

Box 4:25

Japanese - American Relocation Project

1983-85

Rz: Beyond Words: Images from America's Concentration Camps
by Deborah Eisenway and Mindy Roseman.

86/97c

Japanese-American Relocation Project

626 Spruce Street Philadelphia, PA 19106 (215) 925-6795

Deborah Gesensway
Mindy Roseman

Rec'd
2/8/83

4 February 1983

Yoshiko Uchida
1685 Solano Ave.
Berkeley, CA 94707

Dear Ms. Uchida

Because of your involvement with the Japanese American and arts communities, Mr. Karl Matsushita of the Japanese American Library at the Center for Japanese American Studies in Los Angeles suggested we write to you.

We are currently researching the relocation of Japanese Americans during World War II and specifically any documentary art done by them. Our intention is to compile a book concerning the art and the artists so to present a portrait of the relocation experience.

Do you know of any people who painted or sketched during their internment? We plan to be in the Bay area until the end of February and until that time we can be reached at 5203 Genoa Street, Oakland, CA 94608; 428-1209. We look forward to hearing from you soon, and we thank you for your time.

—boxed
apth
ms.

Sincerely

Deborah Gesensway
Mindy Roseman

Deborah Gesensway
Mindy Roseman

- Who is publishing Bk? — no, 2 who are interested
- who's funding? — no one — free lance writers
- affiliated with Am. Friends? — no
- Come take photo? — yes B+W, some color. — Spectator
- Will we rec. comp. copies of Bk? —

Started at Cornell, ^{myself} looking there.

2/9/83 1st time
a.m.

Call by Wed

exp Fri - 2/18 10:30A

morning -

Japanese-American Relocation Project

309 Eddy Street #1, Ithaca, New York 14850 (607)272-4154
5203 ~~5203~~ Grand St Oakland 428-1209

Deborah Gesensway
Mindy Roseman

Most of the books written about Japanese American relocation during World War II have overlooked the human dimension.. A rich source of historical documentation still largely unknown and unpublished, however, can breathe life into the relocation experience -- the art created by the evacuees. Although this art has rarely been exhibited, artists' perceptions of camp life are as illuminating as, in some respects even more compelling than, diaries, letters, and similar documents.

Art was created in every camp and was vital to the inhabitants. As one evacuee artist wrote:

...in a short time all of the social activities in the camp (Puyallup Assembly Center) became dependent upon us for art work. We put all our efforts into decorating the recreation halls for dances and also made artistic signs for people and departments... Besides this, we carried on some of the cultural aspects of art and we even sponsored art exhibits which were a big success in camp. There were a number of fine artists in camp and they contributed their work.

[Dorothy Swaine Thomas, The Salvage (Berkeley, 1952, p. 521-2)]

In the camps, artists worked for pay and for pleasure. They taught art classes, documented events for the administration and for camp sociologists, and painted in their leisure time. As a result, there remains a variety of sketches and prints depicting and reflecting camp life. Combined with interviews from camp residents, this art can provide an accessible, comprehensive account of how relocation affected people.

Our project was conceived at Cornell University when we were

present at the recovery of 130 watercolors, painted at the relocation center at Poston, Arizona, which had been presumed lost. Their documentary value is unquestionable; the paintings depict all aspects of the relocation experience. For example, thirteen paintings are devoted to the living quarters, eight to toilet activities, three to eating. Some deal with larger camp issues such as the Poston Strike, the dust, and the administration. Their styles range from landscape to caricature. Their colors are vibrant and communicate the emotional charge latent in the scenes depicted.

We have learned of other art collections throughout the country and are in the process of contacting the artists in hopes of interviewing them. To date, we have received two positive responses (from Hisako Hibi and K. Ruth Saito), and we believe we can interest at least four additional artists.

To supplement the artwork we plan also to include oral histories. By letting those who experienced an event tell their stories firsthand, oral history imparts a special intimacy to the reader. Moreover, the multifaceted nature of the evacuation experience can best be captured by oral history. At California State University, Fullerton, an in-depth oral history program has produced some of the most penetrating and vibrant accounts to date (Arthur Hansen and Betty Mitsen, Voices Long Silent). The Fullerton interviews are comprehensive, thought-provoking, human, and intellectually accessible. Such history provides the pluralistic, open-ended, and perspectivist framework necessary to make the study of relocation relevant for today. Unfortunately, due to the circumstances of its publication, the Fullerton work is not available for general use.

The value of speaking with the artists will go beyond mere commentary on their art. We will find out what evacuation and internment meant to them, based on their backgrounds, family aspirations, and assumptions about America. We will focus our inquiry on feelings and actions engendered then and now by the social, political, and cultural changes they faced. What do they tell their children? Do they see comparable situations today? Other questions might relate to their art: what was and is the role of art in their lives? What did they depict and why? How, and by whom, was their art received in the camps and since? These are only suggestive of the material we hope to elicit. In the final analysis, we want the people to speak for themselves.

We hope our book will be similar to the enlightening and moving, yet narrowly distributed, work Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island 1910-1940 (by Him Mark Lai, Genny Lin, Judy Yung (San Francisco, 1980)). Poetry and photographs from the island in San Francisco Harbor are juxtaposed with oral histories taken from immigrants who were detained there awaiting clearance to enter the United States. While we plan to retain the informality of the interview format, we intend to draw out its narrative aspects. Since we have not yet conducted the interviews, it is difficult to predict the extent of editing and organizing that will be involved. We are also still able to be flexible regarding how the materials are to be presented. We can group the interviews around issues, or keep them separate. We might intersperse the art or run it as a series. Design will depend upon the material. Nonetheless, we know the effect we wish to produce, and have concrete ideas as to how

that effect can be achieved. Studs Terkel's Hard Times stands as one model.

The extensive attention that Japanese American relocation has received is simply inadequate. The sociological analyses that came out immediately after the internment are dry and dated. The more recent works (during the late 1960s) suffer from too zealous a "racist" interpretation. More recently, there have been some very good revisionist analyses, particularly of the causes and politics behind the evacuation and internment orders (Rodger Daniels, Concentration Camps: North America, for example). Yet by focusing on the political, economic, and social "facts" that traditionally serve as history, they remain unattractive to many outside the field. A few diaries and popular stories have lent a bit more color, but unfortunately they, too, are limited in scope and appeal; they provide more entertainment than information. There is a need for a popular and informative account. Because our approach is to use oral history and illustrations, the appeal of the book extends to all curious individuals, not just to scholars or Japanophiles. At the same time, the market is ripe for oral history as evidenced by the success of Studs Terkel and Ann Banks.

We have contacted representatives of the Japanese American community from New York to Los Angeles. All have been supportive of our project, directing us to Japanese American artists and advising us of where we might obtain funds. One organization (The Japan-United States Friendship Commission) writes: "Yours is an interesting project on a subject about which the American public

needs further enlightenment." Janice Mirikitani, the founder of Asian-American Publications, said: "Your project sounds exciting and much needed -- I wish you every success." These and other responses have given us added inspiration. There is a compelling need and a receptive market for such a book. Our book will enrich the popular memory and heighten public sensitivity to injustice.

Japanese-American Relocation Project

626 Spruce Street Philadelphia, PA 19106 (215) 925-6795

Camp
Art

Deborah Gesensway
Mindy Roseman

25 February 1983

Yoshiko Uchida
1685 Solano Ave.
Berkeley, CA 94707

Dear Ms. Uchida

We wanted to thank you once again for showing us your art and for so candidly sharing your memories with us. They have added a unique perspective to our understanding of the World War II Japanese American evacuation and internment. You tell your story eloquently in Desert Exile, and that same spirit pervades your watercolors.

Our research now takes us to Seattle and then back East. We will keep you abreast of the progress of our work. Once again, thank you.

Sincerely

Mindy Roseman

Deborah Gesensway
Mindy Roseman
Deborah Gesensway

Japanese-American Relocation Project

Neiboy's home
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626 Spruce Street Philadelphia, PA 19106 (215) 925-6795

Deborah Gesensway
Mindy Roseman



Throughout its three-year existence during World War II, the Colorado River Relocation Camp at Poston, Arizona, was the scene of both tranquility and violence, as the watercolors of camp artist Gene Sogioka vividly illustrate. Peaceful moments, such as a stroll under the desert sunset (top) contrasted with violent moonlit outbursts usually incited by poor camp conditions (bottom).



Japanese-American Relocation Project

626 Spruce Street Philadelphia, PA 19106 (215) 925-6795

Deborah Gesensway
Mindy Roseman

3 August 1983

Ms. Yoshiko Uchida
1685 Solano Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94707

Camp Copy
rec'd
4/10/87

Dear Ms. Uchida

It has been awhile since we last wrote to you but we have been very busy working on the manuscript. In fact we expect to submit it to publishers in the next few weeks. Tentatively entitled Beyond Words: Images from the Japanese American Relocation Camps, we are excited about how it has turned out. We have taken selections from all the interviews and placed them side by side with some of the art we photographed. The result is a stirring account of the Japanese American experience during World War II. Without your contribution we never could have done this.

In order to reproduce some of the camp art you shared with us (xeroxed copies enclosed), we need to have you sign the enclosed releases. Please return one to us in the envelope we have provided. The other is for your own records.

Additionally we would like to ask your permission to use a passage from Desert Exile in our book. Could you please sign the release pertaining to this and return it along with the other one.

We thank you in advance for promptly returning all this impersonal but necessary paperwork. We will definitely keep you informed on the status of the book and look forward to hearing from you soon. Once again we cannot thank you enough for all your help.

Sincerely

Mindy Roseman

Deborah Gesensway

Mindy Roseman

Deborah Gesensway

For your own records

I Yoshiko Uchida do hereby give to Deborah Gesensway and Mindy Roseman permission to reproduce in the book entitled Beyond Words the following drawings or paintings:

Tanforan from the Grandstand (watercolor)

These ^{is} reproductions ^{is} are to be used only for this book project with the appropriate credit lines. *Please send me a Comp. copy of the on publication of the book*

X

Yoshiko Uchida
signature

Aug. 15, 1984

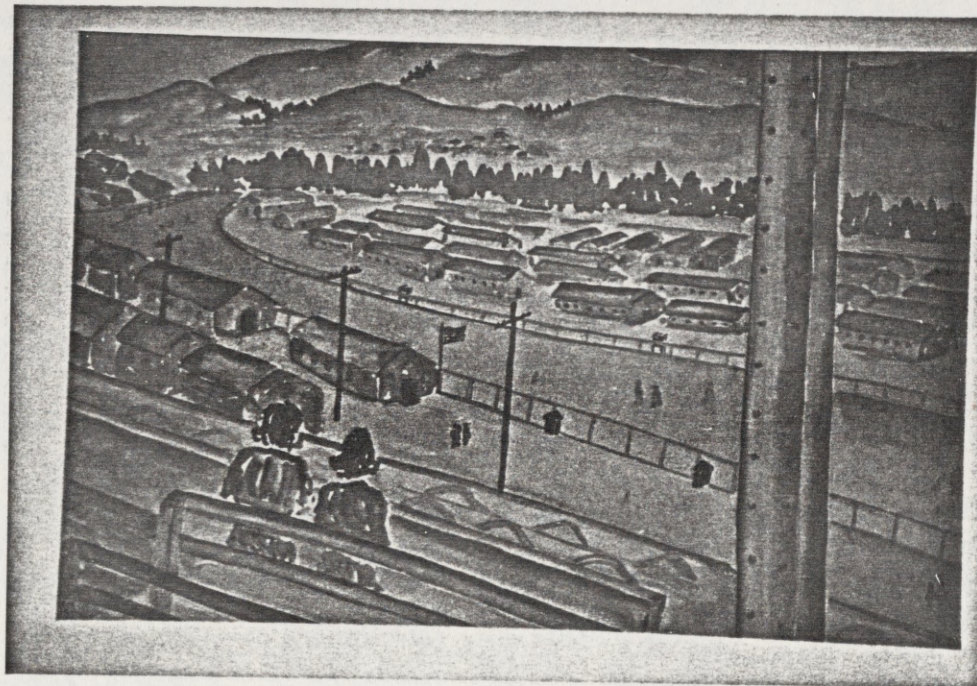
date

Mindy Roseman

Deborah Gesensway

3 August 83

For your own records



Yoshiko Uchida

I Yoshiko Uchida do hereby give to Deborah Gesensway
and Mindy Roseman permission to print in the book tentatively entitled
Beyond Words excerpts from ^{Desert Exile} ~~notes taken during our meeting of~~ 2/18/83.

X Yoshiko Uchida
signature
Sept 12, 1983
date

Mindy Roseman
Deborah Gesensway
3 August 83

Send to U & W.

From Desert Exile, University of Washington Press, p 48.:

The three of us watched Papa go down the dark hallway with the guard and disappear around a corner. He was gone, and we didn't know if we would ever see him again. There were rumors that men such as my father were to be held as hostages in reprisal for atrocities committed by the Japanese soldiers. If the Japanese killed American prisoners, it was possible my father might be among those killed in reprisal.

Japanese-American Relocation Project

916 East Shore Drive, Ithaca, NY 14850 (607) 272-4073

Deborah Gesensway
Mindy Roseman

15 November 1985

Yoshiko Uchida
1685 Solano Ave.
Berkeley, CA 94707

Dear Ms. Uchida

Believe it or not, we have not forgotten you. Cornell University Press just accepted our book "Beyond Words: Images from America's Concentration Camps" for publication. It is expected to appear in early 1987.

Everyone at the Press is excited about the manuscript. All the professors who read it for the editors there have said they think a book about art produced in the Japanese American relocation camps with interviews from artists and other people about their World War II experiences is long overdue.

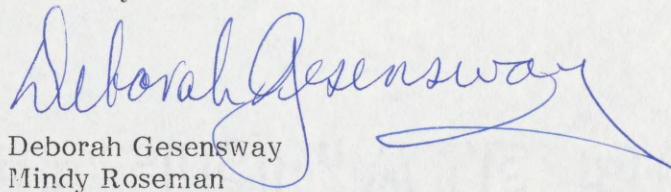
We can't thank you enough for cooperating with us in our project. There is just one more thing we need to ask of you.

We need to get our manuscript to the editor, and we want to be sure the information we have about you in it is correct and up to date. The biography is meant to be brief. It will be part of an index at the back of the book. But if it is missing vital information or if it is inaccurate, please correct it and send it back as soon as possible in the enclosed envelope. If it is okay as it stands, please return it unchanged.

As the publication date nears, you will be hearing more from us. Please let us know if there is anything else we can do or anything else you want to know.

Hope all has been well and thanks again.

Sincerely


Deborah Gesensway
Mindy Roseman

11/23/85 Q-M

So glad to hear you placed your book!
Congratulations!
Would appreciate receiving 2 comp. copies,
on publication.
Best w