

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Swarm Gallery is pleased to present the exhibition

MUSEUM OF HISTORICAL MAKEOVERS | Kathy Aoki, Solo exhibition

September 18 – October 25, 2009

Exhibit Opening | Friday, September 18, 6-8PM

Artist's Talk | Wednesday, October 14, 6:30PM

*This is your moment
Come on girl, you know you own it
Get it girl, get it, get it girl...*

- Lyrics from "Wind It Up" by Gwen Stefani

OAKLAND, Calif. – 5 August 2009 – Kathy Aoki jumped gears to create the *Museum of Historical Makeovers* show at Swarm Gallery. She's leaving behind the trappings of her past cartoon styled narratives favored for several years. Instead, Aoki takes on the aesthetics of historical illustration and ancient artifacts, while preserving her favorite themes of gender, beauty and cute culture consumerism.

Creating a pseudo-museum experience, Aoki presents us with imagery that looks antique, but addresses current beauty and pop culture concepts.

Aoki states, "I want the artwork to help explain why we are so obsessed with beauty and pop consumerism. Obviously (from these mock documents), it's been that way traditionally throughout history."

Aoki's French drawings have the look of illustrations from French philosopher Diderot's *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, a mid-eighteenth century multi-volume publication which attempted to explain everything. In fact, Aoki implies that the drawings, which feature beauty processes such as lip-plumping and lower back tattooing may have been intended to be part of Diderot's publication, but were lost - only to be discovered over a thousand years later and acquired by the *Museum of Historical Makeovers*.

In her own artistic makeover, Aoki creates hand-printed etchings after famous surgical paintings by Eakins and Rembrandt. The scenes, drawn with crosshatching and aquatint grays, depict preposterous beauty procedures such as the Brazilian waxing method.

One of the most creative installations in Aoki's museum is the archeological "discovery" of the Egyptian style burial tombs of Gwen Stefani and the Harajuku girls. Aoki elevates Stefani's status to pharaoh; false artifacts, such as alabaster coasters and "stone" tablets, are covered with custom hieroglyphics. Aoki even goes so far as to provide educational guides that explain the symbols on the "artifacts" and provides analysis of the Stefani cartouche. The Stefani archeological installation also features a mini-tomb room, where viewers can peek in to see the Stefani sarcophagus. All of the museum labeling, maps and objects poke fun at pop culture and beauty consumerism.

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Kathy grew up on the east coast in the small town of Natick, a Boston suburb. She attended the University of California, Berkeley, followed by two years at Washington University in St. Louis for an MFA in Printmaking. Currently Kathy lives in the Silicon Valley where she is an assistant professor at Santa Clara University. Her studio is located in San Jose. Past awards include fellowships from Kala Art Institute (1995), the MacDowell Colony (2001), Headlands Center for the Arts (2003), and Djerassi (2006). Her work can be found in major collections across the U.S. such as SFMOMA, the Harvard University Art Museums, and the New York Public Library. In August-November of 2004 she completed a public art project for the San Francisco Arts Commission Kiosk Poster Series on Market Street. Her series of linocut prints were transformed into 4 x 6 ft posters entitled "Champions of Market St." showing Market St. pedestrians dressed in super-hero garb performing random acts of kindness.

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