Finding aid for the Miné Okubo Collection

Collection number: 2007.62

Japanese American National Museum
Los Angeles, California

Processed by:
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Date Completed:
June 2016
Encoded by:
Lauren Zuchowski Longwell

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Miné Okubo collection
Dates: 1938-1998
Bulk Dates: 1942-1946
Collection number: 2007.62
Creator: Okubo, Miné
Collection Size: 17 linear feet2 oversize artifacts197 digitized items
Repository: Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, Calif.)
Los Angeles, California 90012

Abstract: The collection contains paper materials related to Miné Okubo’s career and personal life. Many items are related to her book, Citizen 13660.


Access
By appointment only. Please contact the Collections Management and Access Unit by email (collections@janm.org) or telephone (213-830-5615). Advanced notice is required.

Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation

Acquisition Information

Alternative Forms of Material Available

Biography
Miné Okubo was born on June 27, 1912 in Riverside, California to Tametsugu and Miyo (Kato). She was one of seven children, each of whom were encouraged from a young age to explore artistic careers by their mother. Okubo’s mother was an artist and her father was a merchant and gardener. She graduated from Poly High School and then attended Riverside Junior College, eventually earning both her Bachelor of Art and Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of California at Berkeley. In 1938 she received the Bertha Taussig Traveling Scholarship, which allowed her to travel to Europe. Okubo was travelling in Switzerland when England and France declared war on September 3, 1939, with all of her belongings in Paris. She had spent all of her money on train fare from Budapest to Berne and money she was expecting had not yet arrived at the American Express Office. Mail services were suspended and the French border closed. Temporarily stranded, Okubo stayed with friends in Berne but was encouraged to return to the United States as the situation grew worse with the bombing and invasion of Poland. When Okubo received word that her mother was seriously ill back home in California she
decided to secure passage immediately. It ultimately took three months but she was able to board the last boat leaving Bordeaux. After docking in New York City, Okubo telegraphed her family for money and made her way to California. Her mother passed away soon after and she subsequently made her way up to Berkeley to settle with her younger brother. Okubo became active with the San Francisco Art Association (SFAA) and joined its annual painting and watercolor exhibitions at the San Francisco Museum of Art, known today as the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. She was selected to assist Diego Rivera in painting murals at the Golden Gate Exhibition. Okubo created mosaics for Fort Ord and the Servicemen’s Hospitality House in Oakland, California as part of the Federal Arts Program when the United States declared war on Japan. On Sunday, April 26, 1943 she reported to Pilgrim Hall of the First Congregational Church in Berkeley to register herself and her brother as a family unit of two. Her family name was reduced to No. 13660 and she was given several tags bearing the family number. Their family unit was scheduled to leave with the next to last group at 11:30 a.m. on Friday, May 1. Their destination was Tanforan Assembly Center, which was located at the Tanforan Race Track in San Bruno, California. After six months at Tanforan, Okubo and her brother were transferred to the Topaz Relocation Center in Utah. By this point, the Okubo family was spread throughout various concentration camps in the West Coast. Her father had been arrested and incarcerated at the Department of Justice camp in Missoula, Montana. Her older brother, Benji, was at Heart Mountain, where he opened an art school. Other siblings were incarcerated in Poston. Okubo taught art classes while incarcerated at Topaz and helped found a literary review, Trek, for which she drew cover designs and illustrations. Okubo documented the incarceration experience through drawings and produced over one thousand sketches depicting camp life. Some of these sketches would be transformed into formal drawings and paintings. In 1943 Okubo’s drawing of camp sentries was reproduced by the San Francisco Chronicle after it won a prize in an exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Art. The Chronicle’s editors then commissioned a series of camp sketches to use in the newspaper’s Sunday magazine, The World. This exposure led to a job offer from Fortune as an illustrator, a position that allowed her to leave camp after two years and relocate to New York City. During this time Okubo took jobs as a commercial illustrator and focused on her personal creative endeavors, one of which was to arrange her camp life sketches into a narrative to be published. Her book, Citizen 13660, was published by Columbia University Press in September 1946. In addition to the book, Okubo’s work appeared in the Time, Life, and the New York Times as well as books for major publishing companies. She left commercial art and New York briefly from 1950 to 1952 to return to Berkeley to teach art. When Okubo returned to New York she eschewed commercial concerns in pursuit of her own artistic vision. Like many other Nisei artists and writers, she was rediscovered by a new generation of Asian Americans in the 1970s and 1980s as her wartime works were connected with redress efforts. Okubo testified in New York before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians in 1981 and presented Citizen 13660 to the commission. Okubo passed away in February 2001.

Scope and Content of Collection
The collection includes artwork, correspondence, Citizen 13660 mock-ups, press clippings, publications, publicity materials, documents, personal notebooks, and photographs. Materials primarily focus on Miné’s creative and professional endeavors but also includes personal items such as diaries and notes.

Arrangement
Items have been broken down into the following series:
Series 1: Press Clippings; Series 2: Mock-ups; Series 3: Artwork; Series 4: Publications; Series 5: Notes and Lists; Series 6: Documents; Series 7: Correspondence; Series 8: Photographs; Series 9: Publicity Materials; Series 10: Topaz Reunions; Series 11: Personal Notebooks; Series 12: Artifacts.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog.
Tanforan Assembly Center (San Bruno, Calif.)
Central Utah Relocation Center
Berkeley (Calif.)
Riverside (Calif.)
New York (N.Y.)
World war II
Japanese Americans--Civil rights.
Japanese Americans in art.
Japanese Americans--Reparations.

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Citizen 13660

Related Material
Miné Okubo Collection at the Riverside Community College, http://library.rcc.edu/riverside/okubo/.

Separated Material
Over-sized items are stored in separate file drawer or box.

Box 1

Series 1 Press Clippings
Physical Description: 16 folders
Series Scope and Content Summary
Approximately 278 press clippings covering Miné Okubo's career.

Folder 1-3, 15-16
Miscellaneous
Scope and Content Summary
Approximately 35 miscellaneous press clippings.

Folder 4-10
Citizen 13660 ca. 1946
Scope and Content Summary
Approximately 131 clippings related to the 1946 release of Citizen 13660.

Folder 11
Topaz Reunion 1993
Scope and Content Summary
3 press clippings about the 1993 Topaz Reunion.

Folder 12-14
Drawings
Scope and Content Summary
Approximately 108 clippings of Okubo's commercial illustration from various magazines and newspapers.

Box 1

Series 2 Mock-ups
Physical Description: 21 folders
Series Scope and Content Summary
Mock-ups for Amerasia and Citizen 13660.

Folders 16-17
Amerasia 1987
Scope and Content Summary
Access Note
Folder 17 is restricted.

Folders 19-37
Citizen 13660
Scope and Content Summary
Illustrations, draft text, and cover mock-ups for Citizen 13660.
Arrangement
Illustrations and text have been put into order based on the published book.
Box 4  **Citizen 13660 Manuscript**  
Scope and Content Summary  
Original manuscript for Citizen 1360  
Access Note  
Access is restricted due to fragile nature of manuscript.

Box 1  **Series 3 Artwork**  
Physical Description: 43 folders  
Series Scope and Content Summary  
Includes sketches, drawings, paintings, and one print by Okubo.  
Arrangement  
Materials have been arranged by medium and date when applicable. Includes some over-sized materials.

Folders 38-39  **Sketchbooks**  
Scope and Content Summary  
2 sketchbooks covering evacuation.

Box 5 Folder 1  **Over-sized Sketchbooks**  
Scope and Content Summary  
2 large sketchbooks. One covers evacuation and the other life at Topaz.

Box 1 Folders 40-52  **Evacuation Sketches**  
Scope and Content Summary  
Approximately 126 ink and pencil sketches of evacuation.

Folders 53-54  **Camp Sketches**  
Subseries Scope and Content Summary  
4 sketches covering Okubo's experiences at Topaz.  
Access Note  
Folder 53 contains sketch and paper fragments saved by Okubo.

Folders 55-60  **Congressional Hearing Sketches 1986**  
Subseries Scope and Content Summary  
Access Note  
Folder 53 contains sketch and paper fragments saved by Okubo.

Folders 55-60  **Congressional Hearing Sketches 1986**  
Subseries Scope and Content Summary  
Access Note  
Folders 55 and 56 contain fragile works.
Citizen 13660 Drawings
Scope and Content Summary
197 drawings illustrated life in Tanforan Assembly Center in San Bruno, CA and Topaz concentration camp in Utah. These drawings were ultimately used as the basis for Citizen 13660. Includes drawings numbered 2007.62.7 through 2007.62.205.
Access Note
Access is restricted. These drawings have been digitized and are available online: http://www.janm.org/collections/mine-okubo-collection/

Oversized Charcoal Drawings
Scope and Content Summary
Access Note
Access is restricted.

Box 2 Series 4 Publications 1944-1998
Physical Description: 1 linear foot
Series Scope and Content Summary
Contains full news articles, magazines, journals, and books saved by Miné Okubo.
Arrangement
Full articles are at the front arranged chronologically. Books and serials follow, also arranged chronologically.

Folder 1
"Issei, Niseei, Kibei: The U.S. has put 110,000 people of Japanese blood in 'protective custody'" 1944
Scope and Content Summary
Copy of article.

Folder 2
The Sunday Review of Literature 1946
Scope and Content Summary
Article saved from the March 1946 edition.

Folder 3
"The Nisei discover a larger America" 1947
Scope and Content Summary
Article saved from April 1947 Mademoiselle magazine.

Folder 4
"Capitalizing jobs and futures in Washington, D.C." 1950
Scope and Content Summary
Article from the January 1950 issue of Mademoiselle magazine.

Folder 5
"Miné Okubo, artist" 1979
Scope and Content Summary
Thesis by Edna Ikeda.

Folder 6
Trek December 1942
Folder 7
Trek February 1943
Folder 8
Trek June 1943
Folder 9
Fortune magazine December 1943
Folder 10
Time magazine 21 May 1945
Folder 11
Broadman Book Review September 1946
Folder 12
Common Ground Autumn 1946
Folder 13
The Southern Patriot June 1949
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publication Year</th>
<th>Creator</th>
<th>Scope and Content Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Ten Against the Sun 1957</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Nugen, Marianne</td>
<td>Published by Friendship Press, illustrated by Miné Okubo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Expressionism from Exile, 1942-1946: Japanese American Art from the Concentration Camps 1979</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td></td>
<td>Catalog from a Japanese American art class at San Francisco State University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Images in Isolation: Japanese American Art from the Concentration Camps 1982</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td></td>
<td>Published by San Francisco State University.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Folder 27  The View from Within 1992
Scope and Content Summary
Published by the Japanese American National Museum.

Folder 28  Rikka 1992
Scope and Content Summary
Volume 13.

Folder 29  There is Always Tomorrow: An Anthology of Wartime Haiku 1993
Scope and Content Summary
Part of Amerasia Volume 19, Number 1. See folder 30.

Folder 30  Amerasia 1993
Scope and Content Summary
Volume 19, Number 1.

Folder 31  Asian American Literature Association Journal 1994
Scope and Content Summary
Number 1.

Folder 32  Day of Remembrance [booklet] 1994
Folder 33  Contemporary Asian Success Stories: Famour People of Asian Ancestry 1995
Creator: Marvis, Barbara J.
Scope and Content Summary
Part of the Mitchell Lane Multi-cultural Biography Series.

Folder 34  The National Voter 1995
Scope and Content Summary
Volume 44, Number 3. March/April.

Folder 35  The Excavation Diary of hatsuye Egami 1995
Creator: Gorfinkel, Claire

Folder 36  Friends 1995
Folder 37  Dialogue 1998
Scope and Content Summary
Fall 1998. 2 copies.

Folder 38  Citizen 13660-
Creator: Gorfinkel, Claire
Scope and Content Summary

Folder 39-41  Japanese Language Books
Scope and Content Summary
Requires translation.

Folder 42  What About Our Japanese Americans? [pamphlet] 1944
Box 3 Folder 1-2  Series 5 Notes and Lists
Physical Description: 2 folders
Series Scope and Content Summary
Loose notes and lists created by Okubo. Includes 2 remitter's receipts, 1 receipt for Okubo's
San Francisco Art Associate dues, 5 packing slips and receipts related to Citizen 13660.
Box 3  Series 6 Documents 1938-1998
   Physical Description: 11 folders
   Series Scope and Content Summary
   Documents related to UC Berkeley, War Relocation Authority, Redress, Citizen 13660, and Okubo's art career.
   Arrangement
   Materials are arranged by subject.

Folder 3  UC Berkeley
   Subseries Scope and Content Summary
   1 statement of earnings and 1 report card.

Folder 4-7  War Relocation Authority
   Scope and Content Summary
   Miscellaneous documents related to the War Relocation Authority, including Okubo's photo identification, baggage tag, messages, and forms.

Folder 8  Redress
   Scope and Content Summary
   Statement by William Hohri.

Folder 9  Citizen 13660
   Scope and Content Summary
   Quotes, forms, advanced information related to Citizen 13660.

Folder 10  Personal Statements and Resumes
   Scope and Content Summary
   Variations of Okubo's resume related to her art career.

Box 3  Series 7 Correspondence 1942-1988
   Physical Description: 17 folders
   Scope and Content Summary
   Professional, government, and personal letters related to Okubo.

Folder 11  Letters to Mine Okubo 1942-1945
   Scope and Content Summary
   Professional letters sent to Okubo.

Folder 12  Letters to Catherine Scott 1946
   Scope and Content Summary
   Professional letters sent to Catherine Scott related to Okubo from various senders.

Letters to Mine Okubo 1945-1998
   Scope and Content Summary
   Professional letters sent to Okubo.

Folder 22-23  Letters to Mine Okubo 1938-1990
   Scope and Content Summary
   Letters sent to Mine Okubo from government agencies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder 24-27</th>
<th><strong>Letters to Mine Okubo 1942-1998</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Summary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letters sent to Mine Okubo by friends and family.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3</th>
<th><strong>Series 8 Photographs</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Physical Description:</strong> 13 folders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Summary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Includes a wide variety of images spanning Okubo's life and career.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder 28</th>
<th><strong>Pre-war Photographs 1939</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Summary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 photographs from Okubo's travels before World War II.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder 29-30</th>
<th><strong>Camp Photographs</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Summary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miscellaneous camp photographs taken in Topaz.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder 31</th>
<th><strong>Exhibition Photographs 1946</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Summary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photographs from the Common Council of American Unity exhibition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder 32</th>
<th><strong>Pacific Citizen 1946</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Summary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 photograph.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder 33-34</th>
<th><strong>Redress 1987</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Summary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Various photographs from redress efforts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder 35</th>
<th><strong>National Council for Japanese American Redress Undated</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Summary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Various photographs from redress efforts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder 36</th>
<th><strong>Miscellaneous Photographs 1985-1995</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Folder 37-39</td>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous Photographs- Early Years Undated</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Summary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black and white photographs from Okubo's early years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder 40</th>
<th><strong>Miscellaneous Photographs- Later Years Undated</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Summary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black and white photographs from Okubo's later years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder 41</th>
<th><strong>Miscellaneous Photographs- Later Years Undated</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Summary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Color photographs from Okubo's later years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder 42</th>
<th><strong>Slides Undated</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Folder 43</td>
<td><strong>Artwork Undated</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Scope and Content Summary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photographs of Okubo's artwork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 3 Folders 44-48</td>
<td>Series 9 Publicity Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: 5 folders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and Content Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miscellaneous publicity materials related to Okubo's art career between 1942 and 1946 as well as publicity materials covering the publication on Citizen 13660.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3 Folders 55-62</th>
<th>Series 11 Personal Notebooks Undated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Series Scope and Content Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Variety of bound and unbound notebooks maintained by Okubo. Some are written in diary format. Many are calendars and datebooks with notes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 6</th>
<th>Series 12 Artifacts Undated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Description: 2 items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Series Scope and Content Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 canvas bags.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>