

AUTO- BIOGRAPHY
by Kathleen Kam, Professional Visual Artist

Some things happen for a few or more reasons. Others are shaped and formed by direct intentions. These can manifest outside or within our selves. SUCH IS LIFE!

The Artist as a Young Woman, aka DANCES WITH BRUSH!

In the course of 45 plus years, the processes of life's experiences have given me a real and defined perspective as an artist. From the early 1960's, I found that art making was going to become more than a hobby. Small and Large canvases, carving on ipu, paper sculpting, trash-fashions, and other mixed media became vehicles to link with philosophies. But by far, "The Bigger, The Better" Mural Works, are my joy and bliss. There is nothing like a fully loaded big brush, which spreads its hairs so eloquently down on a wall. Driven, and working on an accelerated and prolific mode, I am carried away as if my whole body has become a brush that dances with colors. It is ZEN like, stroke after stroke, finding the natural rhythm and one-ness with each of my movements. Fifteen large-scale paintings, put me on a nearly "marathon run" and most of them are located on the Big Island. The largest one graces the Kamāmalu Building on the Kamehameha Elementary School, Kapālama Campus.

The wonder of creating, i.e. this process, "a means justifying the end", is my comfort zone of thinking and acting, so essential to who I am. This Intuition and being at the right place, at the right time, and with the right people, keeps me working with, playing with, and loving everyone.

So now comes the fun part of how one huge mural was gestating for 2 years.

It started with a family, Ola and Kathy Tripp of Volcano, Big Island. (See Kilauea General Store's Mural) We aligned our sights and insights for the first large mural on the old volcano highway. As they remodeled and built their grocery store and family style restaurant, the mural also grew and reflected this "New Beginning". Verdant greens, sunny yellows, muted blues and purples, the reds of Madame Pele and the more earthy rich colors of the rain forest, was calling all volcano residents, to share something and to contribute to this process. Endemic plants, real or their references, were spontaneously given to me. Chats, short and lengthy became a normal daily routine. This painting process became more than just that. The village gave and kept on giving back. True to a nature, this mural for the people, took on a life of its own. Its renovation/restoration was completed this spring, and with it, the inclusion of more endangered native species.

Growing into the "Calling Card" Mural, Kilauea General Store's Mural, kept on giving back. Within 2 years, the Keauhou Bird Conservation Center, aka KBCC, in Volcano, became another site for an education artwork. This native bird facility for Hawaii's species, is an educational haven, that focuses on conservation and rescuing of

endangered species, of our native forests. Open to many conservation/ science groups and for the keiki of Hawaii, it is a training site for researchers. Here, the murals showcase images of pre-contact and the primordial natural history of Hawaii. Within the murals, are hidden faces and animals. It is a rich teaching tool and draws viewers into a virtual landscape. There is also the visual transition of the effects that humans and invasive species, had on Hawaii's diverse ecosystems. (See Keauhou Bird Conservation Center Mural Pics.)

This project further gave birth to the enormous mural (10 ft. X 48 ft.) on KES – Kapālama Campus, Honolulu. Created in 2005, I met physical and mental challenges and juggled the painting processes with impromptu classes under trees, with drawing for keiki in the playground, in the dining hall during breakfast, and even sometimes at lunch. Sharing endless anecdotes and jokes with the elementary keiki became a regular inter-action with them. It was a “WOW” time for me and imagine, 300 plus quick line drawings were made for most of the 1-5 graders, during a 2 month-long period of painting. The kids got more than I could have ever imagined. I innately knew that planting the “art” seeds, would take hold, grow and thrive. My journey back and forth to Honolulu, is evidence of the long-lasting connections to the educational community.

Now my educational leg is playing/working as an Artisti Teaching Partner, during school residencies throughout the Big Island and O’ahu. And the support base if with the Hawaii Arts Alliance, the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and our local Department of Education. How exciting it is to be “DANCES WITH BRUSH!!”