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IN BLOOM: THE ENCHANTING WORLD OF PAIKO HAWAII

home / featured /



How-stopping miniature succulent gardens and aesthetically pleasing air plant arrangements are just two of the living art creations to be found at Tamara Rigney's swoon-worthy botanical boutique in Honolulu. "Being able to have an idea and immediately realize it might be my favorite part of being an artist and small business owner — I'm lacking in patience and hate asking permission," confides floral designer and artist Tamara Rigney of Paiko, her one-stop shop for pretty plants, home goods and thoughtful gifts in Kaka'ako.



Rigney's childhood in Aina Haina (she grew up exploring the surrounding valleys and surfing with friends after high school — even sneaking into a few backyards to poach flowers for leis!) influenced not only her educational path (she went on to become landscape architect), but also her passion for the tropical flora of Hawaii. While she doesn't like to play favorites, 'botanic crushes' du-jour include dramatically spiky bromeliad flowers that grow abundantly in Hawaii, and hot-pink hued amaranthus, which sadly do not, *"My favorite houseplant has to be anthurium-brownii — it doesn't get any better than those heart shaped leaves."*

After being laid off during the recession Rigney landed a prestigious account doing floral arrangements for a luxury shopping mall in Waikiki. *"After a summer of helping at a flower shop, surfing daily, and 80s nights in Chinatown, my unemployment was about to run out,"* she says. *"I loved designing but didn't have the patience to work in a bureaucracy on long projects – I just wanted to work with my hands."* Quickly outgrowing an initial workspace in her parent's laundry room she moved her fledgling floral design business to a spare office in her grandmothers house at Paiko Beach.



While managing her business admin at R/D, a co-working bookstore and coffee shop, she became acquainted with the up-and-coming neighborhood of Kaka'ako – a new epicenter for artists, influencers and entrepreneurs inspired by Hawaii's urban-island culture. When a retail space opened up there in 2012, spurred on by friend (fellow plant-lover and future business partner) Courtney Monahan, Rigney signed the lease and Paiko's first seed was planted: *"It wasn't what I initially had in mind for a retail space but thank god she was down to help me figure it all out!"*

Tucked within Paiko's chic all-white interior are custom terracotta pots and gorgeous containers; a DIY Bar —where terrariums and other assorted vessels wait to be filled with miniature cacti and colored sands— shares space with a myriad of locally sourced plants and flowers. From build-it-yourself fern and moss eco-systems and dainty succulent gardens, to floral 'haku' crowns woven with tropical blooms, under Rigney's creative direction Paiko is reinventing the traditional houseplant through a fusion of art, design, and nature. *"People walk in and get excited at all the different types of plants and the possible arrangements they can make with them,"* she says.



Now boasting six employees, plus coffee shop and social-hub **Brue Bar** (not to mention an enviable Instagram feed), in four short years her botanical boutique has bloomed. *“My favorite aspect of Paiko is that it created a community of people I love — we all work hard, but we keep each other laughing all day too.”* A namesake stationery and market tote line for the store is currently in the works, while future plans include additional workshop collaborations with local artists — of which Rigney says, twinkle orchid ‘kokedama’ balls (a Japanese variant of moss covered bonsai) are a new in-house favorite.



Presently honing her creative talents in the MFA Fine Arts program at California College of Arts in San Francisco, Rigney’s first book *Ohī* —meaning ‘to gather’ in Hawaiian— is an inspiring how-to tome filled with simple yet stunning arrangements made using Hawaiian flora set to hit shelves in May.



For more information visit paikohawaii.com. // Follow [Tamara Rigney](#) and [Paiko](#) on Instagram.

By Keri Bridgwater

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