

# Faces of Hawaii

Vol. II CURATED BY JAMES F. JENSEN

The pixels in the printed image of our cover are separately just flecks of color in a matrix. Viewed from a distance they describe a singular vision – the face of a member of our island community; someone who left an imprint upon those around her. In *Faces of Hawaii*, photographers from our islands turn their cameras upon our community to create a grand self portrait. Each image in this book is similarly a pixel – a tiny fleck of color, which combined with others forms a portrait. The nature of our community is defined by the million faces which comprise the face of Hawaii.

Mahalo to all of the photographers and their subjects who shared images and stories. And a special thank you to James Jensen for the hours spent going over the many photographs and statements submitted before making his thoughtful selections.

Patti Millington & Stephen Freedman  
HI Art Magazine & idspace

## Remarks

Humans have long had a fascination with the face and depicting a likeness of it. What is considered to be the world's oldest known representation of a human face was found in 2006 in the Vilhonneur grotto near Angoulême, France and is thought to be 27,000 years old. In the early Roman Empire we know that an interest developed in creating accurate, life-like representations of specific individuals, not just generic images of faces, exemplified by the funeral portraits painted on wood that survived in the dry climate of Egypt's Fayum district and the realistic, even unflattering, marble heads of Romans of the first and second centuries C.E. The best-known work of art in the Western world is Leonardo da Vinci's painting *Mona Lisa*, a portrait of a woman who lived in 15<sup>th</sup>-century Florence, Italy—her face has become unforgettable, iconic. The art of the portrait flourished in the Renaissance and Baroque periods in grand depictions of royalty and wealthy individuals. The invention of photography in the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century led to the demand for inexpensive portrait images, and the increasing ability of a larger portion of the population to make them. Now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, digital cameras and portable phones with built-in instant picture-taking and transmitting options make it possible for everyone to record a face, make a portrait.

Our interest in human faces is perhaps contained within our genes. Looking at and interpreting the face has always been an essential form of communication, even before the development of language. The human expression conveys much information, and we search faces for intimations of personality, mood, and character. We tend to think of portraits as composed images showing a subject or subjects looking directly at the painter or photographer, engaging the subject with the viewer, and yet in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the depiction of a face in profile was considered the most truthful form of portraiture.

The remarks above are some of the ideas that went through my head as I thought about the selection of images for *Faces of Hawai'i*. How do the images submitted for my consideration fit into the long tradition of depicting faces, making portraits? What makes one image more compelling for me than another? The answer is that the response to photographic images, which we like to think of as objective records, is entirely subjective, dependent on a wide range of factors that one can't really sufficiently express in words. In looking at photographs, I react to what the 20<sup>th</sup>-century French philosopher and theorist Roland Barthes in his work *Camera Lucida* called the "punctum", that tiny detail which pierces one's consciousness and has the capacity or power of expansion. Something catches, perhaps an eye, a mouth, a piece of clothing, an object, even a color, a casting of light or shadow, drawing one back again and deeper into an image. The images selected here had that effect for me, but they might not in the same way for someone else. Beyond this, as a person with a trained critical eye, I looked at elements of composition, light, texture, color, technique, and for surprise, innovation, delight, emotion, honesty. I also bore in mind the title of this project and publication, *Faces of Hawai'i*, for the final selection should reflect the diversity of humanity and culture in these islands, at least as I have come to know them after more than three decades of living here.

I would like to add that I did not think to expect images of animals in the submissions, and yet there were many. We tend to think of "faces" as a term applying to humankind, or at least I did, despite having grown up on a farm surrounded by animals. There are two portraits, and I use the word purposefully, of dogs, for example, in the selection I made, whose faces convey two very different kinds of life experiences and every bit as much character and soul as one might expect to find in the face of a man, woman, or child.

**James Jensen**

## EMILY

Emily Naeole, the council person for my district, graciously modeled many outfits for me at her home. She told me all about herself and her passion to help the people.

At one point she held up a memorial of her husband who passed away in the middle of her campaign for the county council seat. I glimpsed the deep pain of this loss as well as her great power to overcome adversity. - Karen Mortensen



*AARON KAZUO YAMANAKA, POLICE OFFICER, HILO, HI*

*Aaron Kazuo Yamanaka is a police officer serving Hawaii County. He entered the Police Department as a young husband and now has a family. His mother named him after Elvis. - Steven Garon*





## LUNA

Luna is a pitbull mix found in the trash on the street almost 5 years ago. After surviving her first 4 months as a "bait" dog to fighting groups, she now lives a life of Aloha in Honolulu. - Rita Coury

MAIA

*Maia was a wonderful dog and an unusually willing model. Her perfectly symmetrical face made her an interesting subject. - Christina Heliker*

