

Features

# The MAMo show presents wearable works by Native Hawaiian and indigenous artists

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Designer Anna Kahalekulu, left, finished a lau hala capelet with the help of Kapalai de Silva, center, and Christina Santos backstage at the MAMo Wearable Art Show at the Hawaii Theatre on Wednesday. M:

More than a typical fashion show, the 10th annual Maoli Arts Movement Wearable Art Show showcased traditional and evolving indigenous art forms, from weaving to stitching garments from silks dyed with local plants and alaea, red Hawaiian sea salt and volcanic clay.

Eight Native Hawaiian and indigenous artists, designers and cultural practitioners contributed to the show, held Wednesday at the Hawaii Theatre. Storyteller and stage performer Moses Goods opened the show with a tale of the demigod Maui “making plants fly” by using hau branches and wauke (whose bark is used to make kapa) tied with cordage to create a kite. Although the people were amazed by this, he said, it was the Hawaiians themselves who accomplished the amazing by using their creativity to clothe and house themselves using these same materials.

Sixth-generation weaver Keoua Nelson learned that some of these skills are innate. Presenting a showcase of woven belts, bow ties and hats, Nelson said he had grown up watching his grandmother weave, but as a child, “I was all thumbs. I couldn’t weave at all.” He went on to a career in the insurance business, but in 2008, at age 40, he realized there was no one in his immediate family carrying on the legacy.

As an adult, he said, “I had a natural propensity to do weaving. Maybe it was divine intervention from my kupuna, or muscle memory. I didn’t even think about it. My hands were doing what needed to be done.”

This year’s show brought artists from Kauai, Maui and the Big Island to the stage, including Maui’s Anna Kahalekulu, who produces the Kulua line of eco-conscious clothing. She said she looks to MAMo to tell deeper stories.

“It’s a really fun challenge that pushes me out of my comfort zone,” she said.

The theme of her collection was “Pohaku,” taking inspiration from the colors and textures of rocks, from mountain to sea, that form the foundation for many aspects of home and life.

Also featured was the work of Lufi Luteru, Wahine Toa, Hone Bailey, Maile Andrade, Kehaulani Kekua and Marques Marzan, who closed the MAMo show with his study of the peahi, a rare chiefly fan of which there are only 30 in existence, including one at Bishop Museum, where he works in the Cultural Resources Division.

He just completed a fellowship during which he created four such fans to present to educators and cultural practitioners who might “bring new life to them in a modern context.”

Marzan said he was always interested in the peahi, which is different from other fans in that “it incorporates weaving and twining, and you have to understand both techniques to create it.”

The fans often incorporated human hair. "The hair they used was of a close family member or person of dignity who could add their mana to it," he said. "It was not necessarily more durable than other fans, but the plaiting was finer and patterns more delicate and intricate."

Stylized fan prints graced his woven ensembles, which his models wore with the gravitas of royalty.

See more photos from the MAMo fashion show at [staradvertiser.com](http://staradvertiser.com) and watch videos on Nadine Kam's Fashion Tribe blog at [fashiontribe.staradvertiserblogs.com](http://fashiontribe.staradvertiserblogs.com).