Aloha mai kākou! My name is Lehuauakea @_lehuauakea_, and I'll be taking over the @fiveoaksmuseum page for this week, in conjunction with the opening of DISplace, curated by myself and Kanani Miyamoto (@mamakanani).

I am a Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) Portland-based artist, curator, and kapa maker originally from Pāpaʻikou, HI (Moku O Keawe, Big Island of Hawaiʻi). The primary focus of my work is centered on the revival of making kapa -- a traditional labor-intensive process of making cloth from the bark of certain trees, practiced throughout the Pacific and beyond.

My creative practice as a whole is driven by the responsibilities I have to my community, land, and ancestry. Honoring the knowledge that has been passed to me through kapa making is just one of the ways I bring these kuleana (responsibilities) into my life.

Here this week I will be sharing a bit about my work, why it's important, and how it connects me to roots back home in Hawaiʻi. In addition, I will be posting a daily ʻŌlelo Noʻeau to the IG stories on this page -- traditional Native Hawaiian proverbs -- while sharing about the manaʻo (intention, thought, meaning) behind those proverbs. So keep an eye out for those as well!

Looking forward to spending the week with everyone here, and hope we can see you at the virtual opening event for DISplace on Thursday! (registration required; link in bio).

Me ke aloha nui ~ ❤️
As I mentioned in yesterday's post, the bulk of my creative studio practice is centered around the making of kapa, a traditional textile made from the bark of certain trees. In Hawai‘i prior to colonial contact in the late 1700s, the kapa making process was meticulously refined over many, many generations. It is said that Hawaiian kapa was once the finest of all Polynesia. After the violence and cultural genocide of colonization in the Hawaiian Kingdom, kapa bark cloth textiles were gradually replaced with western textiles such as cotton and linen.

In the 1970s and 80s during the Hawaiian Renaissance, a handful of Kānaka practitioners took immense steps to bring this custom back into daily practice. As a kapa maker of the younger generations today, I have dedicated my life and my practice to this work -- the making of the cloth and tools and the patterns and dyes used to tell stories on the kapa, grounded in an understanding and respect for ʻāina (land, that which feeds) and my place in my community.

To understand the practice of kapa making is to understand one's role in the world -- where they are situated within their environment, community, and lineage. This work is how I honor those commitments, that kuleana, while building Kānaka Maoli resiliency for the next seven generations and beyond.

Check out my IG stories here today for a little background on my materials and kapa process, and their links to sustainable Indigenous practices :)

November 10, 2020

As I mentioned in yesterday's post, the bulk of my creative studio practice is centered around the making of kapa, a traditional textile made from the bark of certain trees. In Hawai‘i prior to colonial contact in the late 1700s, the kapa making process was meticulously refined over many, many generations. It is said that Hawaiian kapa was once the finest of all Polynesia. After the violence and cultural genocide of colonization in the Hawaiian Kingdom, kapa bark cloth textiles were gradually replaced with western textiles such as cotton and linen.

In the 1970s and 80s during the Hawaiian Renaissance, a handful of Kānaka practitioners took immense steps to bring this custom back into daily practice. As a kapa maker of the younger generations today, I have dedicated my life and my practice to this work -- the making of the cloth and tools and the patterns and dyes used to tell stories on the kapa, grounded in an understanding and respect for ʻāina (land, that which feeds) and my place in my community.

To understand the practice of kapa making is to understand one's role in the world -- where they are situated within their environment, community, and lineage. This work is how I honor those commitments, that kuleana, while building Kānaka Maoli resiliency for the next seven generations and beyond.

Check out my IG stories here today for a little background on my materials and kapa process, and their links to sustainable Indigenous practices :)

November 10, 2020

As I mentioned in yesterday's post, the bulk of my creative studio practice is centered around the making of kapa, a traditional textile made from the bark of certain trees. In Hawai‘i prior to colonial contact in the late 1700s, the kapa making process was meticulously refined over many, many generations. It is said that Hawaiian kapa was once the finest of all Polynesia. After the violence and cultural genocide of colonization in the Hawaiian Kingdom, kapa bark cloth textiles were gradually replaced with western textiles such as cotton and linen.

In the 1970s and 80s during the Hawaiian Renaissance, a handful of Kānaka practitioners took immense steps to bring this custom back into daily practice. As a kapa maker of the younger generations today, I have dedicated my life and my practice to this work -- the making of the cloth and tools and the patterns and dyes used to tell stories on the kapa, grounded in an understanding and respect for ʻāina (land, that which feeds) and my place in my community.

To understand the practice of kapa making is to understand one's role in the world -- where they are situated within their environment, community, and lineage. This work is how I honor those commitments, that kuleana, while building Kānaka Maoli resiliency for the next seven generations and beyond.

Check out my IG stories here today for a little background on my materials and kapa process, and their links to sustainable Indigenous practices :)
November 11, 2020

Hi everyone! Today, I have a prompt for all of you to think about -- the last two days, I've shared a little bit about kapa and its significance within my life and my practice.

Historically, kapa and other forms of bark cloth served, and continue to serve, many important purposes within a family and community. In Native Hawaiian tradition, our children were born into sheets of kapa; our elders' bones and bodies were wrapped in kapa to be buried after their passing; and kapa lent itself to many aspects of daily life from bed sheets to clothing to ceremonial cloths. So, literally, from birth to death one spent their life surrounded by this textile.

Textiles all over the world typically hold a lot of symbolic, cultural, and sentimental meaning to the communities that create and use them. From the delicately embroidered silks used in Japanese kimono, to colorful woven Guatemalan huipiles, family heirloom patchwork quilts, and so much more beyond -- these cloths hold many of our memories and stories as they hold us within them.

My prompt for you today: what are some important textiles or cloth items within your home or family that hold special meaning for you? This could be an old blanket, an article of clothing, a tapestry, a rug, or something else entirely! Post your responses to your IG stories, tag me here, and I will share them here today and tomorrow. I look forward to seeing how these special textiles tell your personal stories!
November 12, 2020
Today I thought I’d share some of the process of making kapa using the fresh beat method to create a mo‘omo‘o. This is the preliminary fibrous cloth that can be used as is, or fermented for a short time and beaten again to create a finer sheet of cloth. After preparing the bark by stripping off the outer bast, I soak the strips of raw bark in water. I then use my hohoa beater on a smooth stone for the first beating. After running through the bark from top to bottom, it’s time to do the second beating. For this, I switch to my wooden kua (anvil for beating) and a different beater, my i‘e kuku. This beater is square and has grooves and patterns carved into each side, aiding in the felting and spreading of the wauke fibers. I work my way through the material side to side, top to bottom. For the secondary beating, I fold it repeatedly in half — this allows the fibers to spread in a uniform manner, minimizing clumps or inconsistencies. Once I’ve worked my way through, I roll up the cloth and smack! it in my wooden kua. Then I unfold the cloth to see what we’ve made together. It’s a process that relies on care and attention every step of the way, and for that I am honored to be able to do the work. ❤ and! be sure to join us tonight for our opening reception for DISplace! link in bio to register for the Zoom invitation :)
November 13, 2020

Yesterday, I shared a little bit about my kapa making practice and the process involved in beating the bark. Today I thought I would share some of the earth pigments that I use to paint and print designs and patterns onto the finish kapa cloth. These are all pigments that I have gathered and collected myself from Native lands in the Pacific Northwest. I could tell you where each of these colors comes from, the time period that I collected them, and even what the weather was like on the day that I gathered them — without any labels. One of the many reasons why I choose to use earth pigments in this way is because of the deep connection that it allows me to have with the materials that I work with and the lands from which they are formed. There is an inherent responsibility that comes with sourcing these materials and I honor the earth the best ways that I can and try to leave the gathering site in a better state than I found it. Offerings and songs are always given first in order to ask permission before gathering. And yes, there have been times where I’ve asked permission and the answer has been no. It is also important to honor that as well. Using natural materials in my work like these earth pigments is very important to me because of the close connection I have with the finished piece as well as fulfilling my goal of avoiding harmful, toxic non-organic art materials — such as oil paints and acrylics. In these ways my practice focuses on sustainability all the way down to the colors I choose and how I go about gathering them.❤