

Introduction

The exhibition HAWAII – THE NATIVES ARE NOT HAPPY – Sculptures by William Hanson will be presenting 15 sculptures and 5 flags in the artist's first solo exhibition in Berlin. Hanson, who was born and raised in Hawai'i, takes a critical look at the colonial history of the Pacific archipelago.

As part of a 1998 group exhibition of Hawaiian artists entitled »Ho'oku'e, resistance – Modern Art from Hawai'i« this topic was first addressed in Germany by the Linden Museum in Stuttgart.

William Hanson is, however, the first non-indigenous artist to challenge the conventional clichés of this South Sea paradise. His works address how colonialisation has affected the lives and living circumstances of Hawai'i's indigenous population from the arrival of the first Europeans under the command of British navigator James Cook in 1778 until the present day.

The sculptures, made of Nordic pine and Hawaiian milo, are being exhibited for the first time. They were produced far away from Hanson's island home, in Oslo, where he currently lives and works, and in Berlin while working as a visiting artist.

The theme of the exhibition - one that is relatively unfamiliar in Europe - requires the provision of clear and well-founded information. Toward this end, important contributions were provided by our partners in Hawai'i and art historian Michael Nungesser.

I would therefore like to thank everyone for their valuable input, in particular Professor Jonathan Kay Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio from the Center for Hawaiian Studies, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, for his catalogue essay »A Letter to the Lahui« and Leanne K. Ferrer, Director of Pacific Islanders in Communications, Honolulu, for providing us with the documentary film »Then There Were None« by Dr. Elizabeth Kapu'uwaitani Lindsey, which constitutes an important element of the exhibition.

Barbara Mei Chun Müller, July 2013
Curator