

Excellence in Cultural Expression

Kānaka maoli artists receive national recognition from the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation

A slack key musician, a landscape photographer and a modern dancer may not seem to have much in common other than their Native Hawaiian ancestry. In fact, Cyril Pahinui, Kapulani Landgraf, and Chris Morgan have a lot more in common, starting with each winning a 2013 fellowship from the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation (NACF). The NACF is a national philanthropic organization dedicated to the appreciation and perpetuation of indigenous arts and cultures.

"The fellowships are about recognizing excellence," Tara Lulani Arquette, a native Hawaiian and President and CEO of NACF says in explaining why a musician who perpetuates traditional music was selected alongside a photographer and a modern dancer who push the envelopes of their individual art forms through symbolism and metaphor.

Reuben Roqueni, the Program Director at NACF who administers the fellowship grants, explains that the grant panel, made up of mostly native experts in their fields, first reviews the aesthetics of the artist's work then considers the artist's connection to his or her community. The panelists



Christopher Kai Morgan tells stories through the movement of dance.

are asked to judge the context of the artists' stories and their authenticity of voice. A total of 12 fellowships were awarded in Dance, Film, Literature, Music, Traditional Arts and Visual Arts. The three Native Hawaiian artists each received \$20,000.

Cyril Pahinui, who won the Music Fellowship, is a slack key guitar artist whose primary inspiration has always been his father, Gabby 'Pops' Pahinui.

His style is defined by traditional technique; he still tunes his guitar the way his father did. His passion is to perpetuate traditional Hawaiian songs through performance and teaching.

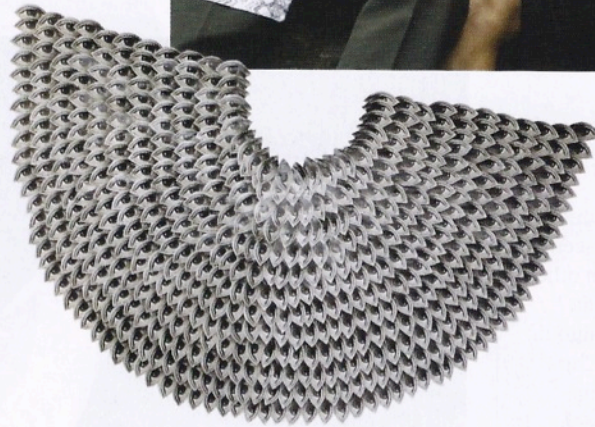
Pahinui spends his time teaching local kids and performing. He notes that "teaching with workshops was something that my dad didn't do for us. With him, it was all eyes and ears, just watching and listening.

It was difficult, but it paid off. By paying attention and listening, I can now share the music with others. I feel so grateful for all I learned from my dad. I can always feel his presence when I play, and he is still my inspiration and the soul of my music." Pahinui plans to use the fellowship award to make instructional recordings and videos and to continue teaching.

Kapulani Landgraf, the Visual Arts Fellowship winner, considers herself a 'responsible artist.' She calls her camera her weapon and endeavors to tell the story of the impact of colonization on the Hawaiian

"Native artists are reflecting their cultures in a myriad of art forms, continuously working back and forth between their past and the future."

continues on page 28



Top: Pahinui teaches student Sean Robbins at Hi'ilawe Waterfall. Bottom: Landgraf pushes the envelope with her "Kahulumanu".

continued from page 27

people through documentation of historical, sacred and cultural landscapes.

Landgraf teaches Hawaiian Art at Kapi'olani Community College. She says, "Land was not meant to be used for individual profit; rather, the 'āina inspired, and even demanded, responsibility and guardianship. Consequently, we must always be engaged in creative forms of resistance to help prevent further erosion and the destruction of nā wahi kapu (sacred sites) whose presence binds us to our ancestors, our oral and written traditions, our spiritual world, our land, its living entities, and our indigenous history as well as our future." Landgraf plans to use the award to build a darkroom and studio in her house.

Christopher Kai Morgan is the only native Hawaiian recipient from the continent. Morgan, who won the Dance Fellowship, is a contemporary dancer and choreographer, who was born and raised by Hawaiian parents in Orange County, California. He came home often to Hawai'i, where he learned to dance hula.

Morgan now runs a contemporary dance company, Christopher K. Morgan and Artists, in the Washington, D.C. area. He has performed nationally and internationally and was profiled in 2011 as one of six breakout choreographers in the U.S. Morgan "retired" from hula at age seven and discovered jazz, ballet and modern dance at 17. Yet, it was hula that made him appreciate the importance of story in dance. "It took me awhile to see how Hawaiian culture

influenced my style," Morgan reflects.

"The narrative qualities of hula made me want more than just the abstract often embodied in modern dance. When I started to develop my own style, I realized that many of my moves were very influenced by hula."

Morgan planned to spend time in Hawai'i in 2006 to study with his cousin, kumu hula John Ka'imikaua, but John passed away before Chris could arrive. Three years later, Chris finally went to Moloka'i to study his late cousin's work. He was overwhelmed by the experience marked by hō'ailona and powerful dreams. He knew when he returned to the continent that he needed to share the story of the Hawaiian people with those far from the islands. The NACF fellowship will help him achieve that goal with "Pohaku." The production is inspired by one of the most important of his Moloka'i dreams in which unseen people placed stones on his back.

"Native artists are reflecting their cultures in a myriad of art forms, continuously working back and forth between their past and the future," says Arquette. "They are always adding to the canon of cultural knowledge." That is certainly the case with these three Native Hawaiian Fellowship recipients, whose recognition reflects our culture for a national audience.



The Native Arts & Cultures Foundation is dedicated to revitalization, appreciation, and perpetuation of indigenous arts and cultures. Visit nacf.us for more information.

50 YEARS OF MERRIE MONARCH

MAANĀ

MARCH/APRIL 2013

THE HAWAIIAN MAGAZINE



5
DECADES
OF HULA'S
FINEST

PRSAT, STD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
HONOLULU, HI
PERMIT NO. 405

PacificBasin
Communications
1000 Bishop St., Suite 405
Honolulu, HI 96813