

Kamehameha III



Object Title: Kamehameha III

Date: 1825

Artist: Robert Dampier

Active: British, 1800 - 1874

Medium: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 20 1/8 x 24 1/4 in. (51.1 x 61.6 cm)

Credit Line: Gift of Eliza Lefferts Cooke, Charles M. Cooke III, and Carolene Alexander Cooke Wrenn in memory of Dr. C. Montague Cooke, Jr., 1951 (1066.1)

Object Number: 1066.1

Robert Dampier (British, 1800–1874)

Kamehameha III, 1825

Oil on canvas

Gift of Eliza Lefferts Cooke, Charles M. Cooke III, and Carolene Alexander Cooke Wrenn in memory of Dr. C. Montague Cooke, Jr., 1951 (1066.1)

Robert Dampier was the official artist on the voyage HMS Blonde, which sailed to Hawai'i in 1825 with the bodies of king Kamehameha II and his queen Kamāmalu, who died in England after contracting measles. In Hawai'i, Dampier painted the younger brother and sister of Kamehameha II: Kamehameha III and Nāhi'ena'ena. Posed as the monarch he was destined to become, young Kamehameha stands regally in a verdant setting, the small settlement of Honolulu Fort just visible beyond the banana trees that frame him. Holding a spear, he is draped in a traditional feather garment, which conceals the Western-style clothing that he actually wore and which the royal family preferred. Kamehameha III reigned from 1825 to 1854, during which time he oversaw Hawai'i's transition from a feudal society to a constitutional monarchy.

ROBERT DAMPIER

England, 1800–1874

***Kamehameha III*, 1825**

Oil on canvas

Gift of Eliza Lefferts Cooke, Charles M. Cooke III, and Carolene Alexander Cooke Wrenn in memory of C. Montague Cooke, Jr., 1951 (1066.1)

Wilshire-born painter Robert Dampier was the official artist on the voyage of Britain's HMS *Blonde*, which returned to Hawai'i in 1825 the bodies of Kamehameha II and his queen, Kamāmalu. Although the first American Protestant missionaries had arrived five years before Dampier's visit, and the old religious system had crumbled more than six years before that, Dampier was the last of the artist-visitors to examine, explore, and record the traditional culture of Hawai'i. Shortly after the state funeral of Kamehameha II in Honolulu, Dampier began painting portraits of the royal family, including the young king Kamehameha III and his sister Nāhi'ena'ena. Kamehameha III is seen here holding a spear in his right hand and dressed in one of the red-and-yellow-feather robes that Dampier noted were, even at this early date, "completely laid aside" in favor of Western attire. Honolulu Fort, next to a palm grove that shelters clusters of thatched houses, the small island across the narrow body of water, and the rising mountains behind are elements taken from the artist's sketches.

see *Encounters with Paradise*
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"Kamehameha III as a Boy" (#1066.1)
"Nahienaena" (Sister of Kamehameha III)
(#1067.1)

GAL 8 England &
1825
Gallery 8

Gifts of Mrs. C. Montague Cooke, Jr.,
Mrs. Heaton Wrenn and Charles M. Cooke,
in memory of Dr. C. Montague Cooke, Jr.;
1951.

ARTIST: Robert Dampier (1800-1874). Arrived Hawaii on May 6, 1825, on the H.M.S. Blonde which was bringing home the bodies of King Kam. II and Queen Kapihi, both of whom died in England of the measles.

Two other oil portraits by Dampier are at Washington Place, though neither are of royalty. Also worked as graphic artist.

SUBJECTS: Kam. III - son of Kam. I. Kam II who died in England was his brother. Became king at age 12; this is approximately his age in the portrait. Kalanimoku (known as Billy Pitt) and dowager Queen Kaahumanu (widow of Kam. I) together acted as regents for Kam. III.

Later Kam. III was responsible for:

1. Great Mahele - gave land away to 17,000 families. Before this, only Kings had owned land.

2. Laws of the Land

3. Hawaiian emblem - "Ua Mau ke ea o ka aina i ka pono." ("The Life of the Land is preserved in Righteousness.") - motto on the State seal.

The Honolulu of 1824-1825 was a placid village - 150 thatched houses and a few buildings of frame or stone, the whole surrounded by fish ponds and taro patches. There were about 100-200 white residents, all seeking power.

This was the era of the zealous Hiram Bingham. Missionaries had just arrived on the "Thaddeus" in 1820.

Tradition has it that Dampier had a difficult time getting Kam. III and Nahienaena to pose in royal clothes. They preferred clothes that missionaries gave them.

STYLE: These two paintings are meant to be shown as a pair - they complement each other, and the compositions mirror one another. Dark forms of trees separate figures from the background, which acts mainly as a backdrop, to place the figures in a geographical and historical setting.

"Kamehameha III as a Boy" (#1066.1)

GAL O

"Nahienaena" (Sister of Kamehameha III)

(#1067.1) - card 2

In both paintings, the faces have an indefinable vagueness and sense of removal. In Kamehameha especially, this becomes an almost wistful expression.

INSTRUCTIONAL AIDS: Since the main interest of these paintings is in terms of who they depict and their historical background, it might be best to start with questions about those points. i.e. who are these people? What are they wearing? What do you see in the background, etc.