



Mauka to Makai - Hawaiian Quilts and the Ecology of the Islands

Marenka Thompson-Odlum

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Exploring the intimate relationship between Hawaiian quilts, post-colonialism and ecological disaster, research curator Marenka Thompson-Odlum traverses Hawai'i through the Poakalani quilting group and fifteen extraordinary quilts, newly commissioned by Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

The ahupua'a is an ancient land division system — extending from the highest regions of Hawai'i's uplands (mauka) to the ocean (makai) — representative of the Hawaiian people's sacred knowledge and reverence towards the environment. Once a thriving and finely balanced system, the colonisation of the Hawaiian Islands coupled with the existential threat posed by the climate crisis has put the ahupua'a severely at risk.

First established in 1972, the Poakalani quilting group continue to preserve the cultural legacy of Hawai'i's quilting tradition, sharing it with makers around the world. Featuring the stories behind the quilts and a glossary of Hawaiian words and phrases, alongside interviews with artists, activists, farmers and historians, Mauka to Makai: Hawaiian Quilts and the Ecology of the Islands pulls on the threads of connectivity shared by those who are using Indigenous Hawaiian philosophies of sustainable stewardship to revitalise the ahupua'a.

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