

# HONOLULU ACADEMY OF ARTS

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*Hawaiian Drum Support, Bishop Museum Collection  
Gift of T. Clive Davies, Esq.*

HONOLULU ACADEMY OF ARTS Philip E. Spalding, *President*; Theodore A. Cooke, *Treasurer*

**25th Anniversary Season**

## Some Aesthetic Aspects Of Pacific Island Art

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One cannot remain in a state of indecisive response when viewing an exhibition of Pacific island art. The impact whether one says "yes" or "no" is instantaneous, often overwhelming; but in the majority of cases close study and observation are necessary to appreciate fully its variant quality. No other primi-

tive art has such an amazing assortment of formal patterns and aesthetic effects. There are throughout the vast area of the Pacific Islands a great number of art styles or traditions. The diversity of these styles is so great that a single small island may have several totally unrelated styles. But they all have as a common feature the use of the human figure as subject matter. Concepts, psychological and emotional states, and generic portraits of specific persons are represented by the human figure. These representations range from the essentially naturalistic to the distorted, often fantastic, rendering of subject matter. By examining a few of these styles some of the basic aesthetic characteristics of Pacific Island art become evident.

The human figure by nature is an assemblage of separate forms which are articulated into an organic unity. The joints or points of articulation both separate the forms and permit their mobility. The major forms are essentially cylindrical or ovoid in shape and are arranged in a vertical alignment, but their proportions in this alignment are extremely varied, differing almost from person to person. The weight or bulk of these parts is also varied and is of particular significance. In a slender figure, for example, they may be almost geometrically shaped, producing a somewhat flowing surface, while in a more heavily muscled figure the forms are irregularly shaped and the surface planes more varied. The most distinctive part of the human figure is the head with its individualizing facial features.

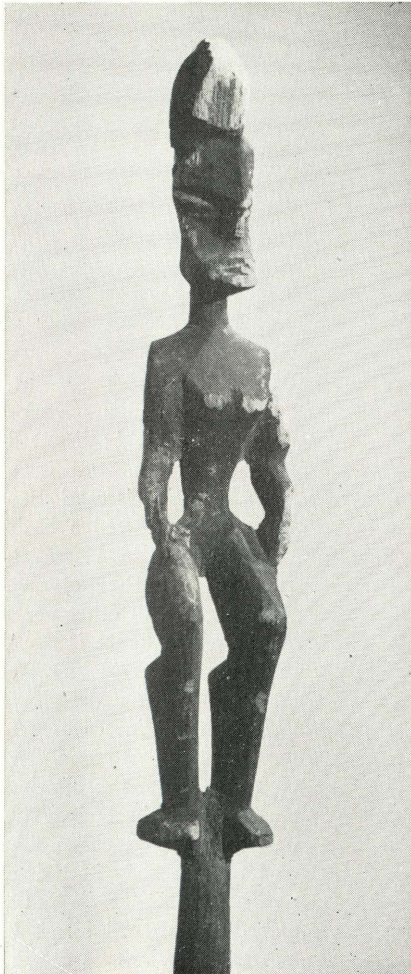
Throughout the history of world art, traditions have differed in the emphasis given to one or another aspect of the human figure. This is remarkably true



*Fig. 1. Hawaiian Figure. Lent to the Academy by Mrs. David McHattie Forbes.*

throughout all Pacific Island sculpture, in which the numerous traditions disclose practically the full range of possibilities in the use of the human figure aesthetically and expressively.

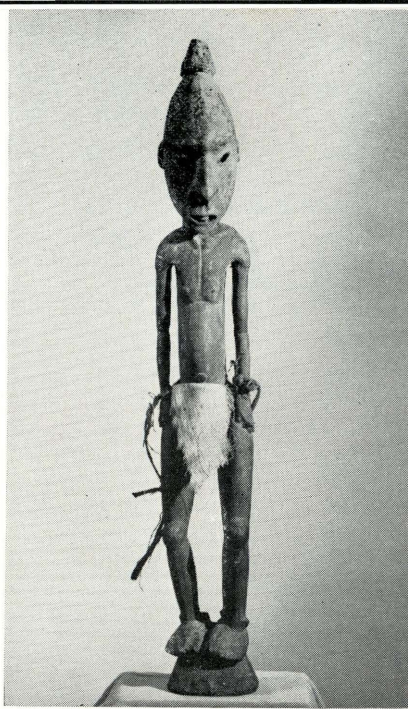
An important tradition in Pacific Island sculpture emphasizes the volume and the articulation of the parts of the human figure (Fig. 1, H. 27 in.). In



this style the forms are enlarged and their three-dimensionality stressed, while each form is distinctly marked off or separated, thus representing the human figure as an assemblage of separate forms. This separation, together with the flexion of pose, expresses effectively a mobility of parts. The remarkable use of negative or free space between the arms and body and between the legs of the figure enhances this expression on it, with form being an important aesthetic concept. It also contributes greatly to the depth of form. While the proportions and the degree of emphasis given to the different parts vary within this tradition from the naturalistic to the highly stylized, a unity is achieved by rhythmical restatement of shapes and linear patterns. This style is particularly strong in Hawaiian sculpture and also in many examples from the Solomon Islands.

A somewhat related style, also very strong in Hawaii, uses distortion more freely and represents the separated parts of the figure in a more angular manner (Fig. 2, H. 10 $\frac{3}{4}$  in.). The parts are in fact frequently arranged to meet at sharp angles, this design expressing dramatically a projection and recession of form. The head, the pectoral planes, and the knees may thrust forward vigorously, while the shoulders are drawn back and the abdominal area is concave. The negative space between the arms and legs in this style is extremely volatile and contributes effectively to the expression of moving volumes in space. Sculptures in this tradition do not emphasize naturalistic aspects of the human figure, but rather through distortion and stylization of parts express a dramatic,

*Fig. 2. Hawaiian Stick Image, Bishop Museum Collection.*



*Fig. 3. New Guinea Figure,  
Bishop Museum Collection.*

tense pose in space. Characteristic of the style, too, is its distortion of the head, especially of the facial forms.

A tradition perhaps more widely found throughout the Pacific Islands is one in which the verticality and the unity of the human figure is stressed. Articulation or separation of parts either is entirely absent or is minimized in examples of this style. A fairly rigid pose is instead presented with an emphasis on tight continuous outlines, which effectively express verticality (Fig. 3, H. 25 $\frac{1}{4}$  in.). This is further achieved by the meager negative spaces between the parts. These areas are kept tightly within the outline and contribute relatively little depth to the form. But figures in this style are, for totally different reasons, also aesthetically satisfying. A few Hawaiian figures are in this tradition, although it is more characteristic of sculptures from the Melanesian

islands of Santa Cruz, the Solomons and the Admiralties.

The aesthetic importance of negative space in Pacific Island sculpture cannot be overstressed. In a number of traditions discussed above it contributes heavily to an expressive sculptural statement. But in some traditions it becomes a major aesthetic force. While this style is well-represented in Hawaii, particularly in carved drum bases and the large deity "stick" figures, it is more characteristic of certain other areas of the Pacific (Cover, H. 6 $\frac{3}{8}$  in., D. 6 $\frac{3}{8}$  in.). In this style the silhouette of the form is stressed, and frequently the form is actually pierced. The proportion of free space around and within the open forms is far greater than that of solid shapes. This not only creates a free movement in depth around and within the figure, but it also sets the figure within what can be called ambient space. The free or negative spaces are, in other words, the major aesthetic and expressive elements.

Throughout Pacific Island art representation of the human figure varies from a naturalistic to a highly distorted or grotesque interpretation. But in a number of areas distortion is carried so far that it must be considered a basic style element. Although in Hawaiian art this is largely found in the grotesque heads of some sculpture, in other parts of the Pacific the entire figure is drastically distorted (Fig. 4, H. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$  in.). In an aesthetic masterpiece from the Huon Gulf region of New Guinea, for example, the face is represented as a flat, high relief form carved as projecting from the upper part of the body. The shoulders flank the face on either side above the eye level; the body itself is a flattened, tapering four-sided shape; and the legs, attached as flattened forms at either side of the body, are carved in



*Fig. 4. New Guinea (Huon Gulf) Figure, Bishop Museum Collection.*

such a manner as to suggest a springy, rubbery substance. Yet the sculpture expresses most effectively the heavy downward pressure of a squatting figure. The distortions and the highly stylized detail, together with the tightness of the form and the downward pressure of all parts give to this sculpture a remarkably hieratic character. Distortions comparable and even more drastic than these are found in many other areas of the Pacific. Although often these distortions

were emotionally or psychologically motivated, in other instances they represent remarkably free handling of the human figure. Masterpieces within this tradition are powerfully expressive and, although often novel in appearance, are aesthetically satisfying.

In all art, regardless of the time and place of its creation, the sensitivity and perception of the artist to life around him is of major significance. The art tradition within which he creates determines the particular aspect of the subject matter to be stressed—that is, the basic conformation of a work is fixed within a culture. But, the artist gives to that pattern the cumulative consequences of his experiences with life. If his perception is acute and his sensibility refined he will be able to create within the limits of his tradition an occasional masterpiece. In primitive, as in all art, masterpieces are occasional. The important fact is that masterpieces are found not only in Renaissance Italy but also in the art of the Pacific islands. In every instance, the real test of a great work of art is its ability to sustain or add to the initial impact when it is reviewed. Pacific Island art has the ability and requires, in fact, much close observation to understand its aesthetic quality.

### **Ke Anuenue - A Portfolio Of Prints**

A public reception from 4:00 to 6:00 o'clock on Thursday afternoon, November 20, will honor the well-known Honolulu artist, Juliette May Fraser and open an exhibition of her latest portfolio of prints—Ke Anuenue. Special guests will be the staff of the University of Hawaii Press who are publishing Miss Fraser's work in both portfolio and book

form, the same plates being used in both editions.

In this series of beautiful prints with accompanying text, Miss Fraser has compared ancient with contemporary Hawaii in fact and legend, presenting in pairs linoleum cuts and etchings of such outstanding events as Kamehameha's Invasion of Oahu and December 7, 1941; and, under "Heroes," Maui, who roped the sun, and the cowboys of today.

### **Travel Talks By Dr. Larsen**

A series of interesting kodachrome slides taken by Dr. Nils P. Larsen on a recent European trip will be shown at the Academy on three Thursday evenings in November, at 8:00 o'clock, as follows:

Nov. 6—"The Viking Nations—Norway, Sweden, England and Ireland."

Nov. 13—"The Romance Nations—France, Spain, Portugal and New Spain."

Nov. 20—"On the Trail of Ancient Man—The Spoons of 40,000 Years."

Explanatory comments will be made by Dr. Larsen, who is contributing this series as part of a program to raise funds for the erection of a new print workshop on the Kinau Street side of the Academy building.

Tickets for single lectures are \$1.20, or \$3.00 for the series of three (including tax). They may be secured at the Academy's Beretania Street information desk, at the Honolulu Book Shops and at Gima's Art Gallery in Waikiki.

### **Calendars For 1953**

The Academy now has on sale (\$1.25 each) a limited number of calendars for 1953 featuring "Famous Paintings in America," including two from the Academy's collection by Chirico and Tanguy.

### **Membership Activities:**

#### *Pacific Island Art*

A lecture on the exhibition, "Masterpieces of Pacific Island Art," sponsored jointly by the B. P. Bishop Museum and the Academy and to be on view through November 30, will be given by Edwin H. Bryan, acting director of the Bishop Museum, on Wednesday, November 5, at 10:30 a.m. No guest privileges.

Mr. Bryan will repeat this lecture at 8 o'clock the same evening. Entrance at that time will be by way of the Kinau Street gate. Escort privileges.

#### *New Members' Tea*

All members who have joined the Academy since May 20 are invited to a tea on Thursday afternoon, November 6. Guests are asked to assemble in the Beretania Street lobby at 4:00 p.m. Following a tour of museum departments conducted by the director, Robert P. Griffing, Jr., tea will be served in the Spanish Court.

#### *The Thanksgiving Table*

A demonstration of Thanksgiving table arrangements, executed by Mrs. W. W. Goodale Moir, will be presented at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, November 12.

An exhibition of finished arrangements will be on view in the educational court that same evening at 8:00 o'clock, at which time Mrs. Moir will gladly answer questions and discuss ideas for decorating the Thanksgiving table.

#### *Ceramics of Korea*

Fine pieces from the Academy's collection as well as a series of slides will illustrate the lecture on "Korean Ceramics" which Robert P. Griffing, Jr. will give for the membership on Wednesday, November 19, at 10:30 a.m.

This program will not be repeated in the evening.

## Members Who Have Joined From October 1 to 17

CONTRIBUTING — Mr. Zadoc W. Brown, Mr. Robert L. Green.

ANNUAL — Mrs. Peter J. Achenbach, Dr. Thomas J. Albert, Lieutenant Catherine June Andress, Mrs. Paul S. Bachman, Mrs. Alice Cooper Bailey, Mrs. Horace V. H. Beazlie, Mr. Howard S. Blitz, Mrs. James R. Bobbitt, Dr. Edward W. Boone, Mrs. Adrian Brash, Mrs. Frederick J. Brennan, Mrs. Irwin Thorpe Brooks, Mrs. Paul W. Brown, Mrs. Creed C. Burlingame, Miss Mary Ethel Cameron, Mrs. Knight S. Carson, Mrs. William Donald Castle, Mrs. Frank Gordon Chadwick, Mrs. Hon Chong Chang, Mr. and Mrs. Clinton S. Childs, Mrs. John P. Chong, Mrs. James G. Chrones, Mrs. Daniel E. Chu, Mrs. Henry S. F. Chun, Mrs. Kwai Wood Chun, Dr. Anna Chung, Mrs. Wilha Chung, Miss Cynthia Clegg, Mrs. Lloyd W. Colton, Mr. Frederick E. Coombs, Mrs. John Corbus, Mrs. Robert A. Cornetti, Mrs. E. Leslie Craig, Mrs. Jack C. Cross, Mrs. Townsend Cromwell, Mrs. Bowman Cutter, Mrs. Thomas Dahl, Mr. and Mrs. Herman L. Danforth, Mrs. Conrad Di Tullio, Jr., Mrs. Robert S. Doane, Mrs. E. Fitz Donnell, Jr., Mrs. William R. Dow, Mrs. George Fanning, Mrs. Duane B. Fish, Lieutenant and Mrs. Robert D. Fisher, Mrs. Roy A. Gano, Mrs. Thomas Gill, Mrs. Mitsuo Goda, Mrs. Reginald C. Godwin, Mrs. John J. Harding, Mrs. Merlin G. Harding, Mrs. Franklin A. Hart, Mrs. Leslie A. Hicks, Mrs. Kenneth E. Ho, Mrs. R. Vance Hull, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin E. Hunter, Mrs. Edward M. Hutton, Mrs. Ben Hyams, Mrs. Robert Ichida, Mrs. Virginia Ince, Mrs. William S. Ito, Mrs. Carl E. Johnsen, Jr., Mrs. K. Lawrence Johnson, Mrs. Raymond W. Jones, Jr., Mrs. Lawrence S. C. Kang, Mrs. Stephen T. Kasper, Mrs. Benjamin Katz, Miss Eleanor A. Kellogg, Mr. Robert G. Kreiger, Miss Nora E. Lange, Major Albert K. Y. Lee, Mrs. F. William LeFevre, Mrs. Maxwell F. Leslie, Miss Joan Marie Lofink, Mrs. Leighton S. C. Louis, Mrs. John A. Lundquist, Dr. and Mrs. John G. Lynn, IV, Mrs. Colin C. McCorrison, Mrs. Richard F. Madden, Miss F. Olga Mason, Miss Berta Metzger, Mrs. Louis Donald Mitchell, Jr., Mrs. Masato Mitsuda, Mrs. Ryotaro Morikawa, Miss Esther Moritomo, Mrs. Arthur B. Mugg, Mrs. Agnes Muller, Miss Margaret R. Nel-

son, Mrs. Willard C. Nelson, Mrs. Grant B. Nielson, Mrs. Kenneth R. Nurse, Miss Esther Park, Mr. Kwan Doo Park, Miss Sarah Park, Mrs. Paul K. Parker, Mrs. Bruce Pennybacker, Mrs. Robert J. Pfeiffer, Mrs. Max L. Pilliard, Captain James H. Reeder, Mrs. Thomas H. Richert, Mrs. Arthur F. Rogers, Mrs. Joseph S. Rosa, Mrs. Charles F. Schutte, Miss Belle Shalit, Miss Marie H. Sharp, Mr. and Mrs. Frank E. Snedeker, Miss Jessie Song, Mrs. Arthur Hoermann Spitzer, Mrs. Ruby B. Stauffer, Mrs. Arthur D. Stubenberg, Mrs. Annie C. Sturgis, Mrs. Gordon Sturrock, Mrs. Clarice B. Taylor, Mrs. Stanley S. Taylor, Jr., Mrs. Trenor Thompson, Miss Helen S. Tsukiyama, Mrs. Roy A. Vitousek, Jr., Mrs. Robert H. Wade, Mrs. Yorio Wakatake, Mrs. Robert F. Walden, Mrs. Ann C. Warren, Mr. and Mrs. Horace W. B. White, Mrs. Howard W. Wickersham, Mrs. Charles L. Wilbar, Jr., Miss Jane O. Wilcox, Mr. Aaron Wunsch, Mrs. Edward N. Yamasaki, Mrs. Cyrus W. Yee, Mrs. Teruo Yoshina, Mrs. E. Wonsik You, Mrs. Clifford F. Young, Commander Henry A. Zuberano.

ANNUAL RENEWALS — Mrs. Howard S. Blitz, Miss Adele Christian, Mrs. Cyril Francis Damon, Mrs. Hans W. Hansen, Mrs. Bartley M. Harloe, Mrs. Wilfred J. Holmes, Mrs. Ronald B. Jamieson, Mrs. Richard K. Kimball, Mrs. Theodore A. Klabau, Mrs. Cecil S. McKinley, Mr. Geoffrey H. Lloyd, Mrs. Leonard O. Oechsli, Paradise of the Pacific, Ltd., Mrs. Frederick P. Whittemore.

EDUCATIONAL — Mrs. Clara Kim Amundsen, Miss Annie K. Bell, Mrs. Madeline V. Bergmann, Mrs. Toon Chun, Dr. Arthur A. Dole, Mrs. John M. Downer, Mrs. James Wright Frierson, Miss Masui Funaki, Miss Julia H. Fussler, Miss Lucetta Gearhart, Mrs. Lee Glover, Mr. David Flierl Guillaume, Mrs. Albert Hansen, Miss Pic Hill, Mrs. Stephen J. Hoeffner, Sr., Miss Grace Humphries, Mrs. Esther C. Jenkins, Mr. Stephen S. Kanda, Mrs. Sue Kosora, Mrs. Volney Field Lacy, Mrs. Gilbert K. S. Lau, Mrs. James S. Lee, Mrs. Koon Wah Lee, Miss Rebecca LeMay, Mrs. Theodore Aiona Loo, Miss Inez Lourenzo, Mrs. Frank Y. F. Low, Mr. Russell McLeod, Mr. Fredric Mueller, Mr. John J. Naughton, Mrs. Gavin J. Pemberton, Miss Gail Price, Mr. Edwin H. Rayford, Miss Eloise Sifford, Miss Esther So, Mrs. Howard I. Takenaka, Mrs. William A. Tam, Mr. Harold B. Turney, Mrs. Fusao Uchiyama,

Mrs. David M'Crae Watson, Mrs. Herbert W. Yamamoto, Miss Margaret H. Yamasaki, Mrs. Man Sing Yap, Miss Patsy Y. K. Yong, Mrs. Wah Chock Young.

**EDUCATIONAL RENEWALS** — Miss Florence Avison, Mrs. Dorothy S. Brown, Mrs. Elizabeth Ball Carr, Mr. Donald D. Mitchell, Miss May Neill, Miss Marion C. Ramey, Mrs. J. Clifford Shaddock, Miss Mildred Sikkema.

## November and December Activities

### NOVEMBER

#### *Public Programs:*

20—4:00-6:00 p.m.—Opening, exhibition, Ke Anuenue—A Portfolio of Prints by Juliette May Fraser.

#### *For Members Only:*

5—10:30 a.m.—“Masterpieces of Pacific Island Art.” Lecture and tour of gallery by Edwin H. Bryan.

5—8:00 p.m.—Above lecture repeated. Kinau Street entrance.

6—4:00 p.m.—Tea for new members.

12—10:30 a.m.—Thanksgiving Table Arrangements, by Mrs. W. W. Goodale Moir. Members only.

12—8:00 p.m.—Exhibition of Thanksgiving Tables, arranged by Mrs. W. W. Goodale Moir. For members and escorts. Kinau Street entrance.

19—10:30 a.m.—“Korean Ceramics,” lecture by Robert P. Griffing, Jr.

### DECEMBER

#### *Public Programs:*

21—4:00 p.m.— Concert, Gleemen of Honolulu.

#### *For Members Only:*

3—10:30 a.m.—“Christmas Decorations for the Home,” lecture-demonstration by Mrs. Caroline E. Peterson.

4—4:00 p.m.—Tea for new members.

## November and December Exhibitions

To Nov. 19—Honolulu Print Makers, Twenty-Fourth Annual.

To Nov. 23—America—Pilgrims and Patriots.

To Nov. 23—Art of the Pacific Islands, Including the Philippines and Indonesia.

To Nov. 30—Masterpieces of Pacific Island Art.

Nov. 20 to Dec. 9—Ke Anuenue—A Portfolio of Prints by Juliette May Fraser.

Dec. 2-Jan. 4—Christmas Exhibition.

Dec. 10-Jan. 4—Prints of the Madonna and Child.

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## HONOLULU ACADEMY OF ARTS

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