



UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII®
MĀNOA

Department of Art & Art History
University of Hawai'i Art Gallery

PRESS INFORMATION: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

updated October 19, 2009

CONTACT: Lisa Yoshihara, Director; or Sharon Tasaka, Associate Director

(808) 956-6888, <gallery@hawaii.edu>, <http://hawaii.edu/artgallery>

ART EXHIBITION

Degrees of Distinction: Alumni Invitational Exhibition

Features 24 artists and art historians educated at the Department of Art and Art History, University of Hawaii at Mānoa who are recognized for their work and for their contributions as artists, educators, designers, researchers, and museum professionals. Since first conferring of Bachelor of Arts degrees in 1923, the Department of Art and Art History, over the past 85 years, has had many alumni contribute locally, nationally, and globally to the development of visual arts and the communities they live in.

SPONSORS

University of Hawaii at Mānoa Department of Art and Art History, the College of Arts and Humanities, and Mānoa Arts & Minds, a partnership that cultivates the mind and spotlights the best of art, music, theater, dance and special performances at UH Mānoa. Graphic design provided by Nomura Design.
http://www.manoa.hawaii.edu/chancellor/arts_minds/

LOCATION

University of Hawaii Art Gallery
Art Building, University of Hawaii at Mānoa

DATES

October 25 – December 11, 2009

OPENING RECEPTION

Sunday, October 25, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.
The public is invited.

HOURS AND ADMISSION

Monday – Friday 10:30 – 5:00; Sunday 12:00 – 5:00.
Closed Saturdays, November 11, Veterans Day, and November 26, Thanksgiving Day.
Admission is free. Donations are appreciated.
Parking fees may apply.



TOURS

Every Sunday beginning Nov. 1 from 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.
Admission is free.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Artists Who Work in Museums

Panel discussion
Sunday, October 25, 1:30 – 3:00 p.m.
Art Auditorium, Art Building, UHM

Panelists:

Willa Cox, Registrar# Art Storeroom Manager, Storeroom One Manager,
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

James Kuroda, Senior Exhibit Specialist, Hawaii State Art Museum

Aaron Padilla, Assistant Curator, Education Department, Honolulu Academy of Arts

Gordon Sasaki, Teaching Artist and Educator, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Inger Tully, Curator of Exhibitions, The Contemporary Museum, Honolulu

Moderator: Lisa Yoshihara, Director, University of Hawaii Art Gallery, Honolulu

(NEW EVENT!)

Visiting Artists Talks by Jason Minami and Gordon Sasaki

Wednesday, October 28, 7:00–8:30 p.m.
Art Auditorium, Art Building, UHM

Jason Minami is the studio manager and instructor at Glassroots in Newark, New Jersey. He teaches glassblowing at GlassRoots, a non-profit organization built on the concept that communities can be transformed and elevated by combining youth, business, and the arts.

Gordon Sasaki, an educator at The Museum of Modern Art, New York City, has worked with special needs groups for over 20 years. Sasaki has used a manual wheelchair since 1982 following an automobile accident and is an advocate for the arts for people with special needs.

(NEW LECTURE TITLE!)

Behind Blythe: Creative Direction Behind a Pop Cult Icon

Presented by Junko Wong, Creative Director and Arts Entrepreneur

Lecture and book-signing of *N! W! hine "Auli"*, a story of Blythe's visit to Hawaii
Tuesday, November 17, 6:00 p.m.
Art Auditorium, Art Building, UHM

Junko Wong is the founder and president of Cross World Connections International, a firm that represents international artists and illustrators, operates three stores and an online illustration school. A driving force in the designer toy culture, she is the executive producer and creative director of the Blythe doll, a fashionable and highly-desired collectible. Wong has lived in Japan since 1983.

EXHIBITION SUMMARY

Thousands of students have pursued degrees in art and art history at the Department of Art at the University of Hawai'i since it conferred its first degrees in 1923. As artists, educators, designers, researchers, and museum professionals, many of these graduates have contributed to the visual arts and the communities they live in at local, national, and global levels.

To highlight the careers and contributions of 24 alumni who received degrees from the Department of Art and Art History, University of Hawaii at M^onoa, the University of Hawai'i Art Gallery is pleased to present ***Degrees of Distinction: Alumni Invitational Exhibition***.

"This exhibition really honors the University of Hawai'i at M^onoa art and art history alumni and their careers. When we started to do research for this exhibition, we knew that we were going to find outstanding work and achievements by our graduates," said Lisa Yoshihara, director of the University of Hawai'i Art Gallery. "There are so many UH alumni doing significant work toward the development of art and building their communities, that it was difficult to make the final selection. The alumni see their education and degrees from UH as critical and pivotal in their work and careers. We hope that these alumni and their contributions will inspire our current students, recent graduates, and the community to strive for excellence."

Featured artists are: Maile Andrade, Reiko Brandon, Sean Browne, Momi Cazimero, Willa Cox, Allen Hori, Grant Kagimoto, Harold Koda, John Koga, James Kuroda, Jason Minami, Wayne Miyamoto, Wayne Morioka, David Naito, Aaron Padilla, Mary Philpotts McGrath, Abigail Romanchak, Gordon Sasaki, Laura Smith, Noe Tanigawa, Inger Tully, Junko Wong, Shige Yamada, and Carol Yotsuda.

The witty and graphic designs of island plants, animals, food, and phrases created by **Grant Kagimoto**, president of Honolulu company Cane Haul Road, have held a special place in the hearts of locals for more than three decades. Printed on t-shirts, tea towels, and calendars, the most popular of his designs include Plantation Days, Club Musubi, and Shave Ice. Hundreds of Kagimoto's memorable and iconic designs as well as several mixed media works on paper will be presented during this exhibition. Kagimoto, who earned a BFA in visual design in 1970, always felt it was important to give back because of the community support for his work. He currently serves on the boards of the City Commission on Culture and the Arts, Māhūlilili Community Center, and TEMARI, Center for Asian and Pacific Arts, and has been a juror for Scholastic Arts, Sterling Scholarships, Congressional Art, Art Maui, and the Honolulu Japanese Chamber of Commerce Art Exhibition.

A longtime resident of New York City, **Harold Koda** has held the position of curator in charge at The Costume Institute, The Metropolitan Museum of Art since 2000. He has also served as curator and director at The Edward C. Blum Design Laboratory at the Fashion Institute of Technology, New York. Koda has curated and organized many outstanding exhibitions individually and in collaboration with other curators, scholars, and consultants. Inspired by the structural simplicity of Paul Poiret's designs, Koda presents *Paris Coat* as a combination of projected animation of the famous couturier's remarkable skills of draping with a life-size replica of the original garment from 1919. He states, "But for me, in the end, success is achieved if people find in passing through a Costume Institute exhibition, that they are engaged by something that had never arrested their attention before and leave wanting to go deeper and to learn even more." Koda received a BA with distinction in English literature and a BFA in art history in 1972 from the University of Hawaii, and a Master's of Landscape Architecture from Harvard University in 2000.

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President of premier interior design company Philpotts & Associates, Inc., **Mary Philpotts McGrath** focuses on reconnecting people with their surroundings and creating timeless, welcoming environments. For nearly fifty years, she has incorporated her universal sense of style, sense of place, and deep appreciation of Hawaii and its culture into designs for private residences through luxury hotels that have received national and international recognition. Her book *Hawaii: A Sense of Place*, was published in 2005. Studying under eminent scholars Jean Charlot, Kenneth Kingrey, and Betty Tseng Yu-Ho Ecke at the University of Hawaii during the 1950s, Philpotts McGrath learned to skillfully blend Hawaii's open-air way of life with aspects of East and West. A series of her Hawaii-themed prints will be on view for this exhibition. Philpotts McGrath has served on many boards and organizations including the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts, Friends of Iolani Palace, Friends of Washington Place, Hawaiian Historical Society, Garden Club of Honolulu, Outrigger Duke Kahanamoku Foundation, Mayor's Advisory Committee for Historic Preservation, Downtown Business Council, and Downtown Task Force on Homelessness.

Gordon Sasaki, who received a BFA with honors, 1987, and MFA, 1992, is a longtime educator at The Museum of Modern Art in New York City, an advocate for accessibility for people with disabilities, and a studio artist. He states, "In 1982, I was involved in an automobile accident that injured my spine and has since required me to use a manual wheelchair for mobility. This incident and subsequent life experiences underscore the importance of creativity at an individual and broader societal context. Simply put, art is a fundamental vehicle, which has the potential to positively transform lives and the communities in which we live." Sasaki brings his unique perspective and insight to his students, many of whom have special needs. He presents a selection of his recent series of photographs entitled *NY Portraits*. "The series examines the constructed nature of beauty through the lens and diversity of disability, presenting alternative representations and models in artistic and societal contexts," he explains.

Since 1993, **Laura Smith** has been the executive director of Honolulu Printmakers, a non-profit organization that promotes the appreciation and understanding of printmaking and print production. She has been instrumental in developing and managing its programs, events, workshops, exhibitions, and membership. In 1987 Smith and Marcia Morse co-founded the Honolulu Printmaking Workshop. It merged with the Honolulu Printmakers to provide a community-access print studio for its members in 1993. "Sometimes it is difficult to balance my work as an administrator and my need to continue creating art. But the combination makes for a lively work life. . . . By working for a small community based visual arts organization I have a satisfying sense of contributing to a community of artists and arts supporters," says Smith. Recognized for her woodcut prints, Smith often creates narratives and stories through her print series. She received her MFA in printmaking in 1987. Her work has been shown in the U.S., Japan, Korea, and Germany. She received many awards including the Catherine E. B. Cox Award from the Honolulu Academy of Arts in 1994.

Living in Japan since 1983, **Junko Wong** established Cross World Connections (CWC), a company that currently represents illustrators, graphic designers, photographers, and artists worldwide; operates three different stores in Tokyo and an online illustration school. Wong is chiefly responsible for the rebirth of the Blythe doll, originally created by U.S. toy company Kenner in 1972. Brought to her attention in 1999, Wong saw the doll's unusual eyes and facial expression and recognized its potential appeal to adults in Asian markets. As creative director and executive producer, Wong and her CWC team design each Blythe doll. "I feel I have been a part and a driving force in the designer toy culture because of Blythe, a doll of peculiar attraction. Not only has neo Blythe started a doll-collecting frenzy, she is a canvas for fashion designers and the muse of many

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photographers and illustrators around the world,” said Wong who received a BFA in 1980.

Wong presents a selection of Blythe dolls, conceptual drawings, photographs, and her book *N! W! hine "Auli"i* for this exhibition. CWC organizes exhibitions and charity events around the Blythe dolls.

Arts educator, community advocate and organizer, and studio artist, **Carol Yotsuda** currently serves as volunteer executive director for the Garden Isle Arts Council. For more than 30 years she has worked tirelessly to bring arts to the people and people to the arts on Kauai. “My involvement as an artist/educator within the larger community began in 1968 upon the encouragement of SFCA founding Executive Director Alfred Preis. . . . Once I embraced that awareness and moved to make that difference, the natural flow of energies of all those with whom I interacted . . . fed and continues to feed this passion,” said Yotsuda. The recipient of a BS, 1962, and MFA, 1984, she has received many awards and was named a Living Treasure of Hawaii by the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii in 2005. For this exhibition, Yotsuda created 49 clay figures based on the Buddhist concept of *chu-in*, meaning “intermediate shadow” that refers to the 49-day time period when the spirit of the deceased is in a state of limbo, awaiting its passage to the Pure Land of Amida Buddha.

PUBLICITY PHOTOS

Digital images are available.

University of Hawaii System

Established in 1907 and fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the University of Hawaii is the state’s sole public system of higher education. The UH System provides an array of undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees and community programs on 10 campuses and through educational, training, and research centers across the state. UH enrolls more than 50,000 students from Hawaii, the U.S. mainland, and around the world. For more information visit www.hawaii.edu.

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