

*Waina*

A Place With Water

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

IN

ART

AUGUST 2004

By

Abigail Lee Kahilikia Romanchak

Thesis Committee:

Charles Cohan, Chairperson  
Ivy Hali`imaile Andrade  
Dr. Jerome Feldman

© Copyright 2004  
by  
Abigail Lee Kahilikia Romanchak

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. <i>Ho`ohui</i> : Introduction.....	1
II. <i>Ke Kumu Hana Kapa</i> : Subject.....	3
III. <i>Ke Kahua</i> : Philosophy.....	10
IV. <i>Ka Hana</i> : Formal & Technical Issues.....	14
V. <i>Ka `Olelo Hope</i> : Conclusion .....	20
Appendix A: Plates .....	21
Bibliography .....	32

## I. HO`OHUI

“Art comes from the inside out. You see forms and shapes from the outside but, you understand them from the inside.”

- Pua Kanahale  
(Renowned Hawaiian scholar and teacher  
of *hula* and Hawaiian culture)

During my first year of graduate school I took a course that explored art making from a Hawaiian perspective. Traditionally<sup>1</sup>, to be “Hawaiian” means being able to trace one’s ancestry to ancient or pre-contact Hawaiians. As part of the course, I was asked to research my Hawaiian genealogy. Understanding my ancestors’ history has influenced my art making and allowed my art to come from a place I trust instinctively. I believe as an artist it is important to develop a visual language of imagery that simultaneously conveys the textured depth of one’s personal culture while creating possibilities for viewers to connect more deeply with their own cultures.

*Waina*, my present body of work, is inspired by the traditional watermarks of Hawaiian *kapa* cloth. In creating this body of work, I envision myself as a contemporary printmaker in dialogue with traditional *kapa* makers, speaking with ancient predecessors from a twenty-first century standpoint. I am fascinated with *kapa* because I view it as one of the truest forms of art making. Just as a contemporary printmaker would print designs onto or emboss a sheet of paper, a *kapa* maker impresses a given design in or on to the *kapa* cloth. In order to create this dialogue with my predecessors, I researched Hawaiian *kapa* under the guidance of University of Hawai`i art professor and *kapa* scholar Maile Andrade. She took me to visit the Bishop Museum’s extensive *kapa* collection

---

<sup>1</sup> In my thesis I am using “tradition” as it is used in the Webster’s New World Dictionary p.1044 to mean, “ the handing down orally of stories, beliefs, customs, etc. from generation to generation.” In this sense, I use tradition not to reference something static or stuck in the past but rather things which have roots in history and continue to live and function in the present.

where we viewed both sheets of *kapa* cloth and the implements used to create them. This research allowed me to incorporate elements of traditional *kapa* within *Waina*. Some of these elements include multi-layered textures, repetition, and symbols from traditional watermarks. At the same time, this work uses contemporary materials and printmaking techniques to create a personal, symbolic and new meaning.

I see my prints as a way to empower and assert a Hawaiian sense of identity and to perpetuate Hawaiian culture through art. Much of my prior work focused on representing customary Hawaiian objects such as canoes, fish hooks, cordage, and wooden tools. While these objects remain a part of everyday life for some people, my art attempts to bring them into the contemporary daily lives of a broader audience. In *Waina*, the object I have chosen to honor is the watermark found in *kapa*. Whether I am referencing an ancient artifact to depict beauty or to critique current events, my goal is to make the creations of my *kupuna* (Hawaiian ancestors) relevant and meaningful to modern-day audiences. I believe that native cultures are jeopardized once they stop speaking to people in the present day. As an artist, I seek to perpetuate traditional culture not through traditional means, but contemporary ones, so that it may endure for generations to come.

## II. KE KUMU HANA KAPA

*waina* n. 1: place with water (Pukui, 1986, 379).

**watermark** n. 1: a marking in paper resulting from differences in thickness usually produced by pressure of a projecting design in the mold and visible when the paper is held up to the light vt. 1: to mark (paper) with a watermark 2: to impress (a given design) as a watermark ( Guralnik, 1974, p. 1,122)

The initial inspiration for *Waina* came on one of my first visits to the Bishop Museum's *kapa* collection in the fall of 2001. As I held the lace-like sheets of *kapa moe* (sleeping kapa), I felt connected to the woman who devoted hours upon hours, painstakingly beating the *kapa* to this fine thinness for the person who slept beneath their softness each night. Touching the sewn layers, worn by use, I could imagine how it would feel to drift to sleep in the comfort of their sandalwood scented folds. Reaching into the dark museum storage drawer, I gently eased my flashlight beneath a layer of the *kapa moe*. What appeared to be a solid white surface transformed as the light shone through. Layer upon layer of small circles surrounded by repeating triangles, patterned after *maka upena* (eyes of the fishing net), emerged from the glow as I moved the light beneath the surface. Discovering these subtle embossings, skillfully hidden within the cloth, inspired me to showcase these watermarks through my art. In *Waina*, I strive to bring the watermark to light. My aim is to share these hidden watermarks with a larger community, a community unable to access the closed storage drawers in the dark recesses of the Bishop Museum.

Once watermarks found in *kapa* captured my imagination, I continued to research them and explore ways to translate their graphic qualities into large scale prints. Over the past three years, I have come to associate these watermarks, underlying the more readily apparent patterns on the surface, with

the highly advanced craftsmanship and unique identity of Hawaiian artisans. However, watermarks are not unique to Hawaiian aesthetic traditions.

The earliest watermark is traced to Bologna, Italy in 1282 . Watermarks were also once known as 'paper marks'. These marks had several uses at their creation. One was to act as a paper maker's trademark, so that whoever used the paper knew who made it. Watermarks were also used to indicate the size of the paper, the quality, the date it was made or the location of the mill in which it was made. Some watermarks were symbols of brotherhoods or religious beliefs. These marks allowed groups to identify their members (The American Museum of Papermaking, 1993). The watermarks found in Hawaiian *kapa* are also symbolic of brotherhoods, religious beliefs, and natural objects unique to Hawai'i. Creating these watermarks was only one step in the series of elaborate steps required to make *kapa*, a process which exemplifies the incredible skill level achieved by Hawaiian crafts people. Furthermore, *kapa* production exemplifies the importance of evolution, as Hawaiian *kapa* makers continued to incorporate new technologies and influences throughout history.

### **History of *Kapa***

Ancient Hawaiian bark cloth was originally called *kapa* which literally translates to "the beaten thing." *Kapa* was used for clothing, bed covers or *kapa moe*, items of trade and gift items, indicators of wealth and status, and objects for ceremonial or religious events. Given the climate in which Hawaiians lived, they had little need for clothing. Clothing consisted of three main items of apparel: the *pa`u* or skirt for women, the *malo* or loincloth for men and the *kihei* or shawl for members of both sexes. All of these items of clothing are made from *kapa*. *Kapa* was scented by placing fragrant plants and blossoms such as *maile*, *mokihana* and pieces of sandalwood between the folds of finished pieces stored in

calabashes (Ihara,1982, 4).

*Kapa* is most commonly made from *wauke* or paper mulberry and *mamaki*. The tasks of *kapa*-making were divided between women and men. Women beat the bark to make *kapa* and designed and decorated the cloth using stamps and dyes. Men cultivated and harvested the plants necessary for bark, dyes, and *kapa* making tools, as well as making the beaters, anvils, stamps, and dyes.

The first step to making *kapa* is the preparation of freshly cut *wauke* branches. An incision is made the entire length of the branch, cutting through the soft, green inner tissue. At this point the outer brown bark is scraped off with the sharp edge of a shell. Next, with the branch braced between the feet and the thumbs on either side of the incision, the sleeve of the inner bark is peeled in one whole piece. The final stage is loosely folding the white glistening inner bark into a bundle and submerging it for three days to a week in a container of water, a river or small high tide ocean pool. Soaking softens and loosens the bark fibers while also ridding the bark of any bacteria or fungi (Abbott, 1992, 51).

At this stage the soaked bundles of *wauke* are called *mo'omo'o*. The *mo'omo'o* are laid on a smooth rock and briefly beaten with a *hohoa*, a smooth, club shaped beater made of *kauila* (perhaps the most dense Hawaiian hardwood). After being smoothed out, the *mo'omo'o* are dried in the sun. These dried pieces of *mo'omo'o* can be kept in bundles until enough bundles were ready to make the desired object (Abbott, 1992, 51).

The second beating and finishing of the *kapa* piece was performed at a *hale kua*, a special house with a drying yard. Only those involved in making the *kapa* were allowed in the house and work area. During the second beating a *kua kuku* (wooden anvil) was used to support the fiber mass. These anvils were approximately five feet long and four inches wide with a v-shaped hollow cut

into the bottom of the anvil in a style unique to Hawai'i. Each anvil made a different sound as the *kapa* was beaten, depending on the wood from which it was made. Women beating *kapa* created a system of signals, sounded in their strokes on the wooden anvils, sending messages that could be heard from valley to valley. It is said that they could relay news of the presence of visitors to the other end of the village while continuing to beat their *kapa*.

Perhaps the most important implement used during the second beating was an *i'e kuku*. An *i'e kuku* is a square beater carved with incised lines. Some *i'e kuku* are carved with the same straight line pattern on each of their four sides and are used to beat and join *mo'omo'o* together into large, flattened sheets of *kapa*. A second type of *i'e kuku* are carved with more detailed geometric patterns, each of the four faces bearing its own unique markation. Through beating, these *i'e kuku* create *ko'eau* or watermarks in the finished piece of *kapa*. These watermarks are visible not only on the surface of *kapa* but also in the cloth itself. This colorless patterning can only be seen if held up to the light. These watermarks result from slight differences in the thickness of the fiber mass after sheets were beaten into final form (Kaeppler, 1978, 1).

*Kapa* designs were of two different types. The first kind of design, a watermark, was impressed into the *kapa* during the beating stage. I will return to these watermarks or *ko'eau* at the end of this section as they are the focus of this thesis. The second type of design was applied to the upper surface of the finished cloth by using stamps. *Kapa* stamps were usually made from *'ohe* (Polynesian introduced bamboo). This type of bamboo is relatively soft and easy to carve. The finished stamp was called an *'ohe kapala*.

These stamps were then dipped in thick dyes made from different Hawaiian plants. Hawai'i's wide range of plants provided many different colored dyes for decorating *kapa*, made primarily from bark, roots and fruits.

Men made the dyes; pounding the plant matter with a stone mortar and pestle; mixing the resulting powder with water to make an infusion, then extracting the dye using a strainer (Krohn, 1978, 13). Yellows came from *kamani*, *noni* and *'olena* (tumeric); reds from *'ama'uma'u* ferns and *noni*; purples from *'akala* berries and *'ina* (sea urchins); browns from *kukui* (candle nut) and *'ohia'ai* (mountain apple); tans from *kou*; orange-reds from *'alaea* (red dirt); blues from *'uki'uki*; blacks from charred *kukui* and taro mud; grays from *'ala'alawainui*; and greens from *ma'o* (Hawaiian cotton) and *popolo* berries.

This wide range of colors is one element which distinguishes Hawaiian *kapa* from all other *kapa* collected at about the same time in other parts of Polynesia, whose color range was limited to a single rust-brown hue and black (Abbott, 1992, 52). Another distinguishing factor in Hawaiian *kapa* was its fineness and paper thin layers. Hawaiian *kapa* also appeared more intricate than other styles of *kapa* from Polynesia because of the use of the *'ohe kapala* stamps carved with small, geometric designs and applied repeatedly in rows or clusters. However, it is the use of watermark that is truly the hallmark of Hawaiian *kapa*, distinguishing it from all other forms. While other Polynesian cultures beat watermarks into their *kapa*, these designs were much less detailed and further apart, more like the straight line grooves on a *hohoa* beater than those intricately carved into the faces of the *i'e kuku*.

While there is extensive research and publication on the subject of *kapa*, the literature contains very little on water marks. The fledgling research which does exist documents twenty-four distinct Hawaiian watermark designs. Tight, geometric patterns were most common, but there was great diversity among watermarks. Hawaiians carved intentional marks into the *i'e kuku* to reference multiple aspects of their natural environment. For example, oblique and vertical lines created a cross-hatched watermark called *maka`upena* (lit. fishnet mesh),

while vertical rows of small triangles produced a shark tooth watermark known as *niho mano*. Other examples of watermarks inspired by nature include *iwipuhi* (eel bone), *kapua`i koloa* (footprint of the koloa duck), *ho`opa`i* (a slapping), *upena halu`a pupu* (fishing net with circles), *leihala halu`a* (pattern from hala), *lau ma`u* (ma`u leaf), *mole halu`a pupu* (pattern with circular motifs referencing ni`ihau shell), and *niho li`ili`i* (small shark tooth).

In essence, in producing water marks, *kapa* makers would take an every day object such as a fishnet, necessary to provide food for one's family each and every day, and reduce it to its most basic element of design. This design would then be incorporated into the fabric and subtle texture of clothing and sleeping cloth. This process of appropriating<sup>2</sup> and honoring everyday objects is exactly what I aim to accomplish in my art. For example, I may take an image of a ti leaf, reinterpret it, abstract it and print it in a way that allows for my viewer to bring new meaning and importance to what may seem like an ordinary object.

European contact in 1778 and the colonization which followed threatened *kapa* production by flooding the market with new, less labor intensive textiles. Sleeping *kapa* or *kapa moe* were gradually replaced by blankets, and *kapa* clothing was replaced by introduced woven textiles. "*Kapa* became symbolic of rank, prestige, and Hawaiian heritage - used as gifts for ceremonial wear, as wrappings for the dead, as decorative covers for European style beds, and to make dresses introduced by the missionaries." (Kaepler, 1978, 1). However, even as *kapa* became less functional and more symbolic, *kapa* makers in Hawai'i continued to evolve their production techniques.

For years after European contact, Hawaiian *kapa* makers incorporated the influx of new technologies, techniques, and concepts to create ever more

sophisticated designs. For example, *kapa* makers began to beat newly introduced

<sup>2</sup> In my thesis I am using "appropriate" to mean "reinterpret" and not as it is often used in a contemporary art context to refer to stealing or misusing someone else's work.

red cotton fibers into their *kapa* to create new pink tones. Iron nails were put to use in carving more intricate, precise water marks into *i'e kuku*. Use of metal carving tools in place of shark's teeth, significantly increased the level of detail Hawaiians were able to achieve in their watermarks, and spawned new designs. Almost seamlessly, these new innovations were cleverly adapted into Hawaiian aesthetic traditions.

Today, most Hawaiian *kapa* is found in museum collections. However, after a century of near extinction, Hawaiian *kapa* making is being revived by dedicated Hawaiian crafts-women. These artisans are relearning aspects of the manufacturing process of *kapa* from other Polynesian *kapa* experts and studying old Hawaiian *kapa* fragments in museums, as well as experimenting on their own (Neich, 1997, 92).

Perhaps most important is the growing recognition of the inventiveness and mastery of aesthetic techniques achieved by our *kupuna* in making *kapa* nearly two centuries ago, techniques that we can only begin to approximate rather than duplicate. Approximation is truly the best that modern *kapa* makers can do without the skills, materials, and teachers of times past. At the same time however, this very inability to duplicate creates the need to be inventive, in the same way that *kapa* makers have been inventive and incorporated new techniques for centuries past. In fact, it is only through innovation that *kapa* making has survived as an art into the present day. Just as *kapa* has evolved and incorporated different techniques to endure over time, my work in *Waina* seeks to bring design elements from traditional crafts such as *kapa* making into contemporary times and give them new meaning.

### III. KE KAHUA

“Art is not just something to be looked at but an experience we have with that which we express. This is why we must write, paint, dance or chant- to create our own way of understanding. It is simply our version of the truth and when we speak it we are changing our future because we are able to define our past and present.”

-Dr. Manulani Alului Meyer, EdD.  
Scholar, Author, and Professor of Education

Like Dr. Meyer, I believe that art is a process of making meaning out of the life around us and, at the same time, creating the future. My *kupuna* drew on everyday objects to create the textures and layers found in watermarks. In doing so, they honored these objects, investing them with meaning and life for generations to come. They ensured that someday, a descendant such as me, would get to “discover” and become inspired by their art, and to reinterpret it for my time. I interpret the visual world using printmaking to articulate my perceptions. As an artist, I am guided by three basic principles: abstraction, uncertainty and layering, each of which is also present in the process of creating Hawaiian *kapa* watermarks.

For me, the process of abstraction is starting with a well-known object or easily recognizable icon, then reinterpreting this basic shape, and investing it with new meaning within the print. By avoiding figurative or representational elements, I make it possible for the viewer themselves to discover their own meaning and interpretation of my work. My work draws from Hawai`i's culture and landscape, becoming a personal search for the beautiful and sublime. I want the work to have a lyrically abstract and meditative quality that remain with the viewer. I believe that allowing viewers to create their own interpretations of non-representational images, rather than force feeding them a concrete visual

reality, impacts them in a way that will linger in their soul.

As a printmaker, I am also inspired by the element of uncertainty inherent in my medium. I believe there is an important connection between the initial making of the image on the plate and the physical effort involved in transferring that image onto paper. These two components are quite distinct processes. Multiple variables such as dampness of paper, applied pressure, and consistency of ink ensure that the finished print seldom looks anything like the inked plate. This unpredictable quality in printmaking appeals to me because it is exciting and mysterious. As each impression will be distinct, my chief aim is to create prints that contain a unique and personal feeling.

The element of individuality and discovery in printmaking is further deepened by the process of layering. My approach will always be predominately concerned with the notion of creating layers of information; and of dealing with the accidental surprises that result from that layering. By combining and layering standard print techniques, I feel I am able to invent and discover new methods and visual phenomenon.

I admire Australian printmaker Geoff LaGerche, who believes:

“Printmaking is an event or process rather than the pure subject matter. It is the subject matter or intended image that dictates the way the plate is worked, but the challenge of printmaking is the development of new techniques. The perfection of traditional methods is important but the development of new techniques necessitates constant departure from tradition and it is this event that makes printmaking meaningful”

(Kemp, 1976, 80).

Like LaGerche, I believe that the stimulating challenge of printmaking lies in the making of discoveries within a technical framework. For me, abstraction, uncertainty, and layering, each a cornerstone of my philosophy as an artist,

combine to create an exhilarating sense of discovery, both in the creation and the viewing of my art.

*Kapa* is a form of printmaking because it utilizes a very similar process. First the paper is created or selected, it is often embossed with a watermark or underlying texture, and then the dye or ink is applied to create patterns. The watermarks found in *kapa* are appealing to me because they incorporate these three integral elements of my artistic philosophy: abstraction, uncertainty, and layering. *Kapa* draws on recognizable every-day images such as fishing nets or shark teeth, then abstracts them by carving them repeatedly on the *i`e kuku*. *Kapa* also involves the element of uncertainty because a *kapa* maker would not be able to predict the surface quality that an *i`e kuku* would actually produce on the bark cloth. As different sides of the *i`e kuku* are repeatedly beat into the *kapa*, layers of texture are created just as I create layers of images and techniques in my prints. Integrating new technologies such as carving with metal, to create finer and more definite watermarks, expanded the possibilities for layering.

By identifying these elements, abstraction, uncertainty, and layering in the process of making watermarks in *kapa*, I feel connected to traditional Hawaiian *kapa* makers in a new way. For me, these three elements combine to create an addicting sense of discovery and anticipation each time I complete a piece. The women who long ago beat the *maka `upena* (eyes of the fish net) watermark into the *kapa moe* that I held at the Bishop Museum must have felt the same exciting sense of discovery as she held her finished layers of *kapa* to the sun to see the subtle watermarks emerging in the light. I feel that engaging in this dialogue with traditional *kapa* makers, has deepened my sense of connection to my heritage and my *kupuna*, connecting me not just to the art they created, but to how they must have felt in the process of creating, suffusing the past with life in the present.

When art allows both the artist and the viewer to make discoveries as they create and experience the art itself, that art gains new life and meaning, enduring into the future. Art guided by innovation can, therefore, help to perpetuate culture as generation after generation does not just replicate the work of their ancestors, but recreates and rediscovers it for themselves.

#### IV. KA HANA

My thesis exhibition, *Waina*, is my own effort at recreating and rediscovering a traditional Hawaiian art form, that of the *kapa* watermark, in today's context, in my own way. *Waina* consists of collagraph prints, collagraph plates, waxed screenprints on rice paper and eighteen three-and-a-half-foot-tall replications of *i`e kuku*. Each of these pieces provide a direct avenue for me to make aspects of traditional *kapa* more accessible to the contemporary viewer. In keeping with the way my ancestors allowed their art to evolve, I felt it was important to create an exhibition which exemplified the evolution of traditional art forms.

##### **Collagraph Prints (Plate III )**

The first major installation in *Waina* were twenty collagraph prints. A collagraph is a print made from a collage of various materials glued onto a hardboard plate. I used dried coffee grounds and glue to make the collagraph plates and coated these plates with a layer of shellac once the coffee grounds were completely dry. I chose coffee grounds so as to create a velvety, textured effect, similar to the embossed textures present in a watermark. My intention was for the surface to be built up from layers of colors and marks and for these mysterious shapes to be left open for interpretation to the viewer. I also wanted to achieve textural rather than linear qualities in my prints.

A collagraph plate can be printed as an intaglio plate, with the ink in the recessions, or as a relief plate, with the ink on the surface. The possibilities for texture, embossing, and color overprinting are innumerable. I decided to print the plates intaglio to achieve a high contrast in each print, to highlight plate tone and to capture textural possibilities. Intaglio printing methods require engraving

lines on the plate. After work on the plate is completed, ink is washed into the lines. The excess ink is then removed from the surface and a sheet of paper, dampened to give greater elasticity, is placed over the plate, covered with a felt blanket and passed through the press. The paper is forced down into the incised lines where it picks up the ink. Even though the finished plate could be used to edition the print, the process of wiping away the ink introduces variability every time a plate is printed. The human hand is not capable of wiping the ink to print the plate exactly the same way twice. To me, the beauty of printmaking is allowing the prints to take on lives of their own by making technical choices and interpreting the subject, then surrendering control of the precise image that results.

The collagraph prints are each twenty-one-and-a-half inches by twenty-one-and-a-half-inches. All together there are twenty of these collagraph prints, each representing a different Hawaiian watermark pattern. Each plate was printed multiple times on the same sheet of paper to create a layered effect similar to that of beating the *i`e kuku* over and over into the same sheet of *kapa*. The plates were inked with Pthalo turquoise etching ink and printed onto Arches buff printing paper. Although the watermarks found in *kapa* are varying shades of white, I chose to print with turquoise to reference hues of ocean and river water and to highlight the importance of water within the process of *kapa* making. The series of prints were hung side-by-side, creating an installation of seven-feet-wide-by-eight-feet-tall.

By magnifying the subtle markations of the Hawaiian watermark, I hoped to reconsider the delicate layers which comprise *kapa*. This also allowed for a metamorphosis from what the object was (traditional watermarks) to its final form. Through the manipulation of scale, I dissolved the literalness of the object yet retained connotations of the watermark. The elegant, gestural simplicity in

my prints of the watermarks also retained an intensity and sensuousness found in traditional watermarks. Seeing all twenty prints of the magnified watermarks created an interesting tension between geometric constraints and floating organic shapes.

### **Collagraph Plates (Plate X )**

On an adjacent wall, I displayed eighteen collagraph plates that served as an index to the larger installation of collagraph prints. At six-inches-by-six-inches the plates were smaller in scale than the collagraph prints and each plate represented a different Hawaiian watermark. These plates were made of masonite, glue and carborundum and inked with various tones of turquoise. My aim with this installation of plates was to create formal harmonies of shapes and colors that existed in their own right, yet had a direct relationship to the larger installation of watermark prints. Many viewers at the show spent a significant amount of time studying the eighteen collagraph plates. Each traditional watermark was recognizable in these plates. Having this relationship between plates and prints, the viewer was encouraged to identify the traditional watermark in the magnified and abstracted form present in the collagraph prints.

### **Enlarged *I`e Kuku* (Plate IX )**

The second installation piece were eighteen enlarged *i`e kuku*. These *i`e kuku* served as a visual metaphor, making a statement which has significance beyond the literal meaning of the original object. Each woman's beater had its own distinct sound and it has been said that someone approaching a village could identify who was beating *kapa* just by the sound. In this way, the *i`e kuku* almost functioned as one form of a woman's voice. The process of beating *kapa*

required sounding the implement over and over and, since women often gathered together to beat *kapa* in groups, the collective sound of the work created a lyrical language or music and conveyed a message through rhythm. I hoped to mimic this rhythmic aspect of *kapa* production by conveying my own message through text. After consulting two Hawaiian language teachers, I selected twenty-four Hawaiian words which I felt captured the underlying values that guide my voice. I chose to carve Hawaiian vocabulary onto the *i`e kuku* in an effort to preserve a language which is being suppressed by other dominant languages. I thoughtfully selected the following words:

*‘aina*: land, *malama*: to take care of, *malie*: calm, quiet, serene  
*ho`ohanohano*: to honor, *ho`ihi*: sacred, *wahi*: place, *pono*: righteous, balanced, *ho`oulu*: to inspire, *na`au*: of the gut, feeling, *malu*: peace or calm, *kupuna*: ancestor, *ha`i*: to tell, *mo`olelo*: history, *no`ono`o*: reflection, *kumu*: purpose, source, *hohonu*: depth, *pilina*: connection, *aloha*: compassion, *kaulike*: balance, *wai*: water, *hana*: work, *kuleana*: responsibility

These words became part of a textured language which I carved on each of the four sides of the eighteen *i`e kuku* in my exhibition. Each word was carved repeatedly to replicate the geometric carvings used to create the traditional watermarks. I had to carve each letter of every word one at a time, and then repeat each word multiple times to fill one side of every beater. Each of the eighteen *i`e kuku* had four sides and I carved all but three of these. The three blank *kapa* beaters reference an unheard voice or story yet to be told.

I shaped the eighteen *kapa* beaters from four-by-four-inch pieces of three-and-a-half-foot tall redwood. A traditional *i`e kuku* used for beating *kapa* is one foot in length for practical reasons such as weight and utility. I chose to make my *i`e kuku* three-and-a-half-feet tall to honor and memorialize a traditional

implement which played a vital role in the creation of watermarks. The *i`e kuku* in my exhibition were not intended for use but rather, to send a loud visual message. I used a grinder and hand sander to shape the beaters and an electric dremmel tool to carve text into their faces. The text was deliberately obscured by the distressing and sanding back of the surface. After the final sanding each *kapa* beater was treated with an ebony stain to emulate the same dark tone of *kauila*, the native hard wood used to make traditional *kapa* beaters. I chose redwood instead of a native hard wood because it is softer and easier to shape. The *kapa* beaters were displayed on a large pedestal-like stage one foot off of the ground. I positioned the pedestal near the middle of the gallery space to provoke a tension between these three-dimensional sculptural forms and the two-dimensional prints hung on the gallery walls.

#### **Rice Paper Installations (Plate IV, V, VI, VII, VIII )**

The final piece in the body of work *Waina* were four five-by-six-foot rice paper installations. Each piece was comprised of 480 screen printed swatches of traditional life-size watermarks found in *kapa*. The scale of each rice paper print was the same size as the end of each beater, about four-inches-by-four-inches. After the watermarks were screen printed on to the rice paper, I coated each piece of rice paper with bee's wax to give each print a weighted and aged surface quality. I wanted these weathered surfaces to subtly suggest an antiqued quality. My reason for printing multiple four-inch-by-four-inch screenprints of watermarks on to rice paper was to resemble the swatches of *kapa* often found in the context of museums. I then nailed the individually waxed screenprints to 24, five foot (one-by-one-inch) pieces of wood to create a layered geometric grid of screen printed watermark swatches. As an installation, the rice paper pieces create visual ambiguity. Looking at one swatch individually, the viewer can see

the traditional watermark. However when looked at as an entirety, the grid installation creates a rich tapestry of indistinguishable textured marks. Each frame of rice paper prints was a different radiant earthy color intended to reference *`aina* - a landscape unique to Hawai'i.

In each of the installations in *Waina*, the large scale collagraph prints of traditional watermarks, larger-than-life-size replications of *i`e kuku* and grids of rice paper prints, I was able to highlight aspects of traditional *kapa*, while at the same time creating something entirely new. I hope that each of the many viewers of my show left *Waina* with a better appreciation for the beauty of traditional design elements.

## V. KA `OLELO HOPE

Through my thesis exhibition, I have attempted to celebrate and bring to light the hidden watermarks unique to Hawaiian *kapa*. These watermarks, largely unknown to contemporary audiences, are a symbol of the high quality craftsmanship and skilled innovation attained by my ancestors. For me, *Waina* has *achieved* what any good dialogue should: it has connected me to the ancestors who worked painstakingly at creating their own watermarks. My work honors a traditional Hawaiian art form by reinterpreting and recreating, not simply replicating. This dialogue becomes relevant and meaningful to modern day audiences. I believe traditional art forms will only survive in today's world through a dialogue which bridges the past to the present.

In *Waina*, I have experienced the same sense of discovery my *kupuna* must have felt to hold a final piece of *kapa* up to the light and see the mesh of their fishing net, so vital to their survival, captured and layered into the cloth, taking on a new form and depth of beauty. In my thesis exhibition, I strived to create a visual language of imagery that I hope is worthy of the best work of my *kupuna*. To honor my *kupuna*, their reactions and discoveries, while at the same time, articulating my own interpretation, I find my own voice and place in the line of artisans before me. If my art is able to empower and assert a Hawaiian sense of identity and culture, while inspiring viewers to connect more deeply with their own sense of identity, I will have expressed my cultural stance in Hawai`i as an artist. My artistic voice will continue to evolve just as the traditions of my *kupuna* do today.

## APPENDIX A: PLATES

Plate I .....	Installation view
Plate II .....	Outside view of gallery
Plate III .....	Turquoise collagraph prints
Plate IV .....	Rice paper installation (red)
Plate V .....	Rice paper installation (black)
Plate VI .....	Rice paper installation (brown)
Plate VII .....	Rice paper installation (white)
Plate VIII .....	Close up of rice paper installation
Plate IX .....	Close up of enlarged <i>i`e kuku</i>
Plate X .....	18 collagraph watermark plates



Plate I: Installation View



Plate II: Outside view of gallery

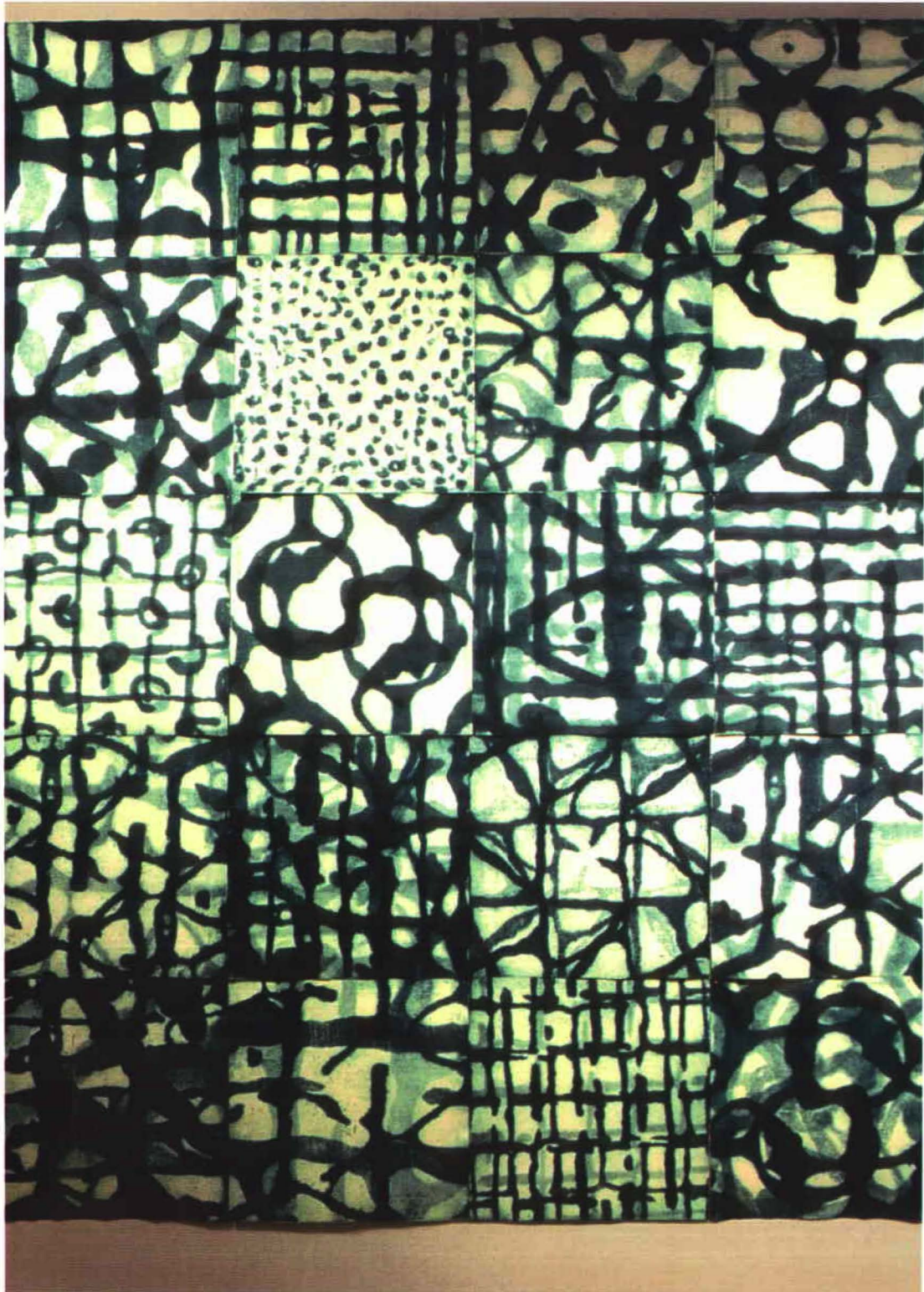


Plate III: Turquoise watermark installation

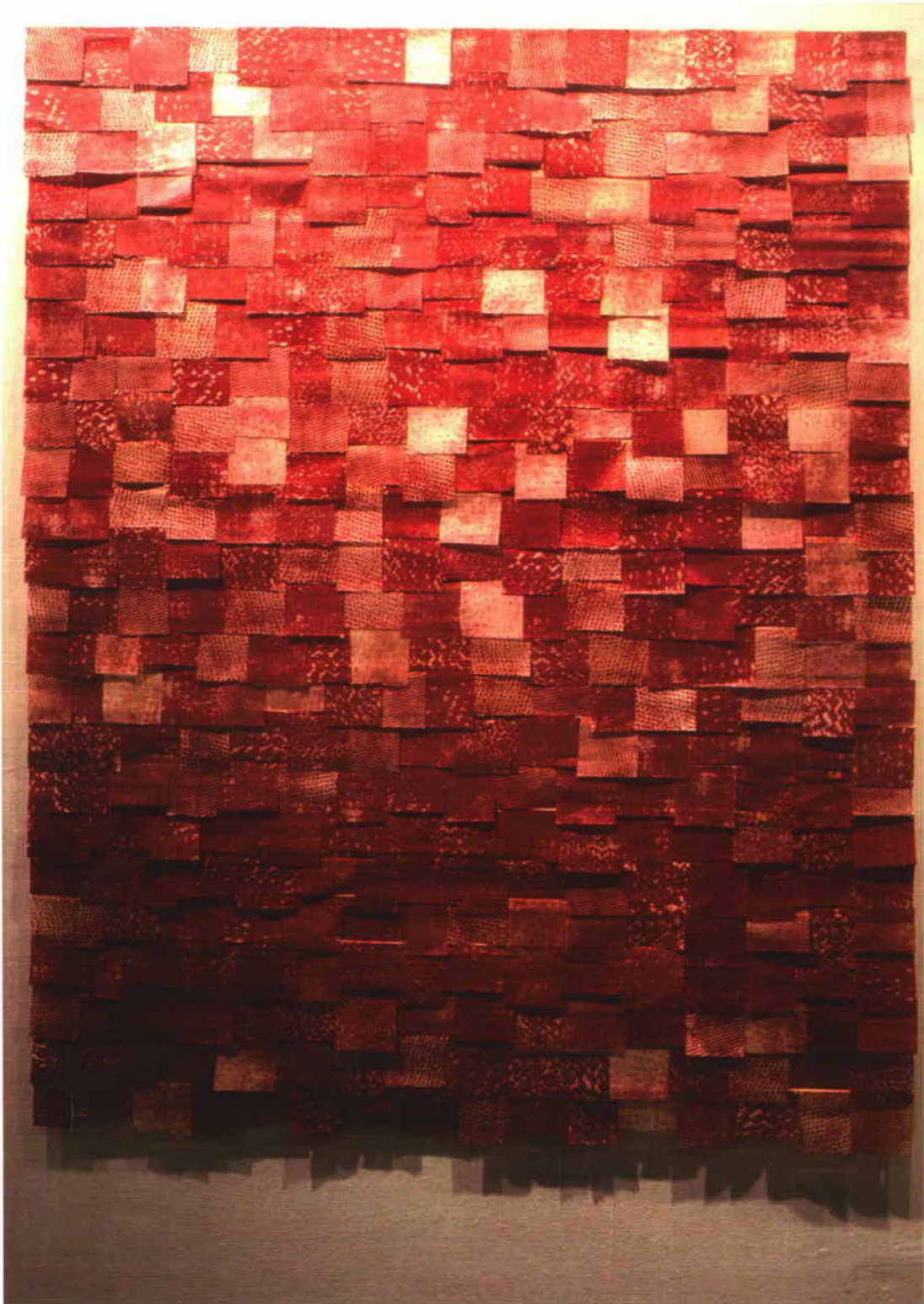


Plate IV: Rice paper installation (red)

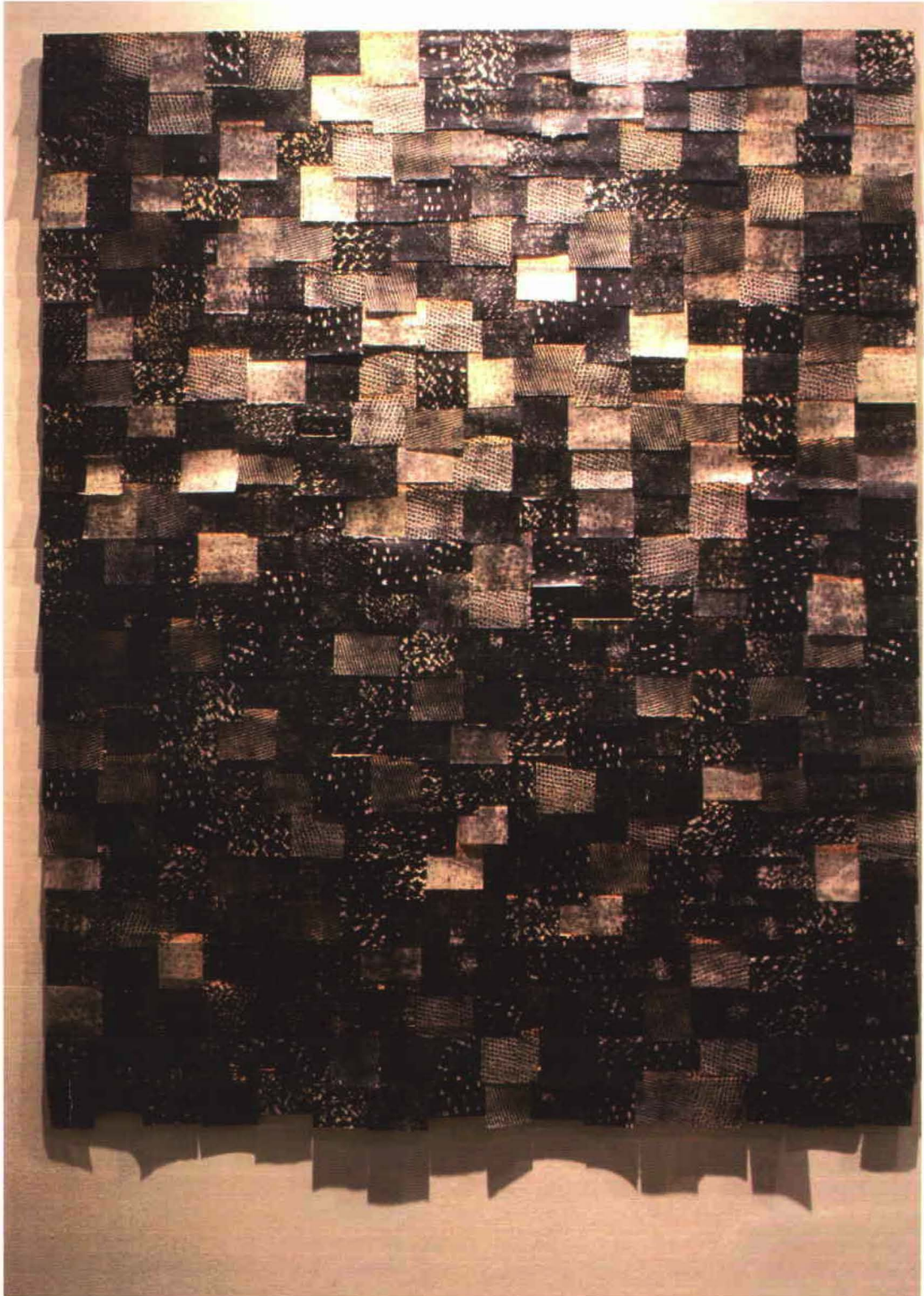


Plate V: Rice paper installation (black)

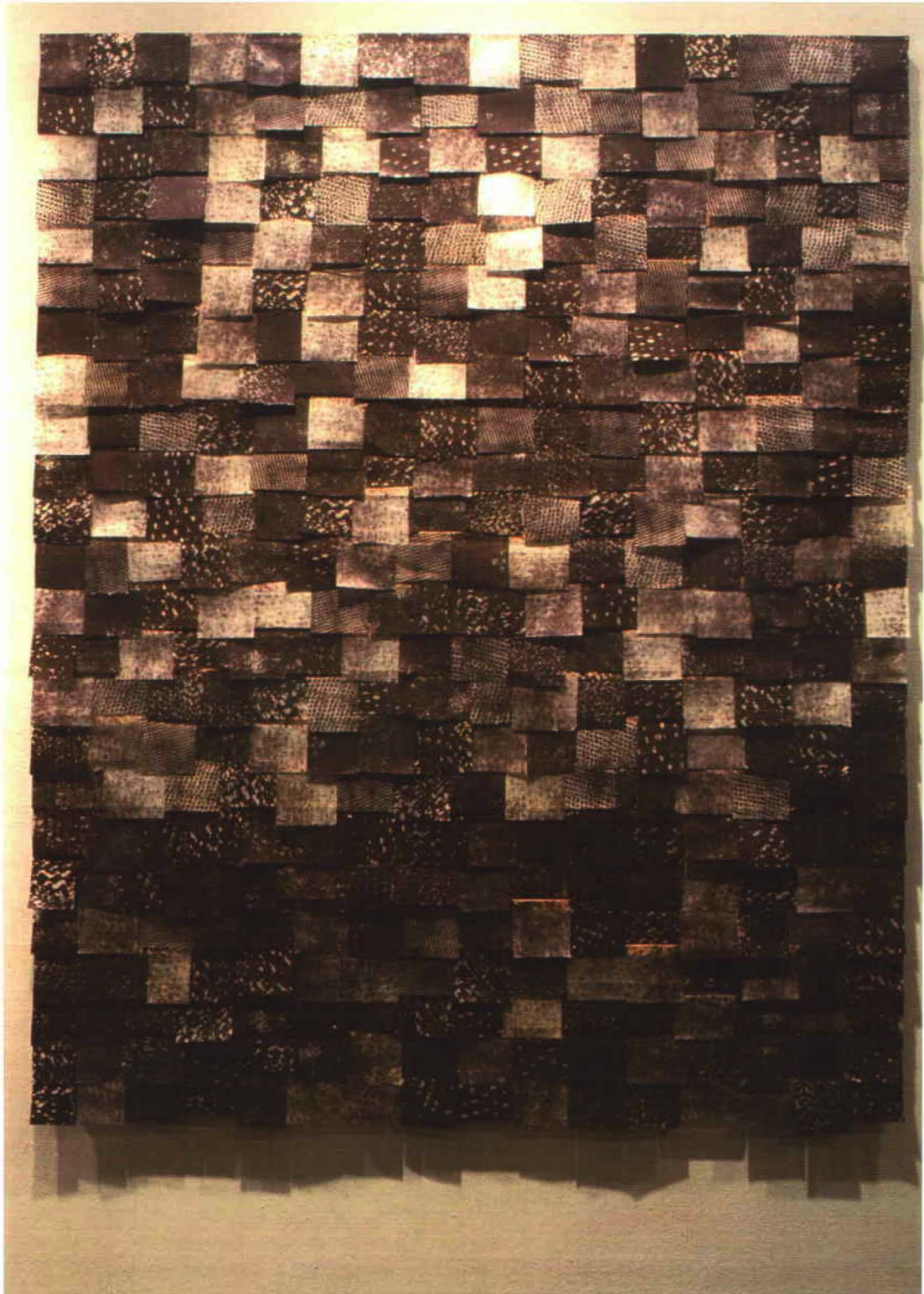


Plate VI: Rice paper installation (brown)

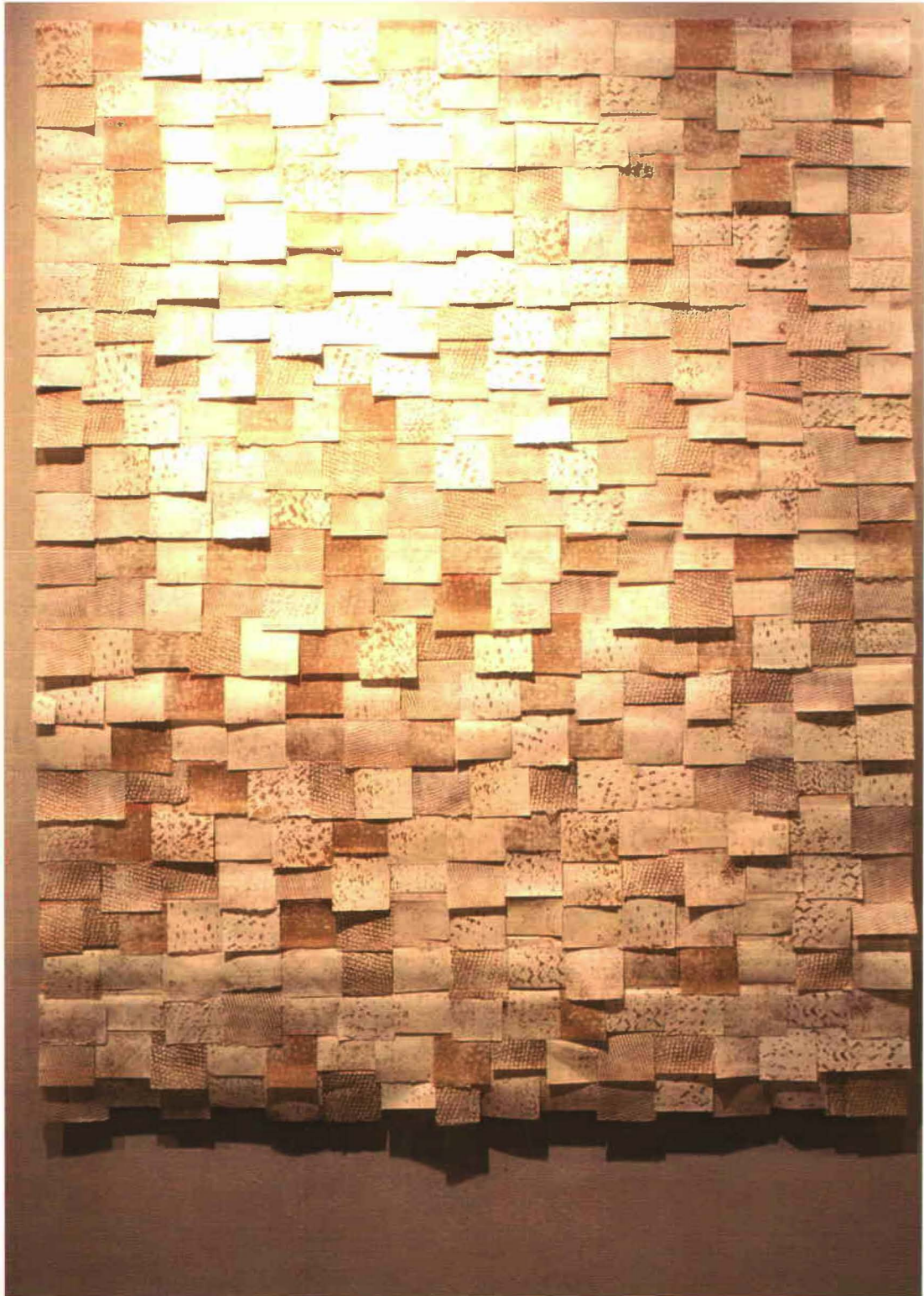


Plate VII: Rice paper installation (white)

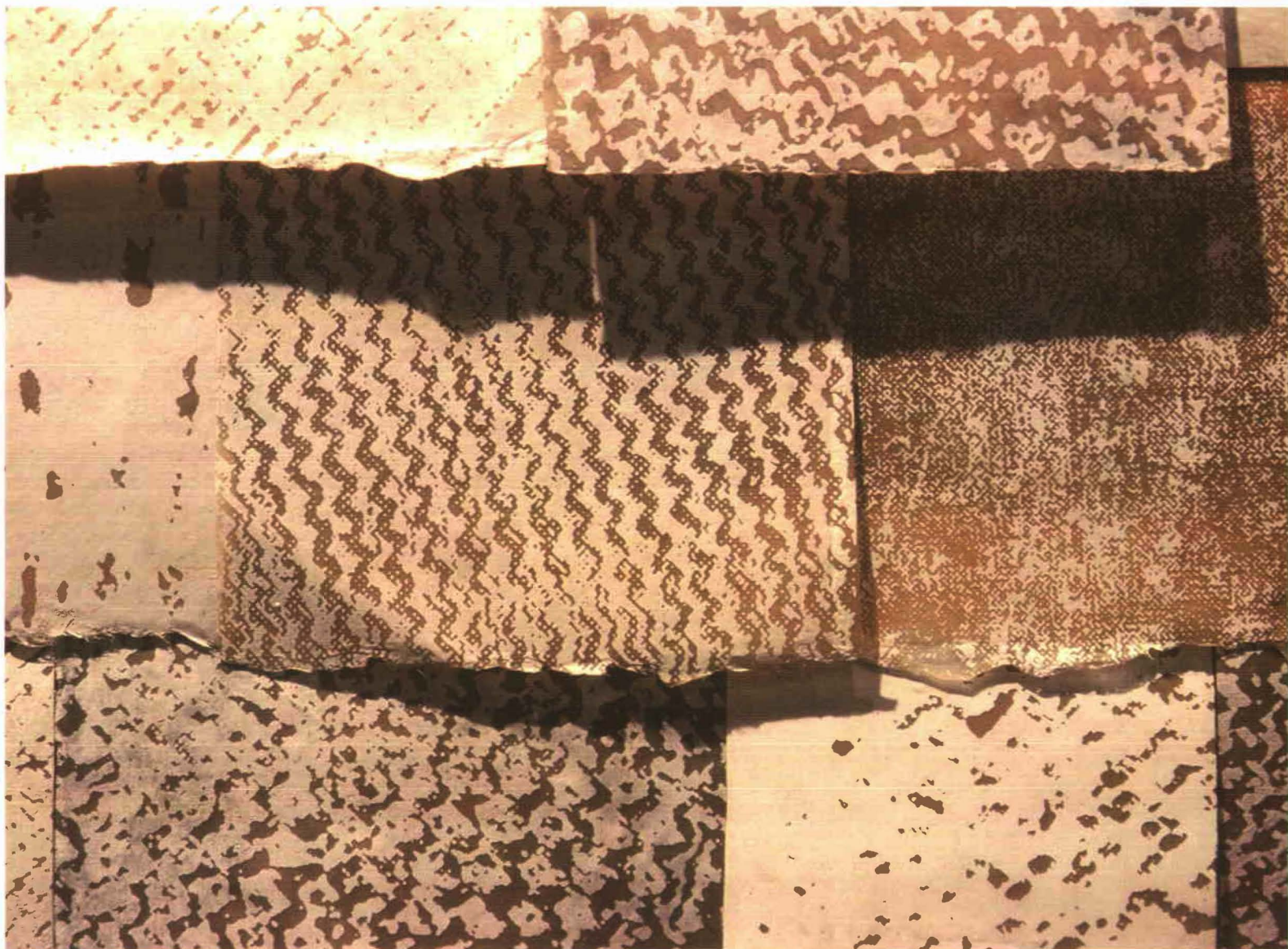


Plate VIII: Close up of rice paper installation

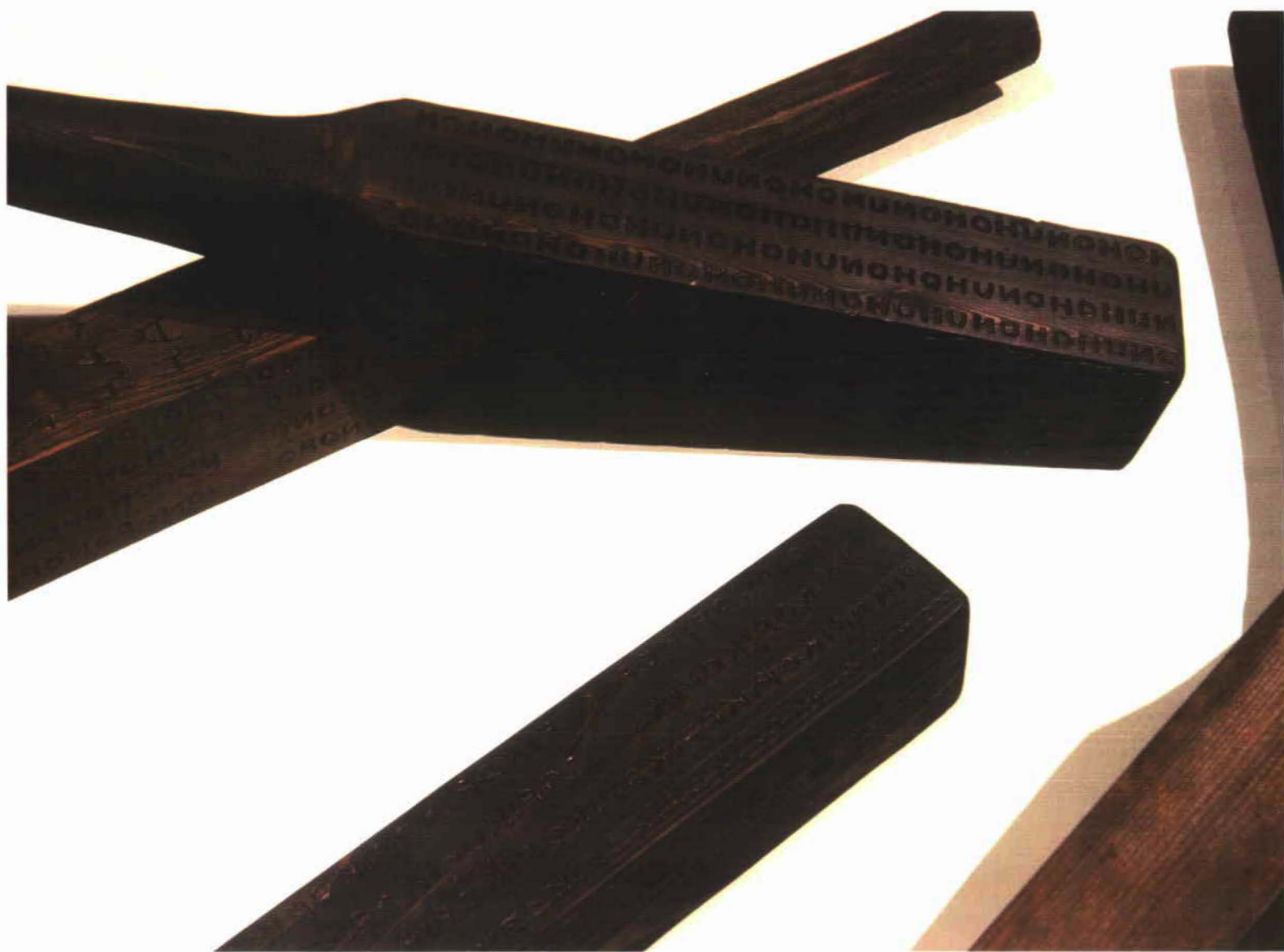


Plate IX: Close up of *kapa* beaters



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbott, Isabella, *La`au Hawai`i*. Bishop Museum Press, Honolulu, Hawai`i, 1992.
- Bruno, Ellen, *‘Ohe Kapala, Bamboo Printing*. Lyman House Memorial Museum, Hilo, Hawai`i, 1964.
- Booth Editions, *Contemporary Art in Print*. The Paragon Press, London, 2001.  
Cazimero, Momi, De La Torre, David, Meyer, Manulani, *Na Maka Hou*. Service Printers, Honolulu, Hawai`i, 2001.
- Guralnik, David, *Webster’s New World Dictionary of The American Language*. William Collins + World Publishing CO., Inc. Cleveland, New York, 1974.
- Georgia Tech, Institute of Paper Science Technology  
<[http://www.ipst.gatech.edu/amp/collection/museum\\_watermark.htm](http://www.ipst.gatech.edu/amp/collection/museum_watermark.htm)>
- Harden, MJ, *Voices of Wisdom*. Aka Press, Kula, Hawai`i, 1999.
- Ihara, Violet, “*Research Material, Bulletin I: Hawaiian Bark Cloth*.” State of Hawai`i Department of Education, Honolulu, Hawai`i, 1982.
- Kaeppler, Adrienne, *Cook Voyage Artifacts*. Bishop Museum Press, Honolulu, Hawai`i, 1978.
- Kempf, Franz, *Contemporary Australian Printmakers*. Lansdowne Editions, Melbourne, Australia, 1976.
- Krauss, Beatrice, *Plants In Hawaiian Culture*. University of Hawai`i Press., Honolulu, Hawai`i, 1993.
- Krohn, Val Frieling, *Hawai`i Dye Plants*. University of Hawai`i Press, Honolulu, Hawai`i, 1978.
- Neich, Roger and Pendergast Mick, *Pacific Tapa*. David Bateman Ltd., Auckland, New Zealand, 1997.
- Pukui, Mary Kawena, Elbert, Samuel H., *Hawaiian Dictionary Revised and Enlarged Edition*. University of Hawai`i Press, Honolulu, Hawai`i, 1971.
- Ross, John. Romano, Clare. Ross, Tim, *The Complete Printmaker*. The Free Press, INC. New York, New York, 1972.
- Summers, Catherine, *Material Culture: The J.S. Emmerson Collection of Hawaiian Artifacts*. Bishop Museum Press, Honolulu, Hawai`i, 1999.
- Young, David, *Na Mea Makamae*. Palapala Press, Kona, Hawai`i, 1999.