

EMPTINESS AND FORM 2024



CLAYTON AMEMIYA ♦ JAKE BOGGS ♦ KEVIN DIMINYATZ ♦ STEPHEN
FREEDMAN ♦ TIMOTHY FREEMAN ♦ JEFF GERE ♦ MICHAEL
MARSHALL ♦ ELIZABETH MILLER ♦ HIROKI MORINOUE ♦ SETSUKO
WATANABE-MORINOUE ♦ DENA NAKAHASHI ♦ PHILIPPE NAULT ♦
MAYUMI ODA ♦ EVELIN PIÑEROS QUINTANA ♦ GABRIEL REED ♦ JECA
RODRÍGUEZ-COLÓN ♦ KAMRAN SAMIMI ♦ BRIAN SAVAGE ♦ ROBIN
SCANLON ♦ RANDALL SHIROMA ♦ SHELBY SMITH ♦ SVENJA TELLE ♦
LONNY TOMONO

An Invitational Exhibition of Visual Art held in conjunction with a philosophy conference, the 17th annual meeting of the *Comparative and Continental Philosophy Circle* (CCPC) which takes place in Volcanoes National Park from June 4-7. Sponsored by the *University of Hawai'i at Hilo* Departments of Art and Philosophy, and the *Volcano Art Center*.

Conception

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Niaulani Campus
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Emptiness and Form

Introduction by Timothy Freeman

Enzō and Calligraphy by Hakuin, 18th century Rinzaï Zen Master

There is a sense in which all visual artists understand the relationship between emptiness and form. A wheel-thrown vessel begins by introducing emptiness in the centered lump of clay, and the final form of the vessel is shaped by the emptiness within the form. The first line in a drawing, or the first application of color in a painting, introduces the complementary interdependence of emptiness and form. Whether one is standing before a blank canvas, an unhewn block of wood, or a solid lump of clay, the possibilities are endless, and the artist's first move is an imposition of form. Without emptiness, there would be no form.

Physicists tell us all matter is mostly empty. In the film *Oppenheimer*, when the title character explains quantum mechanics to his wife, he says "Well, this glass, this drink, this countertop, our bodies, all of it, it's mostly empty space, groupings of tiny energy waves bound together." When Kitty Oppenheimer asks, "By what?" her husband explains "Forces of attraction strong enough to convince us [that] matter is solid, to stop my body passing through yours." According to quantum theory, the building blocks of all matter, like electrons, nuclei, and the molecules they form, can be perceived as waves or particles. Everything that exists thus involves emptiness and form.

Many cultures and traditions explore the theme of emptiness and form. The notion of emptiness (*mu* 無) has a special significance in Zen. The first *kōan* in *The Gateless Barrier*, the 13th century collection of Zen *kōans* begins with the following:

A monk asked Chao-chou, "Has the dog Buddha nature or not?" Chao-chou said, "Mu." (Aitken 1990, 7)

This seems, at first glance, to be quite the perplexing puzzle because one of the basic teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism is that all beings have Buddha nature, the capacity for enlightenment, and "Mu" often expresses a negation. Why does the master respond to the seemingly obvious

question with this straightforward “no”? The simple, merely intellectual answer is that “Mu” can also mean “emptiness,” and thus can, and has served, as a translation for the Sanskrit term *śūnyatā* (emptiness), which is the central teaching of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*, the texts which mark the starting point of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India (ca. 100 BC to 100 CE). The most famous text in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature is known as the *Heart Sūtra*, and the “heart of the *Heart Sūtra*, the most famous and most problematic section of the text,” according to the scholar Donald S. Lopez, Jr., is this passage:

Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is not other than emptiness. In the same way, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness are empty. Śāriputra, in that way all phenomena are empty, without characteristic, unproduced, unceased, stainless, undiminished, unfilled. (Lopez Jr. 1998, 57)

The *Heart Sūtra* is not only the most famous of the *Prajñāpāramitā* texts, it is, according to Lopez, “perhaps the most famous Buddhist scripture.” It influences all of Mahāyāna Buddhism, traditions as diverse as Tibetan Buddhism and Zen. And the most famous line of this most famous section, of this most famous text, is the first sentence: “Form is emptiness; emptiness is form.”

So what is this profound wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) of the kōan and how is this expressed in the initial kōan of the *Gateless Barrier*? Addressing this question confronts one with the difficult problem of the relationship between philosophy and art. While philosophers seek understanding, a kōan is not meant to be rationally understood but is rather a catalyst for transformation. It is not enough to provide a rational explanation of the kōan. One must really get it, this “Mu,” this profound wisdom of emptiness, deep down in the depths of one's being so it becomes evident in one's way of walking upon the Earth. This is the significance of the *ensō*, the Zen circle. It is said to symbolize “Mu,” and thus, like responding to a kōan, the drawing of the circle in one or two uninhibited brushstrokes reveals the enlightenment of the artist. This is why an *ensō* like the one by Hakuin is so highly prized in Japan. In the forward to a recent text, *ENSŌ: Zen Circles of Enlightenment*, Zen teacher John Daido Looi explains: “The *ensō* is perhaps the most common subject of Zen calligraphy. It symbolizes enlightenment, power, and the universe itself. It is a direct expression of thusness, or this-moment-as-it-is. *Ensō* is considered to be one of the most profound subjects in *zenga* (Zen- inspired painting), and it is believed that the character of the artist is fully exposed in how she or he draws an *ensō*. Only a person who is mentally and spiritually complete can draw a true one. Some artists practice drawing an *ensō* daily as a spiritual exercise” (Seo 2007, xi–xii).

While it is not enough to provide a rational explanation of a kōan or a work of art, it is perhaps foolish, or at least too easy, to dismiss the challenge of seeking understanding. So I would like to share a few words about the *Heart Sūtra* and why I proposed this theme of *Emptiness and Form* for exhibition of art at this philosophy conference.

The *Heart Sūtra* is a teaching by the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (the lord who looks down [with compassion]). While Avalokiteśvara was depicted as male in India, in East Asian Buddhism, this bodhisattva is often depicted as female, known as Guanyin in China and Kannon in Japan. In the *Heart Sūtra*, Avalokiteśvara is explaining this profound wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) to Śāriputra, one of the Buddha's favorite disciples. In earlier Buddhism, Śāriputra was recognized as an *arhat*, one who had attained *nirvāṇa*, and had thus achieved liberation from *samsāra*, the endless cycle of birth and death. A bodhisattva, in earlier Buddhism, was a step below that of an *arhat*, as he stood at the doorway of *nirvāṇa* and had not yet passed through it. That it is Śāriputra asking Avalokiteśvara to explain this profound wisdom in the *Heart Sūtra* shows the elevation of the bodhisattva in Mahāyāna Buddhism. This elevation of the bodhisattva is perhaps the most radical revolution in Indian philosophy since all the previous philosophies, the visions (*darśanas*), that make up the history of Indian philosophy—save for the little-known Cārvāka materialists—shared the ultimate goal of liberation from *samsāra* and not having to be reborn again. The bodhisattva becomes the spiritual ideal in Mahāyāna Buddhism in foregoing his own final attainment of *nirvāṇa* and vowing to come back to this life again and again to save all sentient beings.



Bodhisattva with Lotus, India, Ajanta Caves, 5th c.

It is this profound wisdom of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) that leads to the compassion (*karuṇā*) of Avalokiteśvara for all sentient beings. Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. How does this profound wisdom of the *Heart Sūtra* lead to the boundless compassion of the bodhisattva? Sometimes, especially in Zen, this line is said to express a profound paradox. In his style of writing in all caps, the beat poet Albert Saijo, who lived out his last years only a short walk from Volcano Art Center, put it like this:

IF FORM IS EMPTY AND EMPTY FORM—IF THEY ARE ONE & THE SAME—WHY DOES IT TAKE 2 WORDS IN A PARADOXIC STATEMENT TO EXPRESS IT—2 WORDS THAT IN PLAIN LANGUAGE ARE CONTRADICTORY (Saijo 1997, 157)

The merely intellectual response to this is to explain that the line is not really such a paradox at all. If one goes back to the Sanskrit version of the *Heart Sūtra*, this profound wisdom of emptiness is more clear. What the bodhisattva explains is that everything is empty of own-being (*svabhāva*), that is to say, separate or inherent existence. Nāgārjuna, the 2nd century (CE) Mahāyāna philosopher from northern India, often considered the most important Buddhist philosopher after the Buddha, explained that this teaching of emptiness is just a restatement of the Buddha's teaching of dependent-origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*). This is the central teaching of Buddhism—nothing exists in-itself as everything arises and passes away in interdependence. As Nāgārjuna states it in the famous verse:

Whatever is dependently co-arisen [*pratītyasamutpāda*]
That is explained to be emptiness [*śūnyatā*].
That, being a dependent designation,
Is itself, the middle way. (Garfield 1995, 69)

When it is understood that this profound wisdom of emptiness is about interdependence, the first line of the most famous and problematic part of the *Heart Sūtra*, “form is emptiness, emptiness is form,” is the least problematic part of the passage. This is clear, again, if one goes back to the Sanskrit text and realizes that the word “form” is a translation of *rūpa*, and thus refers to our bodies. When the bodhisattva is asked to explain the profound wisdom of emptiness, he begins by explaining that all parts of the self, beginning with the body, are empty of inherent, substantial existence. Avalokiteśvara goes on to explain that this emptiness of the body is also true of the other four parts of the self in the Buddhist analysis: feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saṃjñā*), compositional factors (*saṃskāra*), and consciousness (*viññāna*).

This teaching of interdependence is most obvious in considering our bodies. If one considers their own physical body and where it comes from, it is obvious that our bodies exist in interdependence. The body begins with what our parents contributed but is then the result of all the food and drink we have consumed throughout our lives. If one then considers where all that sustenance comes from, we can perhaps begin to understand the profound wisdom of emptiness. After explaining that all parts of the self are empty of own-being and thus exist in interdependence, the next line of the bodhisattva’s teaching says that “all phenomenon are empty.” Here the word “phenomenon” is a translation of the word *dharma*. This is a most important word in Indian philosophy and has several meanings. In Buddhism, when capitalized *Dharma* refers to the teachings of the Buddha. When uncapitalized it is sometimes used to refer to just about anything, or everything, all phenomena.

In Hawaiian pidgin there is the expression “*da kine*” which is also used to refer to anything. The *Heart Sūtra* is a short condensed, abbreviated summation of the vast *Prajñāpāramitā* literature. When I teach the *Sūtra* to my students at the *University of Hawai‘i–Hilo*, I sometimes joke that the profound wisdom of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* might be abbreviated even further—“*da kine empty, brah!*”

So what then does this mean, this profound wisdom of emptiness? To begin with, it implies an acceptance of our impermanence. From the central teaching of *pratītyasamutpāda*, the Buddha’s teaching of impermanence (*anitya*) follows. From the traditional perspective of the Buddha’s time, shaped by the teachings of the *Upaniṣads*, the most problematic part of the bodhisattva’s teaching in the *Heart Sūtra* would not be that the body, form (*rūpa*) is empty, but rather that consciousness, *viññāna*, is empty of own-being. In the *Upaniṣads*, *viññāna* is sometimes identified with the *Ātman*, the eternal, indestructible Self. In one of the most famous passages from the *Upaniṣads*, in the *Kātha Upaniṣad*, we find this view:

The wise one is not born, nor does it die.
It is not from anywhere, nor was it anyone.
Unborn, everlasting, eternal, primeval,
It is not slain when the body is slain. (Roebuck 2003, 279)

This view is later echoed in the *Bhagavad Gītā* when Krishna explains to Arjuna the nature of the true Self:

Weapons do not cut it,
fire does not burn it,
waters do not wet it,
wind does not wither it.

It cannot be cut or burned;
it cannot be wet or
withered; It is enduring,
all-pervasive,
Fixed, immovable, and timeless. (Miller 1986, 35)

From the central teaching of *pratītyasamutpāda*, the Buddha's teaching of no-self (*anātman*) also follows. This is just the denial of the *Ātman* hypothesis, an acceptance of our fragile, ephemeral nature. To see all *dharma*s as empty, is to see the ephemeral nature of everything. This is beautifully expressed in the famous verse toward the end of the *Diamond Sūtra*, another one of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras*:

*A shooting star, a fault of vision, a lamp;
An illusion and a dew and a bubble;
A dream, a flash of lightning, a thundercloud—
In this way is the conditioned to be seen.* (Lopez, Jr. 2004, 462)

In the great expanse of time, our lifetime is like a shooting star in the dark of the night. Instead of longing for immortality and liberation (*mokṣa*) from the cycle of birth and death, the profound wisdom of emptiness is about acceptance of our ephemeral, fragile existence. This leads to the most surprising passage in Nāgārjuna's text explaining the profound wisdom of emptiness:

There is not the slightest difference
Between cyclic existence [*saṃsāra*] and *nirvāṇa*.
There is not the slightest difference
Between *nirvāṇa* and cyclic existence [*saṃsāra*]. (Garfield 1995, 75)

Jay Garfield explains this point: "To be in *nirvāṇa*, then, is to see things as they are—as merely empty, dependent, impermanent, and nonsubstantial, but not to be somewhere else, seeing something else. [...] Nāgārjuna is emphasizing that *nirvāṇa* is not someplace else. It is a way of being here" (Garfield 1995, 332).

This is why the profound wisdom of emptiness leads to the compassion of the bodhisattva. When one realizes that everything exists in this web of interdependence, and one lets go of this attachment to the conception of a separate self, along with all the attachments that lead to

suffering, then one can be here now in this present moment, not suffering and causing suffering but with compassion for all sentient beings. This is why the profound wisdom expressed in the line, “form is emptiness; emptiness is form,” from the heart of the *Heart Sūtra*, has the greatest relevance for all of us living in this time in which the very future of life on Earth is threatened by global war and ecological collapse.

The late Vietnamese Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh coined the term *interbeing* for this fundamental Buddhist teaching of interdependence. He provides perhaps the best explanation for this conception when he holds up a blank piece of paper and asks if one can see the cloud in the paper. After a long blank stare by everyone listening, he explains:

If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow, and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either. So we can say that the cloud and the paper *inter-are*. ‘Interbeing’ is a word that is not in the dictionary yet, but if we combine the prefix ‘inter’ with the verb ‘to be,’ we have a new verb, inter-be. Without a cloud, we cannot have paper, so we can say that the cloud and the sheet of paper inter-are. (Nhat Hanh 2002, 55)

In a wonderful essay, “The Sun My Heart,” Thich Nhat Hanh draws out the importance of the wisdom of the *Heart Sūtra* in this time of ecological crisis: “Our Earth, our green beautiful Earth is in danger, and all of us know it. Yet we act as if our daily lives have nothing to do with the situation of the world” (Nhat Hanh 1996, 166). Now we understand that the Earth as a planet circling the sun, will continue on its orbit long after we are all gone; but the “green beautiful Earth,” the Earth that allows for life to be possible, is in danger. If we are at all paying attention, we should understand that this danger, the threat of both nuclear and ecological apocalypse, is the result of a way of being here that has shaped our modern civilization. In response to this danger, Thich Nhat Hanh offers this advice:

We have to remember that our body is not limited to what lies within the boundary of our skin. Our body is much more immense. We know that if our heart stops beating, the flow of our life will stop, but we do not take the time to notice the many things outside of our bodies that are equally essential for our survival. If the ozone layer around our Earth were to disappear for even an instant, we would die. If the sun were to stop shining, the flow of our life would stop. The sun is our second heart, our heart outside of our body. It gives all life on Earth the warmth necessary for existence. Plants live thanks to the sun. Their leaves absorb the sun's energy, along with carbon dioxide from the air, to produce food for the tree, the flower, the plankton. And thanks to plants, we and other animals can live. All of us—people, animals, plants, and minerals—“consume” the sun, directly and indirectly. We cannot begin to describe all the effects of the sun, that great heart outside of our body. (Nhat Hanh 1996, 163)

After explaining this notion of interbeing, this profound wisdom of the *Heart Sūtra*, Thich Nhat Hanh challenges us to change our way of being here:

Our way of walking on the Earth has a great influence on animals and plants. We have killed so many animals and plants and destroyed their environments. Many are now extinct. In turn, our environment is now harming us. We are like sleepwalkers, not knowing what we are doing or where we are heading. Whether we can wake up or not depends on whether we can walk mindfully on our Mother Earth. The future of all life, including our own, depends on our mindful steps. [...] We must learn to practice unconditional love for all beings so that the animals, the air, the trees, and the minerals can continue to be themselves. (Nhat Hanh 1996, 165)

So this is perhaps the whole point of the *Heart Sūtra*. If we could really get this wisdom of emptiness, it could change our way of being in the world, our way of walking upon the Earth as Nhat Hanh puts it. It should be clear by now that humanity stands at a crossroads. If our civilization continues the current course the future is not at all very bright. According to the 2024 statement of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, due to the deepening crises of global conflict and the threat of nuclear war, climate change and ecological collapse, we are at a moment of historic danger with the Doomsday Clock standing at 90 seconds to midnight. The nuclear sword of Damocles still hangs over all of humanity, and with ocean temperatures dramatically rising in the last couple of years it seems we are headed inexorably toward global catastrophe.

What is it about our current way of walking upon the Earth that has us on this disastrous course? Part of it is an understanding rooted deep in the history of Western thought in which human beings are thought to be separate from the rest of nature. There is also the longing for eternal life in another world that reduces this Earth to a place that is not our home, but a place to be used up and left behind—a wasteland. One could make a strong case that the problem lies in the attachment to the self as separate not only from the rest of nature but from other human beings. It is this attachment that creates boundaries, dividing people into hostile camps feuding over land and resources. It is also clear that an economy based on perpetual growth and maximizing private wealth for the few is not sustainable. I would say that it is this drive to get as rich as possible, which many today equate with our precious freedom, that is threatening to render the Earth uninhabitable. How can we heal our fractured habitable earth? This is the question that inspired my proposal for an art exhibition on the theme of *Emptiness and Form*.

It is a lot to ask of art, and philosophy for that matter, to be a catalyst for change. But I hope that this exhibition can provoke some reflection. There are many strong works of art in this exhibition, works that are both visually interesting and draw attention in some way to the interaction of emptiness and form. Several artists contributed works that were not made specifically for this exhibition but are examples of a body of work developed for many years exploring the interplay of emptiness and form. This includes a particularly robust exhibition of ceramics, with works by Stephen Freedman, Clayton Amemiya, Jake Boggs, Setsuko



Watanabe-Morinoue, Shelby Smith, and Gabriel Reed. All these individuals are masters of ceramic art, and all are well-known Big Island artists except for Gabriel Reed. A recent graduate from the *Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts*, a Ph.D. program for artists in Visual Arts: Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Art Theory, Reed also has an M.F.A. in ceramics and his work for this exhibition, one of his *Unfired Orb(s)* series, demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of clay and firing processes. Reed will also be presenting a paper at the

philosophy conference. Our philosophy conferences that we have hosted here, both the Comparative and Continental Philosophy Circle (CCPC) and the related *Pacific Association for the Continental Tradition* (PACT), have included artists from the IDSVA program.

Other works exploring the relationship between emptiness and form from artists who contributed from their existing body of work include sculptures by Lonny Tomono, Kamran Samimi, paintings by Philippe Nault, Michael Marshall, Dena Nakahashi and the photo collages by Jeff Gere. I wasn't aware of Samimi's work, an artist from Honolulu, until I attended a presentation by him as part of his work as an artist-in-residence this past spring semester at the *University of Hawai'i at Hilo*. I knew right away that his work belonged in this exhibition.

There are also a few artists who contributed works from their existing body of work that more specifically address the theme of emptiness and form in the *Heart Sutra*. Most obvious is Mayumi Oda's beautiful, limited edition silkscreen print, *The Heart Sutra with Lotus*. This is a masterpiece from one of the most beloved, famous artists living on Hawai'i island. As she explains in her statement, it has been part of her spiritual practice for 40 years to write out the text, the Chinese script, of the *Heart Sutra*. Then there are the wonderful woodblock prints from



Hiroki Morinoue, *Ancient Chant* and *Thin Ice*. Also, one of the best, most well-known, beloved artists from the Big Island, Hiroki's works, part of his *Bleached Coral Series*, directly call attention to the problem of climate change which we can see impacting coral reefs here. We are all on thin ice these days, and when I saw these prints in the Morinoue's Studio 7 gallery in Hōlualoa, I really wanted them for this exhibition. We can also include here Randall Shiroma's mixed-media sculpture, *Singing and Dancing are the Voice of the Law, Bright the Full Moon of Samadhi*. Shiroma is well-known for his monumental, heavy concrete and stone sculptures, but here we see one of the lightest works in the exhibition. A Zen practitioner, the title of Shiroma's work comes from 18th century Zen master Hakuin's *Song of Zazen*.

The other artists in this exhibition created works specifically for this exhibition. This includes Volcano artists Elizabeth Miller, Robin Scanlon, Brian Savage, and Kevin Diminyatz. All of these works are thoughtful reflections. Miller's fascinating *Marvelous Illusions of Forms in Time, Dancing in the Emptiness*, explores the relation between the Zen theme of emptiness and the awareness from contemporary physics that only 4% of the universe exists in form. Another Zen practitioner, Diminyatz's work, *There Is No Such Thing as You*, a painting on a specially prepared cement canvas, is a reflection nurtured in years of zazen practice and kōan study. I think this work perhaps gets to the heart of the bodhisattva's teaching in the *Heart Sutra* that the self along with everything else is empty of separate, substantial existence. We must get over this attachment to the self that underlies the madness of our modern civilization. Diminyatz's reflection on getting over this attachment to self perhaps connects with Nakahashi's painting, *The Pursuit of Ma*, which includes ash from the burning of her journals, letters, and poems. The mixed-media works by Jeca Rodríguez-Colón also belong in this conversation. Another recent graduate from the IDSVA program, also presenting in the philosophy conference, her work uses clips of her own hair, shaped in little *enzōs*, in a reflection on our impermanence.



Another work deserving of special mention is Svenja Telle's work *Ke Pō, Ke Ao (The Night, the Dawn): Navigating Posthumanism Through Nature and Technology*. An artist living near the top of Ocean view, the central image in her work, painted in white ink, takes the shape of *Moku'āweoweo*, the summit caldera of Mauna Loa. This ink is made from ink made from a carbon capture process. This work of art is the first work of art exhibited in the world using this carbon capture technology.

I should also say something about my own work in this exhibition. My pit-fired volcano inspired vessels have frequently been exhibited at the Volcano Art Center Gallery in Hawai'i National Park. For this exhibition I decided to work in porcelain as I like the play of shadows and light across the unglazed white porcelain surface. I had the idea to also produce a thin, ephemeral mask like human face to call attention to the fact that the word "form" in the famous line from the *Heart Sutra* specifically refers to our bodies. When I started the work last summer, Sinéad O'Connor passed away and I started listening to her music. I was particularly struck by her performance of the Elton John song *Sacrifice*. In a video recording she begins by saying she wanted to pare the song down a bit and make it a bit emptier. She goes on to say that she really like singing this song because it is a great song for singers, and the way the light lit up her face as she was singing, I thought her face would be a great subject for such a sculpture suggesting our fragile, ephemeral existence.

Finally, I would like to conclude with a few words about the work of Colombian artist Evelin Piñeros Quintana. Last year, in May of 2023, the CCPC conference was held in Bogotá, Colombia. This year we invited our host, Gustavo Gómez Pérez, a philosophy professor at *La Pontificia Universidad Javeriana*, to present at our conference. At the conference in Bogotá, there was also a small art exhibition on display at the conference site and at the end of the conference the artists, students and recent graduates of the art department along with the chair of the art department, had an opportunity to talk about their work. The last to present was Evelin, a recent graduate from the art program. She is a talented painter and illustrator, but she recently developed work in ceramics, making these whistling bottles (*botellas silbadoras*) or flutes like those produced throughout pre-Colombian South America which produce these bird-like whistling sounds as water passes from one chamber to the other. We were all moved by her presentation. She told a story about her father, a human rights lawyer who had recently passed away. She explained to us that her father could not speak as a young child because of a tongue problem. All he could do was create an ocarina with his hands and whistle to communicate with the birds and other creatures in the forest. He tried to teach her to make a ocarina with her hands when she was a child but she never could produce the bird-like whistle. After her father passed, she decided to make these ceramic flutes. There was something shamanic about her presentation as the clay instrument was a way to communicate, to send a message and to listen for advice from her father. Already thinking about an art exhibition for this year's conference, I invited her to participate in this exhibition. Despite a great effort to bring her here, we were unsuccessful in helping her get a visa. With the boundaries set by our government due to the fear regarding immigration, it is very difficult, especially for a young woman artist to get a tourist visa. In the last year, I also learned about her undergraduate thesis defense, an art event in which she used these whistling bottles for what she calls an *Auscultation of a Wounded Earth*. I had to look up that word. An auscultation is a medical term referring to a doctor's use of a stethoscope for listening to a patient's heart. She made a special whistling bottle for this exhibition and a short video about this *Auscultation of a Wounded Earth*. This work draws attention to the Earth wounded by violent exploitation of the natural world and the political violence that has led to so much bloodshed in Colombia in recent decades. Her auscultation calls attention to the cases of disappeared persons, which I suspect her father's work must have been concerned with.



Evelin Piñeros Quintana at the Bogota Conference

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The Perfection of Wisdom Heart Sutra

The noble Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, while practicing the deep practice of Prajnaparamita looked upon the Five Skandhas and seeing they were empty of self-existence, Said,

“Here, Shariputra, form is emptiness, emptiness is form; emptiness is not separate form, form is not separate from emptiness; whatever is form is emptiness, whatever is emptiness is form. The same holds for sensation and perception, memory and consciousness.”

Here, Shariputra, all dharmas are defined by emptiness not birth or destruction, purity or defilement, completeness or deficiency.

ॐ गते गते पारगते पारसंगते बोधि स्वाहा

Therefore, Shariputra, in emptiness there is no form, no sensation, no perception, no memory and no consciousness; no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body and no mind; no shape, no sound, no smell, no taste, no feeling and no thought; no element of perception, from eye to conceptual consciousness; no causal link, from ignorance to old age and death, and no end of causal link from ignorance to old age and death; no suffering, no source, no relief, no path; no knowledge, no attainment and no non-attainment.

Therefore, Shariputra, without attainment, bodhisattvas take refuge in Prajnaparamita and live without walls of the mind. Without walls of the mind and thus without fears, they see through delusions and finally nirvana.

All Buddhas past, present and future also take refuge in Prajnaparamita and realize unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.

You should therefore know the great mantra of Prajnaparamita, the mantra of great magic, the unexcelled mantra, the mantra equal to the unequalled, which heals all suffering and is true, not false, the mantra in Prajnaparamita spoken thus:

“Gone, gone, gone to the other shore;
Gone completely to the other shore. Svaha.”

Here ends the Perfection of Wisdom Heart Sutra.

The Heart Sutra, Translation and Commentary by Red Pine, Counterpoint Press, 2004.



The Heart Sutra with Lotus

Handpulled Silkscreen Print,
limited edition

39.25" x 13.50"

2014

MAYUMI ODA

The *Heart Sutra* is probably the most well-known, most important of the Buddhist sutras. It is very short and condensed to a little over 270 words, and it has been my practice for nearly 40 years to copy it. When I can't paint, I burn incense and sit, going through each character of the sutra, spending almost an hour. It is like a meditation to clear my mind and clarify my perception.

I played with the overlay effect in this series, placing paintings over the sutra in a metallic resist. The *Heart Sutra* speaks about how, if you can clear your perception, you can see things for what they really are. An overly creates a completely different image and our life is like that, layers on top of each other, sometimes changing what we perceive as the truth. I enjoyed playing with this technique and the idea of enjoying the overlay of our life.



Ancient Chant

Woodblock Print,

43" x 43"

2017

HIROKI MORINOUE

Bleached Coral Series

This entire *Coral Bleaching* series started with, at the time, my four-year-old grandson collecting coral pieces at the beach. I wondered what he saw and thought of, that made him pick up these fragments of broken dried coral.

I soon became fascinated by Kenzo's coral collection and remembered the rocks, fossils, driftwoods and coral pieces that I picked up at his age and now disregarded many years ago. I took my grandson's collection of beachcomb fragments and held it on my fingertips. Then, rotated them around to view these specimens from various perspectives and realized how the coral displayed itself in different forms. I began to create a reductive mokuhanga (Japanese wood cut prints) from Kenzo's coral collection. In a few weeks I created 44 prints of bleached coral fragments and made a small edition. This began a narrative series. From the original work, I continued to carve into the woodblock creating patterns of moving water, shadows, rock forms and proceeded to carve till it seemed as if the coral was under thin ice. This allowed me to create a sense of place where coral fragments are found around the world.



Thin Ice

Woodblock Print,

43" x 43"

2017

HIROKI MORINOUE

Throughout time, artists are challenged on social, political and environmental issues. Coming up with fresh visual concepts that truly express what we artists really feel about any of these situations is a genuine challenge. For myself, I don't want to be seen as being too negative and at the other end of the spectrum not to be overly romantic with my images.

I grew up on the Big Island as a third generation coffee farmer in Holualoa, HI. I remember after the end of each coffee season, it was tradition for all families in Kona to celebrate the harvest by having a picnic at one's favorite beach.

Today, over sixty years later, I'm observing that the rising ocean levels are eroding our popular beach areas. I see my favorite fishing spots and limu (seaweed) harvesting areas have become more dangerous. Global warming and the rising of our ocean levels have become a universal concern. My greatest fear is that these conditions will snowball at a point of no return if it has not started already.



Jinsei Moya I

Ceramic

7.5" x 5.125" x 5.125"

2024

SETSUKO

WATANABE-MORINOUE

For functional wares, I think of intimate relationships from my hands to others. I think of my wares to have a simple and inviting look with its form, weight and feeling.

When I work with mixed media or sculpture, I focus on positive and negative space in and around each work. I play composing until there is a relationship, a conversation or a sense of harmony within or between forms.



Architectural Vase 0818

Ceramic

12.75" x 6.5" x 6.5"

2024



Conversation I

Ceramic

11.25" x 10" x 10"

2024



Iga

Wood-fired Ceramic,
multi fired clay

14”h x 4.5 w

2024

CLAYTON AMEMIYA

This vessel was fashioned from a ten pound lump of clay, embellished with strips of more clay, and impressed with coral markings. It then underwent three 100+ hour firings resulting in a thick coating of natural O’hia wood ash covering its surface.

The buildup of coals in the firebox partially buried the vessel, leaving a dark, burnt residue like charred remains. But within the object, the clay remained relatively unscathed, it’s emptiness shielded from the turbulence of fire.



Untitled Orb(s)

Stoneware Clay, Kaolin Terra Sigillata,
Fire, Gold Luster

18" x 18"

2022

GABRIEL REED

In this series, now in its 23rd year, Gabriel Reed's *Untitled Orb(s)* investigate the upward movement of fire, one that flows like water along its path of least resistance transfiguring all it encounters. Orbs offer a simple and arresting ceramic experience, an unwobbling pivot, each shape a unique centering. They are a kind of structural hypothesis, a first brick in a larger system of refractory clay works; violent collisions in which he explores the direct use of fire as a mold. Using kiln building principles, unglazed local clays and terra sigillata, he creates specific and necessary parameters that magnify the effects of organic firing processes.



Imagining Backwards

Ceramic Stoneware

25”h x 16”w x 11”d

2023

STEPHEN FREEDMAN

This is a reimagining of a funary urn for two people, a 'companion urn'. It's incapacity to contain anything counterpoints the metaphor. The text eviscerated reads, "Remembering is imagining backwards; Imagining is remembering forwards." By recalling the past and projecting the future, we humans have become adaptable to every ecosystem on the planet. The psychological cost of looking back is regret; the cost of looking forward is anxiety. Religion absolves us of past failures and promises us glorious futures. When Nietzsche declared God dead, he replaced an afterlife with an Eternal Recurrence -- an affirmation of all things past and future as generating this moment.



On The Edge

Porcelain, marine
epoxy, paint

14" x 14"

2024

IF YER NOT LIVIN
ON THE EDGE
YER TAKIN UP
TOO MUCH SPACE

ALBERT SAIJO
OUTTSPEAKS: A RHAPSODY

TIMOTHY FREEMAN

The original form of this vessel is similar to the pit-fired volcano inspired vessels which I have made for many years now. A closed form is thrown on the wheel and then turned over and opened up from what was formerly the base. I'm careful not to touch the outside surface at the top, and as the clay is pushed up from within it sometimes splits and tears and thus in some ways evokes the fractured volcano landscape. In this case, I poured some heavy slip on the top before opening it up all the way, and then treated that surface with a little sodium silicate and this produced a more fractured surface at the top. I had the vision for this exposition to work in porcelain as I made one small porcelain vessel awhile back and I enjoy watching the shadows and light play across the surface throughout the day. This vessel was made from 50 lbs of the finest porcelain; it was quite a challenge to throw and work into the final form. It is a lot to ask of porcelain, and it looked really great unfired. But then it cracked in the bisque fire, a small crack right down the middle. Since it had already failed, I decided to go ahead and high-fire it just to see what would happen. Perhaps, I pushed it too far. If it hadn't hung up at that one spot, right on the edge, it would have completely fallen apart. It was a fine form, and now with the crack the emptiness in the form opens up quite dramatically.



Sacrifice

Porcelain, marine epoxy,
lacquer, & gold leaf

15" h x 13.5" w

2024

*A shooting star, a fault of vision, a lamp;
An illusion and a dew and a bubble;
A dream, a flash of lightning, a thundercloud—
In this way is the conditioned to be seen.*

The Diamond Sutra

TIMOTHY FREEMAN

The famous line from the *Heart Sutra*, “form is emptiness; emptiness is form,” is often misunderstood as something of paradox. How can form be emptiness and emptiness form? If one goes back to the Sanskrit text, it is not so hard to understand as the Sanskrit word translated as “form” could just as well be rendered as “body.” The profound wisdom of the *Heart Sutra* is that everything is empty of permanent, independent, substantial existence. This wisdom involves acceptance of our ephemeral, fragile existence. This is most obvious with the body.

I had the idea for this exhibition last summer of making a fragile, mask-like face. Then, as I was preparing for this work, Sinéad O’Connor passed away. I was watching a video in which she sings the Elton John song “Sacrifice.” Before she starts singing she says that “this is a song for singers,” and as she was singing, and the light was shining on her face, I thought “and your face is a face for sculptors.”

To make this thin, mask-like sculpture, I first made a hollow sculpture with a sculpture clay. Then I made a plaster mold of the sculpture, and then pressed thin porcelain into the mold to get this form. It was quite a challenge to make, and, of course, she cracked in the firing.



Healing Our Fractured Earth

Porcelain, marine epoxy,
lacquer, & gold leaf

14" x 10.5"

2024

Only as an allegory of the highest virtue did gold assume the highest value. Gold-like shines the glance of the one who bestows.

Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

TIMOTHY FREEMAN

The wisdom of the *Heart Sutra* involves accepting our ephemeral, fragile existence. We are all cracked in some ways, and if we are at all paying attention, it is clear that our world is pretty fractured these days. Our democracy is just about broken as too few have understood the key to democracy, and our habitable earth is fractured as too many think our precious freedom is just the freedom to get as rich as possible. For them gold is a symbol of wealth and their highest desire is to live in golden splendor.

How can we possibly heal our fractured habitable earth? Human beings have to become capable of a different way of living on the earth. The point of the *Heart Sutra*, is that if we get this profound wisdom of emptiness, compassion should follow. Can human beings become capable of the boundless compassion of a bodhisattva?

Nietzsche suggests a different understanding of gold. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, gold is an image for a love that is a gift rather than an investment. We have to shine like the golden sun, always giving its light. Of course, the Japanese mastered *kintsugi*, a method of healing broken pottery with gold.



The Man In The Arena

Porcelain, Stoneware,
Underglazes

20”h x 9” x 9”

2023

JAKE BOGGS

While contemplating the purpose or meaning of my artwork I frequently return to art theorist and Asian art scholar Phillip Rawson. In his book *Ceramics* Rawson pens a short yet potent description of the spiritual nature of ceramics, one that I often reflect on when thinking about the utility of my own work. Rawson posited the existence of what he called the potter’s space, the metaphysical quality that exists within vessels. The interior space of a vessel is the key to Rawson’s premise though I believe it goes beyond that.

He in essence is saying that vessels are singularities in space/time that serve as portals to a metaphysical dimension. That’s a pretty bold claim to impose on an ordinary pot, but I agree with it. One could look at pots as portals into our own cerebral metaphysical space. The relationship between our skull and mind is parallel to that of the pot and the potter’s space.



Prime Mover

Porcelain, Stoneware,
Underglazes

18''h x 10'' x 10''

2023

JAKE BOGGS

Though they often symbolically allude to a utility, most of the vessels in my recent work have been sealed off at the top, they appear as vases, yet are devoid of openings. I do this in part to highlight the form removed from a utility while attempting to keep its metaphysical energy contained. This notion is not too dissimilar from the tianquiping vases from the *Ming* and *Qing* dynasties. The name of this style of vessel translates to heavenly sphere in English; most importantly these vessels are symbolic aesthetic embodiments of the metaphysical world. Like our bodies holding our consciousness, ceramics can activate our imagination and our contemplative nature.



A Matter Of Time

Ceramics, Wire, Cast
Mortar

6" x 6" x 8"h

2023

SHELBY SMITH

“Smith’s fields of study, both architecture and ceramics, conflate in the “theoretical vessel” – an object by which space becomes an artifact of human design and interaction.”
-Andrej Kramarz

Smith's work in this series are created by applying porcelain slip to wire 3d shapes that have experienced time & action. The pieces are fired to the point of thermal change with glaze and underglaze. Thermal change happens when the wire is heated to a fluxing point and glues the pieces back together, look close. The wire is recycled, objects are found or fabricated and combined to create a story in which the viewer can be inserted The titles like words in a poem only let you in the door to the thoughts of the artist's mind.



Box Pillow For A Twist In The Mind

Ceramics, Wire, Cast
Mortar, Found object

6" x 9" x 10"h

2023

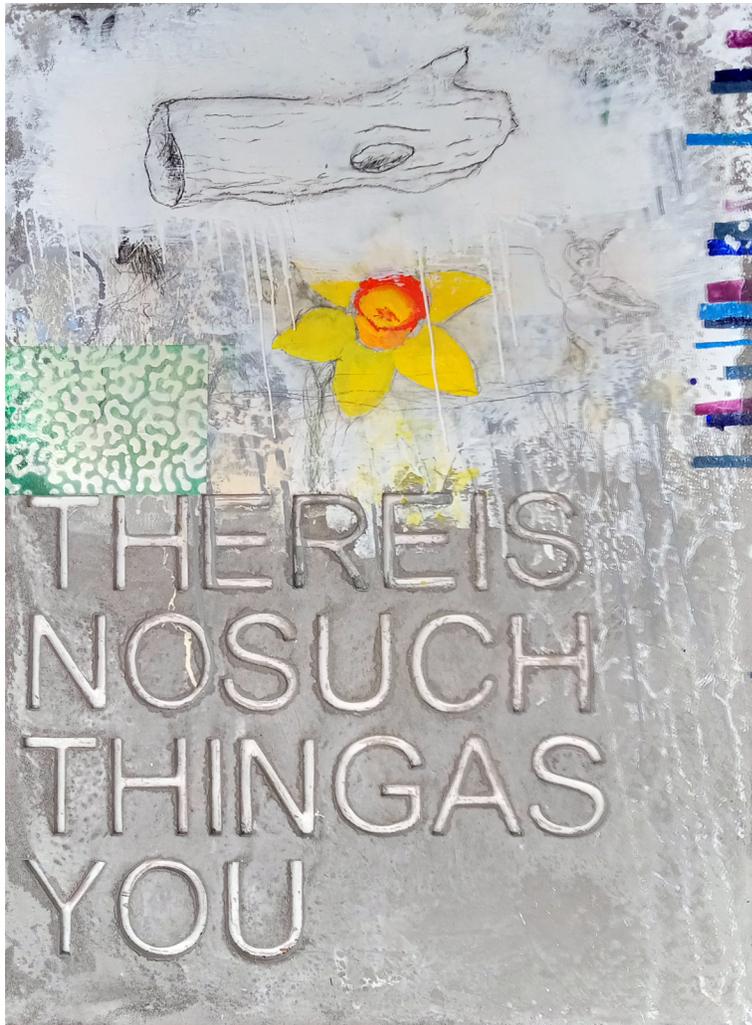


The Unfolded History Of An Occupied Idea

Ceramics, Wire, Cast
Mortar, Found object

11" x 7" x 6"h

2023



There Is
No Such
Thing As
You

35" X 49", encaustic, charcoal,
spray paint on cement

2024

Dogen Zenji, the founder of the
Japanese Soto school, wrote in the
13th century:

*To study the Way is to study the self.
To study the self is to forget the self.
To forget the self is to be awakened to
the myriad things.*

I started a Zen meditation practice
called zazen many years ago. Sitting
zazen in silence is the way to study
ones self, not in an intellectual way, but
to become familiar with the patterns of
thought that are usually taking one into
some imagined place in the future or
remunerating about our past.

KEVIN DIMINYATZ

This self talk for me is usually patterned with thoughts that cause me a certain amount of anxiety. I began going to long retreats when I was young to practice zazen all day and face this constant thinking in a way to hopefully wear it down. Over time in the retreats these patterns become fairly boring and I was starting to see through them.

During one retreat I went for a hike in the woods while on a break in the mid day. While hiking I was focused on my breath and koan. I began to pay less and less attention to my habitual patterns of thought. Suddenly I stopped on the trail and stood staring at an ordinary log in front of me. For a brief moment, I did not see the log from the position that I was here and the log was there. There was no I and other. I can not recall this experience in exact words, but I can say it was a period of complete freedom which did not include the small story of who I was. I had a glimpse into experiencing form as exactly emptiness and emptiness exactly form. Myself didn't matter, but that didn't make me nothing, I was actually more full and complete than I ever was in my life,. My heart was open, as if I was in love with the world and the world loved me. I believe there is in this feeling the reason for "heart" being the name of the sutra.

My practice did not end there, it still continues. I can not say that I gained any wisdom. The state I was in at that retreat faded and daily life crept back in with its story of myself again. But that experience gave me a message that I was ok, just human, and the personality that I cling to called "myself" is not so concrete. One day while painting in my studio, I made a small drawing on a little piece of paper with the caption; "There is no such thing as you" I saw it in two ways, from the perspective of the experience I had at that retreat, and also as a term of endearment for myself. Like yes! There is no such thing as me and this one life.



The
Pursuit
of
Ma

Acrylic, ash from
burned journals,
letters, poems

1" x 30" X 40"

2024

DENA NAKAHASHI

When I moved to Volcano in 2009, the choice felt less like a decision than an escape. I had to learn to let go, and even the things I stubbornly clung to gave way to nature. 15 years later, its clear that this is home. The other things are important, but only what lasts are still here. What lasted is time and space always posing the question of possibilities. Loss, destruction, abandonment gives way to the potential of creation and something new.



Chawan Landscapes (02222022-4)

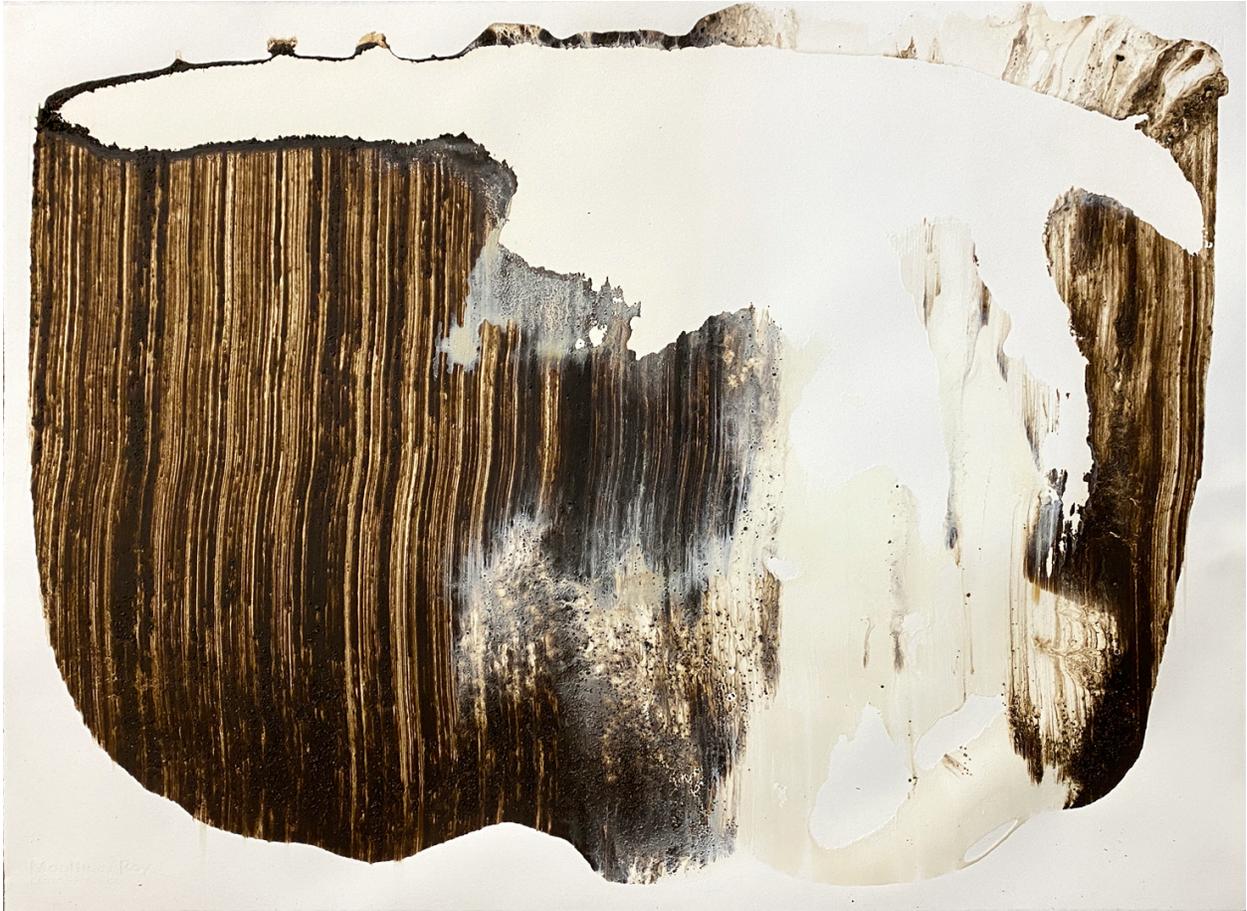
Ka Lae soil and acrylic on paper

30.5" x 22"h

2022

PHILIPPE NAULT

Chawan, the tea bowl used for *Chado* (the Japanese tea ceremony), is the subject of a series of works named *Chawan Landscapes*, started in 2020. In the traditional ceramic art of making chawan, the relationship between the potter and the forces at play between the hand and the clay, the wood and the fire, as well as the variable influence of atmospheric conditions, is a love affair. It goes beyond the artist's personal esthetic concerns, and enters a spiritual realm where the bowl is both, form, to be held in the hands, and emptiness, to be contemplated.



Chawan Landscapes (03042021)

Fern forest mud and acrylic on paper

30" x 22.5"h

2021

PHILIPPE NAULT

As a practitioner of *Chado*, I came to realize that this philosophy was fundamental to the practice. There, the motion of the hand, the weight or the lightness of a utensil, the sound of water pouring in the vessel, the rhythm of the breath, are experienced as just what they are. Form, and emptiness, matter and mind, time and space, merge in a dimension of simple beingness.



Chawan Landscapes (09162020)

Acrylic on paper and traces of Ka Lae soil on paper

30.5" x 22"h

2020

PHILLIPE NAULT

The same process applies to my painting practice. When the basic act of painting comes first, empty, free of narrative and esthetical purpose, the form will appear by itself.

Natural soil from the forest of arborescent ferns where I live and work, and sumi ash from tea ceremonies, are the primary medium used in Chawan Landscapes.



Motion Is At The Center

Collage (magazine image
manipulation)

9”h x 9”

2024

JEFF GERE

Form is Emptiness—a stripe of white.
Emptiness if form—a stripe of black.
white & black, black & white, rising swirling entwined.
Body Form floating,
waving limbs dissolving
form evaporating into the Empty. See?
Never mind the face of this body in motion
Facing front, looking right back at you, unseen.
In a swirl with a twist, with a polka dot flurry
Motion is at the center of this dance
white emptiness embracing black form
with rhythm, dance, stripes with a twist.



Crater Flow Dance

Collage (magazine image
manipulation)

10.25”h x 8”

2024

JEFF GERE

Form is Emptiness is Form filled with Emptiness.
See the crater: firm, fixed, earthen & massive.
It is rising to a lip, an edge, into a vessel embracing ...
nothing... emptiness... a void.
See the dancer rising, legs at the center of a swirling dress,
in layers, spinning spiraling around to a floating edge,
a circumference, a circle's lip, and beyond it?... nothing.
But see? That nothing is flowing red, molten motion and moving
finally shaping cooling turning sold, firm & fixed,
embracing nothing. Again. See?
See the crater. See the flow. See the dance.
Form is Emptiness is Form filled Emptiness
Dancing we are on the solid lip of Emptiness.
Just seems like a perfect image for this Conference
on the Volcano's lip, right?



Portrait of Lady Dusk

Collage (magazine image manipulation)

8.25”h x 6.25”

2024

JEFF GERE

Form is Emptiness,
Day Turns to Night.
Form Turns to be swallowed in shadow
Swallowed by the void. Dusk becomes Night.
See her coming? She is lady Dusk.
In the eyes of the beholder,
In the turning of the World,
See her arriving - so normal,
so natural, so elegant, such presence-
Such Majesty, this common mystery.
Well dressed comes dusk.
In pinks, soft hews, silent.
And arriving, she is invisible. See?
Are you Seeing her face Unseen?
Such Majesty this Dusk to see!



Yemoja — Waikiki 1

Fiberglass Screen, Over-under paper collage, Acrylic Paint

56" x 36"h

20234

MICHAEL MARSHALL

The entries are scaled down variations of a physically larger series of “Reconstructions”. Early works on canvas that were deconstructed and reassembled in collage-like fashion. One work in this series had a particularly evocative balance of shapes and colors that fit the exhibition theme “emptiness and form”.



Yemoja - Waikiki 2

Fiberglass Screen, Over-under paper collage, Acrylic Paint

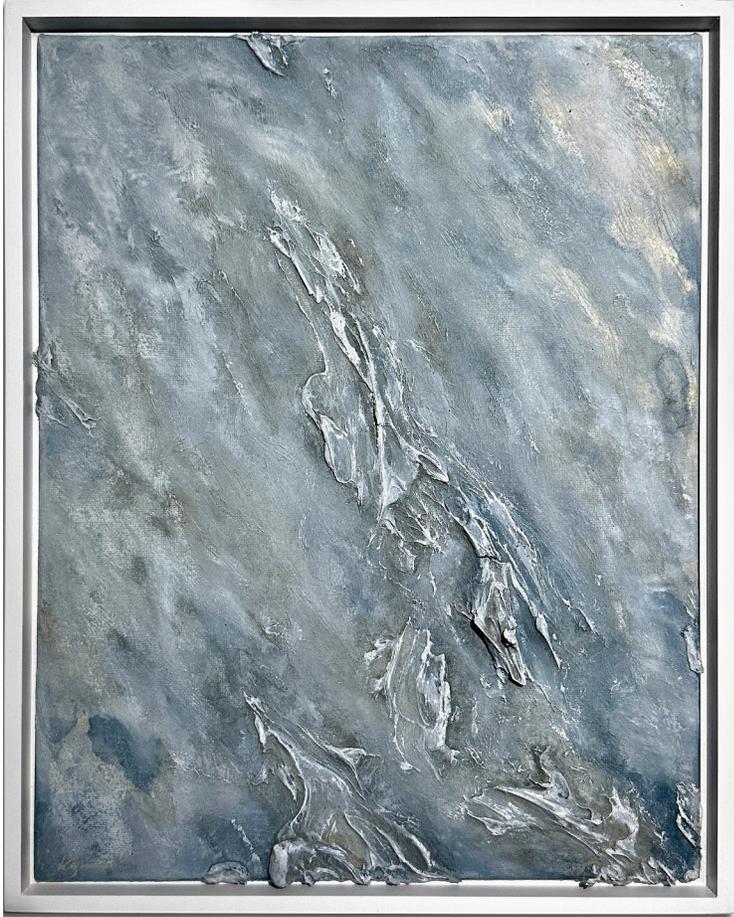
58" x 36.5"h

2024

MICHAEL MARSHALL

In scaling down to meet the exhibition's dimensional requirements, Yemoja, the Yoruba water spirit appeared. My entries link this water spirit to Waikiki, the fresh waters that flow beneath the streets and buildings of Honolulu.

The conjunction "Yoruba-Waikiki" acknowledges connection to this deity.



The Eternal

Cement and basalt dust
on canvas

12" x 1" x 15"h

2023

KAMRAN SAMIMI

Containing dust shed from the process of chiseling and sculpting basalt stone, this painting visualizes the latent energy contained within stone. These microscopic basalt particles are mixed and embedded within both the textured cement surface and the paint. Even a stone's smallest fragment is worthy of affection, as this painting becomes another way to reflect upon a stone's story through time - moments both violent and serene.



Void

Basalt, Indigo pigment,
Wood, India ink

7" x 6" x 14"h

2023

Through the removal of a portion of this stone, its internal textures and surfaces are revealed and its layered stories are made visible. This simple transformation also bridges the stone to its surroundings— allowing air, atmosphere, light, and invisible particles to pass through its body. In so doing, the stone intermixes and imparts some of its ancient essence with its environment, fusing in a microscopic, yet meaningful way.



Awakened

Basalt, Indigo pigment,
Wood, India ink

7" x 6" x 14"h

2023

This basalt core was salvaged from a cracked stone recovered from Laupāhoehoe Point. Its parent's body was rough and fragmented, yearning to be reshaped and realized in a new form. Anointed with indigo pigment, its timeworn skin is still visible, now framed by specs of olivine which glimmer from its newly exposed body.



Container

Wood, plaster, beeswax

7" x 7" x 10.5"h

2023



Untitled

Wood

5.5" x 5.5" x 7.5"h

2021

LONNY TOMONO

Working is something like having a conversation with myself, in which through argument and trial I try to express the inexplicable. I usually have a vague idea when I start but then things fall into place, time passes I may get inspired or labor through. Usually when I'm confident and comfortable with what I'm doing I'm not doing my best work, it seems that when I'm uncomfortable and unsure that I will do something exciting. What I want to see are pieces that strikes a nerve inside me, something that is beyond craft and composition, maybe something that exposes the artist's true self, and or maybe something that will make me understand anew what it means to be a human being living at this time and place."



Singing and
Dancing
Are The Voice
Of The Law,
Bright
The Full Moon
Of Samadhi

Wood, Metal, Paper

7" x 6" x 34"h

RANDALL SHIROMA

Kankara is a *sanshin* made from a tin can. It is said that during the war the prisoners of war missed the singing and dancing associated with the *sanshin* so much they made them out of tin cans. During my study of *uta sanshin*, I had the wonderful opportunity to study with Harry Seisho Nakasone, National Living Treasure. His insight still leaves an impression. He offered only when the student was ready to receive."



Everything Perfect

Mixed media

36" x 20"h

20234

ROBIN SCANLON

This piece includes ohia branches that are bandaged with the words, "Stay strong ohia." The ten thousand things are interconnected and contain hope for the future of our forests.



Rainforest Sutra

Watercolor and ink

8" x 8" each

2024

ROBIN SCANLON

This is a triptic with ensemble writing to suggest that the forest is speaking to us.



FormA Rosa-1

Water color, cotton
thread, and human hair
on canvas

7" x7" (work)
9"x9" (frame)

2024

JECA RODRÍGUEZ-COLÓN

In July 2023 I began to explore several aspects related to shedding/molting, as a concept as much as a process. As humans we rarely speak about these processes as something normal in our bodies, we tend to relate molting to sickness. This past July I began the process of documenting via video, shedding my hair intentionally, not as cutting or trimming it for the purposes of a hairstyle, but as a form to explore via praxis, what if we/I decide it's my time to shed/molt? Can we see losing hair, whether due to sickness, aging or intentional change, as emptiness=form, rather than loss? Through the years, my hair is the one element of my body I can choose to change its form and appearance, but what if I commit to removing most of it as a symbol of emptiness to create, to allow for a new form to parallel a new phase in my life, to shed/molt not due to sickness but to mark my own change.



Form A Negra-2

Water color, cotton thread,
and human hair on canvas

11 " x 17"

2024

JECA RODRÍGUEZ-COLÓN

On August 10th, 2023, the day before I turned 43 years of age, I went to Mine Kill Falls in Gilboa, NY, in the lapse of a couple of hours, I cut and trimmed the rest of my hair, I documented the process and collected the majority of the hair. Since then, I've trimmed my hair every 2-4 weeks, and I have collected as much as I can of my hair.

FormA Rosa-1 and FormA Negra-2, are the first explorations to use the materiality of my hair to create new abstract forms. Can I accept my own impermanence by using the organic material I remove from my body? What new forms can be replicated with material which may or not last, with that which belong to be but no longer does? FormA Rosa-1 and FormA Negra-2, explore the question of how removing hair from my body can become a new beginning in more than one instance?



Marvelous Illusions Of Forms In Time, Dancing In The Emptiness

Epoxy resin with mixed media
embedments, hand-tooled metal
base

14.5" x 4" x 21" [including
base]

2024

ELIZABETH MILLER

I love the challenge of depicting this particular and peculiar Zen koan sounding concept: "Form is Emptiness and Emptiness is Form." Except, the Zen masters are stating a fact of physics. The current thinking is that approximately only 4% of the universe exists in form and although solid-appearing, on the quantum level, within the forms, only more emptiness is found. To depict this, I decided to cast transparent resin, leaving most of it empty, and separately cast a 2 square and 3 triangular shapes filled with items I've collected over the years. I inserted these as different layers were pouring, to symbolize their popping out of the emptiness into the world of time, each with age-limit before dissolving back into Emptiness. And at the base are the underlying mathematical codes that cause a chaos of sub-atomic particles to coalesce and evolve into the different forms ultimately created. We, alive here now, are all particles in the marvelous—our chance in this lifetime, to be awake and aware, dancing in the emptiness!



Ke Pō, Ke Ao (The Night, the Dawn): Navigating Posthumanism Through Nature And Technology

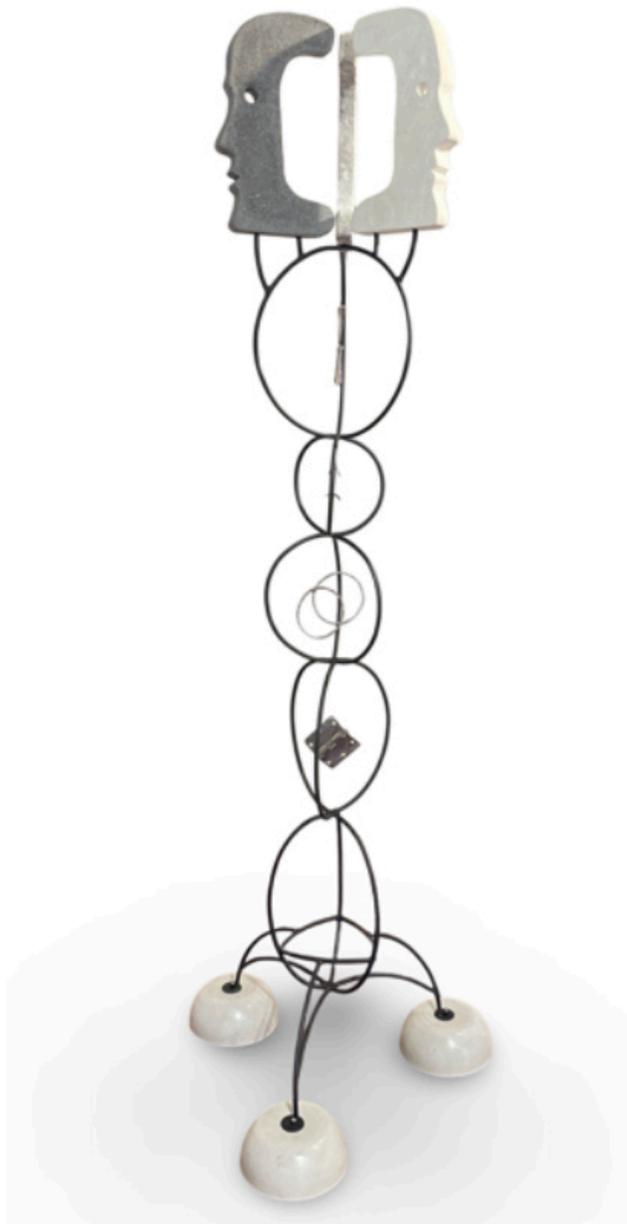
Ink on paper

18" x 24"h

2024

SVENJA TELLE

“Ke pō, ke ao” whispers the ancient tale of the Hawaiian creation story, weaving threads of indigenous wisdom into the fabric of innovation. In the dance between past and future, tradition and technology, this piece serves as a reminder of our intrinsic connection to the earth amidst the tumult of the posthumanist era. A piece displaying the soul-stirring narrative of the Hawaiian creation myth – a story of reverence and respect for the interconnectedness of all living beings. As the advantages of digital technologies dazzle us with their promises, this dialogue stands as a beacon, urging us to remember our roots and honor the wisdom of indigenous cultures. But what sets this artwork apart is not just its homage to mythology; it is the very substance from which it is made. For the ink used is not just pigment – it is alchemy of innovation, a tangible symbol of human ingenuity and ecological consciousness. Derived from cutting edge direct air capture technology, this ink was the first ever to be made with carbon directly from the sky and represents a new achievement in the realm of climate change. It is a testament to our capacity to address environmental challenges with creativity and resolve. And yet, it is more than just a technological breakthrough; it is a deeply symbolic gesture – a reminder of the transformative power of collaboration between humanity and nature, to tell an ancient story. In the sacred dance of creation, “Ke pō, ke ao“ beckons us to ground ourselves in the ancient rhythms of the earth, even as we embrace the marvels of technological innovation. It reminds us that we are not separate from nature – we are a part of it, woven into the very fabric of existence itself. And in that realization, we find solace, strength, and a renewed sense of purpose in our journey to co-create a world where humanity and nature can exist in reciprocity. The outline of the pregnant woman in the center of the painting resembles the shape of *Moku'āweoweo*, the summit crater of Mauna Loa, prior to its last eruption. The repetitive patterns in the center are inspired by traditional Hawaiian *kapa* (barkcloth) designs symbolizing activities and ecosystems in the *wao kanaka* (an inland region where people live and work and where daily tasks are performed), the text frame around the painting are the beginning verses of the 'Kumulipo' - the Hawaiian creation chant.



AND: now

Metal, concrete

28" x 28 x "h

2024

BRIAN SAVAGE

Drawing from the optimistic Sagittarian traits of philosophy, debate, and long-distance exploration, a three-headed, three-legged explorer named AND appears before us at the Volcano Art Center. Hailing from the center of the Milky Way galaxy, AND, joins its tri-headspace to contemplate a core tenet of the Heart Sutra: "Form is emptiness and emptiness is form". In doing so, AND recognizes its own interdependent nature within this philosophical puzzle and puts forth three cascading ideas:

The And Hinge:

Consider a doorway as ‘emptiness’ and a door as ‘form’. The crucial, often overlooked third element is the ‘hinge’. The hinge joins both the empty space of the doorway and the form of the door, allowing the two to open or close, just as the ‘and’ joins “form is emptiness and emptiness is form”. ‘And’ connects the two oppositional concepts as separate elements when the door is open or one and the same when the door is closed. Such is the life of a coordinating conjunction.

Infinite Ands:

‘And’ can create a versatile and dynamic connection where both contrasting parts can ring true. Like the limitless possibilities of ‘and’, hinges are not confined to a single location, but can exist anywhere, bridging gaps and creating connections in unexpected ways.

Time Model:

Within AND’s body, an element of consideration from its headspace symbolizes the point of contact between two ideas—past and future. The hinge as the present, visually and conceptually integrates Stephen Hawking’s bow-tie-like model of time, where the future meets the past and the present moment is continually born anew. This present moment is the hinge that connects the two seemingly opposite perspectives of time.

The future is always about to arrive and the past trails away. This odd predicament leaves us here, in the present, with a condensed singularity like that at the center of a black hole. This may be the point where form is stripped of emptiness AND emptiness is given form. This might be called NOW. NOW is where AND is from. AND invites you to visit NOW.



Singing In Reverse: Magdalena River Flute

Ceramics

25 cm x 15 cm

2024

EVELIN PIÑEROS QUINTANA

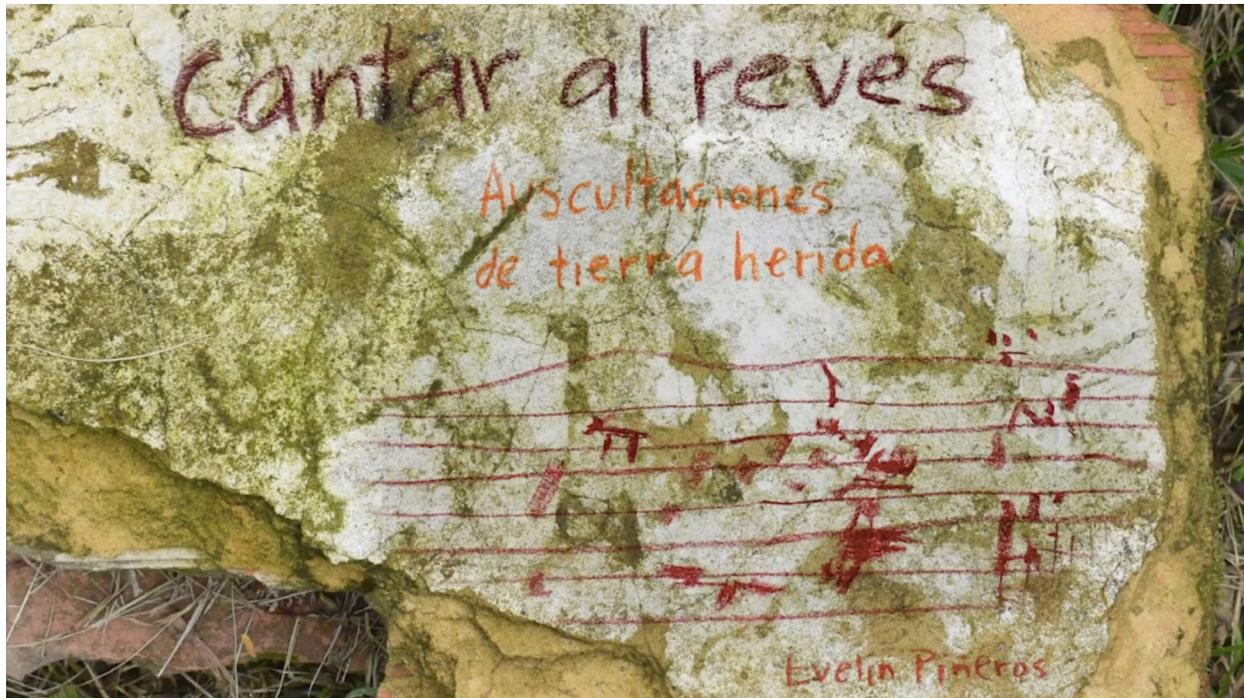
Throughout the unfolding narrative of "Singing in Reverse: Auscultation of Wounded Earth," an investigative exploration into forced disappearances in Colombia, I have been immersed in crafting clay flutes that resonate with water, each imbued with specific attributes drawn from the rivers and lakes that inspire them, as well as the poignant tales of searching families and witnesses of these tragic events. I believe that the water has its own voice and that the emptiness has a sound and...It could be very noisy. On this occasion, the flute presented here is inspired by the story of an Magdalena river fisherman: José.



José sailed while playing a rusty harmonica. In his workday, he used to fish cachama, but one day he also "fished " bodies that had been thrown into the river. He retrieved them from the river and gave them a burial. In the midst of the exercise, José lost his harmonica in the river... the harmonica disappeared." This ceramic piece resonates with the spirit of the Magdalena River and is an interpretation of its melodies in José's harmonica voice. The river also sings about its own pains. I invite you to play the flute. To do so, fill it with water, hold it carefully, and gently shift its weight from one hand to the other as you play.

Water travels through Colombia from the páramos to the Magdalena River, where all memories intertwine before surrendering to the sea. What message does it bring when it returns with the rain for those who await here? Could the land reveal the whereabouts of the missing? The language of the earth could also be the language of ghosts. The territory bears witness and speaks in whispers, in the cold wind, in the waters of the river, in the signs. It speaks in a reverse song, a melody that is not words but carries intention. The lungs, the mountain, and the water stir the air where cries, babbling, and denunciations are expressed.

Reflecting on the above, I extracted clay from the mountain and built ceramic instruments that sing with water, which are like the reversed song of the river. What memories do they tell us of their wounded body, which is also ours? How to find meaning in a non-human language? How to listen to the void? What does it sound like? While building one of my first instrument-devices, my initial reaction was to put my ear to the hole of the vessel and I heard... I remembered when I was a child and my grandmother handed me a seashell, she would ask, "Dear, do you want to hear the sea?" And I would hold the shell to my ear and listen to the sea; the shell was a portal, just as my vessels were, containing the memory of the places from which I had prepared the clay. Undoubtedly, the void has sound and sometimes it can be very noisy, like the silence in the face of the questions asked by the families of those who do not appear in order to find them. A pain that reminds us of conflicts around the world and the environmental crisis, where other inhabitants of the earth have also suffered.



Cantar al Revés: Auscultaciones de Tierra Herida

(Singing in Reverse: Auscultations of a Wounded Earth)

Video (2:38 min)

2024

EVELIN PIÑEROS QUINTANA

"Singing in reverse" is a long-term research project that began in 2021. In this project, I explored forms of repair and mourning around the wounds of the armed conflict, which was not only responsible for disappearing people but also ecosystems, livelihood dynamics, and territories. The territory is also a victim. Amidst this great global urgency to take action in the face of the environmental crisis, recognizing and repairing those who have been harmed within the framework of human wars, I consider the territory, then, as a victim but also as a witness and a moving archive.



This research is also an inquiry into testimony and narrative. Would the river tell us where the missing are? What is its language? Forced disappearance, in the Colombian case, according to the Centro de Memoria Histórica, between 1958 and 2021, there were 80,674 victims of forced disappearance, including 6,400 victims of extrajudicial executions, known as "false positives"¹. In my research, I collected testimonies from mothers of the disappeared who recounted visions and messages in dreams that helped locate the bodies. It was a spectral language, similar to that of nature, with its sense of the hidden, of emptiness, and of the trace: the phantom memory that permeates everything.

In 2023, a crucial event in Colombia marked a path towards peace and healing. After a plane crash in Guaviare, four children were lost in the jungle. To find them, unprecedented alliances were formed: the Armed Forces worked with indigenous communities, who with their knowledge of the territory and its spirits, guided the search in the dense jungle. After 40 days, it was an indigenous grandfather who, after consuming yagé and connecting with the spirits of the jungle, managed to locate the children. This achievement evokes the stories of the mothers and reinforces the idea that the territory is a living and moving archive. It shows us a world where alliances can exist between previously opposed groups, where territories and rivers are recognized as subjects of rights, and where we allow ourselves to listen to the diversity of voices and try to understand them.

Since then, I have explored different territories and investigated the preparation and extraction of clay, seeing it as the gesture of taking a fragment of the territory and holding onto that memory. I have built wind instruments that sound when water is added; it is the water that moves the air, and in a simplified version of speech, the water pushes the air and emits the song-word. The reverse song.

Artists

Clayton Amemiya

Clayton Amemiya is ceramic artist in Hilo, Hawai'i, known for his anagama fired ceramics. He uses 'Ōhi'a primarily as fuel. He is inspired by the Hawai'i Island environment, particularly the volcano and rainforest, and a more distant inspiration is Momoyama period ceramics of 16th century Japan.

Jake Boggs

Jake Boggs is a Hawai'i-based artist, curator, and arts educator concentrating in ceramics and contemporary craft practices. He earned an MFA from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and a BFA from Eastern Kentucky University, both concentrating in ceramics. His interest in ceramics has allowed him to experience the clay traditions of various cultures, weaving a tapestry of influences expressed in his work. He has exhibited widely across the United States, in Hawai'i, and South Korea, and is the recipient of multiple awards and honors for his creative work. He has shared his passion for clay in the classroom at UH Mānoa, Hawaii Potters Guild, Parker High School, and The Donkey Mill Art Center. He was a summer resident at the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts in 2023 and has shared his curatorial vision in *Myths and Mortality*, *Gemz Avery: An Argosy*, *Phase Change: Porcelain in Flux*, and *F4MF: Re/Marks on Color*. He also serves on the board of Hawai'i Craftsmen, a Hawai'i based non-profit that works to enrich the community through contemporary craft. He is currently the Ceramics Studio Coordinator at the Donkey Mill Art Center in Holualoa, Hawai'i where he works to serve the community through ceramic education and programming. He keeps an active and evolving studio practice at his home in Kailua-Kona.

Kevin Diminyatz

Kevin Diminyatz received a BFA in Printmaking from Sonoma State University and MFA in Painting from Mills College. Since 2008 he has been a lecturer at the University of Hawai'i in Hilo and Hawai'i Community College teaching Video/Installation, Printmaking Intaglio, Lithography, Painting and Drawing. His artwork is part of the Art in Public Places Collection of the Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, and in various private collections in Hawaii and internationally.

Stephen Freedman

Stephen Freedman is a third generation potter/sculptor whose works have been exhibited and collected in galleries and museums internationally over a career spanning 50 years. His influences range from Sung Dynasty pottery, to evolutionary biology, to the writings of Nietzsche. He continues to work, write and garden at his studio in Kurtistown, Hawai'i.

Timothy Freeman

Timothy Freeman is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at The University of Hawai'i at Hilo, and a ceramic artist residing in Volcano, Hawai'i. His pit fired vessels, evoking the volcanic landscape have appeared in numerous juried shows including several Hawai'i Craftsmen annual statewide exhibitions, and the Artists of Hawai'i 2011 exhibition at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. They have also appeared in several invited group exhibitions including the 10th Annual Hawai'i Modern Masters exhibition in Honolulu in 2015, and a few small vessels made it into the Minimenta: La grand exposition des petits formats exhibition at Galerie Goutte de Terre in Paris, also in 2015.

Jeff Gere

Storyteller, puppeteer, producer & media artist Jeff Gere has a BA in Painting & Art History (Florence, Italy & UC Davis) and MA in Performance Art (San Francisco). He moved to Hawai'i from Italy in 1982. Since, he's taught & performed at every venue imaginable. As Drama Specialist for the City & County of Honolulu's Parks Department (29 years) he created & produced the Talk Story Festival, story radio and TV series. He's performed constantly in public for 40 years. Jeff retired to end of 2014 & was touring the U.S. & internationally until covid hit. He's quietly created collage art for 30 years, which he shows others occasionally. His solo collage exhibits include DAC (Jan-Feb. '24 & Nov. '21;) & Arts @ Mark's Garage (Sept. '20 & Oct. '18); Dreams of Waking (50 collages) Downtown Art Center (DAC) Jan, 2024; Like Alike (15 duet collages) Downtown Art Center (DAC) Nov 2021. Art & Anarchy (3 collages) Volcano Art Center Sept 2021; Quarantine Queens (50 images) Arts @ Mark's Garage Sept 2020. Collage Massage (50 images) Arts @ Mark's Garage Oct. 2018.

Michael Marshall

Michael D. Marshall (b. 1953) St. Louis, Missouri. Education: Farragut Elementary 1958-61; Grace Lutheran School 1962-65; Farragut Elementary 1965-1967; Cleveland H.S. fall 1967; Beaumont H.S spring 1968-spring 1970. The Honors Art magnet program, fall 1969- spring 70; John Burroughs HS fall 1970-spring 1971. University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, IL, BFA 1975; Yale Summer School Music & Art 1974, and Yale University, New Haven, CT, MFA 1977. Tiffany Foundation grant supported research travel to Morocco/West Africa/Egypt/Europe, January-July 1983. Professor Marshall has taught full time at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo since 1984. His campus and community service include time as Chair of the Art, and Performing Arts departments, Director UHH Campus Center Gallery, committees of the Volcano Art Center, the East Hawaii Cultural Center, and the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts. His community service includes AYSO, Ha'aheo, and Hilo Makule adult soccer league, and co-founding of the Hilo miniBig soccer tournament. He is currently serving a 4 year appointment on the Board of Commissioners for the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (July 1, 2022-2026).

Elizabeth Miller

Elizabeth Miller is a mixed-media painter and experimental sculptor with an abiding interest in science. She states “especially that illusive ‘nature of reality’ question,” and continues “I began to pursue my interest in Quantum Physics at Iowa State University. As luck, fate or mere fluke would have it, I got my head completely turned by taking an art course, Design 101. I had no idea art had a language with organizing principles, and I enjoyed every moment of the experience. At the end of the course, the professor asked me what program I was in? ‘Physics,’ to which he replied, ‘You know, you’re really good at this. You might want to take another art course.’ Had he not said those particular words, I might not have gone on, but I did take another, etc. until I knew I was hooked and switched majors. After graduating with a degree in Art and Design, I moved to Western Washington State and spent the next 30 years teaching art at Pierce College, the University of Puget Sound and The Evergreen State College, and creating murals and sculptures in public places, funded by such civic agencies as the State of Washington, Pierce County and City of Tacoma Arts Commissions and The National Endowment For The Arts. I moved to Volcano in 2004, where I was finally able to establish my dream studio, surrounded by native trees, forest birds, and the primal forces of nature. And, inspired by the notebooks of the definitive artist-scientist-engineer, Leonardo da Vinci, I began to create work that puts our environment and a multitude of sciences that I love into the art I love to make.” Since moving to Hawai‘i, Liz has won many awards for her work and has 3 sculptures included in the State Foundation’s public art collection at the Hawai‘i State Art Museum [recently renamed, the Capitol Modern].

Hiroki Morinoue

Hiroki Morinoue is a native of Holualoa, Hawai‘i, and holds a bachelor's degree in fine arts from the California College of Arts and Crafts. Morinoue has worked successfully in a variety of media including mixed media paintings, printmaking, ceramics, photography, and sculpture. He has long been a patient observer of the rhythms, cycles and patterns of nature. Morinoue has shown his works in galleries across the mainland and Japan. His art may also be seen in the State Foundation for Culture and the Arts collection, The Contemporary Museum, The Honolulu academy of Arts, The National Parks Collection, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, The Ueno no Mori Museum in Tokyo, The First Hawaiian Bank, Neiman-Marcus' Honolulu & Chicago Collection, Verizon Hawaii Collection. His arts in public places include Honolulu State Library, Honolulu Convention Center, Pahoia High School and Library, First Hawaiian Banks. He is a co-founder and the artistic director of Holualoa Foundation for Arts and Culture, now known as the Donkey Mill Art Center, a non-profit organization that offers art education and cultural activities to enrich the lives of people and the community since 1994.

Setsuko Watanabe-Morinoue

Born in Kanagawa, Japan, moved to Hawai‘i in 1970. She started with photography in her high-school time, Kusaki/Roketsu-zome (Japanese natural dye with wax resist) before she moved to Hawaii. She started her pottery at the Kona Arts Center in Holualoa since 1971. She was always interested and appreciated in various media arts. She was mainly self-taught by exploring and experimenting in art-making while she has taken many workshops by well established artists. She works in a multitude of media. She has participated in numerous group shows in Japan, Hawai‘i, and the Mainland, and has received several awards for her clay works in 2D and 3D, painting, printmaking and mixed media over the years. Her works in public and corporate collections include: State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, Honolulu Advertiser, First Hawaiian Banks in Honolulu, Guam and Kailua-Kona Branches, Bank of Hawaii, Royal Hawaiian Hotel and Advanced Medical Nutrition in Hayward, California, Onsen Ryokan “Yamaki” in Tochigi, Japan. She is the visionary and one of the founders of Holualoa Foundation for Arts and Culture, a not-profit organization for arts & cultural education for all ages and abilities. She has developed high quality programs/classes for adults and children in the community at large to be inspired, stimulated and challenged as a volunteer program director for over a decade. She is still serving as an emeritus director to help and assist to sustain the mission and vision. For her, the most beautiful creation is to build a safe, harmonious and sustainable community where everyone will be able to participate and share the joy of Creative Living.

Dena Nakahashi

Born and raised in Honolulu, Dena Nakahashi has had an appreciation for the arts and loved drawing and painting for as long as she can remember. She studied art at Kapi‘olani Community College while working at the Koa gallery, before moving to the Big Island in 2009, enrolling in the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo to continue her studies and received her BA in fine art, with a minor in history. Dena is inspired by the many landscapes and diverse ecological biomes of the Big Island, how they are constantly changing, and how that change is reflected across ourselves, in the past, and in the future. Every animal, plant, place, and person has a story, a perspective, a truth to explore—We just have to sit still and be brave enough to explore it. Dena lives in Volcano Village with her husband Rob, her two boys Conrad and Charlie, and her two cats Nora and Dora.

Philippe Nault

Born in France during the emergence of the New School of Paris movement, Philippe Nault began to paint while a teenager. Figurative expression characterized most of his original cultural environment, and initially defined his work before progressing later towards abstraction. Rather than pursuing art as a career strategy, and driven by his interest for cosmology and spirituality, he eventually left his home country to explore other cultures and other mythologies. This search ultimately helped him shape an intimate vision of “the world as the landscape of self”, and his painting became a way to contemplate, and to identify with this concept. After living successively in Paris, London and New Orleans, he ultimately settled in Hawai‘i. There he learnt from the ancestral ontology of the people of the Pacific, which favors sensory intelligence as an essential connector with the natural world. In a sense, it was a magnification of his predilection to elude the rationales commonly associated in the identification of objects and life manifestations, to unveil a perception as unaltered as possible of their elemental nature. It also summarizes Nault’s exploration of abstraction. His unusual life course became his body of work translated onto canvas, and quantified over a period of fifty years. In the course of his career, Nault has also produced large-scale projects in architectural private and public spaces, in France and in the USA. He is also an independent cultural interpreter for the Hawaiian Islands, and a long time practitioner of Chado, the Japanese Way of Tea.

Mayumi Oda

While meditating in front of a Nepalese Sarasvati statue on New Year's Day in 1991 at her California home, Mayumi received a calling that brought a sudden halt to painting. Having witnessed the horrors of atomic bombings as a child and later, watching her beloved Japan become a leader in nuclear-energy, and seeing the effects of depleted uranium, Mayumi had to pursue a global cause greater than her art or feminism. For the next 10 years, Mayumi put her focus and energy toward stopping the unfolding of a plutonium world. In 1992, Mayumi co-founded Inochi.us (Life Force) under which she established the Plutonium Free Future chartered to educate Japan's nuclear policy makers. Through the years that followed, she embarked on a mission that went as far as speaking to the United Nations World Court of Justice in the Hague. Mayumi received recognition for her commitment to a nuclear-free world over the past 25 years at the 2016 Bioneers Conference in Berkeley, CA. By 2000, Mayumi's lifelong concern for the earth and her view of it as a source of healing and nourishment moved her to begin cultivating a five-acre parcel on the Big Island of Hawai‘i. Since then, Ginger Hill Farm has served as her home, a retreat, a place for educating others about organic and sustainable farming, and where she shares that which makes Hawai‘i a wonderful place to live.

Evelin Piñeros Quintana

Evelin Piñeros Quintana is a Colombian interdisciplinary artist, ceramist, and illustrator. She has a Master of Art from Javierana University in Bogotá, Colombia. She explores her creative work around sound as a plastic material, delving into the boundaries of human perception and pondering non-human languages using poetry as a tool. Her practice addresses Colombian environmental and social issues such as forced disappearance, which have impacted various inhabitants of the territory and the peace-building process. She constructs collective experiential spaces aimed at deep listening, inviting reflection and healing through live arts and performance. Currently, she serves as a training artist in the Strategic Line of Art, Science, and Technology at the District Institute of the Arts at the Planetarium in Bogotá, a government entity tasked with promoting creation and dissemination of arts nationally.

Gabriel Reed

Gabriel Reed is a multidisciplinary ceramicist and philosopher with a distributed lifestyle employing both practice and theory to investigate and reimagine the workings of ceramics in contemporary culture. He holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy, Aesthetics and Visual Art from the Institute for Doctoral Studies in Visual Arts, M.F.A. in Ceramics and Three-Dimensional Design from Bowling Green State University, and a B.F.A. in Ceramics from the Kansas City Art Institute. His research focuses on how we may better understand our sense of ecological and material imagination by engaging in ceramic philosophy, an open exploration of the ways in which we belong to clay and fire. Through ceramics, philosophy, sculpture, photography, drawing, burning and writing poetry, he seeks to expand the discourse of good clay in art and ecology, encouraging a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how ceramics, imagination, and nature intersect. He is particularly interested in organic firing methods, for their engagement in traditionally situated knowledge of phenomenology and materiality.

Jeca Rodríguez-Colón

Jeca Rodríguez-Colón is a Puerto Rican multi-disciplinary artist and philosopher, with a dance and choreography background, and a Ph.D in Philosophy, Aesthetics and Art Theory from IDSVA (Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts). Her artistic practice ranges from dance and performance arts to video art and installations. Rodríguez-Colón's work is connected to diverse aspects of the maternal kinesthetic language, its philosophies and the politics that surround it. Her artwork and research, has been known internationally. As a scholar her research focuses on maternal politics, aesthetics, philosophies and performances in the Americas. Throughout her work, she questions the societal prescription of motherhood and how aesthetic representations of the maternal influence maternal performances. Recently her research has concentrated in film-philosophy, film economics, and queer death studies.

Kamran Samimi

Informed by a strong sense of place and his multi-cultural identity (Iranian/Norwegian raised in Laupāhoehoe), Kamran Samimi's artistic practice centers on natural and indigenous ephemera—stones, wood, pigment, and land—as conduits to explore the intricate dynamics, tensions, and histories that exist between human and non-human ancestors. Through this framework, Samimi questions how interconnected histories and diverse cultures examined via the lens of nature might engender moments of equilibrium, compassion and healing in a world marked by oppression, injustice, and widespread devastation. Specifically, Samimi draws inspiration from the direct, experiential focus on Nature also found in Zen Buddhism and Sufi Mysticism. Hence, his approach is both reverent and whimsical, mirroring Nature's gestures: deconstructing and reforming with intention and compassion.

Brian Savage

Brian Savage is a multi-disciplinary artist, designer and sculptor living and working on Hawai'i Island. He produces work in a variety of mediums such as metal, concrete, wood, reclaimed and deteriorated materials. Savage's subject matter has an equal diversity—musical instrument forms, land and ocean creatures, deterioration, forgotten civilizations, ancient and future relics, new stories or mythologies to be ventured and lifecycles and symbols in gestation.

Robin Scanlon

Robin Scanlon started her art life as a photographer. With her husband, Kris, she has a corporate photography business which offered opportunities to travel the world. Since settling in Volcano, she has broadened her art explorations to include encaustics, watercolor and stitch. Robin's work has been exhibited statewide and is included in private collections worldwide. Proust said, "The only real voyage of discovery consists not in seeing new landscapes, but in having new eyes." When encountering an environment, I attempt to slow down and quiet my mind to discover something new that I haven't noticed before. In doing so, I am learning something new about myself and the way I relate to and view the world. By sharing the art I make, I hope to share my appreciation of the environment.

Randall Shiroma

Randall graduated with an MA & MFA in sculpture from San Jose State University. Randall has been commissioned for various projects on the mainland and Hawai'i, including two from the Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, the Hilton Towers in San Jose, CA, the Four Seasons on Maui, and Santa Clara Library, to name a few. He has participated in numerous solo as well as group exhibitions and has received awards and fellowships in California and Hawai'i.

Shelby Smith

Shelby B. Smith is a Sculptor who uses all types of media to create works that stretch the potential of materials and the imagination. His work has a fantastical and humorous quality that influences his Re-use of many materials. Shelby uses wheel-thrown and hand-built combinations in clay, making functional and Sculptural work using multiple clay bodies and firing techniques. His mixed media sculpture uses the history and patina of time in each object's construction. Trained as an Architect, Shelby began working in Ceramics at the University of Kansas in 1998, where he received a double degree in Architecture and (BA), Ceramics (BFA), 2000. Shelby then went on to Apprentice with noted ceramic sculptor Jun Kaneko at his studio in Omaha, Nebraska for 2 years. Shelby received an MFA from San Jose State University in CA, 2006. Before Moving to the Big Island, Shelby was the Ceramics and Glass Technician for SJSU's Art dept., as well as a part-time instructor in Ceramics and Sculpture, in the South Bay Area, CA. Since being on the Big Island, Shelby has worked for the Volcano Art Center as the Gallery Manager/Show Curator, worked for EHCC/EHMOCA as the Gallery Show Installer, he is on the Boards of the Paradise Studio Artist Collective, and the Arts and Science Center. He currently is a full-time teacher of High School Studio Art 2d/3d at Hawaii Academy of Arts and Science, Pahoa HI. His works are in many private/public collections, across the US, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Australia, Japan, Russia. His studio is located on the east-side of the Big Island.

Svenja Telle

Svenja is a visionary artist whose work transcends traditional boundaries, inviting viewers into a world of boundless imagination and profound introspection. Drawing inspiration from a diverse array of influences, including Sufi poetry, indigenous myth and cosmology, and the transformative realms of psychedelic integration, Svenja's creations are a testament to the power of art to transcend the limitations of language and culture. With a background in calligraphy, Svenja explores the delicate interplay of form and meaning, using intricate strokes and flowing lines to evoke a sense of spiritual depth and connection. Each piece is a meditation on the beauty of the natural world and the mysteries of existence, inviting viewers to contemplate the deeper truths that lie beneath the surface of reality. In addition to calligraphy, Svenja works with a variety of mediums, including painting, textiles, and mixed media, to create artworks that are both visually stunning and emotionally resonant. Through their work, Svenja seeks to inspire others to explore their own inner landscapes and discover the hidden beauty that lies within.

Lonny Tomono

Lonny Tomono is from Hilo, Hawai'i. He attended the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, San Francisco Art Institute, and San Jose State University. Worked for Ron Bogley, architect in Berkeley, California, Kip Mesirov, architect in Berkeley, California, Makoto Imani, tea house carpenter from Kyoto at San Francisco Zen Center, Seiichiro Kitamura 5th generation master temple builder in Kyoto Japan (five year apprenticeship). His work has appeared in exhibitions at Volcano Art Center 1997, East Hawai'i Cultural Center 1999, The Contemporary Museum Honolulu 1999, Bibelot Gallery Honolulu 2000, Honolulu Museum of Art 2004, San Jose State University Art Gallery 2005, Ralph Pucci Gallery New York 2006, Koa Gallery Honolulu 2010, Ars Gallery Honolulu 2018, B. Sakata Gallery Sacramento California 2019, BAS Books Honolulu 2023, First Hawaiian Center 2023.

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