



## **Kevin Woodson**

# **Dahlias en Pleine Aire**

## **Have Bike, Will Paint**

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**K**evin Woodson zooms into Golden Gate Park on his bike specially tricked out with large custom panniers. He extracts poles with which to assemble his easel/table. He lays out twenty or thirty tubes of water color pigments. He fills his spritzer bottle with water. He unwraps a white stiff “canvas.” Finally he dons his painterly hat “a la Matisse” and begins mentally framing his subject: Dahlias!

“Dahlias give me the total luxury of form and color and most of all Time. I get one shot at a plum blossom, but dahlias bloom in the Dell from May through October. They give me the luxury of time to experiment.”

Kevin has been drawing since before he could talk. Family history reports that he was happiest in someone’s lap with a pencil or crayon arranging ideas on paper. Ultimately he majored in sociology/journalism and landed a job at Michigan Daily executing political cartoons. Ten years ago Kevin incorporated Visual Ink, designing corporate images to convey “strategic business illustrations” where “art is about communication and bringing people together.” For the last three years, Kevin has vowed “to paint something EVERY DAY.”

Are Kevin’s paintings about flowers or about the art world? Certainly over the years Kevin has absorbed a lot of botanical information. He knows the names of



his favorite dahlia subjects: Shea's Rainbow, AC Rooster, Mexico, Lulu's Island Mom, Delta Red, Hollyhill Electra, AC Sport, AC Devin, and Eden Barbarossa. He's studied their uses in both Eastern and Western medicine. Kevin captures the seasonal moments from the first tentative blooms to the overabundance of Fall spate through to the blowzy dwindling light days. He revels in "living between the paradoxes" where he concentrates on both the technique of painting but also lapses into the meditational swoon of color, bees buzzing, and encompassing garden experience.

He documents his portraits with scientific facts and fastastigorical whimsy. "Dahlias—they are an entire Empire, a Kingdom, and now... a Circus! When I painted these flowers, I think it seemed the entire menagerie had been let loose. The late summer blooms are roaring and shaking their manes in the hot sun of some of San Francisco's hottest months. Flowers like water and fertilizer, but I felt maybe I should toss these some peanuts!"



With homage towards his mentors, Gary Bukovnik and Richard Bolingbrook—also famous San Francisco watercolorists—Kevin encourages other new artists "to paint and post on FaceBook. "It gives them inspiration and license" to continue creating. This year Kevin painted for the two days of the big dahlia competition in San Francisco delighting dahliaphiles with another interpretation of their favorite flower. At the end of the show, Kevin took buckets of winners to a hospice in Oakland.







While Kevin's work has been hung in many Bay Area and Taiwanese galleries, he is particularly excited to participate in a big show at Oakland City Hall in 2015, and dreaming of Shanghai and Japan. The Mexican Dahlia Association has just invited Kevin to participate in their Day of the Dahlia next year. More of Kevin's work can be seen on his website, [www.kevinwoodson.com](http://www.kevinwoodson.com), including his 2015 calendar and giclee prints.

Tourists love to watch as Kevin smears blushes of color over his canvas. Using lanaquarelle, a heavy, treated paper, Kevin can keep spritzing it up to 8 hours without losing its integrity. Between animated conversations with kibitzers, he builds color upon color, accreting an image in long slow layers, literally "growing" his dahlias over the course of the day. Depending upon the viewer's distance from the frame, Kevin's paintings range from dreamlike, to fantasy to realistic.

After show season, Kevin delighted in setting up WITHIN the dahlia isles.

As he daubed his floral visions, he mused, "The Crown Prince of the Empire of the Dahlias dresses in red to dance in the wild carnival of the Dahlia Summer. One day, he will be a King, he thinks. Once

he's on the throne, maybe the other flowers will want him to stop dancing and spend more time at court. Dahlias have an elaborate system of government, after all, supporting alliances with the Butterfly Kingdom, the Royal Bee Queenship, the Realm of Fairies, and a Host of Gardener Ambassadors representing their glory across the globe. Wouldn't a more serious Monarch accomplish the duties of State with more efficiency and precision than a flamboyant party prince?... The Dahlia Prince looks up at the great throne, and says to hell with it. I'm going to keep dancing!

