

MANA MĀHŪ

Lehuauakea

Hand-painted on traditional barkcloth (kapa), *Mana Māhū* is a personal take on the modern Pride flag. As a māhū individual whose gender identity can be described as fluid between masculine and feminine, I honor my fellow māhū-identifying community through this piece while also acknowledging the role that being a kapa-maker has held on my personal journey. The rainbow of earth pigments and plant dyes seemed appropriate because, just as soil embodies many different shades and forms, so too does gender and sexuality, especially from a traditional Native Hawaiian perspective.

This kapa speaks conceptually to the cultural resurgence of traditional practices like kapa-making alongside a growing recognition and acceptance of māhū in our communities. With this painting, I hope to not only grant further visibility to the māhūi both in Hawai‘i and in diaspora, but to also challenge audiences to think critically about the conflation of māhū with LGBTQ+ terminology by creating a “flag” that represents our own worldview, cultural practices, and pattern symbolism.

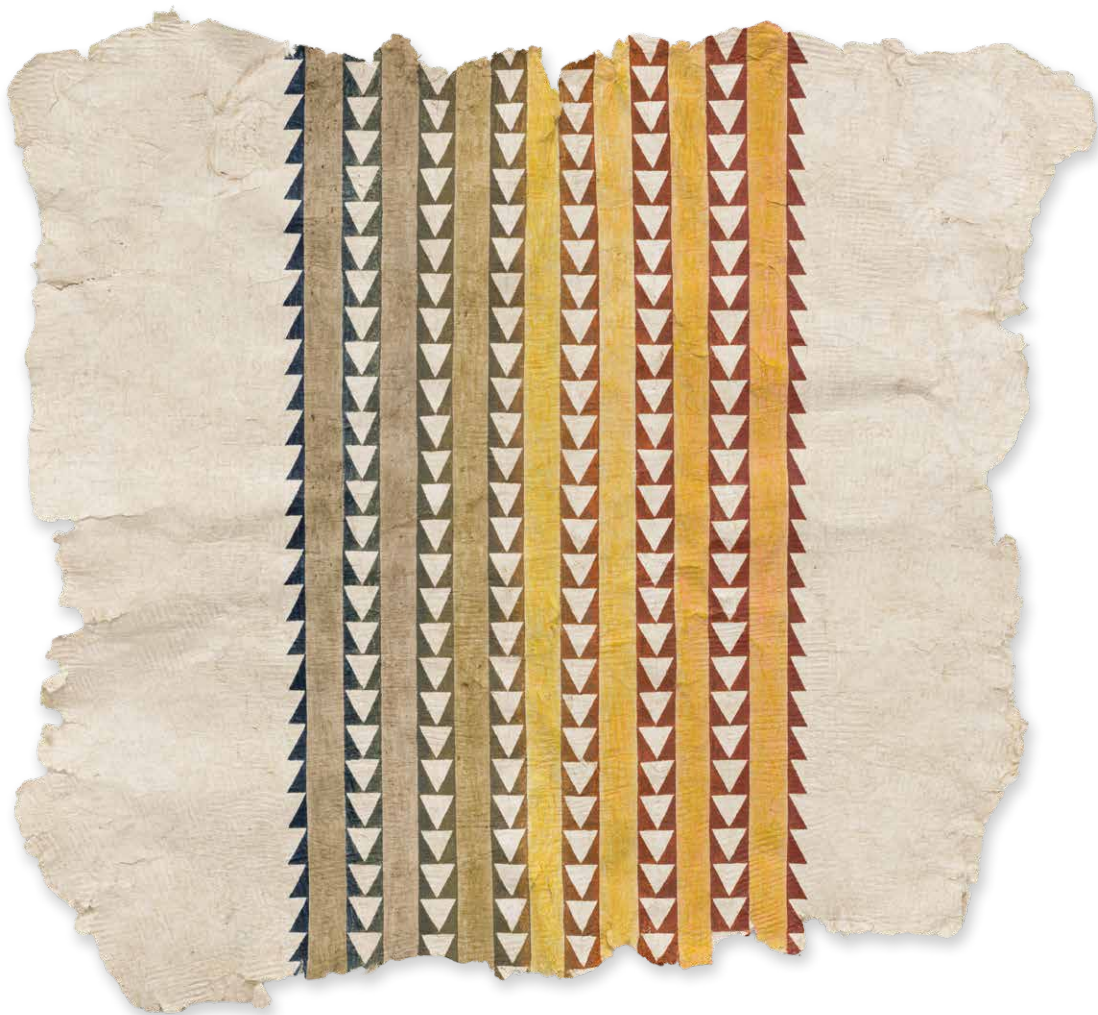
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Mana Māhū

Medium: Earth Pigments and Plant Dyes on Hand-Beaten Kapa

Year: 2020

Size: 17 x 17 inches

PHOTO CREDIT: MARIO GALLUCCI

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lehuauakea is a Native Hawaiian interdisciplinary artist and barkcloth-maker who works with ancestral organic materials to highlight narratives of Indigenous environmental stewardship, contemporary Kanaka Maoli identity, and the teachings held in cultural mythologies and cosmologies. By building a personal relationship with traditional processes and materiality, Lehuauakea breathes new life into intergenerational customs, preserving cultural memory rooted in place-based practices. Grounded by ancestral modality while advancing the medium to new, innovative forms, Lehuauakea aims to build on these knowledge systems and ultimately share them with the next generation.



Lehuauakea has spent the last several years learning kapa from Wesley Sen, who trained in barkcloth-making alongside makers including Pua Van Dorpe, Beatrice Krauss, Malia Solomon, Carla Freitas, Dennis Kana'e, and Mary Pritchard. Lehuauakea's work has been shown in exhibitions nationally and internationally, and is held in prominent collections around the globe, including the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, Portland Art Museum, National Gallery of Victoria, Queensland Art | Gallery of Modern Art, Forge Project, and Museum of International Folk Art, amongst others. The artist is currently based between Santa Fe (NM) and Pāpa'ikou (HI) after earning their bachelor of fine arts degree in painting at Pacific Northwest College of Art.