

NOR CAL NEWS

‘Shadows from the Past: Sansei Artists and the American Concentration Camps’

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STOCKTON — LH Horton Jr. Gallery at San Joaquin Delta College presents “Shadows from the Past: Sansei Artists and the American Concentration Camps,” opening with an online exhibition at <http://gallery.deltacollege.edu> on Thursday, Jan. 21, and an opening reception to meet the artists at 5:30 p.m. PST. Participate online via Zoom: <https://www.deltacollege.edu/event/shadows-past-sansei-artists-and-american-concentration-camps-opening-reception->

The exhibition presents the work of eight nationally recognized Sansei artists whose work reflects their mutual Japanese American history and the racial injustice of their families’ incarceration during WWII in the American concentration camps. These Sansei are now the last generation to hear the stories of those incarcerated first-hand.

To bring this online exhibition to life, Gail Enns, curator of the exhibition and director of Celadon Arts in Monterey, has worked with these artists to include a variety of genres and mediums including painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, assemblage, and fiber arts.

“They demonstrate how contemporary artists have managed their challenging cultural, historical and political place in America,” states Enns. “Each artist uniquely contributes something vital to the collective memory and struggles of the Japanese American people and culture as the events of nearly 80 years ago continue to impact their lives today.”

The exhibition was originated by the Monterey Museum of Art and Celadon Arts in cooperation with the LH Horton Jr. Gallery, and will be presented by the Monterey Museum of Art in September 2021. The exhibition for the Horton Gallery is partially sponsored by the Japanese American Citizens League of Stockton, Delta College Cultural Awareness Program, and the Delta College Asian and Pacific Islander American Staff Association.

Virtual Events:

On Jan. 28 at 1:30 p.m. PST, artist Tom Nakashima will take us on a virtual walking tour through his awesome art studio in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, where we will view his paintings, drawings, and prints. He will discuss the contextual themes of his iconic images of sanctuary, cage, and portrait and how they relate to the general theme of incarceration. Of special interest is his piece made specifically for this exhibition, “Tule Lake Requiem: For Ted Nakashima,” a Japanese folding screen book art, limited edition of 30.

On Feb. 4 at 1:30 p.m. PST, artist Lydia Nakashima Degarrod will discuss the process of paper-making used in her work. We will see how she merges the fibers from the herb yerba, known for its healing qualities in Latin America, and mulberry fibers used in Japan for traditional paper-making. She will also demonstrate the process of photographic transfer, as seen in her piece titled “Mending the Past.”

Exhibiting Artists

Lydia Nakashima Degarrod — “I am a Chilean/Japanese artist whose grandparents migrated to South America at the dawn of World War II where they encountered both hospitality and hostility, the effects of the war, and the clash of disparate cultures in the pursuit of their dreams and escaping danger. My work in the exhibition honors the resilient presence of Japanese people in Latin America by combining some of the traditional crafts of these cultures, paper-making, the use of healing plants, and mending stitching, with the purpose of healing some of their wounds.”

Reiko Fujii — “My art is based on my life experiences, with an emphasis on an ongoing inquiry into my Japanese American roots. Working with my family’s experiences in WWII American concentration camps, along with my mother’s memories of growing up on a chicken farm in Riverside, Calif. and my father’s stories from his years of early education in Esumi, Japan, have given me a clearer understanding of my Japanese American heritage. By creating installations that include family artifacts, objects I make, and videos I produce, I reframe my memories and family stories, viewing them in the context of American history.”

Lucien Kubo — “I am a third-generation Japanese American – a Sansei. An important part of my life experience is that of my parents, their family and community of Japanese Americans who were incarcerated in concentration camps during WWII. The stories of the Japanese diaspora to this country, displacement, incarceration and community have been a common theme in most of my assemblages. One of the pieces in this exhibition, ‘Never Again is Now,’ 2019, brings my family history into the present as I layered images of the American concentration camps and Angel Island Detention Center with those dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, attacks on people of color, detention centers separating families and attacks on DACA, the Muslim ban while promoting white supremacy. I like to think that my art is a part of a collective Asian voice, a vision of change in a world with compassion, equality and peace.”

Wendy Maruyama — “In recent years, I have transitioned from the making of traditional craft objects into the realm of social justice with a focus on Japanese incarceration. I am a Sansei – my grandparents immigrated to the United States from Japan in the late 1800s. My mother’s family settled in Terminal Island, Calif., where my grandfather owned a fishing boat and was forced to move after President Roosevelt issued the

Executive Order 9066 on Feb. 19, 1942, which authorized the evacuation of all persons deemed a threat to national security from the West Coast to relocation centers further inland. However, instead of going into a camp, they chose to ‘self-evacuate’ — I often refer to people who made this decision as ‘invisible incarcerated’ in that they suffered a different set of circumstances and discrimination on the ‘outside.’”

Tom Nakashima — “I was born to a Nisei father and Canadian mother of Irish and German Jewish ancestry and grew up in Dubuque, Iowa. Because my father was a surgeon and drafted into the U.S. Medical Corps just before WWII, my immediate family was sent to a U.S. Army base, Camp Chaffee, Ark., where my father was stationed. My extended family went to the Minidoka or Tule Lake American concentration camps. Even though I am of mixed ancestry, I have always considered myself ethnically Japanese. People see me as Japanese and when I glance into a mirror, I also see someone who looks quite Japanese. I have come to realize that many of my iconic images used throughout my work are related to my extended family’s incarceration.”

Na Omi Judy Shintani — “I explore my identity as an artist, Japanese American, daughter, and woman, by focusing on the history of the American concentration camps. As a descendant of a family who endured the trauma of incarceration, my art is my process of transforming, healing, and journeying on my path. Each art piece was created with a healing intention – for my family, my ancestors, my culture, America and me. My work creates space for learning, understanding, and questioning about a historical injustice and brings to light memories, repressed emotions, and current feelings about this.”

Masako Takahashi — “I never forget that I was born in a concentration camp — in the USA, for being of Japanese ancestry. My personal experiences are filtered through the making of artwork. The kimono installation, ‘Generations,’ is in honor of my parents and their courageous endurance. Each of us has much to owe the folks who’ve gone before. I prefer my work to be at once personal and at the same time universal, that is, meaningful to another. So rather than be more documentary about my camp considerations, I try to be more abstract in execution.”

Jerry Takigawa — “My photographic series, ‘Balancing Cultures,’ highlights the racism deeply woven into the fabric of our society. A recent discovery of family photographs compelled me to express the shame and loss suffered by my family in the WWII American concentration camps. These images add humanity to the historical record – facts require testimony to be remembered. I seek to give voice to what I believe were feelings my family suppressed; reminding us that hysteria, racism, and economic exploitation are still a force in our country today. The camps designed to assuage these reactions became a shadow legacy for an entire Japanese American community. Silence sanctions — documentation is resistance.”

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