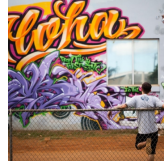


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Jack Johnson and Local Sixth-Grade Students Explore if Plastic is Fantastic

JACK JOHNSON AND KAMAILE ACADEMY SIXTH GRADERS EXPLORE A NEW EXHIBITION TOGETHER.

BY LESA GRIFFITH

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Editor's Note: Through our partnership with the Honolulu Museum of Art, HONOLULU Magazine publishes a monthly blog written by Lesa Griffith, the museum's communications director and a talented Hawai'i writer on arts, culture and food.



STUDENTS FROM KAMAILE ACADEMY AND JACK JOHNSON EXAMINE WORK BY GERMAN ARTIST SWAANTJE GÜNTZEL.

PHOTOS: LESA GRIFFITH

Musician Jack Johnson joined 50 sixth graders from Wai‘anae’s Kamaile Academy on Wednesday morning (Feb. 3) for the inaugural school tour of the new exhibition *Plastic Fantastic?* at Honolulu Museum of Art Spalding House.

The show focuses on the past, present and future of plastic, as illustrated through art, and was born when Kim Johnson, Jack’s wife and co-founder of the [Kōkua Hawai‘i Foundation](#) and the [Johnson Ohana Charitable Foundation](#), approached the museum about doing an exhibition that focused on plastic pollution. At the same time, Spalding House director and curator Aaron Padilla was looking for a subject for a multidisciplinary exhibition.



VASA VELIZAR MICHICH'S 1975 FOREST OF LUCITE COLUMNS SHOW HOW PLASTIC PROVED AN INTERESTING MEDIUM FOR ARTISTS.

The children first toured the exhibition, seeing through art how plastic affects the world—as an amazing material used to make works such as Vasa Velizar Mihich's rainbow-colored Lucite columns, and as disposable trash that winds up in the stomachs of seabirds, as depicted in the visceral photographs of Chris Jordan.

One of the most fascinating parts of the exhibition is “the past”—Padilla selected works from the collection to reveal the “plasticity” of things other than plastic, how plastic changed our notion of making multiples of things, and how plastic is a super material for traditional cultures. Did you know people in Papua New Guinea melt plastic waste and tease the hot goo into threads that they weave into tote bags, just as they traditionally do with natural fibers? You'll see it at *Plastic Fantastic*.



STUDENTS MAKE LEI FROM NEW, RECYCLED AND USED PLASTIC.

Students moved to the Spalding House studio classroom where art teachers led the children through a hands-on activity making lei out of corrugated plastic, trash bags made from recycled plastic and bottle caps recovered through beach cleanups. “The idea is to get them to see that using plastic is about making decisions,” says Padilla, director of Spalding House and curator of the exhibition.

A docent had prepped the class before entering the museum, asking them to not touch the art and to look with their eyes, and Jack piped up like a proud papa, “I’ve been working a lot with these kids, you don’t need to worry about them, they’re good kids.”

When asked what it was like working with Jack Johnson, AII Kalles (pronounced ah-two) said, “He’s really fun. He always does something creative so we can do the same thing.” And Kalles was showing off his creative muscles as he folded trash

bags to create a floral flourish for his lei.

The Johnsons were thrilled to join these sixth graders from Kamaile Academy, as they engage with this school regularly as a **Plastic Free Hawai'i** participant, as well as through Jack's role as an artist ambassador for **Turnaround Arts**, a federal program using the arts to create success in schools. In addition to doing music and songwriting activities, the Johnsons inspired creative thinking around the topic of plastic ocean pollution by encouraging students to consider solutions, as well as to create art. Last fall, Jack Johnson joined Kamaile Academy for a beach cleanup as a kickoff to the Plastic Free Hawai'i School Mural project. The school has connected this art project with a larger plastic theme including science, stewardship and a tour of *Plastic Fantastic?* to give students a chance to view thought-provoking plastic art made by contemporary artists.



SPALDING HOUSE DIRECTOR AND CURATOR AARON PADILLA; ARTIST MAIKA'I TUBBS, WHO IS BACK HOME VISITING FROM NEW YORK CITY; LOS ANGELES-BASED ARTIST DIANNA COHEN; KIM JOHNSON AND JACK JOHNSON AT THE FIRST DAY OF *PLASTIC FANTASTIC?*

Artists Dianna Cohen and Maika'i Tubbs, who have work in the exhibition, were also at the museum. Tubbs was finishing up one of his pieces, which is made from waste produced by the museum. Dianna Cohen couldn't resist joining in on a collaboration with Tubbs and museum art instructor Allison Roscoe to produce an impromptu work of handmade paper and plastic debris. Plastic can also be considered an inspiration.



Lesa Griffith is director of communications at the Honolulu Museum of Art. Born in Honolulu, one of her early seminal art experiences was at the Honolulu Museum of Art, when on a field trip her high school art history teacher pointed out that the ermine cape in Whistler's Portrait of Lady Meux was not just a cape—it was visual signage leading viewers' eyes through the painting.

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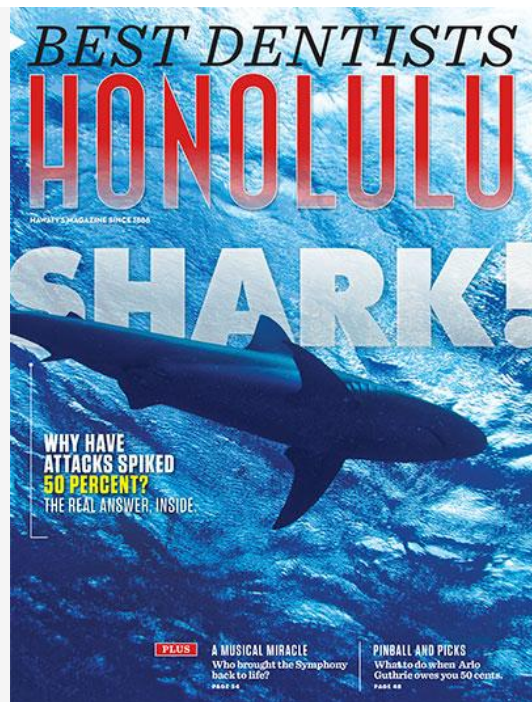
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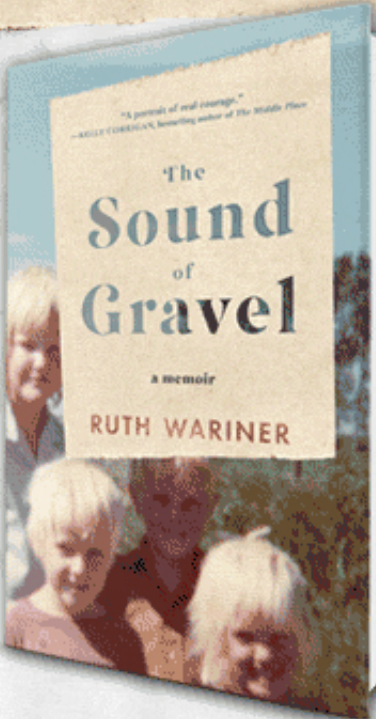
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