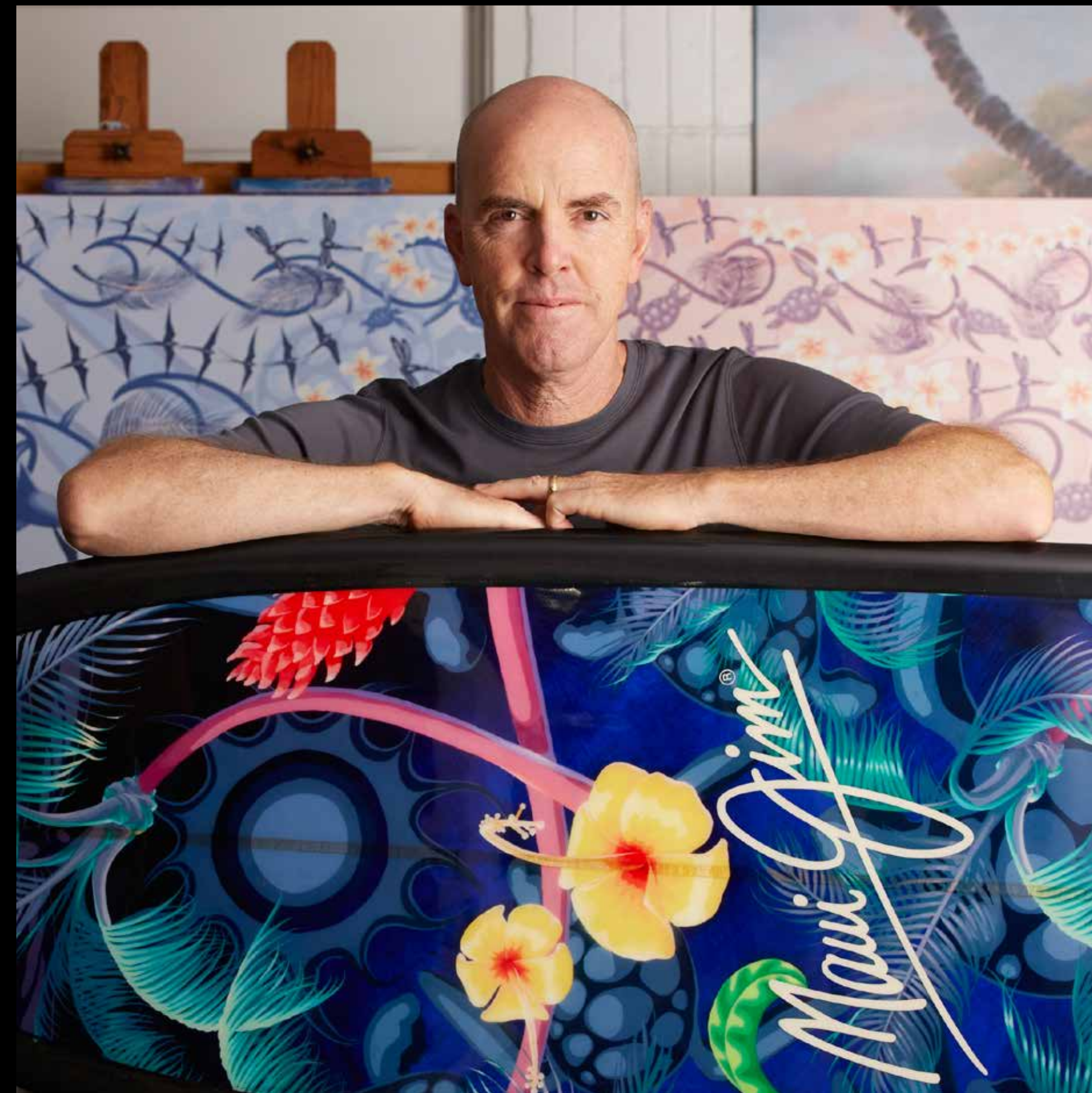




Made in the Shade

HOW THE BEACH LIFE 'GROWS' ON A CANVAS

By ILIMA LOOMIS
Photography by RACHEL OLSSON





Maui artist Charlie Lyon

is used to seeing his work displayed in elegant frames. Now his paintings adorn actual frames—of Maui Jim sunglasses, that is.

Lyon partnered with the international eyewear company to design wearable art for a series of limited-edition sunglasses. His original painting, “You Move Me,” depicts his signature palm trees, along with turtles and vibrant tropical flowers, in a cool color palette of blues and greens.

“One of the key words to it is movement,” he says. “It’s fluid.”

Lyon was already a brand ambassador for Maui Jim when the company invited him to come up with the design. He says it was a natural partnership. “I paint from memory, but all the imagery I take into my mind is seen through these lenses,” he says.

But Lyon had to make some changes to his artistic process to complete the assignment. While he normally paints spontaneously, starting with a mood or feeling and letting a tree “grow” on his canvas, this project required him to sketch and plan.

The idea was to make a painting that could be reproduced on Italian silk, which would then be cut into pieces and laminated into rigid frames. That meant the original painting had to be “busy,” so that any part of it could be used for the frames.

“I had to fill the space without over-filling it,” he says. “My 55-inch painting was going to go down to a four-and-a-half or five-inch square, so all the elements had to read; you had to be able to see the turtles and trees and flowers.”

Lyon now works as a fine artist whose work has been sold to

collectors around the world. With work that has been shown in juried exhibitions, including Art Maui and the Schaefer Portrait Challenge, it wasn’t hard to make the leap to designing frames. He previously worked as an illustrator and designer who created art for surfboards and designed prints for wet suits and T-shirts in the action sports industry.

Inspired by his own love of Maui and the beach, Lyon began painting palm trees around 15 years ago. He started by taking detailed photographs of every tree, trying to get it just right. But eventually his father, also an artist, advised him to paint from the heart.

“He said, ‘You’ve got to trust your mind’s eye and how it feels to you,’” Lyon recalls. “‘Why are you using this tree? Think about that, and try painting from memory.’”

From then on, Lyon sought inspiration by walking on the beach, soaking in the mood of the day and absorbing the sight, sound and movement of palm trees. “When I got back to the canvas, I was inspired by those feelings,” he says. “It’s not a specific tree, it’s more about the way it feels.”

Lyon’s first effort with Maui Jim was so successful that they’re now starting work on a second collection. This time, he’s painting a triptych—a three-paneled piece that represents masculine, feminine and a gender-neutral style. The series is expected to debut in Paris this September.

“It’s exciting,” he says. “We’re going to take it to the next level from the last collection.”

ON EXHIBIT

Maui artist Charlie Lyon has been featured in exhibitions including Art Maui, the Schaefer Portrait Challenge and at galleries on Maui and in Honolulu. See his work year-round at the Four Seasons Resort Maui, “Wailea on Wednesdays.”

