

# SPOTLIGHT

## Linda Shimoda, Kaua'i Museum

### New gallery director makes art, history come alive

Jon Letman

Reflecting on her life after moving from Colorado four years ago, Kaua'i Museum's new gallery director and education outreach coordinator Linda Shimoda explains she felt like she'd hit a wall. In her words, "I'd scratched the surface as much as I could," but she knew there was something more, something much deeper on this island she came to cultivate as her home.

For a dozen years Shimoda was self-employed as a software developer for middle school students and practitioner of shodou (Japanese calligraphy) and was comfortable wearing the dual hats of educator and fine artist, but admits that staring at a computer or sheet of rice paper all day was a very solitary existence.

Shimoda wanted to strengthen her connection with the island and local community and so, after exhibiting her own show at the Kaua'i Museum last June, during which time she grew familiar with museum staff and executive director Carol Lovell, she decided to apply for her current position.

"For me, it seemed like a perfect fit," Shimoda says.

Six months after accepting the job, Shimoda is busy working with schools, community groups and the public at large to promote not only the Kaua'i Museum as a place to appreciate art and learn about Kaua'i's history, but also the notion that we all play a role in making history every day.

"I passionately believe that what we do today affects our future and is, in essence, creating history," Shimoda says.

A key component of Shimoda's outreach program is the Kaua'i Museum's 'Ohana Saturday on the first Saturday of each month when admission fees are waived to encourage more local visitors.

"We receive a lot of visitors, but would like more local folks to see the museum as a place to visit," Shimoda says.

As part of the museum's 2008 events program, Shimoda has organized a year long series based on the theme Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and Man & Beast which will be the basis for each 'Ohana Saturday presentation.

Following local news, events and listening to what people on Kaua'i are talking about, Shimoda has assembled interactive displays, demonstrations and presentations starting with an exploration of taro (Kalo: The Hawaiian staff of life). Other topics include the Chinese New Year (of the Rat), the element of air in sailing and weather, water in relation to monk seals and the earth and how our treatment of the 'aina today will shape our future.

Talks, presentations and performances will be given by Kawika Winter (Lima-huli Garden), Wayne Miyata (KCC Arts), Vi Herbert (Kolam Foundation), Juan



Wilson (Island Breath), slack key guitarist Pancho Graham, author Sharon Jeffers, representatives from the Kaua'i Humane Society, Malama Pono and other organizations.

Also, new for 2008, the Kaua'i Museum is hosting a program called Saturday Clubs in which the public can participate at no cost in astronomy, cooking and cultural arts clubs on the second, third and fourth Saturdays of each month. Each club has a teacher or mentor and will meet between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. on their respective Saturdays.

Besides a year full of active Saturdays, Shimoda will continue to work with docents, presenting museum tours for local and visiting students and other community groups.

The museum is working closely with Wilcox Elementary and Chiefess Kamakahahei Middle School and has a program called Museum on the Go which visits schools island wide, specifically teaching the culture of Kaua'i.

Shimoda is also coordinating with Chiefess staff, seventh graders and writer/film maker Keya Keita in documenting an oral history project in which students will interview their kupuna as a record of Kaua'i's cultural legacy. The finished product, to be called "In a Sea Change," will include over 160 interviews and be gifted to the museum for its archives.

Meanwhile, Shimoda awaits island-wide submissions for the upcoming 48th Annual Student Art Festival, on display Feb. 21 – March 20 (K – 8th grade) and March 27 – April 24 (9 – 12th grade).

If all this wasn't enough, Shimoda also oversees exhibitions by both rising and established Kaua'i artists, many of whom receive national and international recognition.

Upcoming Kaua'i Museum Mezzanine Art Gallery exhibitions include:

Songs of Spirit (art quilts and glass sculpture) through Feb. 15

Summer's Bug (floral works of oil on canvas) May 8 – July 17

In-sight (underwater photography) July 24 – Oct. 2

With five featured artists a year, Shimoda has already booked the gallery through 2010.

While many think of the Kaua'i Museum as strictly historical in nature, Shimoda strives to make the museum real and modern for the people of Kaua'i.

"History is happening now," Shimoda says. "If we are more aware of what we are doing today, we'll build a good, solid future for tomorrow."

The Kaua'i Museum is open Monday to Friday 9 – 4, Saturdays 10 – 4.

[www.kauaimuseum.org](http://www.kauaimuseum.org)