



# FOUNDATION

art and climate change in the pacific

THE ART GALLERY, UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT MĀNOA  
HONOLULU, HAWAII | 1.19.2020 - 2.28.2020

DONKEY MILL ART CENTER  
HŌLUALOA, HAWAII | SUMMER/FALL



# INUNDATION

art and climate change in the pacific

Exhibition organized and curated by Jaimey Hamilton Faris.

Exhibition and publication are supported in part by grants from:  
Hawai'i State Foundation for Culture and the Arts through  
appropriations from the Legislature of the State of Hawai'i and  
by the National Endowment for the Arts | Hawai'i Council for  
the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Humanities  
| Office of the Provost, UHM

EDITOR: Jaimey Hamilton Faris  
DESIGN AND LAYOUT: Napua Wang  
INSTALLATION PHOTOS: Kelly Ciurej  
COVER IMAGE: Mary Babcock, Lotic Sea, 2020.

Images courtesy of the artists.  
Creative Commons license © 2020

978-0-578-64860-6



# AHUPUA'A FOR PEACE

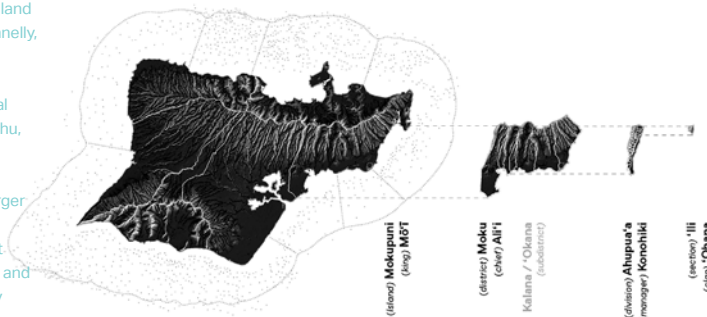
SEAN CONNELLY

When Ma'ilikūkahī clarified the original ahupua'a system of O'ahu, the chief of the island established a legacy of peace for generations (SAMUEL KAMAKAU). This legacy was an outcome of an early Native democracy in Hawai'i, as Ma'ilikūkahī was an elected chief in the 15th century. As Kamakau recounts, leading up to Ma'ilikūkahī, O'ahu's traditional system of resource management had fallen into a state of confusion and the original boundaries had become unclear. Ma'ilikūkahī resolved the crisis. Under the chief's peacebuilding leadership, the architecture of the ahupua'a system was recovered immediately. The reorganization of land by units of small multiples—moku, ahupua'a, 'ili, plus variations—distributed civic responsibility of managing the cultivation of the island. Both citizens and chiefs worked family style to guide natural and artificial inputs and outputs of 'āina cultivating nutrients of the sky, mountain, and sea. Ahupua'a, as a foundational unit specific to the Hawaiian Islands in both conception and implementation assisted in ways to maintain and organize sustenance, reciprocity, and responsibility.

## RIGHT AND FAR RIGHT

Image of O'ahu by Hawaiian land division. Image by Sean Connelly, Hawai'i Futures.

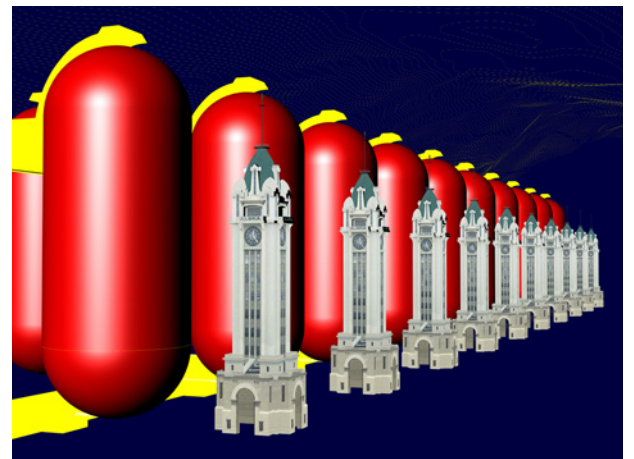
Another major infrastructural threats to freshwater on O'ahu, the U.S. Military's Red Hill Underground Fuel Storage Tanks—twenty fuel tanks larger than the Aloha Tower built underground—pose a direct threat to the island's aquifer and main municipal water supply (Sierra Club Hawai'i) directly below the massive fuel tanks. Image by Sean Connelly, O'ahu 2450 (Architecture Studio in Island Urbanism Advanced).



A long history of Western interaction, militarism, and technological advancement complicates the history and trajectory of O'ahu's original ahupua'a system, which has endured many shifts following Ma'ilikūkahī's peacebuilding legacy. Ahupua'a are not ancient and static; presently, they are erased, suppressed, occupied systems in recovery. Among the largest factors in the active degradation of ahupua'a systems has been the continued transformation of O'ahu as a U.S. military base, ongoing since 1887. Among the most detrimental actions of militarization are threats to freshwater. The Ala Wai Canal, whose construction was intended to drain the wetlands of Waikīkī and remedy stagnant mosquito infested water, is an example of detrimental infrastructure produced by the United States. In 1909, just a decade following the annexation of Hawai'i into a Territory of the United States—the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) dredged reef at Waikīkī

to build Fort Derussy. Plans for the U.S. to establish Fort Derussy as part of a coastal defense for Honolulu and Pearl Harbor coincided with plans for the U.S. Territorial Board of Health to reclaim the wetlands of Waikīkī with solid dredge fill. In the process, the U.S. military was the first to fill Waikīkī, destroying abundant fishponds and major portions of the Pi'inaio stream feeding the delta lands of Kāhala where the streams of Makiki, Mānoa, and Pāloa valleys flowed into the sea.

The construction of Fort Derussy was a leading contributing factor of the environmental degradation that led to the wrongful dredging of the Ala Wai Canal in 1921. Through the territorial construction of the canal, the United States systematically displaced Hawaiians, immigrants, and other farmers of color cultivating the area. Today, Waikīkī is a polluted public health risk prone to catastrophic flooding from storms, king tides, and sea level rise. The ahupua'a recovery of Waikīkī demands a reparation for militarization.



In many ways, the foundation of the U.S. military and its presence in Hawai'i is inherently anti-ahupua'a. The U.S. has a long complex history of moving against the will of Native people reaching back to its very establishment in the Revolutionary War. In British North America before the American Revolution, the Royal Proclamation Line of 1763 sought to clarify a border between the Thirteen Colonies and what was to become a British Indian Confederacy, in return for Native American support against the French during the French Indian war. American colonists were forbidden to settle past the Proclamation Line as defined by the Appalachian Mountain Range, despite paying a higher tax for that territory gained during the war. By the time of the American Revolution, this agreement, which created the potential of a sovereign Native American confederacy, was contested. While this speculative

potential certainly needs to be contextualized by the racism and logic of Western supremacy exhibited historically during that time, it does nuance understandings of the founding of the U.S. and its military in relation to Native people.

Now in the early 21st century, the U.S. Department of Defense is the largest employer in the world ([WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM](#)). As a leader in infrastructure and technology, the military is also the world's largest institutional consumer of fossil fuels ([UNION OF CONCERNED SCIENTISTS](#)). Military activity is a direct and leading contributor to global warming and climate change.

The key to avert further climate change and to secure a future of peace resilience is to make the U.S. military pro-ahupua'a. What better outcomes are possible if we now shift the dialogue from fighting climate change to securing peace resilience? Whereas fighting is to seacoast fortification and defense, peacebuilding is to fertility. Sacred notions are crucial for today's climate of political change, resource uncertainty, and environmental and cultural disenchantment. Freshwater (*wai*), as the source of life, is the source of place (*wahi*) and value (*waiwai*) from where peace prospers and sustains.

*"Wars are not fundamental to human history...let us learn more of the ways of Peace."*

Peace advocacy has had a tremendous influence over the history and theory of cities today. In the influential 1925 essay *The Valley Plan of Civilization*, Patrick Geddes declared a global scope for urban thinking with regards to the intersections of geography, human civilization, and working-class ecologies. In the essay, Geddes elaborates upon what is called a valley section:

*"Of that general slope from mountains to sea which we find everywhere in the world...our most familiar occupational types and manifestly successive as we descend in altitude."*

Describing a productive range in climate, soils, and altitude, the valley section narrates an ecology, or science of the environment. A valley section concerns the human occupation of land as it professionally corresponds to ecological transitions from mountain to sea across a geology carved by water. Miners, woodmen, and hunters in the uplands and forest; shepherds and peasants among the hills and fields; and fishers of the coastline and sea. Based on this historical perspective of the valley setting, Geddes advanced a consideration of evolving vocations as

understood by its evolutionary origins in the valley plan as the founding ecology of urbanism.

Whereas Geddes' valley plan is theoretical, an ahupua'a is real. Mauka to makai is the living notion of the valley plan. The culturally rooted and compact notion of a mountain-to-ocean connection (mauka makai) is a common organizing aspect of life across the Hawaiian Islands. When Ma'ilikūkahi clarified the ahupua'a of O'ahu, cultivation systems like lo'i (wet terrace), loko (fishpond), mala (field), kua'iwi (drylands) were already well established. Ahupua'a boundaries were fluid and helped to establish mauka-makai level jurisdictions over key aspects of food and material systems across an array of vocational interconnectedness. Farmers in the valley and fields and fishers along the shore, among priests, navigators, professionals, and so on. The mauka makai approach of ahupua'a encompassed the total directionality of production across the island from mountains to sea.

Hawai'i is a tangible vision of a cultural future rooted in a history regained, where the wealth of ahupua'a streams peace from mountains to sea. The active and ongoing recovery of native cultivation infrastructures, like fishponds and kalo fields coupled with advancing notions of indigenous real time have accompanied major mainstream gains in social justice made over the past century, particularly in the past ten to forty years. This generation of Hawaiians together with local and settler allies are equipped with the conceptual intelligence necessary to confront historically detrimental infrastructures of urbanization and militarization processes contributing to climate change.

While some may think it is impossible to recover ahupua'a within an urban setting, island urbanism is actually what makes ahupua'a recovery all the more possible for Honolulu. Adapting to climate change is an opportunity to recover ahupua'a through infrastructure designed to secure affordable abundant resources to support the quality of island life. For instance, the recent organized action of schools engaging indigenous knowledge systems into curriculum is crucial to expand the conceptual intelligence necessary to secure peace resilience through infrastructure that embeds island values into the build environment.

For infrastructure to work in Hawai'i, it must be culturally rooted, which means it must also address the negative traumatic histories of social injustice that Hawaiians and

locals have faced in conjunction with the canal and the economy that ensued. Utilizing climate change to adapt the Ala Wai Canal in ways that keep water clean and help to feed people will set a new precedent for Honolulu that can direct the course of Hawai'i's economy over the next 100 years and beyond. For instance, the remaking of Ala Wai Golf Course into the Waikiki Kalo Field is part of my project, the Ala Wai Centennial, which models the kinds of major shifts that need to be made when approaching infrastructural upgrade to address climate change. The Ala Wai Golf Course is Honolulu's largest open space. What would it say about our life here if our largest open space were transformed back to food production? How would it help incentivize the recovery of the upland streams and other ahupua'a?

As the Ala Wai Canal turns 100 in 2021, the immense task of retrofitting the canal presents an opportunity to catalyze an ahupua'a future for the rest of Honolulu. The Ala Wai Canal and the ahupua'a recovery of Waikiki is Honolulu's opportunity for a civic triumph to honor Hawai'i and its people, history, and culture, while also addressing larger issues of social and environmental

justice in perpetuating the values that make the Hawaiian Islands the home we love. An Ahupua'a is the physical manifestation of democratic peacebuilding. Securing ahupua'a is crucial for our common future. #Love the Ala Wai Canal.

**SEAN CONNELLY** (b.1984, Honolulu, Hawai'i) is an artist, architect, and activist. His work pioneers an architectural history and theory for recovering ahupua'a, a traditional Hawaiian spatial configuration. Connelly is the author and producer of *Hydraulic Islands*, which encompasses the ongoing works of *Africa-Pacific*, *Hawai'i Futures*, *Ala Wai Centennial*, *O'ahu 2450*, and more. His visual and sculptural works have been exhibited across the United States, including the *ii Gallery* (2013), *Honolulu Museum of Art* (2015), *Santa Fe Art Institute* (2016), *Honolulu Biennale at Foster Gardens* (2017), *Akron Art Museum* (2018), *Luggage Store Gallery* (2018). Connelly operates both independently and collaboratively out of his practice studio *After Oceanic* which pursues projects in the realms of architecture, landscape, and infrastructure ([WWW.AO-PROJECTS.COM](http://WWW.AO-PROJECTS.COM)).

#### RIGHT

Another major infrastructural threats to freshwater on O'ahu, the U.S. Military's Red Hill Underground Fuel Storage Tanks—twenty fuel tanks larger than the Aloha Tower built underground—pose a direct threat to the island's aquifer and main municipal water supply (Sierra Club Hawai'i) directly below the massive fuel tanks. Image by Sean Connelly, *O'ahu 2450* (Architecture Studio in Island Urbanism Advanced).

