



Contributed by the artist

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Artist Moses Hamilton finds his *stroke*

Keya Keita

THE GARDEN ISLAND

"Van Gogh for his style, the thickness of the paint, the feeling; Da Vinci for his incredible mind and Picasso because he was incredibly prolific," answered Moses Hamilton when asked which artists inspire his own extensive and evolving work. Hamilton's vibrant colors and rounded figures have developed over the past five years to a place that the young painter feels "expresses a deep space in me, a piece of my soul."

Canvases reaching 30-by-40 inches, filling his room, tell more than the story of aesthetic growth and mastery of color, they are instead monuments along an unimaginable road of

mental and emotional recovery after a car accident that left Hamilton paralyzed from the neck down in 2002.

"When I was at the Pacific Rehabilitation Center in O'ahu after the accident, I would sit in the garden watching other patients during a once-weekly painting class. I just watched at first, as I am shy, but soon I tried too," he said. "The first one was difficult, I felt so stiff, but once I came home, the more I painted the easier it got." Hamilton describes that his transformation into an artist was liberating, "This is something I can create and produce. Something I can actually make with my body, even with my disability. Painting is a way that I've reinvented the world for myself,"

he said.

Previous to his accident, Hamilton had drawn with charcoals — mainly black & white work. He had never considered becoming a full-time artist until his life was transformed by the accident. Now, working with vibrant and multiple colors, exploring the pigments in both oil and acrylic have become a study for Hamilton.

"I love color. Where I can't draw details because of my physical limitations, I use color. The relationships between tones and how they communicate emotions and moods is something I am very interested in," he said. Exploring color as symbol, Hamilton feels that he has become much more fluent in the language of color, what

it evokes and how it affects people. "Color is the drama," he said.

While his painting could be described as both healing and cathartic after such a life-altering experience, his work is anything but pedestrian. Creating a definitive style, Hamilton prefers using people as subject matter, "I love people. I am a social person, I enjoy talking to people and so I really enjoy painting them." Working from both photographs and live-sittings, Hamilton captures the character of the moment and the person — not with detail, but with emotional impression.

Inspired by impressionists as much as American blues musical traditions, Hamilton feels all art is "meditative, it takes you

away from the dullness of life — it has revealed to me what a miracle this life is." The artist expresses his deep gratitude for day to day life and his ability to create something deeply personal and original, despite his handicap.

Painting by holding the brush in his mouth, Hamilton has seen his work get more and more controlled. Using the mobility in his neck as his only method in articulation, the lines and shading have become more steady over the years. "I am beginning to experiment in scale — I am limited in my ability to paint in huge scale, but I am expanding," he said.

Hamilton's gratitude and embrace for life is evident in his work — "I take nothing for

granted now. Every second should be a joy. I try to remember that even when I get down about something, life is precious and there is no guarantee. My art is like a child — it grows beside me, and it is changing all the time," Hamilton said.

Meet the artist

Moses Hamilton will be in Hanalei at Robin Savage Gifts and Gourmet (826-7500) at the Ching Young Shopping Village tomorrow from 2 to 5 p.m. to show his latest work. New pieces in addition to many laser prints will be available.