



Hawai'i Volcanoes NEWS RELEASE

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Community Invited to Join in Unveiling of Wahi Kapu Sculpture

Superintendent Cindy Orlando and the staff of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park invite the community to join in the blessing and unveiling of the park's new outdoor sculpture, *Wahi Kapu*.

This auspicious event will take place at 9:00 am on Wednesday, March 7, 2007 on the lawn fronting the Volcano Art Center Galley.

The unveiling will provide a first look at the sculpture and an opportunity to meet the artist, kupuna, and park partners who supported the artwork's creation. Park entrance fees will be waived that morning until 9:00 am.

As part of its program to enhance its interpretive exhibits, the park commissioned the sculpture to portray the Native Hawaiian concept of *wahi kapu*, sacred place. The artwork is intended to give visitors a sense of why Hawaiians have long revered Mauna Loa and Kilauea.

"Through this sculpture we hope to raise the visitors' awareness of the sacredness of our volcanoes and their living deity Pele," said Park Superintendent Cindy Orlando.

The late Emma Kauhi, a member of the park's Kupuna Consultation Committee, envisioned the sculpture in a dream: *"Lava is flowing from Mauna Loa like a river. The upper part of a woman's body is visible in the lava flow—it's Pele riding down the flow, her eyes staring in anticipation, looking in the direction she's going to go. The body of Pele is not the whole body or like we think of a body. It's the upper torso only. Her hair is filling in behind her, also riding the flow, and she's looking out at the ocean. The lava flow, the image of the woman, is the volcano goddess who has come to show us, the people, her power."*

In February 2004, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park issued a call to artists for proposals to create the sculpture. More than 30 artists submitted proposals for review.

The park's kupuna judged the proposals, and based on their recommendation, the park selected artist John Kalewa Matsushita of Kona to produce an appropriate and meaningful sculpture. Born and raised in Hawai'i, Matsushita received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

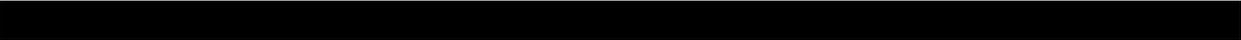
"I am honored to have the opportunity to create a sculpture of such cultural significance to the people of Hawai'i," said Matsushita.



Kalewa John Matsushita aligns *Wahi Kapu* over its base.

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Matsushita was awarded a \$38,000 commission to create, transport, and install the artwork, that when completed becomes the property of the park.

The eleven-foot tall sculpture features a 7-ton lava rock that reveals an impression of Pele. Four carved 'ohi'a panels at the rock's base depict Pele's past, present and future—her journey to Hawai'i, her home at Kilauea and Mauna Loa, and her new home at Kama'ehu.

The artwork was funded through a collaborative project of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, Hawai'i Natural History Association, The Mountain Institute, Volcano Art Center, Hawai'i Tourism Authority, and the Ford Foundation.

Those planning to attend the unveiling should anticipate the possibility of cool wet weather at Kilauea's summit and bring a jacket and umbrella.

The event will also feature music by Kenneth Makuakane, light refreshments served on the Volcano Art Center Gallery lanai, and discounts on selected items at the Kilauea Visitor Center bookstore.

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