

Overtly, Covertly, or Not at All

Putting "Japan" in Japanese American Painting

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The study of Asian American art of the mid-twentieth century has undergone a significant change in recent years. Not long ago, “Asian tradition” was still frequently identified as a definitive component of Asian American art. For example, in 1997 a major exhibition made ground-breaking contributions to knowledge about Asian American art history by focusing on relationships between “Asian tradition” and modern abstraction, while continuing to embrace such Orientalist propositions as “to the Eastern mind, nature is the irrefutable, ultimate source of all things, including artistic expression.”¹ In contrast, a 2008 multi-author volume on Asian American art history, the most extensive study of its kind, starts out in Gordon Chang’s foreword with a critical focus on the racial thinking that so often locked Asian American art into stereotypes: “Viewers could rarely free themselves from the assumption that art produced by persons who looked ‘Asian’ somehow had to express something ‘Asian.’ Mainstream spectators assumed that racial or immutable cultural sensibilities indelibly marked artistic production.”² Another influential voice in this important recognition has been that of Elaine H. Kim, who sought to extricate Asian American art from the *idée fixe* of Asian race by affirming its interstality and hybridity. “Instead of viewing Asian American art as . . . imperfectly replicating ‘real Asian art,’” she proposed situating it in “the untranslatable, incommensurate in-between, in the interstice between mainstream and Asian American (as opposed to Asian) cultural traditions.”³ Thus, “Asia” or “Asian tradition” was retired from its status as an essential element of the study of mid-century Asian American art history in order to disencumber this art from racial assumptions. To be sure, the cumulative weight of the twentieth-century language that exoticized and marginalized Asian American artists is so staggering that one hesitates to revisit Kim’s move away from Asian tradition. Nonetheless,

jettisoning all concepts of “Asian tradition” or “Asia” makes it difficult to understand the context of art produced in the early and mid-twentieth century, before the cognitive term “Asian American” existed. Artists and viewers in this period typically thought about what we now consider “Asian American art” in the oppositional terms of “Asian” and “American,” or analogues such as “East” and “West,” rather than the hybridizing in-betweenness of “Asian American,” so ideas about Asia are critical to the recovery of the meanings their art possessed in earlier historical moments.

I propose three speculative categories for investigating the role of “Asian tradition” and more general concepts of “Asia” in mid-twentieth-century Asian American art. Art objects in the first category called the viewer’s attention to themes of Asia by means of conspicuous signs of Asianness emblazoned on their form. This was achieved by the selection of symbols, motifs, titles, materials, or techniques associated with Asia. But the term “Asia” designates a vast, open-ended pool of signs, or meanings, and it is important to emphasize that while they were recognizably Asian in places like New York, Seattle, and Berkeley, they were not necessarily perceived as Asian in Tokyo, Calcutta, or Urumqi. A second sort of Asian American art is characterized by an absence of references to Asia or Asian tradition. But although we may determine that an artist did not intend to refer to Asia in a given work of art, and we may even corroborate that intention with an art-historical judgment that there is no Asian presence in that work of art, racially determined readings of such works frequently projected a ghostly presence of Asia into their forms or content. In a final category, Asian American works were endowed with veiled references to Asian content, sometimes only recognizable with the aid of supplementary texts explaining the relationship of the work to Asian culture. This often entailed vague subjective assessments by viewers, such as the comment of a student in my seminar who looked at a painting and responded that “something about it feels Asian, but I don’t know what.” Such effects were often obtained through creative processes of combining Asian-associated forms together with forms alluding to other cultures. Typically, the aim of this type of art, however, was not hybridization but universalizing synthesis.

Each of these three types of Asian referentiality could be matched closely to works of art by Americans of other ethnicities; European American, African American, and Latino American artists could and did create works of art that emblazoned, omitted, or veiled references to Asia. Nevertheless, viewers’ presumptions about an involuntary link between the Asian American artist’s identity and the cultural signification of his or her work of art affected the reception and interpretation of such references to Asia in ways that did not pertain to artworks created by Americans of other ethnicities. Asian references in works by artists assumed to be of non-Asian identity were regarded as exoticizing or erudite forays into foreign culture, while similar references by American artists of Asian ethnicity were seen as evidence of a return to origins or as the

racially determined expression of collective identity. Clearly, Asian referentiality—whether emblazoned, veiled, or even absent in the sense described above—constitutes a significant optic that distinguishes Asian American art from other American art.

This three-pronged optic of Asian American art did not always operate in the same manner for artists of different Asian American ethnicities, however. For example, as Gordon Chang has demonstrated, Chinese

American and Japanese American artists' experiences of World War II differed dramatically because China was a U.S. ally, while Japan was an enemy.⁴ Thus, I will restrict this study to the specific experiences of four Japanese American painters who worked before, during, and after World War II. Although Japanese referentiality emerged and subsided in each painter's work in correspondence with his or her efforts to contend with specific social and cultural contexts of American history, these case studies also outline larger historical patterns in the development of Japanese American art. The first two modes of Japanese referentiality were more prevalent in the early twentieth century, though emblazoned signs of Japan became scarce during the war years when such signs were stigmatized by association with the Japanese enemy. Veiled references came into favor in the context of post-war abstraction.

European American admirers of the paintings of Chiura Obata (1885–1975) typically appreciated his pictures in terms that related them to Japan. They were aware that he had been trained as a painter in Tokyo before moving to California in 1903, and some were also aware that he acquired the silk, ink, and pigments for paintings like *Setting Sun: Sacramento Valley* (Figure 1) from suppliers in Japan. It was not hard to understand how the lacy gold-leafing on the edges of these tongues of flame relate to prototypes in the gold clouds and cresting waves of Momoyama and Edo period art. Moreover, this work is a hanging scroll with an ornate brocade silk mounting. In short, such California landscapes were emblazoned with conspicuous references to Japan. Viewers



1. Chiura Obata, *Setting Sun: Sacramento Valley*, ca. 1925. Hanging scroll: ink, color, and gold on silk mounted on paper, 107½ × 69 in. Collection of Gyo Obata. Photo courtesy of the Obata family.

were fascinated by what a *San Francisco Examiner* critic described in 1932 as “America contemplated through the eyes of an Oriental.” The same critic remarked that Obata’s paintings “are pure Nippon, or, if you like, with just a suspicion here and there of Western influence, though even that is rather dubious.”⁵ No doubt, the “suspicion” that Obata might have embedded Western formal or technical influences in his pictures, marring the supposed purity of the Japanese lens he brought to his California scenes, was fostered by awareness that by 1932 he had resided in the Bay Area for nearly three decades.

It certainly would be a mistake to regard the beauty of Obata’s painting as “purely” Japanese, if this connotes some vision of a Japan untouched by either modernity or contact with European art. The artist’s father, Obata Rokuichi, was a painter associated with *Yōga*, literally “Western painting,” a modern Japanese movement of oil painting focused on European techniques and canons. Obata himself was trained in *Nihonga*, literally “Japanese painting,” a modern reconstitution of certain types of past Japanese and East Asian art through a keen awareness of modern European painting. Moreover, Obata created the style that was appreciated by American viewers as a Japanese aesthetic during his early decades in the Bay Area through a process of negotiation with his American environment. During his 12 years (1915–27) working as an illustrator for *Japan*, a magazine published in San Francisco’s Japantown, he developed his artistic personality in the tense environment of the segregated Japanese minority community. The year before painting *Setting Sun, Sacramento Valley*, Obata, his 12-year-old son, and two other Japanese Americans were hiking in northern California when a local accosted them and warned, “Japs have been prohibited in my county for 30 years. Get out of here as fast as you can. If you don’t, I make no guarantee for your physical safety.”⁶ The violent threat of such racism was not to be pacified by the beauty of “pure Nippon,” but many European Americans in California were drawn to Obata’s creative work because of its manifestation of a combination of beauty, skill, and materials that they perceived to be Japanese. Worth Ryder, a professor in the art department at the University of California, Berkeley, was his devoted companion during a strenuous six-week sketching trip to Yosemite in 1927. At one point in their trek through the High Sierras, Ryder humorously proclaimed Obata to be “an emissary for the Mikado looking for the most beautiful spot on the earth.”⁷ Inspired by his Japanese American companion, Ryder became a devotee of Japanese ink-painting and was also instrumental in the appointment of Obata in 1932 as his colleague on the Berkeley art faculty. Thus, the appeal to European Americans of the mode of Japanese tradition that Obata developed in California as well as Japan had tremendous consequences for the artist; by invoking the notion of an apolitical, ahistorical, “traditional” Japanese aesthetic, he secured the interest and amity of individuals like Worth

Ryder as well as high honors and enviable success among California art cognoscenti in a larger environment of anti-Japanese racism.

The idyllic quality of Obata's painting was not disabled entirely, but transformed by his imprisonment as an enemy alien in 1942, first at the Tanforan Assembly Center south of San Francisco, and then in desert barracks of the Topaz Relocation Center in Utah. In Topaz, Obata returned to the same glorious vision of the sunset that he had painted in Sacramento in better times almost 20 years earlier. But in his *Sunset, Water Tower, Topaz*

(1943), the scarlet flames lighting up the sky became the backdrop to the silhouette of a water tower, a structure referencing the camp where Obata was incarcerated by the War Relocation Authority on account of his racial and national identity.⁸

Miné Okubo (1912–2001) was an art student in Obata's department at Berkeley, obtaining her master's degree in art there in 1938. She was also a *nisei* (second-generation Japanese American), and was probably aware of Professor Obata's outspoken views about how *nisei* should position themselves vis-à-vis Japan and the United States:

*Since you have received the blood of Japanese people, I hope you would take interest in the Japanese people who were cultivated through that blood, and search deeply for Japan. Then, face the great nature of the America that you live in and develop your path. Listen to nature. Listen quietly to the voice nature calls out to you. Apply the cultivation you receive from nature, and contribute to your future society, to American society.*⁹

Obata urged *nisei* to do what he presumably attempted when he painted the sunset at Topaz, namely transcend American racism with a Japanese racial aesthetic articulating the beneficent magnanimity of nature. In her *Mother and Cat* (Figure 2), however, Okubo



2. Miné Okubo, *Mother and Cat*, 1941. Tempera on masonite, 29 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 24 in. The Oakland Museum of California, Gift of the Collectors Gallery. Photo courtesy Oakland Museum of California.



3. Miné Okubo, *People were in Shock*, 1943. Charcoal on paper, 14 × 20 in. Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles.

turns her back on the path advocated and modeled by Obata. According to Betty La Duke, Okubo's painting would not manifest an interest in "Japanese heritage" until the late 1950s or 1960s.¹⁰ Indeed, rather than study with Professor Obata, Okubo had trained under other faculty members at Berkeley in techniques of fresco and mural painting, attaining skills that led, in 1939, to a stint working under Mexican muralist Diego Rivera on a San Francisco mural project. Stylistically, these references predominate in Okubo's *Mother and Cat*, a picture constructed in simplified, rounded forms filled with short, dry, parallel brushstrokes and bounded by thin, sinuous contour lines. Moreover, the gentle warpage of perspective and anatomical deformation give the painting a naïve style typical of modernist painters who were interested in American folk art.¹¹

Despite the lack of artistic reference to "Japan" in Okubo's *Mother and Cat*, this painting does make an important statement about the artist's own Japanese American identity through its monumental depiction of the woman identified by the title as her mother. It was painted around the time of Okubo's mother's death, no doubt explaining its static commemorative character. Obata's comment that "you have received the blood of Japanese people" refers to family and racial ties to the Japanese nation, and Okubo's mother was perhaps the artist's most tangible link to Japan. But the Rivera-like manner of her portrayal does little to visualize the Japanese memories and experiences of this *issei* (first-generation) woman, who, in fact, had studied calligraphy and painting at the Tokyo Art Institute before immigrating to California. Rather Okubo shows her mother clasping a Bible in her powerful,

sensuous hand and reigning with reassuring calm over an idyllic view of the rural town in Southern California where the artist grew up.

This serene nostalgia collapsed with Okubo's evacuation by the War Relocation Authority to the same desert barracks as Obata. But while Obata invested an almost religious faith in the rich warmth of the sunset sky, Okubo funneled the darkness from the dust clouds in the sky into the interiors of the bodies of fellow internees (Figure 3). The internment experience moved the artist to develop extraordinary bonds of empathy with members of her Japanese American community, and she expressed these powerful feelings through a modernist language of expressive draftsmanship.

Much like Okubo, Yasuo Kuniyoshi (1889–1953) darkened the faces and depressed the spirits of his figures, evoking associations with the Japanese enemy status that alienated him from his environment at a time of total war. Both artists left their expressions of this experience ambiguous enough to permit more universal thoughts of the tragedy of war, a vagueness of reference necessary in wartime America, where the sympathetic expression of specifically Japanese or Japanese American suffering attributed to American aggressors would have been unthinkable. Kuniyoshi's painting avoids Obata's obvious references to Japan or Japanese tradition, much like Okubo's painting and charcoal study. But unlike Okubo, who created *People Were in Shock* while living among fellow Japanese Americans at the desert barrack camp in Utah, Kuniyoshi kept his imagery remote from the Japanese American community as well.

Kuniyoshi crafted his art for the European American dominated art world centered in New York City, and indeed was the most successful Japanese American artist of his generation in terms of purchases, critical acclaim, and awards. Kuniyoshi's success was gravely threatened but not reversed by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. In striking contrast to Chiura Obata on the West Coast, Kuniyoshi appealed to New York cognoscenti with a scrupulous avoidance of conspicuous signifiers of cultural alterity—or “otherness”—in his painting. In 1942 the *Art News* reviewer Rosamund Frost explained that about 10 years earlier Kuniyoshi had already “assimilated something from his contemporaries—a touch of [Alexander] Brook in the pose, a little of [Bernard] Karfiol in the glance, a trace of [Jules] Pascin's voluptuous softness.” Thus, Frost concluded, “[P]erhaps this is the point at which he stopped being an Oriental and became the American he is today.”¹² Indeed, the style, materials, imagery, and sultry mood of Kuniyoshi's canvases such as *Relaxing* (Figure 4) share a strong American period resemblance with the works of his European American friends and rivals, such as the artists Frost named, painters who were considered leading lights of American art at this time.



4. Yasuo Kuniyoshi, *Relaxing*, 1942. Oil on canvas, 15¹⁵/₁₆ × 12 in. Collection of Soichiro Fukutake, Okayama, Japan © Estate of Yasuo Kuniyoshi/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

Actually, Japanese oil painters working in Tokyo during the same period—Yasui Sôtarô, Matsu-moto Shunsuke, and Asô Saburô, for example—painted in a similar mode to that of the New York artists identified by Frost as the beacons of Kuni-yoshi’s American style.¹³ Kuniyoshi was well aware that School of Paris styles of painting were as prevalent in Tokyo as New York due to a 1931 trip to Japan, encounters with traveling Japanese artists, and exposure to contemporary Japanese art magazines. But Frost and most New Yorkers were either oblivious to modern Jap-

anese art or derided it as derivative of “the West.” They focused on cultivating an American national aesthetic based on minor differences between American and European art and were unwilling to countenance the fact that similar minor differences between Japanese and European art had brought about a situation where New York painting was visually similar to much of what constituted contemporary Japanese art. Therefore, if Kuniyoshi had wished to convey a positive sense of Japanese alterity to his New York spectators at this time without depending on assumptions about his racial identity, he probably would have had to use anachronistic iconographic attributes such as dressing his women in kimonos or placing Imari vases at their elbows. In the war climate, however, even such quaint signifiers of Japan had become anathema to American audiences.

Despite the absence of references to Japan in the painting of both Okubo and Kuniyoshi before and after the invasion of Pearl Harbor, both artists were called upon by American institutions to illustrate the Japanese enemy during the war. *Fortune* magazine commissioned Okubo to illustrate stereotypical images of Japanese civilians and soldiers in

1943,¹⁴ while the Office of War Information (OWI) commissioned Kuniyoshi to illustrate anti-Japanese war propaganda posters in 1942. Neither artist had any particular experience illustrating Japanese subject matter, but as scholar ShiPu Wang has written of the selection of Kuniyoshi for creating propaganda posters, “it was precisely because of his race (and nationality) that [OWI] officials regarded him as an appropriate artist to portray the enemy—not the Germans, nor the Italians, but the Japanese.”¹⁵



5. Yasuo Kuniyoshi, *Rape*, 1942. Pencil on paper, 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Collection of Soichiro Fukutake, Okayama, Japan © Estate of Yasuo Kuniyoshi/ Licensed by VAGA, New York.

Kuniyoshi’s role in fashioning the American image of the Japanese enemy contributed to his wartime reputation as, in Rosamund Frost’s words, “America’s favorite Japanese.”¹⁶

Serving as an illustrator of images of the Japanese enemy to teach Americans who they were fighting against put Kuniyoshi in what must have been a psychologically tortuous position, for now it was his job to reinforce negative American stereotypes of Japanese men—stereotypes that imperiled his own standing in American society. One of the drawings Kuniyoshi submitted to the OWI (Figure 5) depicts a menacing Japanese soldier accosting a woman who closely resembles the dark-complexioned but vaguely Caucasian women that he painted so often in works such as *Relaxing*. The soldier’s nationality is signified by his physiognomy and by the attribute of a ceremonial Japanese sword. Even before this period, the racialization of paintings such as *Relaxing*, from which Kuniyoshi had excluded references to Japan, was a routine thought process that provided the terms even for appreciative art criticism. For example, in 1937 a reviewer admired Kuniyoshi’s painting as “the work of a strong-minded and deliberate individual through whose brain and through whose fingers happen to run the blood stream of the Orient.”¹⁷ But in his rape scene, Kuniyoshi’s resistance to the racialization of his art collapsed. The ghostly presence of an alien Japaneseness, an

essentializing identity that had been projected by racially deterministic thinking onto his paintings, is vividly and explicitly materialized as a monstrous stereotype in his OWI poster design. This exceptional and shocking exposure invites an understanding of the more characteristic stance of his painting—that of omitting signs of Japanese otherness—as a posture of assimilationism. Drawing on Anne Cheng’s psychoanalytic study of assimilation in Asian American literature, we might say that the “camouflage” was ripped away from a “subject who is constituted by debilitating difference.”¹⁸

When not constrained by the desires and expectations of patrons such as the OWI or *Fortune* magazine, most Japanese American artists continued to avoid references to Japanese culture for a time after the war. In Miné Okubo’s words, “anything Japanese was still rat poison.”¹⁹ But this situation changed dramatically in the early 1950s. Disempowered by defeat in war, Japan became an attractive field for American cultural consumers, ranging from scholars to avant-gardists to souvenir hunters. The first peak of this post-war American enthusiasm for Japanese culture came in the year 1954, when multiple Japanese-themed events were organized in New York City, including the construction of a temporary traditional Japanese house in the garden of the Museum of Modern Art and an exhibition of new Japanese abstract art from Tokyo at the Riverside Museum in New York City. This broad interest in Japan greatly affected Japanese American artists and their ambitions for success in the overwhelmingly European American art world centered in New York City. The same racial determinism that had led American cultural leaders to believe that a Japanese American artist would be uniquely suited to represent the Japanese enemy now led to the assumption that Japanese American artists were valuable sources of information about the mysteries of such Japanese cultural properties as calligraphy, Zen Buddhism, the tea ceremony, and ink painting. The first post-war wave of American interest in such Japanese topics coincided with the emergence of second-generation Abstract Expressionist painters. In this context, numerous European American as well as Asian American artists developed innovative ways to inscribe elements of Asian culture into their abstract paintings.²⁰

One such artist, Mike Kanemitsu (1922–1992) had been painting figurative works as a student of Kuniyoshi at the beginning of the 1950s, but was soon won over by the exciting new abstraction of Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, and other Abstract Expressionists. Kanemitsu became an intimate of this circle and would remember one friend from this milieu, the abstract painter Ad Reinhardt, as an erudite scholar knowledgeable in all fields of Asian philosophy and culture.²¹ And while Kanemitsu was first groping his way toward abstraction and enthusiastically observing the innovations of another personal friend, Jackson Pollock, Reinhardt advised him, “Don’t go along with crazy J.P. You’re not an Expressionist—you’re a natural romantic Impressionist.”²² This enigmatic injunction prompted

Kanemitsu to investigate relationships between his gestural abstraction and the East Asian art of calligraphy. In works such as *Quarter to Five* (Figure 6), however, the artist's professed interest in calligraphy remains a subtle presence, veiled beneath bright color, architectonic structure, and the viscous medium of oil on canvas.



6. Mike Kanemitsu, *Quarter to Five*, 1959. Oil on canvas, 49 $\frac{1}{5}$ × 60 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. Osaka Contemporary Art Center, Japan.

While continuing to work in oil on canvas, Kanemitsu also pursued a parallel practice of abstraction in the Japanese medium of *sumi*, black liquid ink on paper.²³ His black-and-white abstractions resonated with similar works by Abstract Expressionists such as Pollock, Kline, Robert Motherwell, and Philip Guston, but this practice held distinct attractions and risks for Kanemitsu and other Asian American artists. On the one hand, the artist's Asianness endowed the link between his abstract imagery and the East Asian art of calligraphy with a type of authenticity that appealed to the modernist ethos of an unmediated relationship between the artist's subjective identity and his creative work. On the other hand, many in this environment looked askance at what they regarded as an artist's too conspicuous or too deliberate reference to his or her Asian heritage. Thus, the prominent Japanese critic and art historian Fujieda Teruo would write, "One distinctive characteristic in Kanemitsu's oeuvre is the use of the calligraphic black line on a white ground. This immediately brings to mind the notion of a Japanese look. . . . But being an intelligent *nisei* artist, Kanemitsu understood that creating art that appeared Japanese for the sake of obtaining a Japanese look was a too-easy use of nationality."²⁴

This rather narrow view of *nisei* artists presumed that they deliberately catered to an American taste for Japanese exotica. In fact, many Asian Americans were sensitive to the racial determinism that often stimulated European American desires to see evidence of Japanese identity in their art. And this awareness sometimes inhibited the expression of such interests or provided an incentive to veil them deeply within the mysterious forms of abstract tableaux. Still, Kanemitsu said that he felt a powerful attraction to calligraphic abstraction, including the work of contemporary Japanese avant-garde calligraphers such as Morita Shiryū

and Hidai Nankoku. He attributed this attraction to a sense of nostalgia that was a consequence of his long years of residence in the United States away from Japan.²⁵ This emotion-laden distance from Japan endowed Kanemitsu's veiled calligraphic abstraction with a personal significance that differentiated it from formally similar works by European American painters like Motherwell as well as Japanese artists like Morita Shiryû.

The four artists considered here illustrate historical patterns in the development of Japanese American painting that resonate broadly through the careers of many others. Chiura Obata's *Setting Sun* exemplifies a tendency in the prewar years to deliver accentuated signs of Japan, and this proved to be an effective way to contend with a social environment defined by a fascination for a particular view of Japanese aesthetics as well as anti-Asian racism. Both Miné Okubo and Yasuo Kuniyoshi rejected Obata's recommendation to seek Japanese aesthetic solutions for racism in America, and both excelled in their practice of mainstream styles of American art in their day. Although their art typically avoided Japanese referentiality, both Okubo and Kuniyoshi were chosen for the task of visualizing notions of "Japan" on account of their race, and both obliged by producing racialized Japanese images. Working in the milieu of second-generation Abstract Expressionism at a time when Japanese culture was a popular interest among many Americans, Mike Kanemitsu responded by investigating relationships between abstraction and calligraphy. Nonetheless, he veiled the presence of Asian content in his work, perhaps to avoid the appearance of catering to an exoticizing American taste for Asia. This veiling was more opaque in Kanemitsu's abstractions in oil on canvas than his works in sumi on paper, a medium that exposed tensions produced by his position between the Japanese and American art worlds.

As suggested at the outset, recent studies of Asian American art history have shifted away from earlier preferences for works manifesting "Asian tradition" in favor of greater sympathy for works that omit Asian references. But one lesson to be drawn from the case studies discussed here is that each of the three modes of Asian referentiality possessed potential gains and risks. Perhaps the best path for future studies of Asian American art of the mid-twentieth century is to put aside preferences—whether for art that references Asia overtly, covertly, or not at all—and recognize that each of these modes of painting was created under difficult circumstances of East–West race thinking, and each held great potential to be art that is beautiful, original, or admirable for its social content or critical stance.

Notes

1. Jeffrey Wechsler, "From Asian Traditions to Modern Expressions: Abstract Art by Asian Americans, 1945–1970," in *Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions: Asian American Artists and Abstraction, 1945–1970*, ed. Jeffrey Wechsler (New York: Harry N. Abrams, in association with the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, 1997), 89.

2. Gordon H. Chang, "Emerging from the Shadows: The Visual Arts and Asian American History," foreword to *Asian American Art: A History, 1850–1970*, ed. Gordon H. Chang, Mark Dean Johnson, and Paul J. Karlstrom (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), x.
3. Elaine H. Kim, "Interstitial Subjects" in Elaine H. Kim, Margo Machida, and Sharon Mizota, *Fresh Talk/ Daring Gazes: Conversations on Asian American Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 36.
4. Gordon H. Chang, "Deployments, Engagements, Obliterations: Asian American Artists and World War II," in Chang et al., *Asian American Art*, 111–39. This essay uses the term "Japanese American artist" to refer to artists who immigrated to the United States from Japan or whose ancestry was partly or wholly Japanese.
5. Quoted in *Chiura Obata: California Art Research*, ed. Gene Hailey, vol. 20, part 2 (WPA Project, 1937), 149.
6. Quoted in Shimojima Tetsurô, *Samurai to Kariforunia: ikyô no Nihon gaka Obata Chiura* (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 2000), 151.
7. Janice T. Driesbach and Susan Landauer, *Obata's Yosemite: The Art and Letters of Chiura Obata from His Trip to the High Sierra in 1927* (Yosemite Association, 1993), 48.
8. Obata's *Sunset, Water Tower, Topaz* is illustrated in Karin Higa, *The View from Within: Japanese American Art from the Internment Camps, 1942–1945* (Los Angeles: Japanese American National Museum, 1992), 25.
9. Quoted by Shimojima, *Samurai to Kariforunia*, 159.
10. Betty La Duke, "On the Road: The Life of Miné Okubo," *Art Education* 40, no. 3 (1987): 46. doi:10.2307/3193056.
11. Mark Dean Johnson, in *Asian | American | Modern Art, Shifting Currents 1900–1970*, ed. Daniel Cornell and Mark Dean Johnson (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 62.
12. Rosamund Frost, "Kuniyoshi, American of Two Decades" *Art News* 41, no. 7 (15–31 May 1942): 19.
13. For the contextualization of Kuniyoshi's painting in contemporaneous Japanese art, see *Kiki no jidai to kaiga, 1930–1945 (Painting in Crisis, 1930–1945)*, ed. Kenichirô Makino and Hidenobu Kujirai, partial trans. by Keiko Katsuya (Nagoya: Aichi Ken Bijutsukan, 1999).
14. Chang, "Deployments, Engagements, Obliterations," 118.
15. ShiPu Wang, "Japan against Japan: U.S. Propaganda and Yasuo Kuniyoshi's Identity Crisis," *American Art* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 35. doi: 10.1086/587915.
16. Frost, "Kuniyoshi, American of Two Decades," 25.
17. Harry Salpeter, "Yasuo Kuniyoshi: Artists' Artist," *Esquire* 7, no. 4 (April 1937): 113.
18. Anne Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), 73–74.
19. Miné Okubo, quoted in Deborah Gesensway and Mindy Roseman, *Beyond Words: Images from America's Concentration Camps* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1987), 74.
20. See Bert Winther-Tamaki, "Calligraphic & Metaphysical: Abstract Expressions," in *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989*, ed. Alexandra Munroe (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2009), 145–57.
21. See Kanemitsu's comment in interview with Matsumi Kanemitsu by Marjorie J. Rogers, editor-interviewer, UCLA Oral History Program, (for Los Angeles Art Community: Group Portrait, tape II, side one, January 14, 1976, 67); online at Calisphere <http://content.cdlib.org/view?docId=ft729006sg&doc.view=frames&chunk.id=d0e141&toc.depth=1&toc.id=&brand=calisphere&query=reinhardt>.
22. Wechsler, *Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions*, 75.
23. See William Hemmerdinger, *Matsumi Kanemitsu: Works in Black and White, 1958–1988* (Los Angeles: Japanese-American Cultural and Community Center, 1988).
24. Fujieda Teruo, "Maiku Kanemitsu ni tsuite no geijutsu-teki na omoide" in *Kanemitsu Matsumi* (National Museum of Art, Osaka, 1998), 5.
25. Kanemitsu in Paul Jenkins, Jules Langsner, and Kanemitsu Matsumi, "Gendai bijutsu: Amerika to Nihon o megutte, zadankai," *Mizue* 718 (December 1964): 12.