

# Kohala Elementary Students Combine Art and Science

An unusual art project has given some Kohala Elementary School (KES) students the opportunity to work with local artist Peter Kowalke in the creation of a large ceramic vessel. As part of the process, the kids have learned about Hawaiian birds and plants as they created the imagery that adorns it.

Since May, "at least 100" third- and fourth-graders and high school students have been involved in putting the vessel together. They helped lift, turn and spin the piece, which is about seven feet tall: sometimes too much for one person to handle. More important, the kids have created the figures added as three-dimensional bas relief. In order to make these as authentic as possible, they've had to do some studying. The students wrote about the birds and plants they chose (habitat, characteristics) and then made sketches showing what each looked like before beginning to sculpt them.

Margaret Hoy, who teaches art at Kohala High School, was instrumental in making a success of the project, Peter explains. She organized her high school ceramics classes to help. The older students instructed the younger ones in working with the clay—an educational experience for both age groups. Patrick Ching, a visiting artist from O'ahu who specializes in Hawaiian birds, gave the kids some lessons in sketching.

Peter is pleased to see the combination of art and science that evolved during the work. Art natu-

rally fits in well with many areas of study, he says. He likes this way of breaking down the categories that traditionally separate art from other disciplines.

The concept for the vessel grew in the making. Initially, he expected to be working with about 60 kids. Because the group included more than 100, he ended up constructing another layer of the vessel onto which more birds and plants could be placed. The result is a unique, highly decorative piece of art.

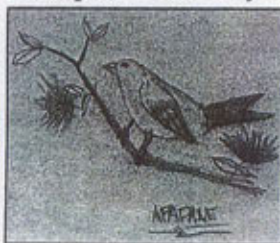
What's the purpose of this project? "It's an art event designed to build a community feeling through individual participation," Mr. Kowalke says. His eventual goal is a community art center and gallery where people can continue learning about art and science. He would also like to see vocational training in woodworking, ceramics and glass, as well as in such fields as agriculture, alternative energy and even the construction of electric vehicles.

The vessel created at Kohala High and Elementary still has some work left to be done, and it takes a long time to dry, he explains. It should be complete by September or October and will be installed, with an appropriate ceremony, somewhere on the school campus. "That way it will serve as a reminder of the value of cooperation," he points out.

Mr. Kowalke has headed similar projects at various schools on O'ahu, along with summer art camps for kids seven to 12 years



Peter Kowalke and Margaret Hoy have collaborated on a unique art project



About 100 Kohala Elementary students have participated in creating a vessel decorated with Hawaiian birds and plants.



old. Two years ago he worked with students at HPA in Waimea, where he currently teaches. HPA contributes to the work at KES through student participation and the use of school facilities. The project is funded by a grant from New Moon, which sponsors commu-

nity awareness projects in this district. Peter already has plans to begin art projects at Kohala Intermediate School, the new Waikoloa library and North Hawaii Community Hospital in the fall.

He would like to acknowledge other people in the community who also contributed to this endeavor, including Olympus Kern, Stephanie Mines, Timark Hamilton, Daniele Stevens and members of the New Moon staff.

For more information, contact Peter Kowalke at 889-6988, P.O. Box 6482, Kamuela, HI, 96743, or pkowalke@hpa.edu.

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