

IC-04-07-0143-07

Award Number IC-04-07-0143-07

Awardee Institution Bishop Museum

Final Report

Period Covered by the Report: From: May 01, 2007 To: October 31, 2007

Project Director Name and Title: Valerie Free, Museum Conservator

Telephone: 808 847-8205

E-mail: vfree@bishopmuseum.org

2. Performance Description

a. What is the purpose of the project?

The purpose of the project was to complete repairs, stabilization and mounting of three Hawaiian feather cloaks by two graduate level conservation-program interns during an advanced three-month internship which took place from June to August 2007. In addition to providing practical conservation experience and strengthening technical skills, the internship was designed to expose the conservation students to other departments in the Museum and introduce them to Hawaiian material culture, issues related to the host culture, the existence of multiple perspectives, and their intersection with the conservation of ethnographic materials.

b. What activities or services have been carried out with project funds to support the purpose of the project?

The project schedule has been met and completed with the submission of this report. Two graduate students, Aimee Ducey, New York University, and Beth Nunan, Buffalo State College, were recruited for the project. They were flown to Hawaii, provided with stipends for living expenses, housing and bus transportation for the internship period. Under the supervision of Valerie Free, Museum Conservator, the interns completed treatment and mounting of 3 cloaks following Ms Free's proposals outlines as submitted to IMLS. The cloaks were thoroughly documented with written reports and digital images, which are permanently housed in Bishop Museum's conservation files.

The interns were introduced to the Museum, the lab facilities, project goals, standards and expectations. Visiting ethnographic conservator Janet Mason, from CCI, assisted Ms Free with initial training and demonstrations of repair and stabilization techniques. Ms Mason led a mount making discussion/workshop (6/19) which described the history and design requirements for mounting feather cloaks. Ms Free described the rational and demonstrated the new mount design which was developed the previous month in collaboration with CCI objects conservator Bob Barkley.

As work began on the treatments, the interns participated in a program of formal lectures, tours, a net making workshop and informal discussions led by Bishop Museum staff (6/26-29). Collection Managers from Anthropology, Vertebrate Zoology, Botany, Library and Archives provided the interns with tours of relevant collection materials. Education and Exhibits staff provided an overview of their facilities and responsibilities. Betty Kam, Vice President of Cultural Collections described how collections serve the museum's mission and how competing interests impact the use and preservation of collection materials. Dr. Susan Lebo, historic archeologist,

IC-04-07-0143-07

presented a stimulating lecture on the stylistic development of feathered cloaks and capes through the 18th and 19th centuries and their socioeconomic impact as trade commodities (7/27). Cultural practitioner Umi Kai led a net making workshop for the students, preceded by a collection tour of traditional Pacific fibers, cordage and net making tools (7/12). Dr. Roger Rose, former curator of Ethnology at Bishop Museum, lectured to an overflow audience of 60 people on "Hawaiian Feather Cloaks at Bishop Museum: 100 Years of Collecting" (8/9). Consulting conservation educator, Ellen Pearlstein spent 3 days with the students reviewing and advising on their projects. She presented 2 lectures based on her ongoing feather research: "Composition and Coloration of Feathers" and "Micro-fading Study of Feathers" (8/20 & 22).

The interns participated in a number of field trips to cultural sites including the Doris Duke Estate and Queen Emma Summer Palace, participated in 2 community discussion panels with Janet Mason and Valerie Free, advising on care of collections. Beth and Aimee covered the required reading and spent time doing additional research in the Bishop Museum Library.

c) What are the outputs of the project activities or services to support the purpose of the project? Explain what documentation is used to report the outcomes.

Three Hawaiian feather cloaks were treated, stabilized and prepared for mounting on newly designed cloak mounts as a result of this project. The cloaks are currently resting in storage on their new support liners and are ready for use in exhibitions or loans. The cloaks were cleaned, broken netting repaired, loose feather bundles reattached, holes stabilized and fragile sections reinforced with additional support material. The cloaks were attached with Velcro tabs to a felt liner which in turn is attached to the cloak mount thus eliminating the need to pull the cloak directly on and off the mount. The treatment was fully documented by the interns in written final treatment reports and extensive digital photodocumentation.

Two 3-D mounts were constructed and customized for each cloak with the assistance of staff from the exhibits department. Museum conservator Valerie Free and visiting conservator Bob Barkley, CCI, developed the mount design in April 2007 given the criteria that it must be compact for storage, light weight, easy to build using local materials and inexpensive while meeting the support and exhibition requirements for the objects. The budget that was submitted to IMLS in October 2006 was based on costs for the previous cloak mount design which was a bulky Ethafoam structure built around a Dorfman conservation form. The new mount which resembles an umbrella with wooden arms mounted on a metal pole is very inexpensive and a great deal of savings in supplies and shipping costs were realized as a result. Bob documented the materials and labor costs for building the mount and Valerie provided a written report with digital photodocumentation on the rationale and method of construction, assembly and advice regarding custom fitting each cloak to the mount. The third cloak, due to its fragility, was provided with a liner and a padded flat mount.

d) What are the outcomes of the project activities or services to support the purpose of the project? Explain what documentation is used to report the outcomes.

Project activities addressed an urgent conservation need, identified in the General Conservation Survey as one of Bishop Museum's highest conservation priorities. Stabilization and repair of 3 feather cloaks will safeguard these major collection items for the enjoyment and education of current and future generations.

As mentioned above treatments for the three cloaks were fully documented in final written reports and extensive digital photodocumentation. The development and construction of the cloak mounting system is likewise documented. These reports are housed in the permanent

IC-04-07-0143-07

conservation files at Bishop Museum. Beth and Airnee presented a PowerPoint talk to Museum staff about the treatments and outcomes of the project (8/21). A copy of this presentation is on file at Bishop Museum. The student interns will present a similar talk to their respective programs when they return to class in the fall.

Further enhancement to visitor and scholarly access to these cloaks will be recognized when the cloaks are displayed in the newly renovated Hawaiian Hall galleries. One of these cloaks was so badly damaged that it is mostly unknown to scholars. Many new observations regarding the technology of the fiber cordage, net making techniques, comparative styles and construction techniques were noted and documented during the project. This information will be presented in interpretive labels and photographs while on display and IMLS project support will be credited with appropriate signage.

Following acceptance of the final report, the project director will issue a press release with photographs documenting the accomplishments of the project as well as an article appearing in Bishop Museum's quarterly newsletter Ka 'Elele (The Messenger). An announcement of the grant award was included in Bishop Museum's Annual Report FY07 and a report on the completed project will appear in the FY08 Annual Report.

As a result of participation in the public panel discussions sponsored by Bishop Museum's Education Department, the project received additional publicity through Hawaiian Civic Clubs and two feature articles in local newspapers.

e) Report other results of project activities

The project stimulated interest from other local institutions and provided networking opportunities for the interns. Program interns from Winterthur working at Shangri-La, Doris Duke Estate, invited their colleagues to see their work and Bishop Museum interns reciprocated with a return visit to the conservation lab. Shangri-La Assistant Director Robert Saarnio also joined the group. Local textile conservators Ann Peariman and Linda Hee visited the lab, discussed treatments and provided advice for the interns. Administrators from Queen Emma Summer Palace who attended several of the program lectures invited our interns to tour the palace and advise on care of their feather work collections. The interns also visited Lynn Davis' book and paper preservation lab at the University of Hawaii.

f) Additional comments/anecdotal information.

This project was an unqualified success both in terms of the conserving 3 major collection items which are unique in the world and providing an exciting and challenging internship opportunity for 2 graduate student interns. Unfortunately the timing of the grant award precludes repeating this valuable training experience. Students start to assess their internship options at the beginning of the fall term and many have secured positions by December. Asking potential interns to wait for a decision until late April is tenuous at best and even then there is no guarantee the award will be granted. The late award announcement on May 10 further exasperated the situation with all but 2 students dropping out of the competition to accept other positions. I advised the remaining students to do whatever they thought best and worried there would be no one left. We were most fortunate that the 2 students who were most determined to secure this internship opportunity were both excellent candidates and ideal for the job. The same timing problem and uncertainty of the award applies to students who have completed their coursework and are looking for 6 or 12 month post graduation internships. It is a pity that the CPS award cannot be coordinated to help provide funding for conservation program interns at museums that otherwise would not benefit from their advanced training and skills.

IC-04-07-0143-07

On a positive note, savings that were realized as a result of the new, less costly mount design were put to good use. After receiving approval from IMLS for a budget revision, sufficient materials were purchased to complete the new mounts for the remaining 6 cloaks in the collection. IMLS administrative staff is responsive, flexible and helpful in the completion of these projects.

3. Certification

In submitting this report, I certify that all information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.



Valerie Free, Museum Conservator and Project Director

October 30, 2007

Date

Internship Curriculum for Feather-Cloak Treatment Project
May 1 to October 31, 2007

Self evaluation **Days 1-2**

- Introductions
- Lab orientation - procedures, tools and equipment, conduct, safety
- Review pesticides and contaminants in collections – discuss protective gear and safe handling procedures
- Goal setting over 12 weeks – personal, academic and professional
- Review schedule and explain evaluation process
- Staff conservator responsibilities in the museum - discussion
- Discuss skill sets

What do you know about feathers, fibers, textile repair and mount making?

- Review established techniques for treatment and display of feather garments
- Cultural values awareness – protocol for handling and treatment

Orientation & Research **Weeks 1-2**

- Campus tours
 - Research using museum resources. Visits to:
 - Vertebrate Zoology collection to see bird specimens – *Carla Kisbinami, Collections Manager*
 - Botany collection to see plant and fiber specimens – *Napua Harbottle, Collections Manager*
 - Cultural collections to see other feather work – *Betty Kam, Vice President, Cultural Collections*
 - Archives to see 19th century prints featuring Hawaiian feather work – *DeSoto Brown, Collections Manager*
- Interns will keep a journal record to document natural resources, technology and traditional use of feather garments.

Treatments **Weeks 1-4**

- Review treatment proposals for #1 Chapman Cloak – discuss treatment options
- Review past and current mount designs with examples – discuss pros and cons
- Stabilize/repair cloak (estimate 130 hours per intern, total of 260 hours)
- Conservation review with supervisor

Mount Making Workshop for Hawaiian Feather Cloaks **Week 4**

Janet Mason, Ethnographic Objects Conservator, Canadian Conservation Institute. Janet will lead a mount-making workshop based on her previous work with Hawaiian feather collections and extensive experience with workshop presentations

Week 5

- Design and construct mount (estimate 40 hours per intern, total of 80 hours)
- Conservation review with supervisor

Weeks 6-9

- Review treatment proposals for #2 Joy Cloak – discuss treatment options
- Stabilize/repair cloak (estimate 150 hours per intern, total of 300 hours)
- Conservation review with supervisor

Week 10

- Design and construct mount (estimate 40 hours per intern, total of 80 hours)
- Conservation review with supervisor

Week 11

- Review treatment proposals for #3 2nd Joy Cloak – discuss treatment options
- Stabilize/repair cloak (estimate 38 hours per intern, total of 76 hours)
- Conservation review with supervisor

Project Completion

Week 12

- Finalize projects – 3 treatments and 2 mounts
- Complete project documentation
- Presentation of results to senior staff and other project participants

Evaluation

- Preparation of final report in which goals, achievements and internship experience are evaluated by the student. How has internship contributed to professional and academic plans?
- Performance review with supervisor

Hawaiian feather cloaks: Training Workshop and Lectures

- *Gordon Umi Kai*, Hawaiian cultural practitioner and Bishop Museum Affiliate – fiber net-making workshop with Hawaiian perspective **Week 3**
- *Ellen Pearlstein*, Faculty/Academic Coordinator, UCLA/Getty Conservation training program – “Composition and Coloration of Feathers” and “Micro-fading Study of Feathers” (2 lectures) **Week 6**
- *Dr. Roger Rose*, former Curator of Collections, Bishop Museum - collection history and significance (lecture) **Week 7**
- *Dr. Susan Lebo*, Associate Anthropologist, Bishop Museum – feather cloaks as exchange commodities during the 18th and 19th centuries (lecture) **Week 10**

Collections Use in a Museum Context: Informal seminars with museum staff

- Research and collections staff to discuss process for object selection and exhibit preparation, *Betty Kam, Vice President, Cultural Collections* **Week 5**
- Education staff to discuss museum exhibits, interpretation and cultural values and their role in the museum’s mission to promote the understanding of Hawaiian culture, *Noelle Kabanu, Education Project Specialist* **Week 6**
- Exhibits staff to discuss effective museum display, *Dave Kemble, Senior Exhibits Designer* **Week 8**

- Senior staff to discuss rationale for choice of exhibits, *Betty Kam, Vice President, Cultural Collections*
Week 9

Supplemental readings

- Buck, Peter H., *Arts and Crafts of Hawaii*, BPBM Special Publication 45, Bishop Museum Press, (Honolulu, 1957).
- Charlott, John, "The Feather Skirt of Nahi'ena'ena: An Innovation in Postcontact Hawaiian Art," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 100(2):119-165, (Polynesian Society Inc., University of Auckland, 1991).
- Cordy, Ross, "Who Made the Feather Cloaks in the Hawaiian Islands? Some Additional Information," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 112(2):157-161, (Polynesian Society Inc., University of Auckland, 2003).
- Holt, John Dominis, *The Art of Featherwork in Old Hawai'i*, Topgallant Publishing Co., Ltd., (Honolulu, 1985).
- Hooper, Steven, *Pacific Encounters: Art & Diversity in Polynesia 1760-1860*, British Museum Press, (London, 2006).
- Kaepler, Adrienne L., *Artificial Curiosities*, BPBM Special Publication 65, Bishop Museum Press, (Honolulu, 1978).
- Kaepler, Adrienne L. (ed.), *Cook Voyage Artifacts*, BPBM Special Publication 66, Bishop Museum Press, (Honolulu, 1978).
- Linnekin, Jocelyn, "Who Made the Feather Cloaks? A Problem in Hawaiian Gender Relations," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 97(3):265-80, (Polynesian Society Inc., University of Auckland, 1988)
- Rose, Roger G., and Kaepler, Adrienne L., *Hawai'i, The Royal Isles*, BPBM Special Publication 67, Bishop Museum Press, (Honolulu, 1980).
- Summers, Catherine C., *Hawaiian Cordage*, Pacific Anthropological Records, Vol. 39, Bishop Museum Press, (Honolulu, 1990).
- Wright, Margot M.(ed.), *The Conservation of Fur, Feather and Skin*, Archetype Publications, (London, 2002).

Interns are expected to be familiar with standard conservation reference materials relating to feathers, fibers, textile (sewing) treatments and mount making principles.

Optional supplemental field trips to broaden understanding of Hawaiian culture and interface with Western world

Ongoing as schedule permits and weekends

- Iolani Palace
- Honolulu Academy of Arts
- Kane Aki Heiau
- Mission Houses Museum
- Kamehameha Day Parade June 12
- Polynesian Cultural Center
- Queen Emma Summer Palace

Interns are expected to visit one off-site cultural location on their own time.

Valerie Free, September 14, 2006