Miné Okubo Collection

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Miné Okubo Collection

Dates: ca. 1930-2001

Collection Number: Consult repository

Creator/Collector: Okubo, Miné, 1912-2001

Extent: 50 linear ft.

Online items available [http://library.rcc.edu/riverside/okubo/](http://library.rcc.edu/riverside/okubo/)

Repository: The Center for Social Justice and Civil Liberties

Riverside, California 92501

Abstract: Correspondence, articles, clippings, photographs, published materials, business and financial records, paintings, collages, and drawings created and collected by artist Miné Okubo (1912-2001), with the bulk dating from the immediate postwar period to the 1970s.

Language of Material: English

Access

Collection stored at the Center for Social Justice and Civil Liberties. Advance notice required for access.

Preferred Citation

Miné Okubo Collection. The Center for Social Justice and Civil Liberties

Acquisition Information

Bequest from the Miné Okubo Estate, 2008.

Biography/Administrative History

Miné Okubo was a Japanese American artist, writer, and social activist whose depiction of life in American internment camps during World War II gave a voice to more than 120,000 Japanese American internees. Her book, CITIZEN 13660, published in 1946, was the first account of the wartime Japanese American relocation and confinement experience, and is regarded as a landmark work that still resonates with Americans. Miné Okubo was born in Riverside, California, on June 27, 1912, to immigrant Japanese parents. She attended Riverside Junior College (now Riverside City College), and subsequently obtained a bachelor’s degree in fine arts as well as a master’s degree from the University of California, Berkeley. She won a fellowship in 1938 to study art in Europe, and returned to the United States just before the outbreak of World War II. She was employed doing public art projects through the federal WPA in the San Francisco area, and worked with Mexican muralist Diego Rivera for the Golden Gate International Exposition on Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay. She was working on a mural when war with Japan was declared. She and her brother Toku were incarcerated briefly at Tanforan Relocation Camp, and subsequently transferred to the Central Utah Relocation Camp in Topaz, Utah. While in the camp, Miné Okubo taught art and did numerous pen and ink drawings depicting life in the relocation center, which later provided the material for CITIZEN 13660. She entered a magazine contest with a drawing of a camp guard, and FORTUNE magazine, recognizing her talent, offered her a job in New York that led to her release from the camp. With some help, she found an apartment in Greenwich Village where she would live for the next 50 years, vigorously participating in the New York art scene and creating works of art that were exhibited from Boston to Tokyo. Okubo died in 2001.

Scope and Content of Collection

This collection is believed to be the most extensive repository of Miné Okubo’s papers and art work in a single location. According to some scholars, it may represent one of the most significant Japanese American art and archival collections in the country, and possibly comprises the largest and most complete body of materials illustrating mid-century Japanese American history spanning the prewar, wartime, and postwar periods. The collection includes an extensive amount of correspondence, business and financial records, articles, clippings, published materials, photographs, paintings, and miscellaneous memorabilia and artifacts gathered from Miné Okubo’s Greenwich Village apartment. The materials range in date from the 1930’s to her death in 2001, with the bulk dating from the immediate postwar period to the 1970s. A large portion of the collection consists of Miné Okubo’s paintings and sketches, (over 2,000 pieces), which she collected over her lifetime and which have never been exhibited.

Indexing Terms

Women authors, Asian American--Archival resources
Artists, Japanese American--Pictorial works
Authors, American--California--20th century--Archival resources
Okubo, Miné, 1912-2001
Riverside (Calif.)
Tanforan Assembly Center (San Bruno, Calif.)
Topaz (Utah)
Greenwich Village (New York, N.Y.)
Clippings
Collages (visual works)
Drawings
Letters
Paintings
Photographs
**CITIZEN 13660**
Artists--California--20th century--Archival resources

[Okubo Collection Finding Aid]