



PŌ'ELE WAI

A FILM BY TIARE RIBEAUX

LENAPE CREATIVE GROUP PRESENTS "PŌ'ELE WAI" STARRING LISE MICHELLE SUSTAN CHILDERS, NANEA LUM, SARAH KAMAKAWIWA 'OLE, KALIWOPIUANO HEADKALANI AIO
AND JANMAL MAMALIAS PRODUCED BY SEBASTIAN GALASSO, JOEY STILLWATER, TIARE RIBEAUX, DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY VINCENT BERGASIO, JOEY STILLWATER
PRODUCTION DESIGNERS NANEA LUM, SEBASTIAN GALASSO MUSIC BY TED DE OLIVERIA, JASON CHU, JELI BY AULLY MITCHELL, SOUND DESIGN BY TED DE OLIVERIA, EDITED BY TIARE RIBEAUX

Links:

[Teaser](#)

(will update file internally, link will stay the same)

[Screener](#)

Logline:

While navigating between survival and her connection to the land, a weaver experiences a transformation when she finds out her drinking water has been poisoned by fuel leaking into O'ahu's watersheds.



Short Synopsis:

- 1) A weaver navigates between survival and her connection to the ‘āina (land) while a mysterious rash grows on her body. While working as a cleaner, she becomes entranced by a mysterious painting and learns it is inspired by a Hawaiian creation story. As her rash worsens, she realizes her drinking water has been poisoned by fuel leaking into the island’s watersheds, and undergoes a major transformation.

- 2) A weaver navigates between survival and her connection to the ‘āina (land) while a mysterious rash grows on her body. As her rash worsens, she realizes O‘ahu’s drinking water has been poisoned by fuel leaking into the island’s watersheds, and undergoes a major transformation. Weaving practices, a creation story, a mysterious creature, and the mundane come together to reveal the horrors that lie underneath our daily lives and bring them to the surface. In a poetic homage to our sacred waters, the linkage between our bodies, the water, and the land is woven together.

Long Synopsis:

- 1) A weaver, Kunawai, navigates between survival and her connection to the ‘āina (land) while a mysterious rash grows on her body. She has visions of a mysterious creature lurking in the waterways as she tries to go about her daily routine and her work as a cleaner. As Kunawai continues to have haunting visions that may be real or imagined, she goes through a metamorphosis after she finds out her drinking water is being poisoned by fuel leaking into the island’s watersheds. The transformation of Kunawai takes her through cemented waterways until she reaches the ocean to be cleansed or perhaps, reborn.

Weaving practices, creation stories, a mysterious creature, and the mundane come together to reveal the horrors of that lie underneath our daily lives and bring them to the surface. In a poetic homage to our sacred waters, the linkage between our bodies, the water, and the land is woven together through visual metaphors.

- 2) A weaver, Kunawai, navigates between survival and her connection to the ‘āina (land) while a mysterious rash grows on her body. She has visions of a mysterious creature lurking in the waterways as she tries to go about her daily routine and her work as a cleaner. After becoming transfixed by a mysterious painting she finds at a client’s house, she is plagued with visions of being underwater, and learns the painting is related to a Hawaiian creation story. As Kunawai continues to have haunting visions that may be real or imagined, she goes through a metamorphosis after she finds out her drinking water is being poisoned by fuel leaking into the island’s watersheds. The transformation of Kunawai takes her through cemented waterways until she reaches the ocean to be cleansed or perhaps, reborn.



Format:

DCP on request with subtitles.
Aspect Ratio 2.35:1

File Options:

2160p
2.82GB
4096 x 1706

1440p
1.42GB
2732 x 1138

1080p
697.99MB
2048 x 854

Tone & Atmosphere:

Pō'ele Wai combines magical realism, dark fantasy and horror within a classical narrative to tell a visceral story of the effects of poisoning (of our bodies and our land) in a poetic homage to our sacred waters. There are lush backdrops of the rainforest, waterways, and reflections combined with the urban environment that offer a juxtaposition of the mundane with the landscape of dreams.

Our film references and influences are a mix of Thai New Wave, directors like Tsai Ming-Liang, Cronenberg, Mati Diop as well as all of the new wave of Hawaiian cinema that is coming out today.





Tone & Atmosphere: Soundtrack

The soundtrack is original, and the guitar riffs and melodies that drift in and out of the film and give it its dream-like feel were composed by musician Ted de Oliveira, who also did the sound design alongside Tiare Ribeiro. An original 'oli' (chant) “Kane i ka Wai” that resonates with the reverence we hold for our 'wai' (waters) was written by Auli'i Mitchell. An original song “A Drift” was written for the film by musician Jason Chu with his haunting yet beautiful vocals that linger with us after the credits are over.

Director's Statement:

What we hold sacred bridges the past, the present and the future.

E ola i ka wai!
(Water is life!)

Taking a unique approach to telling a story, Pō'ele Wai aims to convey the pain, trauma, and cognitive dissonance as Kānaka as our water and our 'āina are poisoned and harmed - as extensions of our bodies and our ancestral land. It speaks to a more universal story of occupation, land degradation, and subsequent poisoning of spiritual beliefs. At its core it really aims to be a reclamation of what we hold sacred, telling stories on our own terms, how we heal as a community, and a story of resilience.





Director’s Statement: Spirit and Meaning

Pō, a term/concept throughout Polynesia means not only “night” but also – a “cosmic darkness out of which all forms of life and light were afterwards evolved or procreated.” The Kumulipō cosmogenic genealogical chant begins with Pō. Pō’ele, which means “to darken”, “to become black/night”, is also named in the Kumulipō as the first female/female element. Pō is an ancestor of all things, as well as a type of underworld where all souls go (and come from). Petroleum represents millions of years of life and death from the deep earth, which has been extracted and then weaponized. Pō’ele wai brings these things together in a story that weaves space, time, bodies, and the elements.

Another creation story about Papahānaumoku is cited in the film, she gave birth to the islands from her mating with Wakea. Papahānaumoku is of a lineage that Kānaka are descended from and into each of her daughters she is reborn.

Kunawai, our main character who goes through a transformation, could represent a merging of these two – a death and rebirth of ‘āina – as she descends into the ocean after experiencing the ecological disaster on our islands within her body.



Team Bios:



Tiare Ribeaux (writer, director) is a Kanaka 'Ōiwi filmmaker, writer and creative producer based between Honolulu and Oakland. Her work involves a magical realist exploration of spirituality, labor, and the natural environment, drawing upon the structure of dreamworlds and Hawaiian cosmology to critique both social and ecological imbalances. Her films use visual narrative storytelling and components of science fiction and fantasy to reimagine both our present realities and future trajectories of lineage, place and belonging. She is currently a Sundance Native Lab Fellow.



Lise Michelle Suguitan Childers (lead actor, story advisor) is a weaver and actor that was raised in Kalihi Uka. They weave lau hala with Keanahala, a community weaving program based on O'ahu that focuses on weaving moena and our relationship to the pūhala. In their waking time, they are also a collector of fragmented dream memories through methods of ulana, practice, and performance. They have a background in the study of butoh.



Nanea Lum (actor, story advisor) is a Kānaka Maoli artist whose work ranges from kapa (Hawaiian wauke beaten bark fiber materials) to large scale oil paintings. Nanea's kapa is produced from plant material that she personally harvested and processed, dyed with inks from homemade charcoal, earth pigments, and plants. Her paintings are abstract land and ocean scapes that apply cultural concepts of creation that bridge the worlds between creation and creating.



Kālikopuanoheaokalani (Kaliko) Aiu (actor, choreographer) is a mixed Kānaka Maoli dancer and choreographer, researcher, and writer exploring art-making and community-building. Aiu co-founded Ka Hui Ho'okino Hālāwai (H3) is an indigenous, māhū collective that focuses on learning and practicing traditional Native Hawaiian skills in order to build community that centers ancestral senses, the revival of cultural rituals, and queer/gender-expansive experiences in Hawai'i.

Team Bios:



Jody Stillwater 周青海 (cinematographer, producer) is a director and filmmaker from the San Francisco Bay Area. His film and interdisciplinary project themes are based in dream logic and tactile reality, with a modern/transforming approach to visual semiotics & archetype, grounded in Eastern rhizomatic systems and Western classical narrative. His cultural background as a Chinese/Norwegian/Cherokee-American amidst colliding waves of post-temporal diaspora and arhythmic, intertidal class structures has influenced a value of justice, representation and the ethereal in his cinematic work.



Sebastian Galasso (co-writer, producer) is an actor, film producer, & creative director based in the San Francisco Bay Area. His work ranges from feature film, music video and installation to recorded music. His cultural background is of mixed race, Black-American, Italian, and Indigenous American. He is interested in crafting projects and cinematic worlds that make use of his own poetic and sometimes visceral experiences in urban environments.



Vincent Bercasio (cinematographer) is a photographer, film editor and cinematographer based in Pearl City, O'ahu.



Jason Chu (soundtrack, BTS) is an artist and musician based in Honolulu on the island of O'ahu. His photographic work explores dream landscapes that blend portraiture and scenic still lifes with a focus on celebrating Hawai'i's various spaces, its inhabitants, and the local culture. Jason composed the song "A Drift" for Pō'ele Wai and did the primary BTS for this film.

BTS Photo Credit:
Jason Chu





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Jason Chu



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Jason Chu

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Additional Film Stills













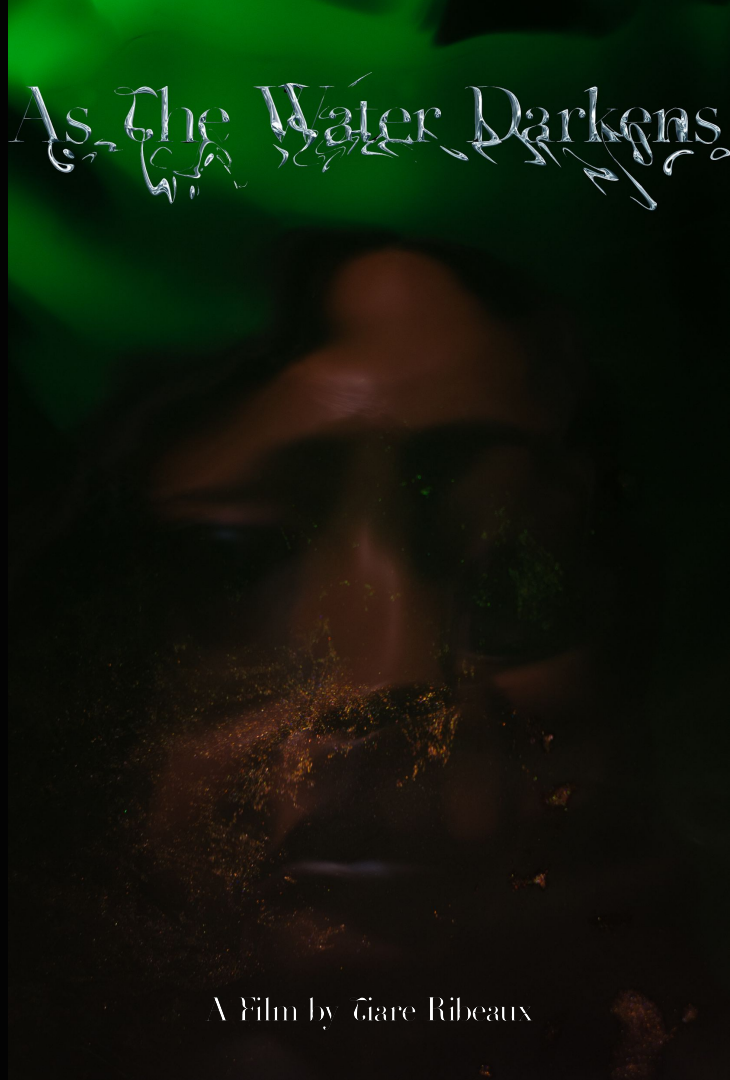








As The Water Darkens



A Film by Gare Ribaoux

