

Kaili Chun

b.1962, Honolulu, Hawai'i, lives in Honolulu, O'ahu
exhibited in *Biennial VI*

Na'au Pi'o, 2012

repurposed wood, paint

The 'ō'ō is a visual embodiment of ancestral linkages to the land that is the base of Hawaiian identity. My work provides the starting point to the concept "Na'au pi'o." Literally translated as "standing upright and un-caged," Na'au pi'o is a source for protection and cultivation of the historical traditions and practices that inform identity, and fortify the resolve to sustain ancestral connections in a contemporary environment. For me, the 'ō'ō embodies the notion of life foundation, family stability, generational continuity and *mana*.

'O'ō are implements that were used to build the foundations of heiau, hale, lo'i, and generally, to work the land. They are a respected member of the family, passed from one generation to the next and are held in high regard due to their myriad uses. The 'ō'ō here are based on a traditional Kaua'i design and fashioned from repurposed woods, including koa, cedar, ohi'a, redwood, plywood and pine. Each is unique in shape and character.

In the first part of the Hawaiian genealogical creation chant *Kumulipo*, the cosmic night of *Pō* is used to reference the darkness from which life emerges and grows into *Ao* — the light. The black chambers in this work imply *Pō* and serve as "pockets of protection" for the 'ō'ō. One chamber is empty, alluding to the notions of "expectancy" and as-yet un-obtained spiritual perfection.