

1991



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NEW YORK, NY 101

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Yuri Tsubada

Dear Guis!

The Women's Caucus for art national Honor awards ceremony was a beautiful happy celebration. I got VIP. Treatment. Didn't see much of museum and show as autographing everything and being filmed and my family came from Hawaii & Calif., so I joined them soon after on their tour. On return to N.Y. slipped in ice and fell on my cheek bone so was with lopsided face and a black eye for over 2 weeks. God's way to tell me to rest. Am on barbit case but now thank you, for letters, sendin' catalogues & Xerox and Tax. I have to be a one-man machine, no time for creative art self. a hell read very few understand, anyway I have prepared another a painting so now will see what I can do.

Hope Things are strong your way.

My best

Mini Okubo



Happy Spring! Happy Easter!

Presentations awards

Betty LaDuke - Miss Okubo

in form of two paintings

*National Women's Caucus for Art Conference
Washington, DC
19 to 21 February 1991*

WCA
Honor Awards

Theresa Bernstein
Mildred Constantine
Otellie Loloma
Miné Okubo
Delilah Pierce

Statement of Purpose

The Women's Caucus for Art, founded in 1972, is the major organization of women actively engaged in the visual arts professions. The Women's Caucus is unique in its multi-disciplinary membership which is drawn from the ranks of art historians and critics, professional artists and educators, arts administrators, gallery and museum professionals and students of the visual arts. We are committed: to educate the general public about the contributions of women and of people of color to the arts; to a non-racist, non-sexist approach to art curricula at all educational levels; to ensure inclusion of the contributions of women and people of color and discussions of gender-based issues in the history of art; to expand the dominant aesthetic to encompass all forms of creative expression; to promote a viable system that provides an opportunity for realistic economic survival in the arts; including financial parity and equal access to grants, funding and employment for women, people of color and differently-abled people; to equal representation and visibility for women's work in the art community; to the formulation and support of legislation which contributes to the goals of the Women's Caucus for Art. The National Office is located at Philadelphia's Moore College of Art, the first women's art school in the U.S. Over thirty-five WCA chapters are active across the country.

The WCA Honor Awards were instituted in 1979, with the first awards being presented by President Carter in the Oval Office at the White House. A complete list of previous recipients appears on the back cover of this catalogue.

Introduction

The extraordinary women the Women's Caucus for Art honors this year are from the Four Colors of People. Since 1979, sixty-eight outstanding women have received the WCA Honor Award. In 1991, we add the histories of Theresa Bernstein, Mildred Constantine, Otellie Loloma, Miné Okubo and Delilah Pierce to our collective history as women in the arts. These Honorees exemplify the excellence and quality of artistic endeavor that flourishes in our culturally diverse communities. Each has lived an inspirational life of dedication and commitment to excellence in the arts. Their accomplishments encompass a broad range of artistic endeavor and expand our understanding of the power of the creative experience. These women deserve respect and recognition. They were pioneers in the visual arts of the 20th century. They faced obstacles and adversity while pursuing their careers which they overcame with courage, tenacity and joyfulness. It is fitting that these Honorees, who represent the multi-cultural heritage of our nation are honored in its capitol. It is significant that their diverse creativity is exhibited at the only museum in the world dedicated to the history of women in the arts. This Honor exhibit and ceremony is an important step as WCA moves into the 21st century with an agenda that embraces the cultural contributions of Women of all Colors.

Miné Okubo is the first Asian-American woman artist to be honored by WCA. Her fifty-year career, spanning the commercial and fine art fields, began with "Citizen 13660", a series of hundreds of drawings chronicling her experiences as a Japanese-American relocatee during World War II. Mildred Constantine, curator, author, consultant and lecturer, has been an effective arts advocate for

more than half a century. She expanded the definitions of high and low art which broadened the scope of curators and art historians. She exposed the public to cultural diversity by curating exhibits of the arts of Latin America. Otellie Loloma, Hopi sculptor and founding teacher at the seminal Institute of American Indian Arts, has influenced two generations of Native American and non-Native sculptors. Her handbuilt figurative clay sculpture is a highly personalized contemporary expression by a 20th-century Hopi which is deeply rooted in ancient Hopi ceremony and tradition. Theresa Bernstein, achieved acclaim as an early Ashcan artist and has continued to make a life as a representational painter for nearly ninety years. Her vibrant paintings document and celebrate a century of America's people. Delilah Williams Pierce, a native Washingtonian, is a prolific painter and gifted educator. She has combined an expansive vision, keen intellect and dramatic compositional skill to create a body of work that elucidates the breadth of her life and travels in Europe, the Near East and Africa.

To this day, these esteemed women continue to create, experiment and pursue their own vision. These are our Elders, and in honoring their achievements, creativity and wisdom, it is really we who are honored. It is a privilege for the WCA and The National Museum of Women in the Arts to share the depth and beauty of the 1991 Honorees' artistic expression. Their creative achievements are integral pieces in the patchwork of our living cultural heritage.

Charleen Touchette
Editor, Awards Catalogue

Women's Caucus for Art Honor Awards for Outstanding Achievement in the Visual Arts

12th Annual Exhibition

*The National Museum of Women in the Arts
Gudelsky State Gallery
3rd Floor
Washington, D.C.
15 February to 17 March 1991*

12th Annual Ceremony

*The National Museum of Women in the Arts
Martin Marietta Hall
8:00 p.m., Wednesday, 20 February 1991*

■ Welcome & Introduction

*Iona Deering, President
Women's Caucus for Art*

*Alice Sims, Coordinator
Marilyn Banner, Coordinator
Corinne Mitchell, Coordinator
1991 Women's Caucus for Art Conference*

*Melissa Dabakis, Chair
Honor Awards Committee*

■ Presentation of Awards

*Theresa Bernstein
Patricia M. Burnham
Mildred Constantine
Martica Sawin
Otellie Loloma
James McGrath
Miné Okubo
Betty LaDuke
Delilah Pierce
Julette Day*

■ Reception and Special Viewing

*The National Museum of Women in the Arts
Immediately following the Ceremony*

The Women's Caucus for Art wishes to give special thanks to the following individuals and organizations:

Melissa Dabakis
Chuck Dailey
Julette Day
Rick Hill
Wilhelmina Cole Holladay
Institute of American Indian Arts
Verna Solomon
Deborah Sperry
Susan Fisher Sterling
The National Museum
of Women in the Arts
Charleen Touchette

This exhibition is organized by the Women's Caucus for Art (WCA) in cooperation with The National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA).

Miné Okubo

Miné Okubo, your life and art have been marked by two events. The first occurred during World War II, when the loyalty of 110,000 West Coast Americans of Japanese heritage was questioned and you were moved to a remote relocation camp. The second, when you had the courage to abandon a successful illustration career for Time, Life and Fortune magazines to pursue your own creative path. Miné Okubo, we honor you: first, for your courage in creating hundreds of powerful drawings and paintings depicting the camp experience leaving a historical legacy so we should not forget; and second, for your integrity in risking security to validate your own creative spirit in your search for truth and beauty.

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Miné Okubo was born in 1912 in Riverside, California. She earned a Master's of Art degree from the University of California at Berkeley in 1936 and was awarded the prestigious Bertha Taussig Traveling Scholarship in 1938. When she returned from travel in Europe in 1939, she participated in the Federal Arts Program, painting several murals for the U.S. Army at Fort Ord, California. In 1942, Okubo and all West Coast, Japanese-Americans were severed from their roots, dreams and aspirations when they were given three days to condense all their worldly possessions into a few bundles and be ready for evacuation.

In the relocation camp in Topaz, Utah, Okubo was identified as Number 13,660. She turned her bitterness into a survival philosophy. She said, "I had the opportunity to study the human race from the cradle to the grave, and to see what happens to people when reduced to one status and condition." Okubo made her "American Experience" visible in hundreds of drawings and paintings that serve as a unique historical documentation of a people's suffering, endurance and ability to survive with dignity. In 1946, the drawings with commentary were published as a book, *Citizen 13660*, by Columbia University Press and republished three times by the University of Washington Press. With a few deft strokes of her pen, Okubo captured the essence of

the events of the Relocation. *Citizen 13660* was described in a New York Times Book Review:

A remarkable objective and vivid and even humorous account . . . In dramatic and detailed drawings and brief text, she documents the whole episode . . . all that she saw, objectively, yet with a warmth of understanding . . . but the wry pictures and the scanty words make the reader laugh — and if he is an American too — sometimes blush.

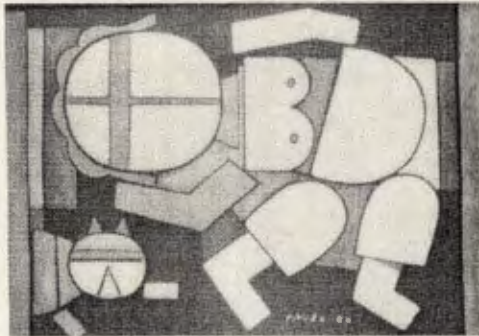
Okubo was the art editor of *Trek*, a literary magazine initiated in the camp. She created the cover designs and many illustrations. Her work for *Trek* impressed the editors of *Fortune* magazine who arranged for her to leave the camp in 1944 to illustrate their feature story on Japan. Once again, Okubo had but three days to pack her things and arrive in New York "with just what I could carry in my hands."

During the next ten years, Okubo successfully established herself in the commercial art field, illustrating for *Time*, *Life*, *Saturday Review*, *The New York Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, as well as for leading publishing houses. She was commissioned to paint four murals for American Lines. Always outspoken, Okubo characterizes the commercial art field, "At first everybody is friendly. Then it becomes establishment, where people are just out for themselves, and you're playing a game." She determined to return to painting and "dedicate myself to the highest ideals in art. You can't serve two masters at the same time."

Throughout her fifty-year career, Okubo has never had consistent gallery sponsorship; though she exhibited and won prizes at the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco. Shipping her art from Topaz during the war, she was awarded: an Honorable Mention, 1942, Arts Fund Prize, 1943, Art Association Purchase Prize, 1944, and the Museum Annual Prize, 1948. She had individual shows at the: New School for Social Research, New York, 1945, Mortimer Levitt Gallery, New York, 1951, and Image Gallery, Stockbridge, Massachusetts, 1968. In 1972, Okubo was the first



Miné Okubo. Photograph by Hideo Gate.



Reclining Girl, 1980.

woman to have a major retrospective at the Oakland Museum, which published an extensive catalog, *Miné Okubo: An American Experience*. Okubo participated in many group shows of Relocation art. In 1974, the Western Association of Art Museums sponsored one based on drawings

from *Citizen 13660*. However, long years of rejection and isolation occurred in response to her subsequent work. Still, Okubo was steadfast in her commitment to expressing her creative spirit. She notes: "You either pursue the art business-show business system as a promotion game, or you're on your own, which often means that your works don't sell. I didn't follow any trend or any one."

Stylistically, Okubo's work has undergone many transformations from lyrical impressionistic portraits and still-life studies in the 60's and 70's to explorations of stylized geometric forms in the early 80's. These later paintings are playful in spirit and childlike as *Cat with Flags*, *Girl with Fish* and *Lady, Cat and Lemons*. They represent the "simple vision that we are born with, that gets messed up, so that I had to go back to basics to find myself again."

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A major event was Okubo's 40-year retrospective at the Elizabeth Gallery in New York in 1985. Since this exhibit contained over 80 examples of her art, Okubo had the opportunity to look back and affirm that she is "on the right path." She wisely said, "Good artists are full of anger. They see the conditions of our time, the reality, the truth, and how they're up against it." She optimistically feels that anger makes you fight, but "If you do your best, you're bound to hit something."

At age 78, Okubo continues to combine hope with hard work as she risks expressing new moods and experiences. *Song of Summer*, *Meadowlark*, and *Sand and Sun*'s dreamlike, floating shapes evoke a sense of oneness with nature. Her accomplishments have begun to receive the recognition they merit. Okubo is the first Asian-American woman artist to receive the Women's Caucus for Arts Honor Award for Outstanding Achievement. She said "I was born Oriental, educated Western, and I followed the French, but now I'm returning to my Oriental roots . . . My one dream is to really make it in painting." Will her dream become a reality?

Betty LaDuke

Selected Bibliography

Eaton, Allen H. *Beauty Behind Barbed Wire: The Arts of the Japanese in our War Relocation Camps*. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1952.

Gesensway, Deborah and Mindy Roseman. *Beyond Words: Images from America's Concentration Camps*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1987.

Gross, Richard E. and Robert F. Madgic, Editors. *The World at War 1941-1945*. San Francisco: Field Educational Publications, Inc., 1971.

LaDuke, Betty. "On the Right Road: The Life of Miné Okubo". *Art Education: The Journal of the National Art Education Association*. May, 1987, p.43-48.

_____. "Miné Okubo: An American Experience". *Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology*. Corvallis, Oregon: Calyx Books, 1988.

McClelland, Gordon T. and Jay T. Last. *The California Style: California Watercolor Artists 1925-1955*. Hillcrest Press, Inc., 1985.

Orr-Cahall, Christina, Editor. *The Art of California: Selected Works from the Collection of the Oakland Museum*. Oakland, California: Oakland Museum Art Department, 1984.

Thiel, Yvonne Greer. *Artists and People*. Philosophical Library Inc., 1959.

Von Blum, Paul. *The Art of Social Conscience*. New York: Universe Books, 1976.

Miné Okubo

- 1912 Born, June 23, Riverside, California.
1933-34 Riverside Junior College, Riverside, California.
1935-36 B.A. and M.A., University of California, Berkeley.
1937 San Francisco Art Association Purchase Prize.
1938-39 Bertha Henicke Taussig Traveling Fellowship from University of California at Berkeley. Toured Europe for 18 months.
1939-41 Commission from Federal Arts Program to paint and demonstrate murals, mosaics and frescos at Government Island, Oakland Hospitality House, Fort Ord and Treasure Island, California.
1940 University of California Award. Anonymous Donor Prize. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California.
1940-41 Two solo exhibitions of European impressions at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California.
1942-44 Internment at Tanforan Relocation Camp in San Bruno, California and Central Utah Relocation Camp in Topaz, Utah.
1942-43 Art editor and illustrator. *Trek*, literary magazine at Topaz Camp.
1944 Illustrator for *Fortune Magazine*. Moved to New York. Exhibited at Rockefeller Center. Paintings on Japan appear in *Fortune* in April.
1944-52 Free-lance illustrator for major magazines and periodicals, including *Fortune*, *Life*, *Time*, *Saturday Review*, *New York Times*, *Common Ground*, *Survey Graphics*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Los Angeles* and *Japanese-American News*.

- 1945 National traveling show of the art from the Japanese Relocation Camps. Common Council for American Unity, New York City.
- 1946 "As Nisei Saw It," Riverside Fine Arts Guild, Riverside Public Library. *Citizen 13660*, Columbia University Press, New York. Okubo's record of the Relocation Camp experience in drawings and sketches is published.
- 1948 San Francisco Museum, Annual Prize. Painted four murals for American Export Lines.
- 1950-52 Lecturer in Art, University of California at Berkeley.
- 1951 Solo Exhibition, Mortimer Levitt Gallery, New York City.
- 1965 "The Nisei: The Pride & The Shame", appearance, Twentieth Century Television, CBS News.
- 1968 Solo Exhibition, Image Gallery, Stockbridge, Massachusetts.
- 1972 Group exhibition of Japanese Relocation Camp art, California Historical Society, San Francisco, California. Solo exhibition, "Miné Okubo: An American Experience", Oakland Museum, California.
- 1973 Interview, Hiroshi Ogawa Television Program, Fuji Telecasting Company, Tokyo, Japan.
- 1974 Distinguished Alumni Award, Riverside City College, California. Solo exhibition, Riverside City College Art Gallery.
- 1974-75 Western Association of Art Museums Traveling Exhibition. Solo exhibition, Selected Works from Oakland's "An American Experience", Coast and Rocky Mountain States. Slide Lecture, Third World Culture Center, Princeton University, New Jersey.
- 1976 Photographic exhibition: "Executive Order 9066" and Okubo exhibition of Evacuation art from "*Citizen 13660*", Seibu Corporation of America, Tokyo, Japan. Traveled throughout Japan.
- 1977 Exhibition and symposium: "A View from the Inside." Slide lecture Asian American Studies Center, University of California at Berkeley, Oakland Museum, California. "Half Century of Japanese Artists in New York 1910-1950", Azuma Gallery, New York City.
- 1978 "Expressions from Exile", Japanese-American art from the Concentration Camps, Japan Center, San Francisco State University, California. Folk History and Arts Festival, Basement Workshop, New York City.
- 1979 "Dragon and the Chrysanthemum", Group exhibit, Summit, New Jersey. "Expressions from Exile", Japanese-American art from the Concentration Camps, JACL Building, San Francisco State University, California. Asian-Pacific American Heritage Week, slide lecture, "An Artist's Story of Japanese Evacuation", JACL, Fordham University, Lincoln Center, New York City. Interview: "In the Belly of the Beast", documentary film of the Japanese-American internment camps. Jason Hwang, Director, New York University.
- 1980 Solo exhibition, Thousand Branches Gallery, San Francisco, California. Group exhibition of Asian American Artists, Basement Workshop, New York City.
- 1982 "Images in Isolation", Asian American Studies, Masao W. Satow Building, San Francisco State University, California.
- 1983 "*Citizen 13660*" reprinted in paperback, University of Washington Press, Seattle, Washington.
- 1984 Before Columbus Foundation American Book Award for "*Citizen 13660*", Berkeley, California.
- 1985 "Miné Okubo: A Retrospective 1942-1985", Catherine Gallery, New York City.
- 1987 California State Department of Education poster, "California Women: Courage, Compassion, Conviction".

**Honor Awards
Selection Committee
1990-1991**

■ **Chair:**
Melissa Dabakis

■ **Committee:**
*Carol Jacobsen
Betty LaDuke
Patricia Mathews
Barbara Tannenbaum
Charleen Touchette*

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*Deborah Sperry
Susan Fisher Sterling*

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Corinne Mitchell
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■ **Catalogue Editors:**
*Charleen Touchette
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■ **Exhibition Curators:**
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■ **Installation Design:**
Susan Kitsoulis

■ **Awards Calligrapher:**
Mary Scott

WCA

Honor Awards

- **Washington, D.C. 1979**
*Isabel Bishop
Selma Burke
Alice Neel
Louise Nevelson
Georgia O'Keeffe*
- **New Orleans 1980**
*Anni Albers
Louise Bourgeois
Caroline Durieux
Ida Kohlmeyer
Lee Krasner*
- **Washington, D.C.
1980 Alternate Awards**
*Bella Abzug
Sonia Johnson
Sister Theresa Kane
Grace Paley
Rosa Parks
Gloria Steinem*
- **San Francisco 1981**
*Ruth Bernhard
Adelyn Breeskin
Elizabeth Catlett
Sari Dienes
Claire Falkenstein
Helen Lundeberg*
- **New York City 1982**
*Berenice Abbott
Elsie Driggs
Elizabeth Gilmore Holt
Katharine Kuh
Charmion von Wiegand
Claire Zeisler*
- **Philadelphia 1983**
*Edna Andrade
Dorothy Dehner
Lotte Jacobi
Ellen Johnson
Stella Kramrisch
Lenore Tawney
Pecolia Warner*
- **Toronto 1984/Los Angeles 1985**
*Minna Citron
Clyde Connell
Eleanor Raymond
Joyce Treiman
June Wayne
Rachel Wischnitzer*
- **New York City 1986**
*Nell Blaine
Leonora Carrington
Sue Fuller
Lois Mailou Jones
Dorothy Miller
Barbara Morgan*
- **Boston 1987**
*Grace Hartigan
Agnes Mongan
Maud Morgan
Elizabeth Talford Scott
Honoré Snarrer
Beatrice Wood*
- **Houston 1988**
*Margaret Taylor Burroughs
Dorothy Hood
Miriam Schapiro
Edith Standen
Jane Teller*
- **San Francisco 1989**
*Margret Craver
Clare Leighton
Samella Sanders Lewis
Betye Saar
Bernarda Bryson Shahn*
- **New York 1990**
*Ilse Bing
Elizabeth Layton
Helen Serger
May Stevens
Pablita Velarde*



