



KAIĀULU:

Rising Together

October
2025

Opening Day
Saturday, October 4th
1-4PM

Capitol Modern
250 South Hotel Street
Honolulu, HI

KAIĀULU:

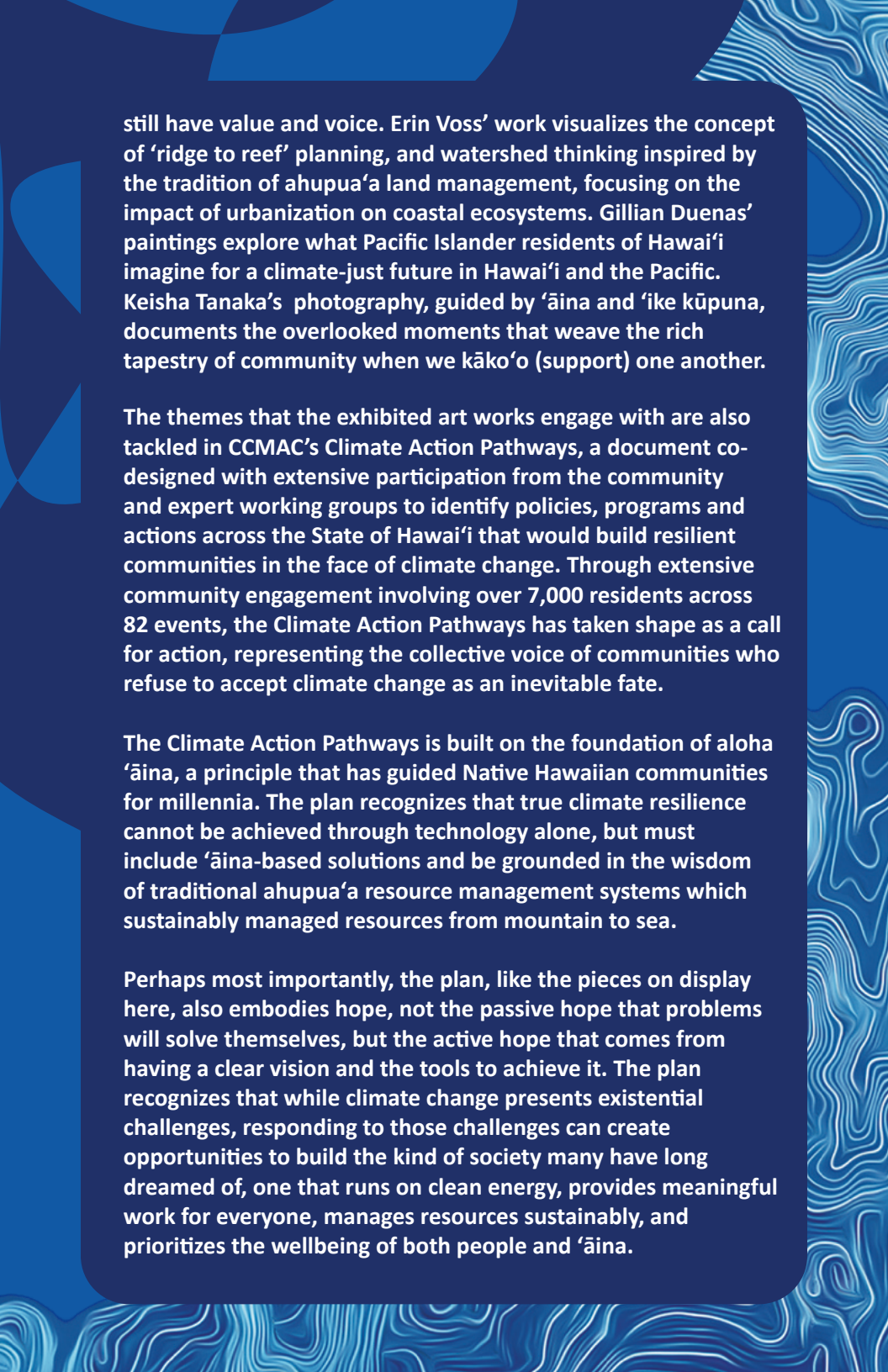
Rising Together

The climate crisis is no longer a distant threat but a daily reality shaping the lives of every resident across these islands. Families watch as coastal roads flood with increasing frequency, farmers struggle with unpredictable weather patterns and drought, and wildfires impact communities, who also grapple with electricity bills that are more than triple the national average. The devastating 2023 Maui wildfires remind us that climate change has already cost Hawai'i lives. Yet the direct experiences of climate change have yet to translate into collective action.

Native Hawaiians, and indigenous cultures around the world have shown that the shaping of consciousness and building pilina with 'āina is directly supported by embodied practices of oli, and mele and hula and the visual arts. These artforms articulate an intimate reciprocal connection to place, give shape to the imagination, and tell stories of what was and what is possible and remind us of our intrinsic connection and responsibility to the living world around us. Art has this capacity to make the invisible visible, the intangible tangible and the multiple relationships we have to the world around us, perceivable to our senses, our hearts, bodies and mind.

In the summer of 2024 the Hawai'i State Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission (CCMAC) in partnership with Sea Grant and Capitol Modern put out a call for Hawaii-based artists to participate in an innovative Artist Climate Action Residency program. This program's goal is to connect Hawai'i residents to critical climate change challenges and actions through artistic expression from a range of different media. The program received an overwhelming response with 65 applications from artists across Hawai'i. This exhibition shows the work of 4 artists who have been engaging with the topic of Climate Change, selected by an expert panel of professional artists, curators and scientists.

Since the summer of 2024 the selected artists have been engaging with themes that reflect a changing world. Benjamin Fairfield turns trash into functional musical instruments, showing how things deemed worthless can



still have value and voice. Erin Voss' work visualizes the concept of 'ridge to reef' planning, and watershed thinking inspired by the tradition of ahupua'a land management, focusing on the impact of urbanization on coastal ecosystems. Gillian Duenas' paintings explore what Pacific Islander residents of Hawai'i imagine for a climate-just future in Hawai'i and the Pacific. Keisha Tanaka's photography, guided by 'āina and 'ike kūpuna, documents the overlooked moments that weave the rich tapestry of community when we kāko'o (support) one another.

The themes that the exhibited art works engage with are also tackled in CCMAC's Climate Action Pathways, a document co-designed with extensive participation from the community and expert working groups to identify policies, programs and actions across the State of Hawai'i that would build resilient communities in the face of climate change. Through extensive community engagement involving over 7,000 residents across 82 events, the Climate Action Pathways has taken shape as a call for action, representing the collective voice of communities who refuse to accept climate change as an inevitable fate.

The Climate Action Pathways is built on the foundation of aloha 'āina, a principle that has guided Native Hawaiian communities for millennia. The plan recognizes that true climate resilience cannot be achieved through technology alone, but must include 'āina-based solutions and be grounded in the wisdom of traditional ahupua'a resource management systems which sustainably managed resources from mountain to sea.

Perhaps most importantly, the plan, like the pieces on display here, also embodies hope, not the passive hope that problems will solve themselves, but the active hope that comes from having a clear vision and the tools to achieve it. The plan recognizes that while climate change presents existential challenges, responding to those challenges can create opportunities to build the kind of society many have long dreamed of, one that runs on clean energy, provides meaningful work for everyone, manages resources sustainably, and prioritizes the wellbeing of both people and 'āina.

MEET THE ARTISTS

KEISHA TANAKA



Keisha Tanaka is a Kanaka Ōiwi artist from the ahupuaʻa of Heʻeia on Oʻahu. Their art is guided by ʻāina and ʻike kūpuna, and inspired by the kāhuli (tree snails), whose voices, once innumerable, were known to fill forests with song. Keisha's photography aims to document the smaller, often overlooked moments that weave the rich tapestry of community when we kākoʻo (support) one another. The phrase "kāhuli mai" —"turn toward me"—guides their

practice, both as a practical photographer's request and a call for the lāhui to turn towards each other to build a better Hawaiʻi. Each moʻolelo (story) they have the privilege to photograph hopes to fill Hawaiʻi's forests with our stories once more.

Beyond art, Keisha works at Kupu, a nonprofit organization that fosters careers for youth and young adults in conservation. As staff and alumna, they amplify stories that secure funding for mālama ʻāina initiatives and advocate for climate resilience. It is the dedication of educators, practitioners, technicians, scientists, lobbyists, administrators, artists, students, and the lehulehu (multitude) who contribute in between that fuels the work at Kāhuli Mai.

GILLIAN DUENAS



Gillian is a mixed-race Chamoru woman who was born and raised in Bremerton, WA. Self-taught, she began acrylic painting when she started college as a means of healing and connecting to her cultural identity. Her art centers her stories and perspectives as an Indigenous woman told through traditional legends, motifs, and aesthetics brought into a modern context. Themes that Gillian centers in her art include matriarchy, vulnerability, Indigeneity, and healing.

BEN FAIRFIELD



Benjamin Fairfield received his MA and PhD in ethnomusicology from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where he serves as lecturer and founder of the MUS311 Thai Ensemble (a sustainability-focused course where students repurpose found objects into Thai musical instruments). He has taught music at Ala Wai Elementary and Hawai'i Pacific University, produced a high school garage band rock album in Thailand as a Peace

Corps volunteer, and has published in various literary and academic journals. His illustrated children's book about repurposing rubbish into musical instruments, *Kani Ka 'ōpala: How can garbage sing?* is scheduled for publication with UH Press in September 2025.

ERIN VOSS



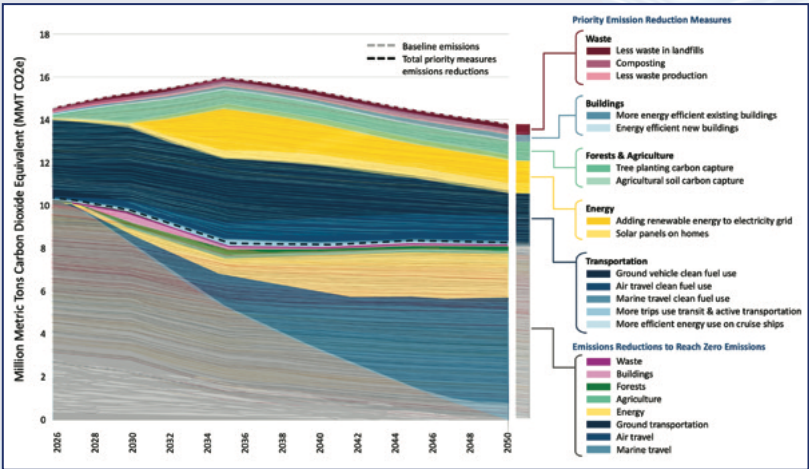
Erin Voss is an Asian American artist-researcher whose interdisciplinary practice investigates ecological and social systems within coastal territories and their relation to climate change. Informed by her affinity for the ocean and upbringing in Hawai'i, Erin's work is grounded in 'āina and wai as both subject and collaborator, engaging with natural and digital ephemera to explore interconnections between oceanic cosmologies, biocultural knowledge, and the practice of design.

During her studies, she exhibited work exploring Tahitians' spiritual and embodied knowledge of seascapes and the value of this perspective for future coastline design and management. Her current works look at the role of limu in ecological and cultural resiliency schemes, and how designing for limu necessitates an entire ahupua'a approach. Erin has a Master of Landscape Architecture from the Harvard Graduate School of Design and professional experience in open space planning, landscape design, and community engagement across the Pacific and California. In autumn 2025, she will begin an appointment as an assistant professor in the School of Architecture at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

THE HAWAI'I CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION COMMISSION (CCMAC)

provides policy direction, facilitation, coordination, and planning among state and county agencies, federal agencies, and other partners as appropriate. It establishes climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies and goals to help guide planning and implementation statewide using the latest scientific analysis and risk assessment to monitor and forecast climate change related impacts at the regional, state, and local levels.

CCMAC helps bridge the gap between community voices and state climate action, ensuring our initiatives truly reflect the priorities and knowledge of all who call Hawai'i home. Our work involves developing relevant outreach that empowers communities, across Hawai'i, to co-create our climate-resilient future.



The graph above represents the Green House Gas Reductions achieved through the various actions across all sectors of the economy that are found in the Climate Action Pathways, which has recently been released for public feedback by CCMAC and will be finalized at the end of 2025.



Scan this QR code to enlarge the graph.

MAHALO

EXHIBIT AND EVENT COORDINATORS

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GRAPHIC DESIGN

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MAHALO NUI to the following people for their advisory role in this project and exhibition:

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Nina Tonga, Assistant Professor, Department of Art and Art History, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

Victoria Keener, Research Professor, Global Institute of Sustainability & Innovation, Arizona State University, Senior Research Fellow, East-West Center

Sol Enos, Artist in Residence at the Capitol Modern



