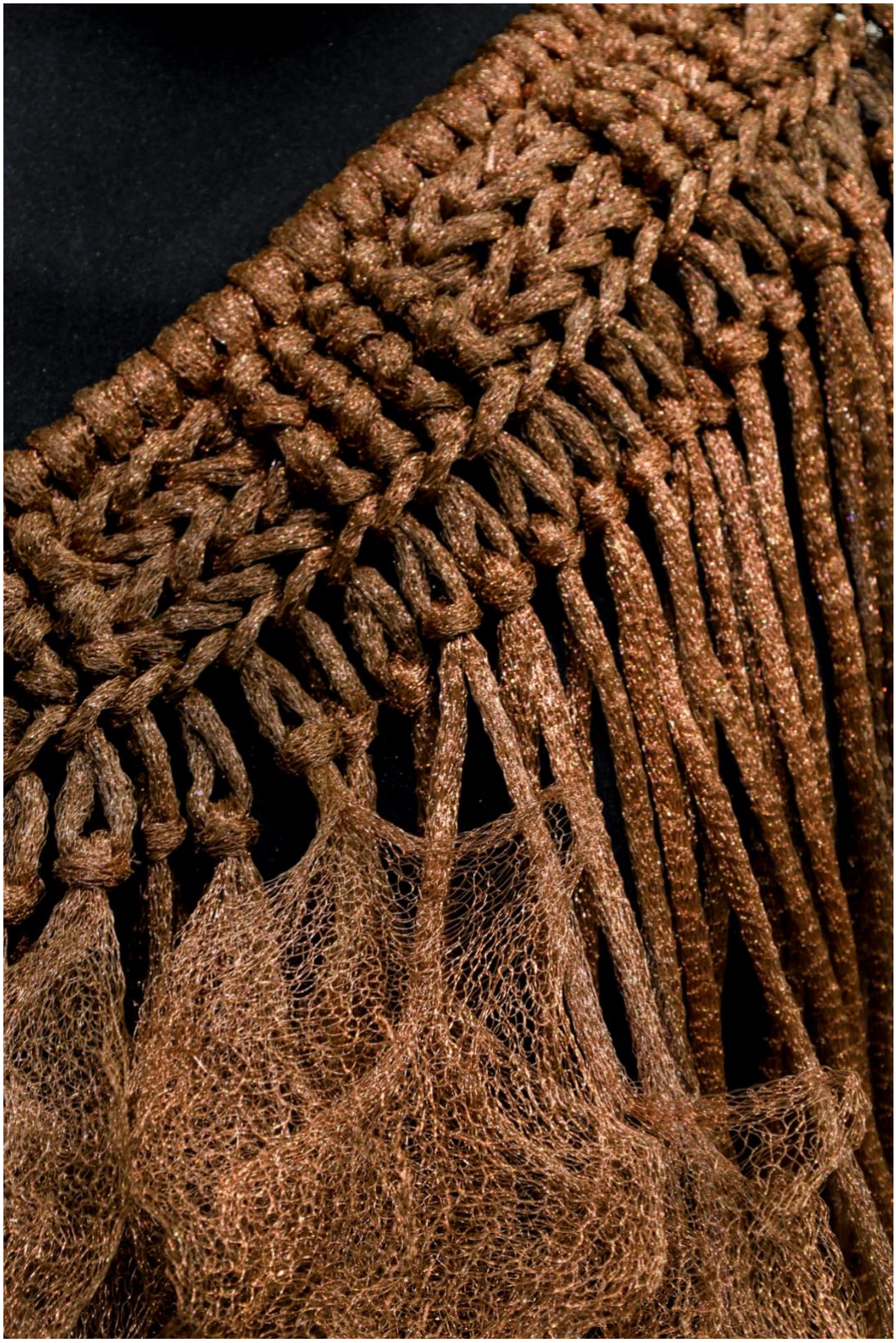

Figure 29. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Copper. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

Figure 30. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Cotton, cedar wood, and velvet. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

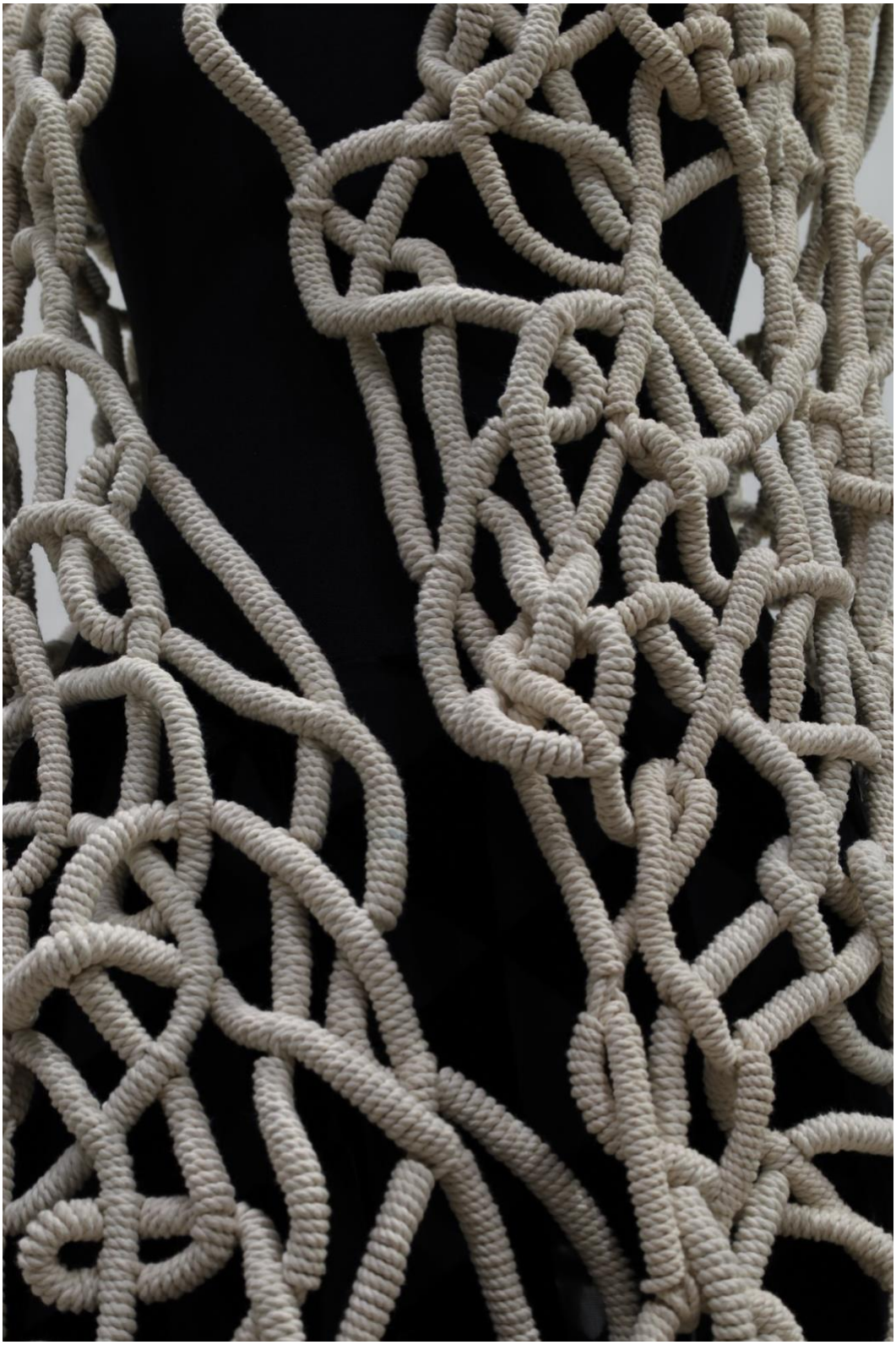

Figure 31. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Cotton. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

Figure 32. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Silk, cotton, cedar wood, and velvet. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

Figure 33. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Silk, cotton, and velvet. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

Figure 34. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Copper, cedar wood, and velvet. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

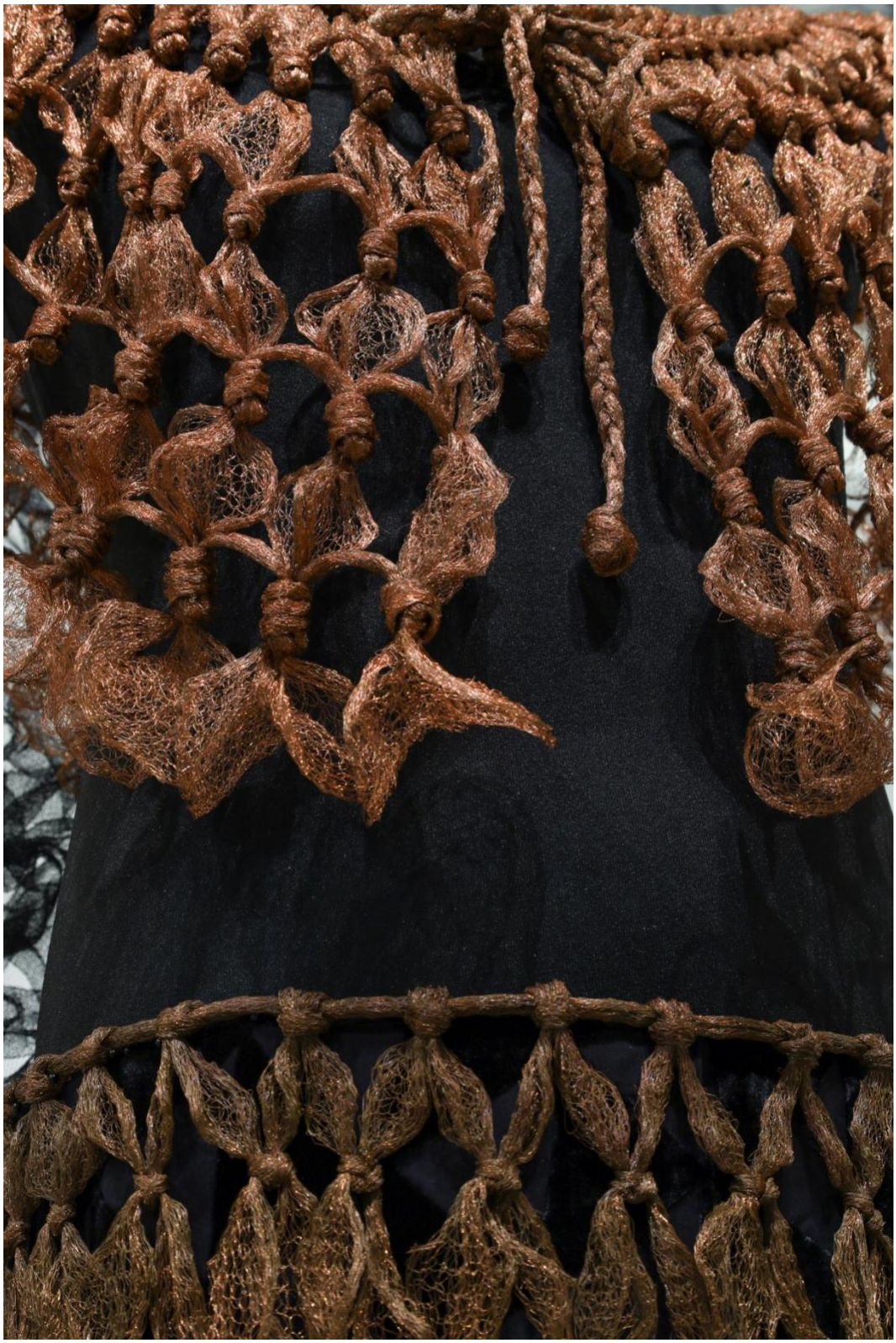

Figure 35. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Copper. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

Figure 36. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Cotton, cedar wood, and velvet. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

Figure 37. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Cotton. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

Figure 38. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Coconut rope, barkcloth, cedar wood, and velvet. Courtesy: Marques Hanalei Marzan.

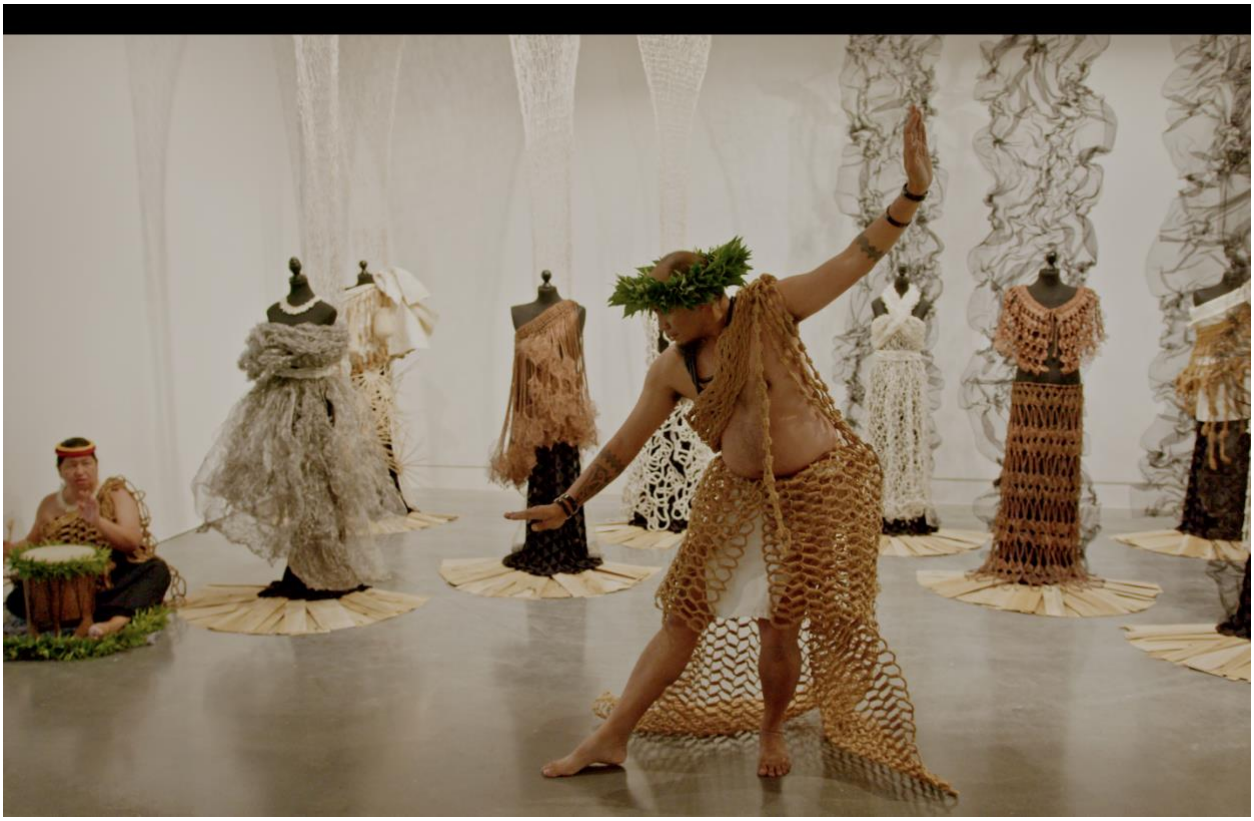

Figure 39. Marques Hanalei Marzan, Creation: From A Hawaiian Viewpoint, 2024. Courtesy: Andrew Ina. Video documentation of installation activation through Hawaiian dance and chant. https://youtu.be/KWZBYu4J5z8

The final element to the work was the physical activation of the space through protocol of instrumentation, chant, and dance. Having imbued the work with my mana through the creation process, I wanted to acknowledge the importance of place and people that continues to make this work special. It is not just a culmination of time, materials, and energy, but a recognition of cherished relationships that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. Relationships are active fulfillments of responsibility that we live, breathe, and practice everyday. This journey is just one story of activating ancestral memory in modern living.

I Kūlanihākoʻi ka ʻolu, e kau mai
At Kūlanihākoʻi resides the kindness

E kau mai ka ʻauamo ke kuleana hāʻawe
Where the burden stick is placed, a relationship

Welehia ka ʻumeke heke ʻieʻie i ka uakoko
Suspended is the calabash in the clouds

Lehua ka puʻu i loko nei a kīkepa amo
The net laden with honors, a one-sided burden

Hiʻikua hia ka ipu pāwehe aia i luna
Cherished is the decorated gourd presented

Piha nō ke ʻōpū hālau ka huewai
A water gourd filled to capacity

E kaulei i ka ʻauamo e hāpai kau pono
Placed on the burden stick to create balance

He alo a he alo i ke aloha
Face to face in appreciation

Marques Hanalei Marzan

https://youtu.be/dVsVQ3g_Yak

PĪPĪ HOLO KAʻAO

[THE END]

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