

The Art of Gaman: Arts and Crafts from the Japanese American Internment Camps, 1942 - 1946

Extended Labels

Artist Unidentified

Internment camp unidentified

woven vase

crepe paper, wire, shellac

Japanese American Archival Collection,

Library, California State University, Sacramento

Ikebana, the traditional Japanese art of flower arranging, was a favorite activity for women in camp, despite the difficulty of securing fresh flowers and vases. The women made flowers out of wrapping paper and crepe paper. For vases, they used hollowed logs, shallow trays made from fruit crates, and containers woven out of string or twisted paper.

Moyo Furuoka

Interned at Rohwer, Arkansas

woven vase

crepe paper, wire, shellac

Collection of Irene Furuoka and Family

To imitate the look of traditional Japanese woven bamboo vases, internees wove tightly twisted crepe paper around thin wire and shellacked the final form to a hard finish. A tin can placed inside the vase held water.

Kenji Fuji

Interned at Topaz, Utah

woven basket

crepe paper, twine, wire, starch

Collection of the National Japanese American Historical Society

Aesthetically pleasing containers to store and display personal items were highly desirable. Internees coveted the containers that supplies came in as much as the delivered goods themselves. Fuji created this basket by weaving twisted crepe paper around and through a wire frame.

Mrs. Sakamoto

Interned at Tule Lake, California

lidded basket

tule reeds, onion-sack string

Collection of the Japanese American Museum of San José

Like the Native Americans who once inhabited the region, the internees at Tule Lake learned to make baskets from tule reeds. This one is sewn with string from an unraveled onion sack.

Artist Unidentified

Internment camp unidentified

cigarette case

string, pigment, shellac

Japanese American Archival Collection,

Library, California State University, Sacramento

The cigarette case was woven from the waxy strings of an unraveled onion sack.

Artist Unidentified

Interned at Gila River, Arizona
smoking set
scrap wood, cactus wood, shellac
Collection of Jewel Nishi Okawachi

Okawachi's father was a dentist and provided dental services in a clinic at the camp. His patients, lacking the money to compensate him, often gave gifts instead. Dr. Nishi earned the government's top pay for a professional in the camps---nineteen dollars a month.

Artist Unidentified

Interned at Gila River, Arizona
six-sided vase
ironwood, scrap wood
Japanese American Archival Collection,
Library, California State University, Sacramento

The interior of this vase is constructed from a crate around which the artist pieced together a mosaic of dark and light ironwood to create a six-sided vessel. Ironwood grew prolifically in the Arizona desert where the Gila River camp was located.

Norichika Akamatsu

Interned at Topaz, Utah
incised vase
iron sewer pipe
Collection of the Nomura and Akamatsu Families

Internees had to build the water and sewer systems at many camps. This scrap piece of pipe was salvaged, sealed, and turned into a vase for *ikebana* (flower arranging). The delicate bird on a flowering plum branch was incised into the pipe, probably with one of the construction tools.

Mits Kaida

Interned at Tule Lake, California
chair
scrap wood, nails
Collection of the Japanese American Museum of San José

This chair was constructed out of short pieces of salvaged two-by-four-inch lumber, with the back brace portion split at an angle to create a more comfortable position for the sitter. After camp, Kaida kept the chair in his living room as a conversation piece.

Jack Yoshizuka

Interned at Topaz, Utah
chair
scrap wood
Collection of the Japanese American Museum of San José

The absence of any furniture except a cot in the assigned living quarters made the construction of chairs and tables a priority. Even clothes hangers needed to be devised from scratch. At first, all of this had to be done with scrap lumber left over from building the camps and with minimal tools.

Artist Unidentified

Assembly center unidentified
table
palm fronds, scrap wood, nails
Collection of Rick Gerharter

The owner of this piece acquired it at an estate sale in Copperopolis, California. The palm-frond table is a type of American folk furniture that was popular at the turn of the twentieth century through the 1950s, mainly in Florida, where it is thought to have originated with African American artisans. It is likely that published patterns and instructions in the public domain inspired internees to use local palm fronds for making much-needed small tables. This table was probably built in an assembly center in Fresno or Southern California where palm trees grew on racetracks and fairgrounds used to house internees.

Giichi Kimura

Interned at Minidoka (Hunt), Idaho
three-drawer chest
scrap wood, manzanita, putty, drawer pulls
Japanese American Archival Collection,
Library, California State University, Sacramento

At Minidoka, Kimura gathered manzanita branches, which he trimmed, cleaned, and sawed into one-eighth-inch cross-sections. He glued them to a chest he had made from scrap wood, then filled the open spaces with putty. After the piece was dry, he sanded the surface and applied several coats of varnish.

Yoshitsuchi Ikemoto

Interned at Rohwer, Arkansas
sewing box
scrap wood, metal
Collection of Henry and Wendy Nagao

Ikemoto was one of hundreds of *Issei* (first-generation) “bachelor” laborers who were unable to send for their wives or a picture bride because the U.S. government cut off all immigration from Japan in 1924. The bachelors’ barrack quarters were appointed with row upon row of cots, offering absolutely no privacy or room to store personal belongings. Ikemoto made this sewing box to hold his darning supplies.

Frank Kosugi

Interned at Rohwer, Arkansas
Japanese-style display cabinet
scrap wood, shellac
Kosugi Family Collection

Amateur furniture makers attempted to imprint their own styles onto the items they built by using inlays, laminates, and interesting curvatures and details. Some internees built large-scale furniture such as hutch cabinets and wardrobe closets.

Artist Unidentified

Interned at Gila River, Arizona
small chest of drawers
scrap wood, ironwood
Collection of Jewel Nishi Okawachi

Okawachi’s father was a dentist, and in lieu of payment, many of his patients gave him crafted objects such as this handsome five-drawer chest that has been carefully pieced together from thin sheets of ironwood and scrap wood from packing crates.

Artist Unidentified

Interned at Topaz, Utah
small chest of drawers
scrap wood, stain, nails
Collection of Kazu Maruoka, Internee

This chest was made by a friend of Shigemitsu "Joe" Maruoka, who was an insurance agent in the Bay Area when he was arrested by the FBI after Pearl Harbor and sent to the Justice Department camp in Fort Missoula, Montana. After he suffered a stroke, Maruoka was transferred to the internment camp at Topaz, Utah, where his wife, Kazu, cared for him until he died. She supplemented their income by making shell pins that she sold through a friend in Denver.

Mineo Matoba

Interned at Santa Fe Detention Center, New Mexico
butsudan
scrap wood
Collection of the National Japanese American Historical Society

Limited to what they could carry, most Buddhist evacuees were unable to take the family shrine, or *butsudan*, into camp with them. The *butsudan* represents the spiritual heart of the family home. Traditionally, both morning and evening observances were held at the shrine by all family members, either individually or as a group.

To continue their religious practices, some people constructed their own *butsudan* so they could place their family's ancestral tablets into the sacred recess. Matoba made this *butsudan* while incarcerated at Santa Fe Detention Center and had it shipped to his wife, who was held at Gila River. It was carved from six separate pieces that could be assembled without nails.

Shintaro Onishi

Interned at Rohwer, Arkansas
butsudan
firewood log, scrap wood, metal
Collection of Shintaro Onishi and Family

Onishi hollowed out a log destined for the firewood pile to create a recess for the *butsudan* altar, attached hinged doors, and used the remaining bark to suggest a textured roof. The small incense receptacle is part of a branch with a natural depression.

Kichitaro Kawase

Interned at Amache, Colorado
butsudan
scrap wood, paint, metal
Collection of Haruo Kawase and Family

Kawase was a poultry farmer from Petaluma, California. He died in camp three weeks before his family was released on August 21, 1945.

Himeko Fukuhara, Kazuko Matsumoto, and Unidentified Artists

Interned at Amache, Colorado, and Gila River, Arizona
bird and animal pins
scrap wood, paint, metal
Collection of Jewel Nishi Okawachi, James Yasutome, and Sadao Oka Family
Collections of the National Japanese American Historical Society and the Japanese American Citizens League, San Francisco Chapter

Wood carving of birds was a prevalent art form in all the camps. A set of Audubon bird identification cards and an old *National Geographic* issue that featured birds were sources of research and inspiration for many carvers. The *National Geographic* was probably baffled by the unusual number of requests for back issues coming from the internment camps.

To create the bird, artists sketched a bird outline on flat wood, carved and sanded it into a three-dimensional form, then painted it with realistic colors. The biggest challenge was the bird's legs and feet, which had to look spindly, yet be sturdy enough to hang onto a "limb." Many artists solved the problem by snipping the surplus off wire-mesh screens that had been slapped over barrack windows. The wire proved to be just the right thickness and strength to resemble bird legs. The final touch was to glue a safety pin onto the back of the carving so it could be worn as a brooch.

Bunzo Fujimoto, Mrs. Taniguchi, and Unidentified Artist

Interned at Poston, Arizona; Amache, Colorado; and Topaz, Utah
decorative pins

beans, sunflower seeds, shells, wood, paper, wire, glue

Collection of Henry Kaku and Fumiko Tajii

Japanese American Archival Collection,

Library, California State University, Sacramento

The most commonplace things became material for craft projects. The bean pins were mostly made from food stocks shipped to the camp. The sunflower-seed pin is backed with a milk-bottle cap and has three tiny shells at the center. Prune and plum pits were also carved into pins as were toothbrush handles.

Grace Ayako Ito, Iwa Miura, and Unidentified Artists

Interned at Tule Lake, California, and Topaz, Utah

shell pins and corsages

shells, ribbon, crepe paper, wood, buttons, wire, paint, glue

Collections of Bruce Miura Family, Grace Ayako Ito and Family, Jewel Nishi Okawachi, and James Yasutome; Collections of the Japanese American Museum of San José and the Japanese American Citizens League, San Francisco Chapter

Both Tule Lake in California and Topaz in Utah were situated on dry lakebeds that grew sagebrush and little else, but internees noted that the landscape was littered with tiny shells, some smaller than a seed. Digging a few feet deeper yielded shells by the bucketful. Using screens, they shifted out the shells, then sorted them by sizes and shapes, bleached them, and painted them different colors. In the absence of real flowers, the shells were painstakingly assembled into corsages for weddings and funerals and made into brooches, necklaces, larger table displays, and trinkets. To make butterflies, internees carefully clipped wafer-thin shells to suggest the scalloped look of their wings, then assembled the parts and painted them with a delicate wash of color. As internees were transferred among camps, they often took their boxes of shells with them and introduced the craft in other locations.

Masataro Umeda

Interned at Jerome, Arkansas

geta

scrap wood, twine

Collection of the National Japanese American Historical Society

An indelible memory for most former internees is the sound of wooden stilt clogs, called *geta*, clattering toward the latrine, public baths, and laundry rooms every morning and evening. The abrasive sand of the deserts where most of the camps were located and the mud of the camps in Arkansas wreaked havoc on shoes, so handmade *geta* became essential footwear.

H. Ezaki; Unidentified Artist

Interned at Gila River, Arizona

walking canes

various woods

Collection of the Japanese American Museum of San José

Collection of Jewel Nishi Okawachi (cactus-wood cane)

Not allowed vehicles, internees walked everywhere in camp. The unpaved paths were sandy, muddy, slippery with ice, or severely potholed, depending on the season. The making of walking sticks began as a necessity, but soon became a fad. Internees searched for unusual natural forms and ways to embellish them. Canes were made from every type of indigenous wood, including cactus, manzanita, mesquite, and greasewood. Some were adorned with paintings, carved images, or poems. One man even skinned a rattlesnake he caught and wrapped it around his cane.

Artist Unidentified

Interned at Gila River, Arizona

crocheted purse

cloth, scrap wood, thread, paint

Japanese American Archival Collection,

Library, California State University, Sacramento

Sewing and needlework were popular pastimes and necessities. This internee made a stylish crocheted purse for herself and used a handle shaped from a crate slat. The handle was sanded smooth, then painted with a scene of the surrounding landscape.

Fuki Shusho

Interned at Tule Lake, California

flower pins

thread

Collection of Oscar Itani and Family

With families typically confined to twenty-by-twenty-foot one-room living quarters that had no cooking facilities, women took up crocheting, knitting, and embroidery out of boredom and necessity. In the barren desert where the Tule Lake camp was located, Shusho's handiwork produced lovely floral corsages.

Shizuo Sasaki

Interned at Bismarck, North Dakota

rings

agate, silver

Collection of Emiko Sasaki Shinagawa

Sasaki was a gardener and community leader in Berkeley when he was arrested by the FBI after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. He was first sent to the Justice Department camp at Bismarck, North Dakota, where he made these two rings for his family. The rocky terrain of the Great Plains yielded colorful stones that could be shaped and polished. After some time at Bismarck, the government decided he could join his family at the internment camp in Topaz, Utah. Following a short time there, he was reclassified as a "troublemaker" and sent to Crystal City, Texas, another Justice Department camp. He did not see his family again until they were released from Topaz at the end of the war.

Robert Ueda

Interned at the Santa Anita Assembly Center
ring
peach pit
Courtesy of the Eastern California Museum, County of Inyo,
Independence, California

A former internee who viewed this ring remembers trying to make one as a child. "We'd take the pits, run into the showers, and rub them back and forth across the rough concrete floor to smooth them down," he said.

Shigeki Roy Yoshiyama

Interned at Gila River, Arizona
heart pendants
ironwood
Collection of Clarence Yamada and Family

Despite its beautiful grain and dark and light colors, ironwood is difficult to work with because it is so hard and dense that it tends to damage pocketknives used for carving.

Mother of George Matsushita

Interned at Amache, Colorado
senninbari vest
silk cloth, thread, ink, buttons, paint
Japanese American Archival Collection,
Library, California State University, Sacramento

Issei mothers (first-generation immigrants) seeing their sons off to war followed the custom of creating a *senninbari*. Literally meaning "thousand-person stitches," they took the form of a sash, scarf, or vest and held a thousand French-tied knots, each made by a different person as an expression of good luck and long life. *Senninbari* traditionally feature a tiger, symbolic of courage. With so many *Nisei* men (second-generation Japanese, born in the United States) entering the U.S. Army from the camps, "knot gathering" became a familiar pastime. The characters on this vest indicate that it was made for George Matsushita by his mother. He was a member of Company 1, 442nd Regimental Combat Team and wore this vest while serving in Italy.

Oscar Itani

Interned at Tule Lake, California
wallet
leather
Collection of the Oscar Itani Family

Internees probably ordered leather-making kits for wallets through mail-order catalogues, then added their own decorative patterns to the finished objects. Itani tooled a picture of the camp, complete with guard tower and Abalone Mountain in the distance.

Ryusuke Kurosawa

Interned at Topaz, Utah
knives
found metal, scrap wood
Japanese American Archival Collection,
Library, California State University, Sacramento

Kurosawa, who operated the boiler furnace for his block at Topaz, collected old, abandoned animal traps that he found on his frequent hikes around the camp. Using the boiler fire, he softened the metal and hammered it into knife blades.

Akira Oye

Interned at Rohwer, Arkansas
scissors, tin snips
scrap metal
Collection of Ron and Michiko Oye and Family

Tools were scarce in the camps, so many men melted down scrap metals, discarded saws, automobile springs, filings, and butter knives in the boiler furnace and hammered out their own tools. Worn-out triangular files were the most prized scrap because they offered the advantage of being evenly tempered, which makes the metal strong and less brittle.

Shoya Sakazaki

Interned at Tule Lake, California
abacus
scrap wood
Japanese American Archival Collection,
Library, California State University, Sacramento

Sakazaki was just sixteen years old when he made this abacus (an ancient form of calculator). Abacus usage was taught as an after-school course at Tule Lake, and because Sakazaki did not own an abacus, he made one for himself.

Artist Unidentified

Interned at Gila River, Arizona
chopsticks
ironwood
Collection of Jewel Nishi Okawachi

Internees who had not brought *hashi*, or chopsticks, with them when they were relocated had to make their own.

Shigeru Sueoka

Interned at Amache, Colorado
washboard
scrap wood, metal
Collection of the Japanese American Citizens League,
Sonoma County Chapter

Shigeru and Rose Sueoka were chicken farmers in Petaluma, California, at the time of the evacuation. After they were interned, Rose could not get her clothes as clean as she wanted, so she asked her husband to make a washboard.

Artist Unidentified

Interned at Topaz, Utah
bonito shaver
scrap wood, bamboo, metal
Collection of the National Japanese American Historical Society

Dried bonito, shaved into thin flakes, is used to make soup stock for many Japanese dishes. The bonito shaver also worked well to make shaved ice on hot summer days.

H. Ezaki

Interned at Fort Missoula Detention Center, Montana
pencil holder
rocks, cement
Collection of the Japanese American Museum of San José

The detention camps at Fort Missoula, Montana, and the relocation camp in Minidoka, Idaho, were known for their rocky terrain. With few other natural materials to work with, internees used small rocks to make storage containers, trays, and vases.

Kameichi Yamaichi

Interned at Heart Mountain, Wyoming
nameplate
scrap wood, paint
Collection of the Japanese American Museum of San José

The identical look of the tar-paper-covered barracks led to some embarrassing moments as residents accidentally entered the wrong living quarters. Internees hurriedly remedied that situation by creating nameplates to nail by the door.

Choji Nakan

Interned at Tule Lake, California
hanafuda game cards
electrical insulation board, paint
Japanese American Archival Collection,
Library, California State University, Sacramento

A popular card game many Japanese immigrants loved to play, *hanafuda* features a stylized nature scene on the face of each card. To provide his fellow *Issei* (first-generation immigrants) with a deck, Nakan stenciled seventy-five individual card designs. As word of his skill spread to other camps, he received many requests and ended up making nine more decks.

Mr. Toshima

Interned at Rohwer, Arkansas
barrack model
scrap wood, toothpicks, paint, thread, nail
Collection of Irene Furuoka and Family

Using scrap wood and toothpicks, Toshima created a miniature replica of a barrack. The actual barracks were covered with tar paper and divided into six one-room family units (twenty-by-twenty feet), with two families sharing a single entry. The walls dividing living units did not extend to the ceiling, so privacy was impossible. When someone sneezed at one end of the barrack, it was heard by all, and if any arguments or loud socializing went on, everyone in the barrack knew. This created tension within and between families.

Mr. Yamaguchi

Internment camp unidentified
doll clothes armoire
scrap wood, metal
Courtesy of JoAnne Hirasuna Kagiwada

Yamaguchi made this doll clothes armoire in camp and sent it to five-year-old JoAnne Hirasuna, who had relocated from Fresno to Mankato, Minnesota, with her family. Ethnic Japanese who could show proof of financial self-sufficiency and gain acceptance from the local government could apply to the Western Defense Command to move to "free zones." JoAnne's father, Fred Hirasuna, received permission to join a business associate in Minnesota and bring eight family members. The travel papers issued by the Army ordered that they leave within seven days and stick to a route that took

them over the treacherous one-lane Tioga Pass through the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Unable to fit all of their belongings into their authorized vehicles, a nephew volunteered to drive a truck on the major highway and rendezvous with the family in Reno, Nevada--a daring mission because after the attack on Pearl Harbor, ethnic Japanese on the West Coast were not allowed to travel more than five miles from home and were under strict dusk-to-dawn curfew. Provisioned with gasoline, food, and water to avoid stops, the nephew headed out at night. The entire family made it safely across the border to Nevada, but found that no motels would rent to them. Fred Hirasuna then assumed the alias "Harry Soon," traveling with his nice Korean family.

Artist Unidentified

Interned at Jerome, Arkansas
model ship
wood, scrap metal, wire, thread, paint, screws, nails
Collection of the National Japanese American Historical Society

This model of a freighter was carved to scale in meticulous detail. The artist, whose name has been forgotten, intended to leave the boat behind when the camps closed since he had no home to return to. But he decided to offer it to a neighbor in the camp, who brought it back to California.

Artist Unidentified

Interned at Topaz
baseball jersey
cloth, ribbon, paint, buttons
Collection of the National Japanese American Historical Society

Hand-sewn from mattress canvas, this baseball jersey was worn by pitcher Bo Kataoka, who was famous at the Topaz camp for his *shoben tama* (curve ball) pitch. Bo's sister, Tsuyako "Sox" Kitashima, served as the announcer for the games there and kept the jersey as a memento. Years later, Sox became a well-known activist in the Japanese American community in San Francisco and played a prominent role in fighting for redress.

Artist Unidentified

Interned at Tule Lake, California
championship banner
felt, commercial trim, paint
Collection of Diane Tamura Reeves

When the team for Block 49 at Tule Lake won the "Citywide" (i.e., Tule Lake Relocation Camp) baseball championship, someone painted a banner on which the players signed their names. The team captain was Iwao "Harold" Tamura. The team won nine out of ten games for the season.

Artist Unidentified

Interned at Manzanar, California
child's *kendo gi*
cotton cloth, thread
Courtesy of the Eastern California Museum, County of Inyo,
Independence, California

This child's garment is decorated with a stitched pattern typical of Japanese-style quilting called *sashiko*.

Artist Unidentified

Interned at Tule Lake, California
painting of Tule Lake Camp
paper, watercolor paint
Collection of the Akashi family

An internee taped together two Western Defense Command evacuation notices, written in Japanese, and used the backsides to paint the desolate landscape of Tule Lake. He presented the painting to his friends Sanae and Kiyoshi Akashi. Sanae, who had immigrated to America because he was drawn to the ideals of democracy, chose to be repatriated to Japan with his family to protest the violation of their civil rights.

George Tamura

Interned at Tule Lake, California
paintings of camp
paper, watercolor paint
Collection of the National Japanese American Historical Society

Tamura was fifteen years old when he painted these watercolor scenes of Tule Lake on the back of a discarded Army evacuation notice. Years later, he said he was not trying to make an ironic statement, but just looking for something to draw on because materials of any kind, even pieces of paper, were hard to get in camp. He explained the absence of people in his pictures: "I felt that this was simply no place for people to be living."

Kango Takamura

Interned at Manzanar, California
painting of Children's Village at Manzanar
paper, watercolor paint
Collection of Lillian I. Matsumoto

The mandatory evacuation order on the West Coast included anyone and everyone of Japanese ancestry, including children housed in orphanages and foster-care homes. The orphans, the youngest of whom was three months old, were sent to Manzanar and housed in an area called "Children's Village." Matsumoto and her husband were appointed caretakers. To make the surroundings more cheerful for these wards, internees at Manzanar built them a park and also closed off the bottoms of the barracks so the children could not crawl under them and risk being bitten by scorpions.

Takamura was a photo retoucher for RKO Studios in Hollywood before the war. He was arrested by the FBI and sent to the Santa Fe Detention Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico, before being allowed to join his family at Manzanar. At Santa Fe, Takamura served as a sign maker, and at Manzanar, he helped to create a small museum. He produced seventy-seven watercolor paintings during his incarceration. After the war, he returned to RKO, where he worked for twenty-five more years until his retirement.

Tadao Takiuchi

Interned at the Tanforan Assembly Center
Tanforan Racetrack, infield barracks
paper, graphite
Collection of the National Japanese American Historical Society

As with so many of the artist internees, nothing is known about Takiuchi. Many practiced their art only in the camps, and after their release, they returned to their jobs as farmers, shopkeepers, fishermen, gardeners, and homemakers. The hardship of trying to get back on their feet after the war left no time for artistic activities.

No one was allowed to take a camera into the assembly center, so sketches by Takiuchi and others provide the only visual documentation of camp life. The camera rule was relaxed in the relocation camps. Family pictures from the first months of incarceration are virtually nonexistent.

Artist Unidentified

Interned at Manzanar, California
landscape scene with Manzanar Camp in background
paper, watercolor paint
Collection of Lillian I. Matsumoto

Although this watercolor bears the artist's mark, it is believed to be a pseudonym. Interestingly, the artist painted the scene from outside of Manzanar, only faintly showing the camp (center left) and Mount Williamson, the second highest peak in California.

Charles Erabu "Suiko" Mikami

Interned at Topaz, Utah
painting of Topaz
paper, graphite, watercolor paint
Collection of the National Japanese American Historical Archives

Mikami studied traditional brush painting, or *sumi-e*, in Japan before immigrating to Seattle in 1919. While interned in Tule Lake and later in Topaz, he painted the camp landscapes. A characteristic of many of the finished paintings made in the camps is the absence of human activity. The artists repeatedly painted their physical surroundings, but they presented people, if at all, as insignificant, faceless figures. Only rough sketchbook drawings, usually done in pencil, crayon, or ink, depict scenes of daily camp life. Many drawings were treated in a humorous, cartoonlike manner, since internees feared that expressing a more serious point of view would incite officials at the War Relocation Authority.

George Matsusaburo Hibi

Interned at Topaz, Utah
Topaz in winter
canvas, oil paint
Collection of the Japanese American Museum of San José

George and Hisako Hibi, who met while studying at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco, were established artists before they entered camp. Their work had appeared in exhibitions before the war. Both were inspired by the works of late nineteenth-century Western painters.

Chiura Obata

Interned at Tanforan Assembly Center, Topaz, Utah
internment sketches
paper, ink
Private Collection

An art professor at the University of California, Berkeley, Obata was largely responsible for starting an arts program for internees who were forcibly evacuated from the San Francisco Bay Area. With supplies and materials donated by friends on the outside, Obata opened Tanforan Art School in a mess hall at the assembly center located at Tanforan racetrack in San Bruno. He recruited other professional artists interned at Tanforan to serve as instructors. In addition to teaching art to fellow internees, Obata kept a visual diary, sketching scenes of the evacuation and internment. Since evacuees were initially not allowed to have cameras, Obata's sketches, as well as those by other internees, provide a rare glimpse of daily life in the camps.

- 1) Obata's assigned evacuation point was the First Congregational Church in Berkeley.
- 2) At Tanforan Assembly Center, which a week earlier was a racetrack, a blind man struggles through the rain to find his new horse-stable home.
- 3) On the train ride from Tanforan to Topaz Relocation Center, Obata's wife, Haruko, is shown knitting a pair of socks.

4) An incident seared into the memory of Topaz internees was the shooting of an old man who was trying to capture a stray dog. Profoundly deaf, the man could not hear the sentry's warning to halt when he walked too near the fenced perimeter and was shot to death.

5) Dust storms were so fierce in the desert that sand would come through sealed gum-paper windows and every crevice of the barracks. Former internees recall that when they awoke in the morning, the only part of the bed not covered with dust was where they had rested their heads.

Yukiharu "Pete" Sazaki

Interned at Tule Lake, California

doves

silk fabric, watercolor paint

Collection of Haruo Sazaki and Family

Sazaki, who was born in Lincoln, California, in 1917, took art classes in high school before the war. He used to paint backdrops and scenery for community *shibai*, or cultural shows, in the Japanese American community in the Penryn and Lincoln area. After the war, he continued organizing shibai in Sacramento. For this painting, he remembers that a camp internee gave him a piece of silk from her belongings.

Fuji Nakamizo

Interned at Topaz, Utah

etching of eagle with airplanes

paper, ink

Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Donald T. Nakahata

Paintings and etchings by Nakamizo can still be found at art auctions, but little is known about him except that he was born in 1889 and died in 1950. During the Great Depression, he was employed under the federal Public Works of Art Project.

S. Kawamoto

Interned at the Santa Fe Detention Center, New Mexico

painting of the center

natural wood slab, wedge of old fence post, paint

Collection of Mary Tsuyuka Nakagawa

One of the three thousand Japanese immigrants arrested by the FBI in a mass roundup of so-called "enemy aliens," Kawamoto was imprisoned at the detention camp in Santa Fe, which operated under the provisions of the Geneva Conventions.

Akira Oye

Interned at Rohwer, Arkansas

bear

pine, shellac

Collection of Ron and Michiko Oye and Family

A farmer in Lodi, California, before and after the war, Oye, while interned at Rohwer, carved the figures of many familiar animals and birds. After the camps closed, he never carved again.

William Shiro Hoshiyama

Interned at Topaz, Utah
Scottie dogs
scrap wood, shellac, ink
Collection of the William and Lynne Hoshiyama Family

Carving was a popular way to pass the time for most men in camp. All it required was a pocketknife and whatever bit of wood one could find. In Topaz, Hoshiyama carved a set of Scottie dogs, the smallest of which is just one-half-inch high.

Seitaro Sasaki

Interned at Rohwer, Arkansas
elephant
scrap wood, nails
Collection of Bob and Rose Sasaki

Sasaki, the grandfather of Delphine Hirasuna (the exhibition's curator), was like many other Japanese immigrants to America. He emigrated from Hiroshima around 1904 and became a farmer in California's San Joaquin Valley, raising grapes and plums. In 1914, he sent for a picture bride with whom he had seven children. Except for a brief visit to Japan in 1920, he never returned. The only photograph of Sasaki taken in camp shows him whittling while sitting in a chair that he had made. Four out of six of his sons were inducted into the U.S. Army from the camps, along with his son-in-law (Hirasuna's father).

Tsunejiro Tanaka

Interned at Poston, Arizona
samurai
ironwood
Collection of the National Japanese American Historical Society

Tanaka owned and operated a fruit stand and store in the early 1920s in San Luis Obispo, California. He was arrested in 1942 by the FBI for being president of a Japanese American social organization. In camp, Tanaka and his friends were called *yama arashi*, or "scourers of the desert," because they carried gallons of water, axes, and saws while walking miles in the hot desert cutting and carrying back ironwood to carve. Tanaka's son served in the U.S. Army's Military Intelligence Service in the Pacific Theater during the war.

Harry Yoshio Tsuruda

Interned at Amache, Colorado
mountain climbers
birch branch
Japanese American Archival Collection,
Library, California State University, Sacramento

One of the more prolific artists in camp, Tsuruda created both wood carvings and landscape paintings in oils.

Jitsuro Hiramoto

Interned at the Santa Fe Detention Center, New Mexico
cranes
mesquite, scrap lumber
Collection of Edward Hiramoto and Family

Hiramoto, a farmer in Lodi, California, was fifty-five-years old when he was arrested by the FBI the day after Pearl Harbor and sent to the Santa Fe Detention Center. He was later transferred to Rohwer, Arkansas, to join his family. Other than telling his wife that the Santa Fe experience was "pretty bad," he never spoke of his time there. During the war, his son served overseas in the U.S. Army.

Takizo Obata

Interned at Poston, Arizona
snake, lion, bird of prey
mesquite, ironwood, wire, nails
Collection of Takashi Obata and Family

Obata carved the head and tail rattle on a mesquite branch, rescued from the firewood pile, to help the viewer appreciate that the natural form of the branch resembled the pose of a rattlesnake.

Arao Matsuhira

Interned at Rohwer, Arkansas
birds
cypress wood
Collection of Frank and Shigeko Matsuhira

Matsuhira removed the outer surface of this *kobu* (natural-form cypress knee) to reveal its smooth inner grain, then carved a mother bird feeding her young. In Rohwer and Jerome, located in the swamp forests of Arkansas, *kobu* hunting was a popular pastime, especially among men sent into the forest to harvest firewood. The snake-infested swamps made *kobu* hunting as much a “macho” sport as an artistic endeavor.

Shigeo Naito

Interned at Poston, Arizona
sculptures
ironwood, metal, thread
Collection of the Naito Family

Naito was a farmer in California’s Central Valley before and after the war. Since all able-bodied adults were expected to work to sustain the camp, he served as a construction foreman in Poston III. During his off hours, he took up carving the indigenous ironwood and mesquite found in the desert. First he would rough out a form with a knife, then use broken glass like sandpaper to smooth out the surface. Favorite themes for his carvings were Japanese folklore characters. When he was in his late seventies, Naito decided to divide the carvings he made in camp among his eight children. Many have since been passed on to his grandchildren, who kindly agreed to lend them for this exhibition and sent them from their homes across the United States.

Homei Iseyama

Interned at Topaz, Utah
inkwells, teapots, cups, candy dish, covered bowl, bonsai notebook
slate, paper, graphite
Collections of Carolyn Holden, Aiko Iseyama and Family,
and Homei Iseyama and Family

While imprisoned at Topaz, Iseyama carved a number of exquisite teapots, teacups, candy dishes, and calligraphy inkwells, or *suzuri*, out of the slate stones found in the area. After first chipping out a rough form in the rock slab, he carved, sanded, and polished the shape and design. A self-taught artist, Iseyama attended Waseda University in Tokyo before coming to America in 1914 with the hope of attending art school. He was forced instead to seek full-time employment as a gardener to survive. At Topaz, in addition to making slate carvings, he demonstrated his artistic range through watercolor paintings and *tanka* poems. A landscape gardener in Oakland, California, before and after the war, Iseyama was also a widely respected bonsai master. While in Topaz, he continued to hone his skill by sketching ideas that he copiously annotated with notes.

Tani Furuhata

Interned at Topaz, Utah

dolls

kimono fabric, crepe paper, wire, embroidery thread, ink, wood

Collection of Gail Hoshiyama Nanbu

Collection of the William and Lynne Hoshiyama Family

Many camps had doll-making classes informally taught by internees familiar with the art form. The doll garments were made from pieces of kimono fabric donated by various internees. The hair was made from either crepe paper or embroidery thread. Furuhata, who had been a midwife before evacuation, created more than a dozen dolls. Each figure is different in pose and apparel to reflect its status in Japanese society.

Kinoe Adachi

Interned at Topaz, Utah

samurai

shells, paint, wood, glue, bottle cap

Collection of Dennis Katayama and Family

Before the war, Adachi and her husband owned a Chinese restaurant in Oakland, which they lost during the internment. A creative person, she had always sewn clothes and made quilts. This exquisite samurai is one of the shell pieces she made at Topaz. When she left camp, she took her jars of sorted shells with her. She and her husband bought a home in Berkeley upon their return, where she took care of him after he suffered a stroke.

Tomitaro Sano

Interned at Gila River, Arizona

sword with scabbard and dagger

wood, paint, thread

Collection of Georgia Yokota Sano and Family

Descended from a samurai family, Sano owned a small grocery store in Fresno before being sent to camp. At Gila, he made two ceremonial samurai swords and gave one to each of his sons.

Artist Unidentified

Interned at Rohwer, Arkansas

bouquets

pipe cleaners, glass mayonnaise jars

Collection of Mrs. Ui Sagara and Family

Anyone with a skill was talked into teaching other internees. Craft supplies were often ordered by mail from Sears Roebuck. The mess hall had a run on commercial-size mayonnaise jars, which were perfect for keeping pipe-cleaner floral arrangements from getting crushed and dirty.

Ochiyo Omori

Interned at Heart Mountain, Wyoming

landscape

cloth, embroidery floss

Collection of the Japanese American Museum of San José

The internees at the camp at Heart Mountain developed a reputation for their fine embroidery, partly due to the presence of Mr. Nagahama, a master of this traditional Japanese art form who was seventy-five years old when he was forced into a camp. His skill captured the imagination of fellow internees, including Omori. At one point, Nagahama had more than 650 needlework students.

Artist Unidentified

Interned at Heart Mountain, Wyoming
camp scene
wood, paint

Collection of the Japanese American Museum of San José

Tar-paper-covered barracks that stood in the shadow of the limestone-capped Heart Mountain in northern Wyoming are depicted in bas relief by an unknown artist.

Jyokichi Kitagawa

Interned at Rohwer, Arkansas
parrots
scrap wood, paint

Collection of Fumiye Kitagawa Iwamura

Like so many objects in this exhibition, these carved pieces were stored in the rafters of a garage and forgotten until the publication of the book *The Art of Gaman* prompted the owner to remember the things she had that were made in camp.

Kameichi Yamaichi

Interned at Heart Mountain, Wyoming
Noh masks
scrap wood, shellac

Collection of the Japanese American Museum of San José

Yamaichi made his own tools to carve the classical Noh mask panel. By heating worn triangular files in the coal-burning potbellied stove in his barrack quarters, he was able to pound out the metal to form a chisel. Then, he used a stone to sharpen it.

The Rev. Tameichi Okimoto

Santa Anita Assembly Center
Interned at Poston, Arizona
plaque with map of Santa Anita
wood, ink

Collection of the Okimoto Family

The Okimoto family was first evacuated to an assembly center at the Santa Anita Racetrack, where the Rev. Okimoto drew this map of the camp layout on the back of a plaque he had carved with the Hebrew saying “kadosh Adonai,” roughly translated as “holy to God.” The plaque hung over Okimoto’s office desk the rest of his life. He may have learned Hebrew at the Oriental Missionary Society Bible College in Tokyo, where he graduated in 1933, or he may have been self-taught. He was pastor at the San Diego Holiness Church from 1937--42. After the war, he was transferred to the San Lorenzo Holiness Church and later served the San Fernando Church. He was killed in an auto accident in 1969, so the full story of the plaque will never be known.

Ann Chizuko Yokota

Interned at Poston, Arizona
embroidered linen towel
cloth, embroidery floss
Collection of Georgia Yokota Sano and Family

Residents of Block 317 at Poston III, along with some visitors, signed this cloth, which Yokota embroidered to commemorate the camp experience. Even her four-year-old daughter, Georgia Ann, embroidered her name onto the cloth.

Kumekichi Taniguchi

Interned at Amache, Colorado

picture frame

scrap wood, shellac

Collection of Howard Taniguchi

Common objects like picture frames were not easy to obtain in camp, so Taniguchi crafted his own, personalizing it for the special photograph it would hold.

Jimmy Tsutomu Mirikitani

Interned at Tule Lake, California

painting of Tule Lake (around 1945)

paper, paint

Collection of Hiroshi Sakai Estate and Family

Mirikitani, whose remarkable story is told in the 2006 film *The Cats of Mirikitani*, was born in Sacramento in 1920. After studying art in Hiroshima, Japan, in his teens, he returned to the United States only to be incarcerated at the Tule Lake internment camp. While there, he continued to work at his art. Sakai purchased this painting from the artist as a remembrance of the camp experience. Mirikitani was able to leave Tule Lake by volunteering to work at the Bird's Eye plant in Seabrook, New Jersey. Eventually he made his way to New York, where by 2000 he was living on the streets of Soho, spending his daytime hours drawing scenes of the internment camps, the bombing of Hiroshima, and cats. A filmmaker neighbor, Linda Hattendorf, befriended him and documented the progress of his life from just before 9/11 through the challenging aftermath, his poignant reunion with a long-lost sister, and his pilgrimage to Tule Lake.

Kametaro Matsumoto

Interned at Minidoka (Hunt), Idaho

puzzle

wood, paint, lacquer

Collection of Alice Ando and Jean Matsumoto

Assigned to tend the boiler while interned at Minidoka, Matsumoto amused himself by whittling and carving things for his children. Using scrap wood, he carved this puzzle and hand-painted the blocks. The object of the game was to move the blocks without lifting them so that the "fair maiden" could escape the protective attention of her parents and servants and meet her four eager suitors.

Ruth Asawa

Interned at Rohwer, Arkansas

The Bayou (1942)

paper, watercolor

Collection of the Asawa/Lanier Family

Famed sculptor Asawa was a teenager when she was put in camp with her family. While interned at the assembly center at Santa Anita Racetrack, she liked to sit in the bleachers and watch internees who had once worked as illustrators for the Disney Studios practice drawing. This experience sparked her interest in art. After she was transferred to the camp at Rohwer, located in the forested swamps of Arkansas, Asawa took an art class and painted this watercolor. Years later, Mrs. Jameson, her art teacher in camp, sent the painting back to her.

Various Artists

Interned at Minidoka (Hunt), Idaho
Prints of Hunt (forty-two linocut prints)
paper, ink
Collection of Ruth Komachi Muramatsu

In a high school freshman art class taught by internee Fumi Haraguchi at Minidoka, students were encouraged to draw scenes of daily life in the camp and turn them into linoleum-cut prints. The block prints were bound into an album titled *Prints of Hunt*. Hunt was the town in south-central Idaho, nearest to the Minidoka camp.

Artist Unidentified

Interned at Minidoka (Hunt), Idaho
calligraphy with illustration
paper, ink, watercolor paint
Ryo Tsai Collection, Wing Luke Asian Museum

In addition to visual arts and crafts, internees formed poetry clubs, acting troupes, musical groups, and teams for every kind of sport. The *Issei* (first-generation immigrants from Japan) practiced Japanese styles of poetry, including *haiku*, *senryu*, and *tanka*. The poems were brushed onto paper or cardboard strips called *tanzaku* and illustrated by either the poet or someone skilled in drawing. This senryu poem, signed by a person named Chari, was done in calligraphy on a strip of paper. The poem reads: "Simply holding fast to pride of blood, I wait for tomorrow."

Mine Okubo

Interned at Topaz, Utah
Waiting in Line
paper, ink
Courtesy of Hajime and Judy Hamaguchi

Okubo received her AB and MA degrees in art at the University of California, Berkeley, then went to Switzerland on an art fellowship. When the war broke out in Europe, she returned to California and got a job designing a mosaic in Oakland under the Federal Art Project. After the evacuation orders were issued, Okubo began keeping a graphic diary, chronicling her life in camp. Her sketches and observations were published in the book *Citizen 13660* (her camp ID number). Although this drawing does not appear in Okubo's book, it is consistent with the other drawings in it. While in camp, Okubo taught art to internees and served as art director for the internee-produced magazine, *Trek*. A copy of *Trek* came to the attention of art editors at *Fortune* magazine and they managed to secure her release so she could move to New York to work for the publication. She continued to paint and draw prolifically for the rest of her life.

Umakichi Asawa

Interned at Santa Fe Detention Camp, Santa Fe, New Mexico
carved box (1943)
scrap wood, paint
Collection of Asawa/Lanier Family

The father of sculptor Ruth Asawa, Umakichi Asawa was among the hundreds of *Issei* men (first-generation immigrants from Japan) who were rounded up after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and sent to camps run by the Justice Department. There they were held without being charged with a crime and without right of personal attorney. Asawa probably made the list because he was a community leader, Japanese language teacher, and a highly successful farmer. His daughter remembers that he was arrested on April 1, 1942, which was his birthday as well as his wife's. The family didn't know where he was taken for months. Finally, they received a letter from him. He was allowed to join his family at the Rohwer, Arkansas, camp a year later. By then Ruth had received permission to leave the camp to attend a teacher's college in Wisconsin. While there, she received a carved box from him (lid shown here), inscribed on the back: "For Ruth Asawa from Daddy."

Sachiko Kawasaki

Interned at Topaz, Utah

dolls

old kimono material, thread, pipe cleaners, toilet paper, ink, scrap wood

Collections of Virginia Suzuki and Richard Kawasaki

The types of arts and crafts taught in the camps often depended on the presence of an internee skilled enough to offer lessons. Topaz had an active doll-making class with women volunteering their old kimono fabric to dress the dolls. Kawasaki, who made these dolls along with a half-dozen others, was in a class taught by Sho Tabata, from San Mateo, California.

Isamu Noguchi

Interned at Poston, Arizona

bust of Ginger Rogers (1942)

pink Georgia marble

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Conserved with funds from the Smithsonian Women's Committee

Noguchi, whose mother was an Irish American writer and father a famous Japanese poet, was already a renowned sculptor living in New York when the war broke out between the United States and Imperial Japan. Identifying himself as a *Nisei*, or a second-generation Japanese born in the United States, he worked to counteract the bigoted hysteria of the time by forming the group "Nisei Artists and Writers for Democracy." He went to Washington, D.C., to lobby on behalf of his fellow Japanese Americans and there was persuaded he could best serve by voluntarily entering the camp at Poston, located on Indian reservation land in Arizona, and organizing a craft guild to perpetuate the arts. He was told that he could leave at any time, since his permanent residence was outside the evacuation zone. He found the harsh conditions unbearable and was viewed with suspicion by other internees. His repeated requests to leave, however, were turned down by authorities, and he was treated like any other prisoner. During his stay at Poston, he completed this bust of actress Ginger Rogers, who posed for the portrait in 1941.

Gentaro and Shinzaburo Nishiura

Interned at Heart Mountain, Wyoming

butsudan

wood, metal, glue

Collection of Shinzui and Naomi Sanada

The Nishiura brothers were born near Nara, Japan, in the shadow of the ancient temples, and learned traditional carpentry skills from their father. The Nishiuras immigrated to Hawaii in the early 1900s and worked briefly in the shipbuilding industry before moving to northern California, where they devoted their lives to constructing buildings for the Japanese American community of Santa Clara County. At the time of the evacuation in 1942, the brothers were forced to give away or sell their Japanese woodworking tools and discontinue their business. But even after being interned at Heart Mountain, they found a way to create beautiful wooden *butsudan*—Buddhist altars—so that camp families could continue their religious practices.

Artist Unidentified

Interned at Rohwer, Arkansas

shamisen

wood, wool yarn

Gift of Hamayo Tamaki, Japanese American National Museum (99.139.1--.2)

An unidentified artist in Rohwer crafted this *shamisen*, a three-stringed Japanese musical instrument played with a pick. Familiar with its tonal qualities, the craftsman managed to locate pure-grain lumber with no knots for high-stress areas and the sounding board. For the bridge bone, however, he used pink crochet yarn.

Sadayuki Uno

Interned at Jerome, Arkansas

World War II leaders

pine

Gift of Hisae Uno, Japanese American National Museum (2000.15.1)

Before the war, Uno studied at California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, California, then moved to Chicago and later New York to study photography and cinematography. He returned to California when his father took ill and worked as an interior decorator. In camp, Uno took up carving. Working with a sharpened butter knife, he carved caricatures of Benito Mussolini, Josef Stalin, Adolph Hitler, and Winston Churchill out of scrap pine. After the war, he returned to Oakland and worked as a gardener and was active in *shigin*, a form of spoken poetry.

Henry Sugimoto

Interned at Jerome, Arkansas

Mother in Jerome Camp (1943)

oil paint, canvas

Gift of Madeleine Sugimoto and Naomi Tagawa,

Japanese American National Museum (92.97.7)

Henry Sugimoto studied art at the University of California, Berkeley, and California College of Arts and Crafts. By the time of the evacuation, his paintings had been exhibited in Europe, Japan, and the United States. In camp, Sugimoto taught art and continued to paint. The portrait of his mother, surrounded by patriotic symbols of victory, communicates her concern for her son, Ralph, who was serving with the Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team overseas.

Photographic Reproductions**Tom Parker**

Artist at Work

1942

Courtesy of the National Archives

The resident artist attracted an audience as he completed a watercolor of the landscape near the Granada War Relocation Authority Center in Amache, Colorado.

Dorothea Lange

Manzanar Art School

1942

Courtesy of the National Archives

A recreation hall at the Manzanar War Relocation Authority Center in Manzanar, California, doubled as an art school. Instruction was given in oil and watercolor, life drawing and sketching, lettering, poster making, and fashion drawing.

Ansel Adams

The Gardens of the Camps

1943

Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

The gardens and pool were built by internees at the Manzanar War Relocation Authority Center in Manzanar, California, for the orphaned children who were incarcerated there.

Dorothea Lange

Dust Storm at Manzanar War Relocation Authority Center, Manzanar, California

1942

Courtesy of the National Archives

Dorothea Lange was one of a few photographers hired by the War Relocation Authority to record the evacuation and internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Ansel Adams

Leaving Manzanar War Relocation Authority Center, Manzanar, California

1943

Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

If internees could find a sponsor, such as an employer, friend, or school, they could leave the relocation center for points east. They were not allowed to return to the West Coast, their home, until the ban was lifted in December 1944.

American Flag Assemblage

This original art piece was designed by Kit Hinrichs. The origami cranes were folded and assembled by Linda Tomoko Mihara, one of the world's foremost origami artists.

About *Voices Long Silent*

BANNER LABELS:

Some internment documents of Yukino Ezaki and other members of the Ezaki family. Photo by Terry Heffernan from the book *The Art of Gaman*.

A handmade cigarette case rests on top of a desk made at the Tule Lake Camp. Sadaki Taniguchi made the keyhole-style desk as a wedding present for George and Martha Tanaka. He took apart a barrack partition wall to use as lumber and embellished the top with an inlaid design.

Sadaichi Sasaki made this small chest of drawers from scrap oak wood found around the camp at Rohwer, Arkansas.

Mr. Fujimoto painted this figure of a Japanese girl on a smooth rock found on the grounds of the Fort Missoula Detention Center in Montana. Fujimoto was later released to join his family in the camp at Heart Mountain, Wyoming.

Eizuchi Tsujikawa made this wallet at the Tule Lake camp. The check for thirty-two cents was issued to an internee by the Work Projects Administration Evacuation of Restricted Areas. It represented pay for one day's work.

Creating pictures by burning them into wood has been a popular craft for many decades. In the camp at Rohwer, Arkansas, Arao Matsuhiro made these by drawing sketches on pieces of scrap lumber and going over the lines with a red-hot stylus. Sadly, most of the pieces seen here were destroyed in a recent fire.

This slate *suzuri* (a receptacle for *sumi*, or ink) is one of many made by Homei Iseyama while interned at the Topaz, Utah, camp.