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Hawaii Triennial
Preview

Inaugural Hawaii Triennial considers social activism, climate change and the Westernisation of Asia-Pacific

The exhibition, which began as a biennial, has been curated by Melissa Chiu, Miwako Tezuka and Kahu'āina Broderick

Gabriella Angeleti

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Installation view of Ai Weiwei, *Roots* (2018-ongoing)

Photo: Lila Lee. Courtesy Hawaii Contemporary

The inaugural edition of the [Hawaii Triennial](#), titled *Pacific Century – E Ho‘omau no Moananuiākea*, opens across seven venues in Oahu this week, featuring works by more than 40 artists and collectives from Hawaii, the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere, such as Ai Weiwei, Izumi Kato and Sun Xun.

According to the curator Melissa Chiu, the director of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC, whose background includes extensive curatorial work focused on Asia-Pacific, the exhibition has some overarching themes like social activism and climate change, but more specifically responds to cultural and historical narratives tied to specific sites on the island.

Among some highlights, Ai will install trees from his series *Roots* (2018-ongoing)—a collection of iron-cast versions of endangered trees from the Brazilian rainforest—in the Foster Botanical Garden in Honolulu. The work aims to critique the settler, imperialist and corporate practices on the island that have upended traditions of the Indigenous Hawaiian population. And the artist Richard Bell will install an iteration of his roving work *Embassy* (2013-ongoing) that considers Indigenous histories through the lens of Westernised institutions on the grounds of the Iolani Palace, the residence of the last reigning Hawaiian monarch, Queen Liliuokalani, who was imprisoned and forced to abdicate.

Chiu organised the exhibition in collaboration with Miwako Tezuka, the associate director of the Reversible Destiny Foundation in New York and previously an associate curator at the Asia

Society Museum, and Kahu‘āina Broderick, the director of the Koa Gallery of the Kapiolani Community College in Honolulu.

“As the geographic midpoint between the US and Asia-Pacific, Hawaii has its own unique cultural landscape, starting with the native Hawaiian perspective but also including various different immigrant voices, especially from Asia and other parts of the world,” Chiu tells *The Art Newspaper*.

The title and curatorial theme of the exhibition, drawn from a term introduced as Asia-Pacific grew in economic prominence, explores “Hawaii as a central rather than peripheral place, not just from a geopolitical but also a cultural standpoint”, she adds.

The exhibition began as a biennial in 2017 organised by the Honolulu Biennial Foundation, a non-profit organisation that was renamed Hawaii Contemporary in 2020 after two successful biennials that collectively drew more than 200,000 visitors.

The triennial's venues include: the Bishop Museum, the Foster Botanical Garden, the Hawaii Theatre Center, the Hawaii State Art Museum, Iolani Palace, Honolulu Museum of Art and Royal Hawaiian Center.

- [Hawaii Triennial 2022: Pacific Century – E Ho‘omau no Moananuiākea](#), 18 February-8 May 2022

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