

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215 extension 224

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HAWAIIAN DANCERS CELEBRATE

PACIFIC ISLANDS EXHIBITION

WASHINGTON, D. C. December 27, 1979. Extended beyond its original closing date to February 17 and containing objects so fragile that they may never leave their far-flung homes again, the National Gallery's exhibition The Art of the Pacific Islands will be celebrated daily for over a week with authentic Hawaiian dances.

The exhibition is the most comprehensive ever devoted to the arts of Polynesia, Melanesia, Micronesia and New Guinea--a collective land mass of approximately 400,000 square miles set in an ocean of 64 million square miles, or about a third of the world's surface.

The dances will be given by the Hula Halau o Hoakalei, a renowned group from the island of Oahu, twice daily from Friday, January 18 through Sunday, January 27.

More than 400 objects, selected for their absolutely authentic relationships to original island cultures, have been lent for the exhibition by over 70 public and private collections in the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Great Britain, Switzerland, Rumania, Germany, Scotland, France, the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, East Germany and Tahiti.

(more)

Many if not most of the objects, made of wood, feathers, coconut, sea and turtle-shell, cloth, sennit, seeds, skulls and bones, and other organic materials--some merely held together by mud and, in at least one case, cobwebs--will probably not be allowed to travel again.

The Hula Halau o Hoakalei, a six-member group led by Master of Hula Helen Hoakalei Kamaau, will offer thirty-minute programs of traditional Hawaiian chants, invocations and dances at 12:30 and 2:00 p.m. near the entrance to the exhibition.

These presentations are being cosponsored by the State Council on Hawaiian Heritage and the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts. The group's transportation will be provided by Continental Airlines.

Mrs. Kamaau is one of the best-known and most respected custodians of Hawaiian culture. She received her knowledge of classic Hawaiian chant, dance and music from her aunt, the late Iolani Luahine, a pre-eminent performer of ancient Hawaiian dances with whom she worked for more than thirty years. In addition to serving as head of the Hula Halau o Hoakalei since 1960, and as ethnic dance coordinator for the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts since 1977, Mrs. Kamaau has performed in dance and folk festivals throughout the United States and the Pacific, including the National Folk Festival at Wolf Trap Farm Park in Virginia, the American Dance Festival at New London, Connecticut, and the Pan-Pacific Festival of the Arts at Rotorua, New Zealand.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director (Information Officer) or Mary Dyer, Information Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 20565, area code 202, 737-4215, ext. 511