



Royal Hawaiian Featherwork: Na Hulu Alii

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Painstakingly constructed by hand of plant fiber and precious feathers from endemic birds of Hawai‘i, feather cloaks and capes provided spiritual protection to Hawaiian chiefs for centuries while proclaiming their royal status. Few of the artworks known as *nā hulu ali‘i*, or royal feathers, survive today except in museums and private collections. Through photographs and scholarly essays, *Royal Hawaiian Featherwork* highlights approximately seventy-five rare examples of the finest featherwork capes and cloaks (*‘ahu‘ula*) extant, as well as royal staffs of feathers (*kāhili*), feather lei (*lei hulu manu*), helmets (*mahiōle*), feathered god images (*akua hulu manu*), and related eighteenth- and nineteenth-century paintings and works on paper.

With their brilliant coloring and abstract compositions of crescents, triangles, circles, quadrilaterals, and lines, the artworks are both beautiful and rich in cultural significance. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, featherworks were key items of indigenous Hawaiian diplomacy, used to secure political alliances and agreements, worn as battlefield regalia, and seized as spoils from defeated chiefs. Later, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the featherworks’ used in trading and gifts to foreign visitors’ became symbols of Hawaiian heritage and cultural pride.

This stunningly illustrated volume also serves as the catalogue to accompany the first exhibition of Hawaiian featherwork to be staged on the U.S. continent, scheduled for a six-month run starting in late August 2015 at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. The book and exhibition provide an overdue opportunity for the public to discover the central role these artworks played in the culture and history of the Hawaiian Islands, to explore their unparalleled technical craftsmanship, and to discover an aesthetic tradition unique to the Hawaiian archipelago.

Essays by: Samuel M. Ohukani‘hia Gon III, Marques Marzan, Maile Andrade, Noelle Kahanu, Betty Kam, Adrienne Kaeppler, Stacy L. Kamehiro, Christina Hellmich, and Roger Rose.

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Jorge Raines:

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Lillie Rose:

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