

ARTIST STATEMENT
Helen Nahoopii

“The Unknown Craftsman,” by Author, Soetsu Yanagi influenced my artistic expression.

Japanese commoners in the countryside would handcraft their household goods and personal adornment as a matter of thrift. Everything made held a purpose, was functional and embodied a simplistic beauty.

Although my family lived on the remote shores of east Hawaii Island in the village of Pohoiki: the American concept of cash and carry, where everything purchased came from large manufacturers abroad was our reality in the late 1960's.

Yanagi's book provided clarity: I want to make art that served a dual purpose. By 1978 I was introduced to another key philosophy: voluntary simplicity, how to live well with less.

Being in a large Hawaiian family provided insight into the idea of living simply, primarily because money was scarce. Back then, my great grandmother: a pure Hawaiian lived in a simple plantation style shed in the village of Hau'ula on Oahu. We would read by kerosene lanterns, there was a water tank and great grandmother wore hand made simple muu' muu's. She would read aloud to us from English novels gifted to her from a teacher friend at Kamehameha Schools in Honolulu. She was thrifty but more importantly, she lived with dignity, grace and ease. I found great value in her presence; to live simply, however, I was curious and wanted a choice, then to be forced by my economic reality.

I left Hawaii to pursue a formal education and an eventual career path. I studied Oriental Art History and eventually earned a BA in Liberal Arts from The Evergreen State College in Washington State. I continued to dabble in art, yet pursued a career as a Marketing Director for social causes close to my heart.

My interest in fiber arts continued with weekend courses and workshops to learn fiber art methods. A return to Hawaii in 1994 led me to learn Sumi-e with American Zen Master, Paul Repp. I took other coursework: Shibori at Oregon College of Arts and Craft, and other fiber art classes throughout the years. My passion was art. My professional living was to help others.

All the while I held a belief and a mission to live simply: to embrace the philosophy that best served me over a lifetime and to create art that others could afford and would serve a dual purpose. Today, I have returned to Hawaii and to pursue my passion with Indigo Blue Hawaii.

Working in the medium of fiber taps into all of my senses: its tactile, it's visually stimulating, and it is three-dimensional. Doing the Japanese Shibori method is serendipitous. Magic happens as I begin with a white surface only to then manipulate: either hand paint, then iron pleats, fold, bind and then hand dip into a green vat of indigo only then to expose to air which oxygenates the fabric and turns it blue.

The ultimate thrill is the end result and the element of surprise that lingers there.