

# FREEDOM UNDER ROUGH YEARS

*Freedom Under Rough Years* showcases the work of multi-talented local artist Nicholas Gates. Through his work with dance, sculpture, and fashion, Gates celebrates the elements of hip hop, particularly graffiti and b-boying. He created his first sculpture, a piece mourning the death of his grandmother, during a ceramics class in high school. This sparked a passion for sculpting, and after its completion, he began a sculptural series representing figures from the golden age of hip hop. Sources as diverse as Michelangelo, graffiti, manga, and iconic hip hop album covers influence Gates' work. He has completed a commission for Ice-T and his artwork is in the collections of Jay Z and Kanye West.

Gates finished a sculptural commission in 2009 for the film *Step Up 3D*, released in 2010. This project created new opportunities for him when friends encouraged him to design a clothing line based upon his artwork. With the goal of promoting the idea that a young African American man from the inner city could produce art, he took the bright, colorful palette of his sculptures and applied it to the pieces in his new urban fashion line, Kid-N-Clay. It features unique takes on classic fashion staples, including five panel hats, letterman jackets, and button down shirts. Gates gradually began to integrate LED technology into clothing for performers at Hip Hop Foundation Fanatics, his dance studio. His current project is Techniride, an innovative new line of safety wear for cyclists, which fuses LED technology with sleek, attractive fashion.