

**HUBERT VOS**

Holland, 1855–1935

***Study of Hawaiian Fish*, 1898**

Oil on canvas

Gift of Robert and Deanna Levy, 1987

(5626.1)

No doubt in reference to this depiction of a white-bearded Hawaiian fisherman spilling the bounty of the sea from his woven *lauhala* basket onto a table top, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* informed its readers on April 26, 1898, that:

*Hubert Vos is just now engaged in a large painting of Hawaiian Fishes represented in various positions on a marble slab. He has been particularly struck by the exquisite coloring of the members of the finny tribe to be found in Hawaiian waters.*

In painting this carefully detailed representation of fifty-seven varieties of fish and crustaceans Vos drew on the tradition of seventeenth-century Dutch still-life painting with which he must have been familiar from his childhood and studies in Europe. The myriad forms and colors are not fanciful imaginings but were carefully rendered from sketches of actual specimens purchased at the Honolulu fish market. Vos completed this impressive work by including a *kou calabash* and a draped net in the background.

*see Encounters with Paradise  
p. 222*

Hubert Vos (Dutch, 1855–1935)

*Kolomona: Hawaiian Troubadour*, 1898

Oil on canvas

Gift of Charlotte and Henry B. Clark, Jr., 1994

(7676.1)

Born in Maastricht and educated trained in Belgium at the Académie des Beaux Arts in Brussels, Hubert Vos served as Holland's art commissioner for The Netherlands at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. In the late 1890s, after meeting and marrying Eleanor Kaikilani Coney—, who was an accompanying travel companion to the deposed throned Queen Lili'uokalani— in New York, Vos journeyed traveled to Honolulu in the late 1890s and set up established a studio on Richards Street. An accomplished portraitist, Vos he rendered made many likenesses, including this of Kolomona, a stevedore by day and an entertainer at by night. Kolomona's lively minstrel style is conveyed through present in the vibrant animation of his radiant face, the sparkle in his sparkling eyes, half-opened mouth, and the deftness with which he holds his d sensitive hands'ukulele. As one writer noted in Honolulu's Pacific Commercial Advertiser,

The whole painting is a strong piece of work, brimful of life and action. The hands draped lightly over the strings of the adopted native musical instrument of these modern days, is one of the crowning features of the painting.

## HUBERT VOS

Holland, 1855–1935

### ***Kolomona: Hawaiian Troubadour*, 1898**

Oil on canvas

Gift of Henry B. Clark, Jr. in memory of  
Dr. and Mrs. Frank L. Putman, 1994

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*see Encounters with Paradise  
p. 221*

## **HUBERT VOS**

United States, 1855–1935

### ***Kolomona: Hawaiian Troubadour*, 1898**

Oil on canvas

Gift of Henry B. Clark, Jr. in memory of Dr. and Mrs. Frank L. Putman, 1994 (7676.1)

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HUBERT VOS, AMERICAN (1855-1935)  
KOLOMONA: HAWAIIAN TROUBADOUR

1898

oil on canvas  
40 × 35 in. (101.6 × 88.9 cm)  
Proctor Stafford, Honolulu

Kolomona, as he is termed in the musical tongue of Hawaii, or Solomon, as he was baptized, shows the jovial, pleasure-loving features of his race as he holds the ukulele. . . . He is a civilized native, and the son of one, and his raiment is not like that which Captain Cook found there a century and more ago. He is a minstrel, and cab-driver, leader of sports and merriment, one of the "characters" of Honolulu. . . . When selected as the best-looking, yet most typical, Hawaiian by the artist, Solomon was indeed in his glory.<sup>1</sup>

The above quotation provides only tantalizing clues to the identity of this sitter. Several Hawaiians of this name worked for the Inter-Island Steam Navigation Company in Honolulu and were listed in period directories as Kolomona one to Kolomona four. Motivated by patriotism or a wish to be more modern, in 1900, some of these men anglicized their names to "Solomon," by which many of their descendants are still known. Red shirts were a distinctive uniform of the *poola* (professional stevedores) of Honolulu, and the sitter could easily have been a member of this group. Under the caption "Mr. Vos at Work," the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* of April 26, 1898, described the painting in his studio:

Mr. Vos has already completed two Hawaiian types—one of a young boy . . . representing most admirably the native of olden times and the other, of a Hawaiian of the present day dressed in red shirt and white trowsers with a large handkerchief about his neck and a broad brimmed straw hat tilted back, exposing his face to full view. He is in the act of playing a ukulele. . . . The whole painting is a strong piece of work, brimful of life and action. The hands draped lightly over the strings of the adopted native musical instrument of these modern days, is one of the crowning features of the painting.

Kolomona looks at the viewer, his head tilted slightly as though he is about to sing, and his pleasant face is framed by his hat. His massive hands elegantly strum the minuscule ukulele; clearly he is the master of both instrument and song.





Honolulu Academy of Arts

# Calendar News



**About the Cover:** This engaging portrait by the Dutch-American artist Hubert Vos, *Kolomona: Hawaiian Troubadour*, part of the *Hawaii and its People* exhibition, has an interesting history. Vos was born in Maastricht, Holland in 1855. Much to the chagrin of his mother, he pursued studies in art, first at the University of Brussels and the Academie Royal de Bruxelles Vos represented Holland at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, and while in New York met his future wife, Eleanor Kaikilani Coney, who was accompanying the dethroned Queen Liliuokalani. After their marriage, the couple journeyed to Honolulu during the late 1890's. Vos quickly established his studio on Richards Street where he resumed painting and tried to capture on canvas the distinctive lifestyle of the Hawaiian Islands. *Kolomona: Hawaiian Troubadour* was one of the paintings completed during his stay here.

A known "character" and entertainer of Honolulu (a stevedore by day and performer at night), Kolomona's spirit as master of merriment and song is suggested in this captivating portrait.

*Acquisition was made possible by a gift from Henry B. Clark, Jr., in memory of Dr. and Mrs. Frank L. Putman.*

The Academy is pleased to announce the recent acquisition of *Kolomona: Hawaiian Troubadour*, an engaging portrait by the American artist Hubert Vos. Addition to the Academy's collection on view in Gallery 2 was possible by a gift from Henry B. Clark, Jr., in memory of Dr. and Mrs. Frank L. Putman.

Hubert Vos was born in Maastricht, Holland in 1855. Much to the chagrin of his mother, he pursued his career in art and trained under the tutelage of the Academie Royal de Bruxelles. With a grant from the Dutch government, Vos was able to travel to Rome and later, Paris where he worked under the instruction of the painter Jean-Léon Gérôme at the École des Beaux-Arts. Vos completed his studies at the University of Brussels where he was named a Professor of Drawing in 1887. There he was attracted to the taste of British upper class society and focused his attention on formal portraiture.

Vos represented Holland at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, and while in Chicago met his future wife, Eleanor Liliuokalani Coney, who was

accompanying the dethroned Queen Liliuokalani. After their marriage, the couple journeyed to Honolulu during the late 1890's. Vos quickly established his studio, Holani Pa', on Richards Street where he resumed painting and tried to capture on canvas the distinctive lifestyle of the Hawaiian Islands. *Kolomona: Hawaiian Troubadour* was one of the paintings completed during his stay here.

*Kolomona* was a known "character" and entertainer of Honolulu, a stevedore by day and local performer at night. His lively style is conveyed through the vibrant animation of his radiant face and active hands and was captured by Vos in a manner reminiscent of portraits by the 17th century Dutch artist, Frans Hals. Like Hals, Vos conveyed the sense of personable informality through his subject's sparkling eyes, half-opened mouth and casual posture, as if capturing a fleeting moment in time. Although the two artists worked during different centuries, it seems likely that Vos was inspired by his countryman. Thus, Vos suggested in this captivating portrait, the spirit and essence of *Kolomona*, master of merriment and song.

Cammi Yamashiro  
Volunteer Intern



Hubert Vos, Holland, 1855-1935  
*Kolomona: Hawaiian Troubadour*, 1898  
Oil on canvas  
35 in. (101.6 x 88.9 cm.)  
Gift of Henry B. Clark, Jr. in memory of Dr. and Mrs. Frank L. Putman, 1994

*ce n out 94*

The Academy has recently been given a rare Indian earthenware plaque dating to the Sunga period (c. 2nd-1st century BC). This beautifully modeled clay plaque depicts a standing female figure of a type often seen in early Indian terracottas. These figures are classified as either *yakshis* (fertility goddesses) or aristocratic humans. The extraordinary naturalism of the Academy's figure is characteristic of the terracottas produced at Chandraketurgarh in West Bengal, just north of modern Calcutta.

This partially nude figure wears a profusion of elaborate jewelry, and gazes at the viewer with a calm, confident expression. The most remarkable aspect of this figure is the decoration and ornamentation of the hair, which is piled high on the head in a chignon. The detailing in very low relief of the ornamental tassels which hang from the carefully arranged hair is unusually refined. A border of small stamped flowers traces the perimeter of the plaque. The two holes at the top suggest that it was designed to be hung on a wall or in a shrine.

While different interpretations have been proposed for such figures, they are generally believed to represent

*yakshis*. The cult of the mother-goddess was widespread in early India, and similar terra-cotta plaques have been discovered over a wide area. The majority of this type, however, come from Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

The Academy is deeply grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Christian H. Aall for donating this beautiful terra-cotta plaque to the museum's growing collection of Indian art. The plaque will be displayed in the Jhamandas Watumull Gallery of Indian Art when the Asian Galleries re-open in the late autumn.

Stephen Little  
Curator of Asian Art



Anonymous, India  
*Plaque with Female Figure*  
Sunga period, c. 2nd-1st century BC  
Chandraketugarh, West Bengal, India  
Molded earthenware; h 17.7 cm., w 15.2 cm.  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Christian H. Aall, 1994 (7624.1)