

Economies of the City: Honolulu's Financial Plaza of the Pacific

Kelema Lee Moses

Occidental College, California, USA

Abstract

This paper concerns one monumental architectural structure that defined Honolulu's business economy and approaches to urban planning in the Central Business District (CBD) during the 1960s – the Financial Plaza of the Pacific. As indicated from its moniker, the design and construction of the edifice highlighted Hawai'i's physical location as a global crossroads. The international vision of this “commercial condominium”, and by extension Honolulu, addressed the effects of urban blight and suburban flight that plagued the CBD in the years leading up to, and following, U.S. statehood. The merger of three corporate enterprises (Castle & Cooke, Bank of Hawaii, and American Savings and Loan) at the Financial Plaza of the Pacific functioned as means to display corporate reinvestment in the district. The architects of the project, Leo S. Wou & Associates and Victor Gruen Associates, desired to create a spatially unified environment with outdoor public space and art projects as loci for human interaction. Ultimately, the Financial Plaza of the Pacific reveals the ways in which Honolulu operated – and continues to operate – as a living city spurred by enterprise and revitalization.

Keywords: architecture, public art, commerce, Hawai'i, Brutalism

A Stake in Urban Development

A close analysis of the Financial Plaza of the Pacific (1968) reveals the ways in which architecture in post-statehood Hawai'i visually reinforced the century-long relationship between the Hawaiian Islands and the United States. The architectural history of the structure unveils a narrative about Honolulu as a living city of the Pacific – one in which its urban inhabitants contend with the complicated negotiations between indigeneity, U.S. citizenship, public space, and modern architecture. As Mohammad Garipour and Nilay Ozlu (2015) argue regarding the nature of a city, “[it] is not a stable entity with a solid form but, on the contrary, a constantly evolving paradigm, an ongoing construction of mobile individuals living, experiencing or visiting the city...” (p. 1). Here, in relation to this research, I evaluate the

Financial Plaza of the Pacific as a study of patronage, usage, and stylistic inspiration that speaks to the ways in which individuals and institutions with a stake in urban development negotiate multiple identity positions to (re)engage people with the city.

The paper begins by situating Hawai'i's political transition from a U.S. territory (1898-1959) to U.S. state (1959). In doing so, Honolulu is embedded within American nationalist discourses. Statehood (and citizenship), for better or worse, offered Hawai'i residents and businesses permanent ties to a country with a relatively strong consumerist economy, underpinning the necessity for the construction of the Financial Plaza of the Pacific in the Central Business District (CBD) wedged between the Capitol District, Chinatown, Honolulu Harbor and mountains. I next move to a discussion about Brutalism as an architectural style in order to underscore Honolulu as a dynamic, evolving city whose architects and designers engaged with international discourses about the built environment. Finally, I discuss the ways in which individuals experience the building and its landscape through public art and plazas, fostering civic life in an ethnically and socially diverse Pacific Island community.

The March Toward Statehood

As the United States experienced post-WWII economic prosperity, Hawai'i – a U.S. territory in the Pacific – found itself on the cusp of statehood. Weekly magazines such as *LIFE* published articles attesting to Hawai'i's 'Americanness'. For instance, a six-page spread in the 22 February 1954 edition entitled "Decision Approaches for Hawaii" addressed claims that the territory's Democratic and Republican leadership had reached political maturity. Photographic evidence in the *LIFE* article attested to the "Americanization" of Hawai'i. Joseph Farrington, Hawai'i's Congressional Delegate, appears next to a 49-star American flag; Hiram Fong, Hawai'i's Speaker of the House and graduate of Harvard Law, poses on his *lanai* overlooking Nu'uano Valley; and, Sakae Takahashi, an ex-U.S. Army Major and member of Hawai'i's Cabinet, sits next to his wife and their two children. In another group of images, a new four-lane highway funded by the territorial and U.S. federal government traverses the mountains of O'ahu; and television commercial stills for washing machines and Tide detergent are shown as evidence of the 90% of commodity goods that were imported to Hawai'i from the U.S. mainland. Amid this medley of politics and culture, the *LIFE* article opens with a large photograph of people on their hands and knees signing the Petition for Statehood (Honor Roll) that was unfurled on the ground along Bishop Street, Honolulu's avenue of commerce. At the top of the document seen in Figure 1, which is currently housed at the National Archives in Washington D.C., a multi-coloured sign with black letters placed against three vertical stripes of red, white, and blue reads, "We, the citizens of Hawaii, U.S.A., petition for statehood *now!*" The purposeful

attempt on the part of petitioners to adopt these specific iconic cues of American visual culture directly challenged Hawai'i's territorial status within the ethos of U.S. citizenship.

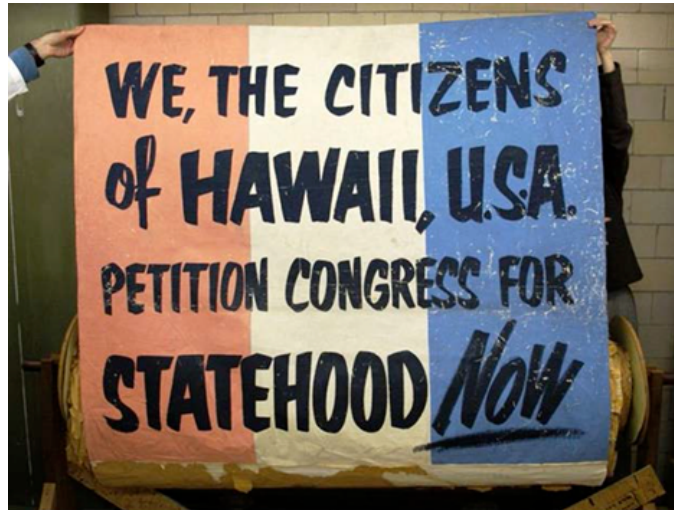


Figure 1. Hawaii Statehood (Honor Roll) Petition, 1954

A discussion about U.S. citizenship must contend with dichotomous notions of unity and exclusion. To operate within the realm of citizenship insists upon membership and acceptance within a codified political system. However, for those not accepted within the established corpus, rejection and/or marginalization results. As Aloys N.M. Fleischmann and Nancy van Styvendale (2011) summarize, "Citizenship both alienates and assimilates, ostracizes and equalizes" (p. xx). More specifically, unity and exclusion has historically been predicated on notions of race and influenced pathways to citizenship. As Lucy E. Salyer (2004) reminds us, racial nativism functions as the bedrock for U.S. citizenship such that physical markers or phenotypic characteristics of 'difference' among non-whites connote an inability to assimilate into the nation (p. 848). Nevertheless, diverse communities within the United States confronted and challenged precarious citizenship policies that sought to dictate land sovereignty and circumvent equal protection laws.

Discourses about race and multiculturalism in the context of U.S. citizenship extended to Pacific Island territories, specifically Hawai'i, where large segments of the population were either foreign born or non-white. The 1950 census indicated that out of a total population of 499,794 nearly 364,000 were of Asian and Pacific Island descent, 114,793 identified as Caucasian, and Puerto Ricans and Blacks totaled 9551 and 2651 respectively (Forstall, 2002). Because of this complex racial and ethnic breakdown of the Hawaiian Islands Americans commonly referred to all residents of Hawai'i as "Hawaiians", regardless of race or ethnicity. As proclaimed by J.

Kēhaulani Kauanui (2008), conflating the racial and ethnic populations of Hawai'i in the same way that one would characterize a New Yorker, Pennsylvanian, or Californian, served to circumvent colonial discourses of the U.S. in Hawai'i and the settler occupation of non-natives in the islands.

The march toward statehood was long and arduous given the varied positions on the topic – chief among them, the views of Kānaka Maoli (indigenous people of Hawai'i). Even though many Kānaka Maoli actively participated in the political and legal rhetoric of the period, they did not simply accept U.S. political and social control following the 1893 illegal overthrow of Hawai'i's last sovereign monarch Lili'uokalani, nor did they view themselves in passive terms. Alice Kamokila Campbell, a territorial senator (term: 1942-1946) and sister of Hawaiian princess Abigail Kawānanakoa, clearly articulated her position toward statehood in 1946 during a meeting with the Territorial Affairs subcommittee in the U.S. House of Representatives. Campbell asserted, "I do not feel that we should forfeit the rights and privileges of natives of our islands for a mere thimbleful of votes in Congress" (New York Times, 1946, p. 8). However, far from simply negating the relationship between the U.S. government and Hawai'i, Campbell offered an alternative: "What we need is an independent form of government with Congress retaining certain controls. We are too far away to be intimately associated with you" (New York Times, 1946, p. 8). Campbell's acknowledgment that Hawai'i's government remain connected (in some vague capacity) to the United States, yet retain a certain level of independence, reflected the complicated discourse about Hawai'i's evolving position within the U.S. system of governance.

In the meantime, Hawai'i's architects, planners, and government officials participated in national and international conversations about architecture, technology, and industry. Statehood supporters consciously used architecture to make a claim for statehood. The "ordered" and "rational" architecture of Honolulu led statehood advocates in the 1950s to contend that Hawai'i accommodated an American way of life. Booklets, pamphlets, and other printed materials encouraged readers to witness the ranch houses, baseball fields, and Carnegie-endowed public institutions of Honolulu. Moreover, the adoption of architectural modernism as well as Spanish Colonial, Mission Revival, and Mediterranean styles of architecture for buildings in the Capitol District supported a Pan-Pacific ideology predicated on the belief that the Americas, Asian nations, and Pacific Islands – with Hawai'i as the nexus – had a significant role to play in global relations. Effectively, statehood supporters were on a quest for legitimacy. They viewed statehood and full citizenship as a demonstration of Hawai'i's maturity as a society and sought to appeal to the visual sensibilities of their mainland counterparts. By creating a built environment in which meaning derived from "intersecting and mutually informing histories" between the U.S. mainland and Hawai'i (Bell, 1998, p. 8), territorial officials in the islands endeavored to make Honolulu readable within American public consciousness. Thus, the

fundamental values espoused by statehood supporters in Hawai'i emphasised that "civilization" had taken root in the islands as a result of their ability to make American capitalism, systems of government, and architectural modernity available in a Pacific Island environment.

Architectural Brutalism in the Pacific

President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed 'An Act to Provide for the Admission of the State of Hawaii into the Union' on 18 March 1959. This act gave Hawai'i and its residents the ability to vote for the U.S. President, to elect officials to the United States Congress, and gain access to federal funding in support of education, infrastructure, and transportation. Moreover, statehood reinforced Hawai'i's position within the free-market economy. In alignment with Daina Penkiunas' argument (1990) that the pre-statehood emphasis on architecture was "the vehicle with which Honolulu expressed its aspirations and defined its image" (pp. 14-15), investment in Honolulu's post-statehood built environment illustrates the contention put forward by Peggy Dreamer (2013) that capitalism shapes cultural desires for an architecture that "works for and within the monetary system" (pp. 1-2).

The 29 June 1969 *Los Angeles Times* headline reads, "Hawaii's Economy: It's as Lively as the Hula." For the article, Martin Rossman (1969) interviewed Hawai'i's governor, John A. Burns (term: 1962-1974), who pointed to the U.S. military as the "single largest economic factor" of Hawai'i's economy, followed by tourism, pineapple, sugar cane, and construction (p. H1). When asked to express his feelings about the state's economy, Burns replied: "I'm afraid I'd have to resort to superlatives – it's that good. It is, perhaps, the most vigorous and dynamic that it's ever been" (Rossman, p. H1). Rossman reinforced the governor's enthusiasm about the economy, especially regarding new construction in the state, when he wrote, "Throughout the islands...it's not the cloud-shrouded mountains that form a backdrop, but the huge construction cranes, piling one concrete cube upon another" (p. H1).

The Financial Plaza of the Pacific was one concrete Brutalist "commercial condominium" that identified Honolulu as a U.S. centre for finance and commerce during this period of economic euphoria.¹ Architects and planners of the building contributed to Honolulu's economy by addressing blight and suburbanization, two issues that plagued U.S. cities during the twentieth century. Prior to its erection, Honolulu's City Planning Commission (1959) noted that the CBD – unlike the Capitol District – had experienced gradual disintegration for over a decade. The commission concluded that the once "thriving and prosperous district is becoming less of an

¹ A commercial condominium includes retail, office and industrial properties. A portion of the building can be purchased from the owner/developer of the building either for use by the owner use or as an investment property to be leased to others.

ideal location in which to conduct business. Buildings have been neglected and allowed to deteriorate, thus resulting in lower rents and continued loss of business” (p. 2). Nearly one-half of all downtown buildings were approaching degraded conditions and in need of either major repair or removal. The commission and other related committees determined that the construction of new, modern high-rise buildings would aid in the renewal of the CBD.

Three of Hawai'i's leading corporations – Castle & Cooke, Bank of Hawaii, and American Savings and Loan – supported the revitalisation of the CBD by investing in the Financial Plaza of the Pacific. The edifice, shown in Figure 2, consists of three individual yet visually unified structures. Upper cantilevered floors supported by concrete columns and girders give visual dimension to the Bank of Hawaii, a low-rise, five-story, horizontal building with ample floor space and windows to accommodate business offices. The Castle & Cooke building is a 21-story tower with generously sized windows that create a grid-like configuration. The uppermost floors of the structure extend beyond the lower wall to produce a cantilever-like effect that visually links Castle & Cooke to the Bank of Hawaii building. Finally, the American Savings and Loan building is a visual and structural combination of the Castle & Cooke tower and the horizontal block of the Bank of Hawaii. The façade repeats the pattern of the uppermost three floors of the Castle & Cooke tower, and the two exterior columns on the side of the building accentuate the building's verticality, mimicking the exterior piers at the Bank of Hawaii.



Figure 2. Leo S. Wou & Associates and Victor Gruen Associates, Financial Plaza of the Pacific, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 1968

Concrete unites the three structures at the Financial Plaza of the Pacific. The designers of the project defended their choice of material following public complaints that the complex looked like a prison. John Zeazeas, the assistant project director, supported the use of concrete arguing that the material's colour was a bit darker than usual because it had been waterproofed and infused with pumice and basalt chips. In an article for the *Honolulu Advertiser* written by Gene Hunter (1967), Zeazeas proposed that architectural design and landscaping defined the beauty of the building, not its material. He critiqued other unnamed contemporary structures in Honolulu as "so bright you can't see the architecture. They glare" (Hunter, p. B1:3). Zeazeas suggested that the warmth of the dark concrete made the Financial Plaza of the Pacific superior because it allowed for an explosion of colour to emanate from the Monkey Pod Trees, Plumeria, Shower Trees, and Coconut Palms that decorated the exterior of the complex (Hunter, p. B1:3). In this way, the building's design acknowledged the tropical landscape and local character of Honolulu.

The design for the Financial Plaza of the Pacific aligned with 1950s and 1960s modern architectural trends in Brutalist construction. Rayner Banham's (1955, 2011 reprint) definition of Brutalism, as derived from his analysis of Peter and Alison Smithson's Hunstanton School (Hunstanton, England, 1949-1954) suggested that Brutalism is "a program, a banner" for architecture that displays its basic structure and materials (p. 22). In "The New Brutalism", Banham maintained: "What moves a New Brutalist is the thing itself, in its totality, and with all its overtones of human association" (p. 25). Brutalist structures must be both visually appealing and "stirring" (Lichtenstein & Schregenberger, 2006, p. 125). Thus, the bold dynamism of shapes, forms, and textured materiality of the Financial Plaza of the Pacific enlivened the order and symmetry of the International Style of the Keelikolani (1951), Board of Water Supply (1958), and Aliiaimoku (1959) buildings in Honolulu's Capitol District.

Growth Investment

The Wilcox Development Corporation, along with Castle & Cooke, the Bank of Hawaii, and American Savings and Loan invested in constructing the Financial Plaza of the Pacific on the block between Merchant, Bishop, King, and Fort Streets in the CBD.² The structure emerged as

² The Wilcox Development Corporation did not physically occupy the space but used its holdings as rental property income. Hawai'i's "Big Five" sugar conglomerates included Castle & Cooke, Amfac, Alexander and Baldwin, C. Brewer & Company, and Theo S. Davies. These corporations dominated sugar production in the islands and, essentially, controlled the entire economy from pineapple production and merchandising to transportation and banking. For more information, see R. Takaki (1983, p. 20) and J. Smith (1942).

a by-product of the agricultural successes of Hawai'i that date back to the mid-nineteenth century. Each of the companies were affiliated with Hawai'i's prosperous sugar corporations, the people who managed them, and various businesses that sponsored buildings, spaces, and attractions on the islands.

Castle & Cooke trace their company roots in Hawai'i to the 1850s. Samuel Northrup Castle of New York, and Amos Starr Cooke of Connecticut, founded the business as a mercantile store in Honolulu. The company diversified in the late 1800s when it purchased stock and became general agents for sugar plantations in the Hawaiian Islands (Castle & Cooke, 1951, pp. 14-20). By the twentieth century, Castle & Cooke was not only involved in the business of sugar but in the launching of rail and sea transportation networks as well as the production of tuna and macadamia nuts.

From its founding, Castle & Cooke's owners recognized the importance of establishing an architectural presence in Honolulu. Their occupancy of various downtown buildings, including the Stangenwald Building (1901) on Merchant Street, explains the company's architectural trajectory to the Financial Plaza of the Pacific. The Stangenwald Building (Figure 3), a six-story, Renaissance Revival style structure designed by Charles Dickey, provided the first high-rise, elevator-equipped, fireproof building for prominent island businesses. However, in 1924, Castle & Cooke invested in a new headquarters (non-extant) at the corner of Merchant and Bishop Streets to accommodate its growing business. The architect, Hart Wood, built the offices of Castle & Cooke with a neoclassical aesthetic as pictured in Figure 4. The imposing five-story structure with colonnades of granite Ionic columns defined the building's facade. The block was generously fenestrated with rectangular windows, while an attic story provided additional space. The company's moniker stretched along the horizontal entablature above the columns that faced Merchant Street. The neoclassical design of the 1920s is further evidence of the ways in which architectural regionalism and revivalism coexisted in the early territorial years and of Castle & Cooke's architectural heritage in Honolulu.



Figure 3. Charles Dickey, Stangenwald Building, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 1901



Figure 4. Hart Wood, Castle & Cooke Building, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 1924

Cecil G. Tilton (1927) documents the strong ties between the Bank of Hawaii and Castle & Cooke. Peter Cushman Jones founded the Bank of Hawaii in 1897 as the first chartered and incorporated bank in the Hawaiian Islands. The Bank of Hawaii counted J.B. Atherton (president of Castle & Cooke), Clarence H. Cooke (son of C.M. Cooke), and Ed Tenney (officer of Castle & Cooke) among its founders. And, like Castle & Cooke, decision makers for the Bank of Hawaii

understood the value in establishing an architectural presence in Honolulu when they occupied a building facing Fort Street (1897). In 1899, as its business and revenue increased, the bank moved into the entire first floor the Judd Building (1899) (Figure 5), named after long-time Honolulu resident Dr Gerrit P. Judd. Oliver G. Traphagen designed the iron and steel Italiante building clad in Hawai'i bluestone and yellow-tinted Roman brick (Jay, 1992, p. 39). Small bands above the first and third floors create a tripartite façade capped by a cornice. The geographic position and technological advances of the Judd Building allowed workers and patrons of the bank to enjoy mountain and sea views as well as make full use of the elevator, a technological innovation of the time (Hibbard, 2011, p. 97).



Figure 5. Oliver G. Traphagen, Judd Building, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 1898-1899

The Bank of Hawaii moved into new headquarters (non-extant) at the corner of King and Bishop Streets after eight years in the Judd Building. Bertram Goodhue erected an edifice, Figure 6, that was both up-to-date and spacious. The architect stylistically created an arcuated palazzo in the Italianate tradition through the stripped "modernized" form distinctive of the architect, while also incorporating elements such as the tiled awning and hipped roof that had come to define the Hawaiian regional style of the 1920s.



Figure 6. Bertram Goodhue, Bank of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 1927

The architectural histories of Castle & Cooke and the Bank of Hawaii reveal their decades-long commercial expansion in the Pacific. While American Savings and Loan did not begin operations in Honolulu until 1925, the company operated in a structure on Fort Street as a business that financially supported home ownership in the islands. Each company's investment in the city's economy reflected Honolulu's emerging status as the cultural juncture between Hawai'i, the United States mainland, and Asia. The stylistic visualities of Honolulu's corporate buildings during the territorial era reveal the ways in which architects and patrons crafted representations of Western modernity in the Pacific. Yet, more than the aesthetic descriptors, their architectural narratives underpin the companies meaning and value to the city which, over time, remained intact and encouraged the construction of the Financial Plaza of the Pacific.

Spatial Constraints

The erection of the Financial Plaza of the Pacific coincided with urban development plans for the CBD. Following the 1959 conclusion by Honolulu's City Planning Commission that businesses and industries had fled the once thriving district and left behind dilapidated and unoccupied structures, the Central Business District Consultants of Honolulu formed in 1960 (City Planning Commission, 1959, p. 2). The group, comprised of three Honolulu architectural and planning firms and one Los Angeles firm, published a report about blighted elements that stretched through Chinatown to the edge of the CBD. They determined that nearly one-half of all downtown buildings were approaching degraded conditions and in need of either major repair or

removal. The committee described the appearance of the CBD as filled with “blank-faced warehouses”, “a total absence of architectural character”, and “colorless streets” (Central Business District Consultants, 1960, pp. 6-35). They also suggested that the spatial constraints caused by the CBD’s geographical position forced new large-scale construction to extend vertically rather than horizontally. The report proposed that the CBD keep pace with the spread of department stores, theatres, and businesses in Honolulu’s suburban satellite communities of Kapahulu, Kaimuki, Kailua, Waialae-Kahala, and Pearl City (p. 20). The committee concluded with a recommendation that the erection of new, modern buildings would aid in the renewal of the CBD.

After the release of the Central Business District Consultants report, the Downtown Improvement Association (DIA), composed of private property owners and merchants from the district, commissioned San Francisco-based architect Leo S. Wou to produce “The Master Plan for the Central Business District” (1962). The expressed purpose of the plan was to evaluate the best use of the land given the economic and sociological needs of the district. The revitalization strategy proposed by Wou called for a four-pronged approach predicated on reserving space for offices, retail, culture and entertainment, and an international centre. The architect endeavored to devise an arrangement that would attract public and private institutions to the CBD.

Wou and David Y.C. Tom, a Honolulu planning consultant, were interested in determining how pedestrians would navigate the reconfigured CBD as envisioned in the “Master Plan”. They considered traffic, parking, and circulation within the district as the premise for their “flexible plan”, which included ring roads, tunnels under Honolulu Harbor, and parking garages located on the edges of the CBD. Wou’s plan gave pedestrians the maximum right of way and allocated open spaces for scenic vistas. Ultimately Wou considered the ways in which the urban environment could positively improve the human condition.

Although city officials did not adopt Wou’s master plan in its totality, evidence of its success is revealed in two ways. Firstly, Wou’s concept for mixed-use development led to the construction of the Financial Plaza of the Pacific, which served as the catalyst for the commercial revival of Honolulu’s CBD (Adamson, 2013, p. 117). Secondly, Wou suggested that Fort Street be reconceived as a pedestrian mall. The Planning Department of the City and County of Honolulu enlisted Victor Gruen, a Viennese architect who developed the concept of the American regional shopping mall during the 1950s, to develop a proposal for a pedestrian mall along Fort Street. Gruen’s analysis, complete with architectural drawings of the proposed Financial Plaza of the Pacific, concluded that pedestrian paths, outdoor plazas, and a simplified street system would allow for an effective revitalization program that addressed the needs of both pedestrians and vehicular traffic (Victor Gruen Associates, 1968, p. 3).

Commerce, Art, and Entertainment

The Financial Plaza of the Pacific is more than a site for trade and business. A desire to create a lively social life in the CBD underscored the planning and erection of the edifice. From its inception, planners for the complex determined that it would function as an environment that merged commerce, art, and entertainment. The site, as an active location for lived experiences supports Henri Lefebvre's (1968) call for urban spaces that address a variety of individual desires; but, the building does little to move beyond an understanding of the city as an economic imperative. However, the Financial Plaza of the Pacific succeeds at placing private corporate architecture in the public realm, making the case for an integrated view of urbanisation.

Halprin & Associates designed public plazas at the Financial Plaza of the Pacific for people to congregate, meet, and see art displays within a commercial context. Figure 7, *Sun Disk* (1970), marks the plaza in front of the Bishop Street entrance to the Bank of Hawaii. Tony Bernard Rosenthal created the large bronze and steel sun disk with geometric indentations. This fabrication was not new to Rosenthal's oeuvre. A similar piece, *Rondo* (1969), first ornamented space in front of the 110 East 59th Street towers and then became a marker for the New York Public Library at 127 East 58th Street. Meanwhile, Arnaldo Pomodoro's sculptural work in Figure 8, *Columns* (1970), occupies the plaza in front of the Fort Street Mall entrance to the Bank of Hawaii. *Columns* consist of three vertical posts of bronze, stainless steel, and concrete. Pomodoro, an Italian artist, took inspiration from ancient obelisks, Egyptian hieroglyphics, and Hawaiian sculpture in designing the piece. He created lines and forms that intersect in ways that allude to ecological erosion and the material possibilities of the future (Clancy, 2016).



Figure 7. Tony Bernard Rosenthal, *Sun Disk*, bronze and steel, the Financial Plaza of Pacific, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 1970



Figure 8. Arnaldo Pomodoro, *Columns*, bronze, stainless steel, and concrete, the Financial Plaza of the Pacific, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 1969

Bank of Hawaii patrons elected to incorporate art in the design of the Financial Plaza of the Pacific. The purpose was not only to utilize art's restorative and cognitive associations, but to reassert the company's historical lineage in the Hawaiian Islands. Bronze art panels from the company's 1927 headquarters at the corner of King and Bishop Streets (see Figure 6) were moved to the Financial Plaza. Tying the company to a Hawaiian sense of place and history, Lee Lawrie – famed for his low-relief sculptures adorning the entryway at 30 Rockefeller Plaza in New York City – created bronze decorative panels depicting seiners (net fishermen) and canoe builders for the Goodhue-designed bank. The panels in Figures 9 and 10 depict muscular, Hawaiian men working with traditional instruments. Lawrie's sculptural reliefs were a search for – or a moment to recapture – masculinities that frame Pacific Islander men as naturally athletic and physically strong. As pointed out by Isaiah Helekunihi Walker (2008), the physicality of Hawaiian men is tied to their colonial, Western positionality as beachboys and the sustainers of Hawai'i's tourist economy (p. 89-90). When framed in such a way, people of color are, as Herman Gray (1995) contends, "structured by and against dominant (and dominating) discourses of masculinity and race, specifically (whiteness)" (p. 401). The bronze relief sculptures at the Bank of Hawaii confirm this argument. Lawrie's seamen who skillfully operate the canoe within the oceanic realm, are paradoxically located within a banking institution that sought to advance American economic interests in the Pacific while upending indigenous rights and systems.



Figure 9. Lee Lawrie, *Canoe Builders*, bronze bas reliefs, Bank of Hawaii, Financial Plaza of the Pacific, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 1936

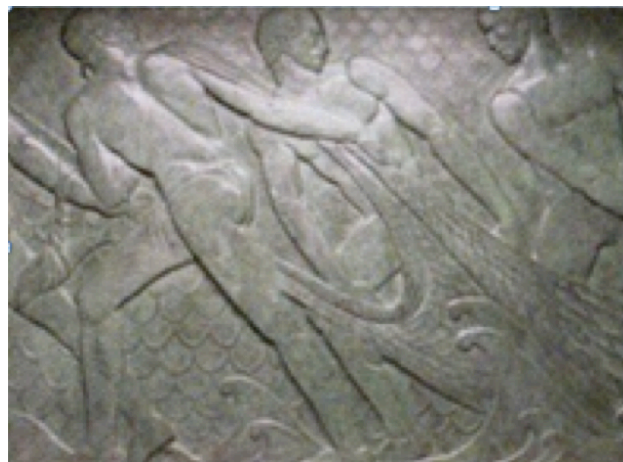


Figure 10. Lee Lawrie, *Seiners*, bronze bas reliefs, Bank of Hawaii, Financial Plaza of the Pacific, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 1936

Construction of the Financial Plaza of the Pacific as well as its landscape design and art programs reinvigorated the architectural heritage of the CBD and reestablished it as the centre of the state's business economy. Companies at the Financial Plaza of the Pacific assisted in this process by establishing their offices in the district which, in turn, brought workers and visitors to the area. The 1966 employment census recorded that 17,000 individuals worked in the CBD. By 1969, one year after the completion of the Financial Plaza of the Pacific, the work force had reached 30,000 (McElroy, 1974, p. 10). The Financial Plaza of the Pacific not only reflected a post-statehood employment and financial boom, but also welcomed public audiences with a functional aesthetic of open-air spaces and artworks.



Conclusion

Promoting Hawai'i's economic viability through monumental architectural design at the Financial Plaza of the Pacific was particularly important for a post-statehood era in which the tourism industry and military initiatives dictated much of the new construction in Honolulu. Business owners, architects, and planners at the Financial Plaza of the Pacific challenged cultural designations that singularly defined Hawai'i as a "paradise of the Pacific" and instead confronted the urban realities of the 1950s and 1960s – a period when the people of Hawai'i were absorbing global conversations about architecture while simultaneously becoming acutely aware of their geographic significance to U.S. military and international policies. Not only did Honolulu's residents and citizens gain access to commercial options and public space in the city with the erection of the Financial Plaza of the Pacific, but the CBD and adjacent areas were primed for future growth. Today, the structure remains home to the Bank of Hawaii and other corporations while offering employees and tourists various cultural and social amenities. The Financial Plaza of the Pacific and its Fort Street surrounds expose Honolulu as a living city that utilizes its architecture as a tool for individuals to navigate the intersections of urban life which include public and private spaces, as well as formal and informal settings. As people encounter and move throughout the Financial Plaza of the Pacific they experience erstwhile indigenous and colonial narratives that engage them with the historical formation of Hawai'i as a U.S. state.

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