



## **Our Past Acclaims Our Future: Japanese-American Artists Respond To the American Experience Roger Shimomura, Sansei.**

Curriculum Unit 00.04.03  
by Donna Frederick-Neznek

“A Jap’s a Jap, They are a dangerous element... It makes no difference whether he is an American citizen...You can’t change him by giving him a piece of paper.”  
- Lt. Gen. John L. Dewitt, Commander of the Western Defense Zone”, 1942

“We know now that what we should have known then - not only was the evacuation wrong, but Japanese-Americans were and are loyal Americans” - President Gerald Ford, 1975

### **Introduction**

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This curriculum unit was developed as an antidote to ignorance and racism and to address and enhance the understanding of the reality of our collective lives. My goals are rooted in the fundamental purpose of challenging my students to recognize one of the most frightening abuses of state power in the history of the United States: the Japanese Internment and the role of society played in perpetuating the isolation and devaluation of Japanese American culture. Through the work of visual artist Roger Shimomura. I will demonstrate to my students that acculturation was not an obstacle for Japanese American artists who visually articulated a cross cultural identity. Shimomura is an American artist of Japanese ancestry who has commemorated his family’s internment during World War II. He combines Japanese literary tradition with pop-art images in idioms of the popular genre called Ukiyo-e (pictures of the floating world) as he concomitantly examines his relationship between his American identity and his Japanese heritage.

“Our Past Acclaims Our Future: Japanese-American Artists Respond To The American Experience: Roger Shimomura, Sansei.” is intended for my visual arts students and interdisciplinary classes at Cooperative Arts &

Humanities Magnet High School. "The CO-OP," as the school is known, is a visual and performing arts interdistrict high school in New Haven, Connecticut. It offers a quality arts-focused curriculum within the context of a comprehensive college preparation program. Our student body reflects the diversity of Greater New Haven. 70% of our students (mostly minority) are from New Haven and 30% (mostly majority) are from the participating surrounding suburban districts. As a magnet school, our goals are for the purpose of reducing minority isolation and addressing diversity within the classroom, student body and the community. This curriculum unit is in concert with these goals. Additionally, as enrollment increases our school will undoubtedly see an increase in Japanese-American enrollment. This unit will introduce students to the work of Roger Shimomura, a Japanese-American visual artist, whose vision has too often been neglected in our curriculums. It will hopefully empower students to recognize social injustice and advocate for the constitutional rights of every one.

As a teacher at "The Co-op," I am committed to meeting the needs of each student and challenging them beyond the parameters of the curriculum. At "The Co-op," we are rather fortunate. Our school provides an enriched, stimulating environment where individuality is cherished and respect for differences is practiced. Students have the opportunity to learn and celebrate human differences and commonalities through our curriculum. Each year, students at "The Co-op" participate in a myriad of activities designed to foster positive interpersonal relationships amongst members of diverse groups in the classroom and to strengthen each student's self-concept. We challenge our students with an understanding and appreciation of our pluralistic society. This unit is dedicated to all the idealists who believe in the engagement of strategies that enhance communication, develop cross-cultural understanding and awareness and lead to more positive learning outcomes.

## **Historical Background: JAPANESE IMMIGRATION**

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The starting point of this unit is the Japanese immigrant experience which is an integral part of our overall national history and an important piece of America's multi-ethnic mosaic. In 1639, and for nearly two centuries thereafter the Japanese government effectively restricted travel abroad by adopting a "closed door" policy. Japanese citizens were forbidden to travel. Japan's presence in North America was first felt in Hawaii. Manjiro Nakihara, a shipwrecked sailor, was rescued by a U.S. vessel. He became the first Japanese to enter the U.S. in 1843. Hawaii at that time was not part of the United States.

Immigration from Japan began in 1885 after the Japanese government relaxed its restriction on immigration. This was due partly to the economic depression Japan was experiencing and the previously established trade and diplomatic relations with the U.S. of 1854. Severe economic hardships engulfed the population; particularly hardest hit were the farmers. In 1885, 944 migrants arrived on "The City of Tokio" to work as laborers on the sugar plantations. This was soon followed by a large increase of Japanese immigrants to the U.S.

Significantly the reasons for this influx of immigrants was due to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act (the first law to exclude immigrants based on race or nationality) that was passed by the U.S. Congress banning immigration from China which resulted in labor shortages in the western part of the U.S. and Japan's Immigrants Protection Law Of 1896 which required each immigrant to insure sponsorship for their financial support in the country of their destination. Soon U.S. labor contractors implemented policy directly with immigration companies in Japan to guarantee financial assistance and employment in the US. This marketing

strategy proved highly effective.

## THE ISSEI-THE FIRST GENERATION

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The Issei, the first generation who left Japan starting in the late 1880's to come to the U.S., were lured by tales of wealth and plentiful employment. Once they arrived, the Issei found conditions to have been exaggerated. They had been told they could gain entry to America, secure good jobs, and save a lot of money and be able to return to Japan and live the good life. Reality proved to be another matter.

Although the remuneration was considerably higher than in Japan, the hours were longer and conditions poor to substandard. The types of employment found by the Issei were primarily in farming, factories, fisheries, railways, canneries and plant nurseries which came with the risks of accidents and health problems. Despite these conditions, the Issei persevered and made important contributions in agricultural and aquacultural industries despite discrimination and xenophobic editorials over the years warning of "The Japanese Invasion" and "The Yellow Peril" (racist terror of alien cultures, sexual anxieties and the belief that the West will be overpowered and enveloped by the irresistible, dark, occult forces of the East., Marchetti, 64) In addition to "official entry" other Issei arrived as stowaways on ships destined for the U.S. Upon approach to U.S. waters they would jump ship and swim to shore. This unorthodox practice was called "smuggling in."

The Issei started their lives at the bottom of the economic and social ladder facing hardship, hostility, prejudice and economic discrimination. Japanese immigrants faced unique legal restrictions based on their race that limited their opportunity to own and lease land, denied them access to citizenship and the ability to develop and exercise political power. As the Issei adjusted to their new lives in America, restrictions to immigration increased and produced major effects in U.S.-Japan relations. Japan, under pressure from the United States, agreed to restrict additional immigration. "The Gentlemen's Agreement" prohibited immigration of Japanese laborers but allowed family members to join their families in the U.S. This loophole led to the influx of "picture brides." This produced an innovation in the traditional practice of arranged marriage.

Many Issei men, due to the shortage of Japanese women in the U.S., sought to bring Japanese women to America (anti-miscegenation laws precluded the possibility of inter-marriage and because in-group marriage was preferred in Japanese culture). Issei men followed the custom of arranged marriages in which parents, relatives and friends acted as marriage brokers. The Issei men would choose their prospective wives through an exchange of correspondence and photographs. The new brides arrived having experienced the same conditions their prospective husbands had earlier with the dream of returning one day to Japan. Later in 1920, newspapers and politicians launched a campaign against the "picture brides" and as a consequence Japan was to later cease the issuance of passports to them.) Like the men, the women soon realized life in America was not easy. It demanded long hours, living in overcrowded conditions or in rooms off the family business. And yet despite these obstacles, the Issei, in response to the hostility of the majority population which had forced them to live in social isolation, formed organizations and established their own religions, building Shinto and Buddhist temples as families held firmly together and became part of the American landscape. The dream of returning to Japan became elusive and the offspring of the Issei, American citizens by birth became the second generation of Japanese in America.

## THE NISEI- THE FIRST AMERICAN BORN GENERATION

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The Nisei were the first generation of Japanese descent to be born and receive their entire education in America. This generation reflected the attitude and cultural heritage of both Japan and the U.S. The Nisei worked as generations of immigrants before them along side their parents in pursuit of the American Dream. After attending the local public schools, young Nisei helped on family farms, in the storefront businesses and in the timber mills. Preservation of their mother language and culture was reinforced by attending Japanese language schools and by being members of the audience at Japanese cultural plays.

The Kibei, although Nisei, were not raised in America. They had been sent for their schooling to Japan and had returned with an education designed for success within the Japanese community, a pattern that then segregated them from the majority society. Psychologically the Kibei were more allied to the attitudes and culture of native Japan than their American born peers. The Kibei exhibited the classic symptoms of being caught between two cultures. They found difficulty fitting in; the Nisei looked down on them as being “too Japanese” (they enunciated English with a Japanese accent) and their behavior reflected mannerisms more befitting Japan than America, They were unable to bridge the duality of identity or communicate to their American educated peers, segregated from community Nisei or non-Japanese . But as American citizens they weren’t considered Japanese nationals either.

The Nisei witnessed and were subject to blatant discrimination as were their parents, but for many it was very difficult to accept these practices when they were American citizens by birth. With this new generation came a growing commitment to communal unity. The Nisei formed organizations before WWII to assert their citizenship and to give voice to the rights of both Kibei and Issei. The Human Loyalty League was organized in San Francisco and the Progressive Citizen League in Seattle. In 1939 the two organizations merged to become the Japanese American Citizens League, comprised of about half of all Japanese living in America. The goal of the JACL was to fight racism and promote Americanism.

Japanese Americans actively began to assert their rights as Americans. Although the organization was still in its infancy and it was unable to succeed in improving the socio- economic conditions of the Nisei before the war. It did provide an association separate from the Issei. After the attack by Japan on Pearl Harbor, Dec 7, 1941, the Japanese American community found itself the target of resentment and suspicion. Inciting the majority population to demand the removal of all persons of Japanese ancestry. Paranoia erupted about attacks by Japanese naval forces on the West Coast. Disregarding the denouncement by Japanese Americans of the attack on Pearl Harbor, public, political and media pressure escalated to remove the Japanese from the West coast.

The commander of the Western Defense Command, Lt. General John Dewitt encouraged all people of Japanese descent to “voluntarily evacuate the coast and move to the designated areas in Washington, California, Oregon and Arizona. This voluntary settlement failed as fewer than 5,000 people (one out of 110,000) left. On February 13, 1942, Dewitt recommended to the War department and to President Roosevelt the military necessity for removal of the Japanese American people. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 allowing military authorities to exclude anyone from anywhere without trial or hearings. This order sets the stage for the unconstitutional mass removal and incarceration of 120,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry. This decree was to prevent sabotage and espionage, but Roosevelt knew it would be used to remove people of Japanese descent from the West coast. This was followed the next month (March 24,1942) by the First Civilian Exclusion Order for Bainbridge Island near Seattle, which forced Japanese

families to move within one week. The Nisei were outraged at the evacuation order, but the JACL directed its members to obey the order peacefully. Japanese American families from spring to fall were removed neighborhood by neighborhood up and down the West coast. Many would spend the war years in camps.

The Japanese American community, especially the Nisei, was deeply hurt by the suspicions of their fellow Americans. All their lives they had thought of themselves as Americans and now suddenly they had become the enemy. Patriotic Americans, the Nisei actively participated in the civilian branch of the Wartime Civil Control Administration as interpreters and soldiers in addition to combat in the Pacific and European theaters. Japanese American sacrifices during the war were acknowledged by President Ford in 1975 with a proclamation titled "The American Promise." He stated, "We know now that what we should have known then-not only was the evacuation wrong, but Japanese Americans were and are loyal Americans".

## **THE SANSEI: THE THIRD GENERATION**

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"Recognizing the great injustice that took place, they carry with them the legacy of their parent's internment. Time has not severed the psychological ties to events that preceded them, nor has the fact that their parents will not openly discuss the internment. On the contrary, the vast majority of Sansei, feel that the incarceration has affected their lives in significant ways - (Donna K. Nagata, Legacy of Injustice, 1993)

Generally, the Sansei are baby boomers and their history has yet to be written. Some of the older Sansei were born in the internment camps and may not remember those dark years enclosed behind barbed wire fences. Very few Sansei know the details of their parent's experiences in the internment centers or in the military or civil service. Many, if not nearly all Nisei parents were ashamed by their war time experiences, or angry or reticent about sharing their memories, but slowly the veil is being lifted.

With little official documentation or traditional textbooks about internment, the children of the Nisei have had to ask their parents about the void in their heritage and culture.

This dialogue between the two generations helped to bring about a movement in the 1970's to rectify the wrongs. There was initial opposition from some veterans groups and others. With time the redress movement gained support in Congress. On February 19, 1976, President Ford signed Proclamation 4177 which referred to the evacuation as a "national mistake." It was not a formal apology but the first step in healing wounds. Congress established the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. A check of \$20,000 was issued to each survivor of the internment centers. Although in the 1988, Civil Liberties Act, President Reagan made a formal apology to all former internees and their descendants, his efforts can never repair the psycho historical damage that was done.

## **YONSEI (Generation X ) : THE FOURTH GENERATION**

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It's too early to summarize this post Baby-Boom generation. Many are struggling to find a new consensus that lies somewhere between the secular permissiveness of the left and the cultural intolerance of the right. The challenges of multiculturalism in today's society may be addressed through their actions. Either way, this generation has yet to be judged and permanently labeled by its legacy.

## **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: THE 1930's and 1940's**

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### **THE MEDIA AND JAPANESE AMERICAN STEREOTYPING**

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In contrast to ideologies of American communities being portrayed as great melting pots, Americans have historically aligned themselves along racial and ethnic divisions. This has flourished in stereotypes of practically all non-majority members in the media. Japanese-Americans have been no exception. Characterizations of Japanese-Americans in the media often fail to make distinctions between Japanese, Japanese-Americans, Asians and Asian Americans. Consequently, attitudes towards Japanese-Americans have been heavily influenced by portrayals of all Asians.

The first Asians to come to America in significant numbers were Chinese laborers. The early depictions emphasized slant-eyes, buckteeth and yellow skin. This representation reinforced the notion of "otherness." Anti-Asian bias was a major reason behind immigration exclusion acts directed first at the Chinese, then the Japanese. Rather than the media acknowledging the difference between Asian cultures, American representation of Asians often borrowed indiscriminately from all cultures. All the dozens of Asians and Pacific Island cultures are lumped together into one homogeneous group identity. Even the Korean and Vietnamese women in the late 1950's-70's were commonly called "Mama San" despite the Japanese American origins of the term. Characterizations of Japanese-Americans (and all Asians) in the media of the 1920's and 1930's as "vicious, rat-like sneaks, part of a world-wide "yellow peril" appears to have been one of the reasons for the internment.

Amy Kashiwabara in "Vanishing Son: The Appearance, Disappearance, and Assimilation of the Asian-American Male in American Mainstream Media (1996) states "The visceral hatred of the Japanese inevitably tapped into yellow peril sentiments before the turn of the century which had been directed mainly against the Chinese". In early movies, attached to the assignment of being Japanese came the implication of duplicity, violence and untrustworthiness appearing as Japanese traits, thus, sending the message that Asians, particularly Japanese men could not be trusted, no matter how Americanized they seem. This furthered the notion that Japanese-American men were even more dangerous than unassimilated ones because they could deceive people into trusting them. Persistent in early media was the idea of the diabolical Japanese that continually plotted the destruction of America in general and white women in particular. The 1946 film, "The Yellow Menace," showed attempted Japanese domination. The 1940's images on film were rife with scenes of Japanese torturing and abusing white people. The majority of Americans in the '40's were intimately introduced to the Japanese in the context of war and violence at the movies, newspaper editorials, propaganda posters (\*scan example) and later on in the 1950's on television. Films from 1942 included "Prisoner of Japan," "Remember Pearl Harbor,"



and “ Secret Agent of Japan.”

The stereotype created of Japanese men as military foes combined nationalism with racism. Since their physique has always been considered small, the danger from the Japanese was perceived to come from the Japanese Superman, possessed of uncanny discipline and fighting skills. Films, often punctuated with racial slurs, were quick to paint Japan’s treachery in battle, its brutality, and disregard for international rules of war. These stereotypic images carried over to Japanese-American men outside the context of the war. Pearl Harbor and the war years enabled Hollywood to revive the yellow peril characteristics and the fear of miscegenation. By the end of the war, Americans had learned to associate brutality and treachery with a Japanese face.

Caricatures of the Japanese were found in the cartoons of the period. Warner Brothers, Looney Tunes, created a duck version of “The Jap” who had glasses, buckteeth and cries “oh sorry, sorry, sorry” (with slurred r’s). They also created “Tokio Jokio” and “Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips.” The buck-toothed Japanese became a standard cartoon figure. Max Fleischer created a Popeye the Sailor cartoon entitled “You’re A Sap, Mr. Jap”, which is a song Popeye sings over and over. This cartoon showed the Japanese deceiving Popeye, causing him to cry out righteously: “Double-Crossing Japansies”

The portrayal of women during this period fared no better. The common stereotype was the “Dragon Lady,” “Geisha Girl,” and “Tokyo Rose,” who had a penchant for White men, dressed in tight dresses, bodies on display. They are sly, cruel, exotic sex objects, or subservient and hardworking. Shirley Geok-Lin Lim, in “Feminist and Ethnic Literary Theories in Asian American Literature” comments on how “the image of Japanese-American women usually remains on the margin, invisible, mute or constrained to limited stereotypic images of passion.” The media played on these stereotypes to sell misleading images to audiences, who wanted entertainment that was different from their normal lives and were willing to see and accept anything exotic. The stereotypes of Japanese and Japanese-American women were pervasive in the media because the media perpetuated these stereotypes through their portrayal of Japanese and Japanese-Americans. Unfortunately, for some, they still carry over in the perceptions of the American people.

Japanese-Americans are challenging the stereotypical images of the past and have made a voice for themselves in American society. They are fighting against the persistent racism and sexism against themselves by establishing a unifying identity as Americans and monitoring the media’s representations. Although ethnic stereotyping is less common today than it was in the last century, it persists. The images are not so obviously offensive; consequently, many people do not recognize them as stereotypes.

## **SHIFTING BOUNDARIES: ART AND LIFE IN AMERICA**

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The Japanese-American artistic response has undergone a transformation along with the culture of the United States. Many artists express the difficulty of achieving meaningful dialogue and communication amongst racial, ethnic and cultural groups in our country, which is in flux due to economic, political and social changes. There is a new vernacular which has emerged within the culture of Japanese-American artists. In the past Japanese-American artistic response has too often been shaped, canonized and colonized by the bureaucratic elites in the arts community. Many Japanese-American artists were only seen as tokens, minority members fulfilling affirmative action slots, or their talents were wasted to amuse those with enough money to buy the “exotic” in the U.S. In the 1990’s, Japanese-American artists were increasingly articulating their own non-elite culture, a new culture that has grown out of a multi-American view that addresses important topics on the

condition of their race, ethnicity, gender and other issues through a variety of media. In their attempt to reconcile two divergent cultural traditions, they have explored their relationship to mainstream American culture as both outside observers (taking the role of commentators on cross-cultural connections and confrontations) and active participants.

Japanese-American visual expression has yet no theories and no master narrative. It is a youthful, amorphous medium that is still trying to find its own identity. Artists represent visually an array of vibrant, distinctive modes of expression that permeate a variety of fields and disciplines. It manifests itself in conversations amongst artists, historians, film scholars, theorists, phenomenologists and anthropologists. The construction of Japanese-American artistic production is thus interdisciplinary, as it responds to art, history, literature, media and culture. Artists are deliberately engaging in their craftsmanship the use of imagery and metaphor to illuminate content that is subject to many possible interpretations, highlighting aspects of post modern art that reveal some of their deepest concerns today: the nature of personal identity and social responsibility in our pluralistic society, and the “truth” of history.

Japanese-American visual expression has reconfigured structures of identity. Artists blend modernism with accepted histories to create responses of radical openness to reveal the racial and media systems of control. Many art products challenge the social perceptions of the role of truth, lies and their consequences through transformation and adaptation of imagery and media. The resulting artworks have become vehicles of cultural assimilation and differentiation, telling the stories that risk being forgotten of a past that has become increasingly valued, and a present that is accessible to larger audiences, in an attempt to present a broader spectrum of American cultural production.

Acrimonious treatment and incarceration has been documented by Margo Machida in “A View From Within, Japanese American Art From The Internment Camps 1942-1945.” She examined the art created by the incarcerated Japanese-Americans. She “contextualizes the artistic expression and personal visions created during the years of hardship and isolation. These images range from protest to an assembly of representations of anger then hope. The beauty which emerged in these circumstances were astounding. In spite the dark isolation reinforced by the barbed wire and armed guards, the inhabitants of the camps managed to view their art as a positive way to escape the pain of incarceration. Some of the art shows the internee’s confusion between the loyalty to the U.S. and their feelings of betrayal and hatred for being treated as aliens in their own country. It also showed the pride they felt within and their deeply rooted connection to their culture and their past.”

Sociologically, as a consequence of devaluation by the dominate culture, Japanese-Americans historically functioned as a peculiar kind of “other” (amongst other others) in the symbolic economy of America. They are now being held up as the “model minority” to prove the viability of American egalitarian ideals. Many Japanese-American artists have a common stake in how they address their lives within their positions in this country. The acculturation (a process by which continuous contact between two or more distinct societies causes cultural change) of Japanese ancestry with American experience and needs has been subjected to marginalization and isolation, resulting in an identity that is characterized by complexity and contradiction. Although Japanese-Americans were not overtly forced into the American way of life (as Africans, Mexicans and Native Americans), they possessed established cultural norms from Japan and participated culturally on separate and unequal terms. Japanese-Americans were not publicly intimidated by, nor did they feel their culture was robbed or undermined by, the dominant society. Instead, they developed a dual cultural frame of reference, one derived from their home ancestry and the other derived from their new host society. They have both discovered and invented homelands for themselves. There has been a confusion of identity for many



Japanese-Americans, a century and a half after arrival in America. Americans of Japanese ancestry still remain “foreigners” in their homeland. “As Asians they have never been fully accepted in America” according to K.W. Lee an observer of Asian American life. “Whether their ancestors have been here four or five generations, they are still held as foreigners. It is as if you can never become full-blooded American citizens as long as you have Asian features.” In the development of modern and post modern art Japanese-American visual art expression has both energized the field of American art and eroded its former Euroamerocentric integrity in changing fundamental conceptions of what it is to be an American, by producing art that can both catalyze and cauterize.

In the early 1980’s the presence of Japanese-Americans (and collectively all Asian Americans) as artists was acknowledged on a national stage. Innovative and ambitious studies and exhibitions appeared in significant numbers during the last decades, and developments in American art commanded more attention within the discipline of art history as a whole. This growth has been stimulated by an expansiveness and liberality that has blurred the boundaries of the field and has revealed the visual culture of the United States to be a rich and complex infusion that tells us more about an America we recognize and share than about any of the separate groups a particular artist might seem to represent. Many artworks are constructed out of social interactions that are confirmed as being important through deconstruction (taking apart, particularly from the standpoint of motive or agenda) and reconstruction (or interpretation) by the artist’s position, in which case their reconstruction of the same material will inevitably be different. There is an attempt to reveal the existence of paradoxical themes, allusions to discrepant periods in history or cultural contradictions, hidden within the artwork. The relationship between Japanese-American art and the changing society around it has reached beneath the surface of the stereotypical Japanese- American image of passive acceptance “gamman” (endurance) “shikata ga nai” (it cannot be helped) and survival to reflect on all kinds of crosscurrents in American culture. Japanese-American artists frequently contend with the emotional dimension of their changing circumstances in America as they search for new meanings and definitions that will bestow sense and clarity on their altered lives

Mitsuo Toshida, who came to America after WW II, was unprepared for the difficulty in acclimating to his new life in New York. In “LABYRINTH OF SOLITUDE,” 1987, he represents the dislocation he experienced by employing an image of Frankenstein the monster (a theme of transformation) to articulate his distress and loneliness at a time when he most wanted to fit in, to be understood and accepted. Using paired motifs, one of the monster’s face, “arrayed sequentially like separate frames in an unreeling film and the other a geometric grid (an allusion to the fact that to an initiated Asian- even one from a society as supposedly Westernized as Japan- life in America can seem like an unfathomable maze), Toshida evokes the estrangement and incomprehension he experienced during a period of uneasy solitude. Thus, the artist employs the monster’s image not to identify with the fictional creature’s rampaging anger but because in its halting attempts to reach out to those it met after escaping its creator, it found itself misjudged and ultimately persecuted” The Frankenstein monster became a personal metaphor for Toshida’s isolation from other members of society in his difficult adaption to America. Toshida confronted his growing sense of vulnerability after eight years of living in America when he contemplated the possibility that he might not be able to fully reintegrate himself into Japanese society should he ever return to Japan.

In “Shifted Center,” 1987, he described his living in the United States as a “drama of alienation and assimilation.” He questioned and tried to unravel what it meant to consider himself a Japanese who was no longer “completely Japanese, concomitantly, he was confused about the meaning of being American. Margo Machida in “Identities in Contemporary Asian American Art” describes “Shifted Center” as “a mazelike form signifying Toshida’s confusion in an adopted culture, bracketed by mirror images of an Asian applying

theatrical makeup (indicative of the pressure the artist feels to put on a 'face' appropriate to his new society). Below, Toshida includes a poignant abstract motif in which a small square, sundered from a far larger one, conveying what it had meant for him to make the uneasy shift, laden with the potential for isolation, from a culture that greatly values group identity to one centered on the primacy of the individual."

Takako Nagai , was born in Japan and came to America as a nineteen year old to study. But returning to Japan after having spent only three year in the West; she experienced dislocation. She recalls "when I went back to Tokyo I realized my psychology had changed. After living in this (American) culture my soul was no longer Japanese." She returned to the U.S. and became a permanent resident. Nagai represents her struggle for acculturation/assimilation and her desire to unify East and West -past and present - in "Self-Portrait, 1990." (Oil and mixed media on canvas) She reveals her disconcertion through the image of a kimono, (traditional Japan) engulfed in flames. She painted the cultural emblem embodying the continuity of her heritage as a Japanese woman on a ground of pages torn from American newspapers. Nagai emphasized her desire to anchor her changing identity in her newly naturalized country. Although she was intent in her determination to adjust to America, her anxiety is evident in the inscription of Japanese calligraphy asking, "Who knows how my road ought to be/Who knows how my life ends up?"

## **CROSSCURRENTS IN AMERICA ART AND IDENTITY:**

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The contemporary and post-modern artists of today are calling attention to themselves as they appropriate the experience of "difference and otherness" in order to provide themselves with oppositional historical meaning, legitimacy and immediacy. They have expanded their dialogues to include meaningful connection between their authentic experiences and critical thinking about aesthetics and culture to offer new insight, in addition, to challenging theoretical hegemony.

During the Seventies, many artists were influenced by modern perspectives addressing issues of identity. Today the dialogue incorporates the voices of the displaced, marginalized, exploited and oppressed communities. Through the work of artists such as Dinh Le, Betye and Alison Saar, Hung Li, Jaune Quick-to See Smith, and Maria Gutierrez , we are seeing work that creates longing for insight and strategies for change that can renew spirits and reconstruct grounds for their collective experiences.

Each artist in his or her own way has addressed and responded to continued displacement, loss of a sense of grounding and profound alienation. They have restored cultural difference to the minds of mainstream America and created immanence which resonates in luminosity, texture, color and light. They also offer the viewer an aesthetic whose narrative at the same time challenges out dated views and compel a rethinking of how we define society's others.

## **ROGER SHIMOMURA, SANSEI**

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Roger Shimomura is a Seattle born Japanese-American artist who creates innovative work inspired by his ethnic heritage. He deals with the social issues of race relations and cultural interface. His works are an aesthetic and political comparison between contemporary America and traditional Japan. He depicts his

bicultural heritage in paintings and performance pieces that derive from his ironic mix, or complicated “layering” of Japanese imagery and popular American culture, building overlapping references to personal history, art history, pop culture, and current events.

Through deconstruction and reconstruction, his intentions are revealed in subtle and political ways. His early paintings and serigraphs presented humorous vignettes combining Hollywood icons and traditional stock characters, geishas and samurais to illustrate cultural overlays and distinctions that define everyday life. Kentucky Fried Chicken and sushi, cocktails and kimonos dramatize the double consciousness many “hyphenated” Americans feel, when society so often dwells on their otherness rather than their identity as Americans, even after several generations in the United States.

Shimomura uses comic juxtapositions placing all the players whether European, Asian or other origin, in humorous settings, where the viewers can laugh together at their collective prejudices and pretensions.

Lucy Lippard, in *Mixed Blessings*, writing about “Untitled, 1985, states “If Shimomura’s imagery is initially amusing- a cacophony of Disney and samurai, Superman and geishas, chopsticks and surfboards- there is a hidden agenda: a brown hand sprays Snow White with an aerosol can; a chain breaks across the face of a Kabuki player; a brushstroke of brown paint attacks the very pale skin of a “typical American teenager.” The multiple scenes in this untitled work are overseen by a silhouetted “FBI man” at the upper right, while on the lower left sitting glumly in a “cell” made of traditional Japanese screens, a perhaps revolutionary Pinocchio isn’t using his camera or rifle. (Outside, a warplane moves by and his alter ego runs past.) Donald Duck has entangled a samurai in a phallic garden hose and Wonder woman appears interested in a Japanese woman, ignoring the glaring male at the front of the painting. Shimomura’s imagery is intentionally ambiguous, but the meeting of East and West in full stereotype, in spite of themselves, seems to be his theme. His intricate compositions also have their source of viewpoint and stylization in both cultures.”

Shimomura states his early “ paintings and serigraphs... were inspired from all the toy stuff I was collecting.. They were large acrylic paintings that contained such things as Buck Rogers’ space ship, the Big Bad Wolf, Dick Tracy, Minnie Mouse, et al... At that point... I realized the only difference between Minnie Mouse and one of Utamaro’s beauties was race.” Shimomura was influenced by pop art images created by the artists Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol, in addition to comic book images which later inspired him to begin making assemblage pieces.

The combination of Ukiyo-e and these art forms can be seen in the painting “Valeda Daze.” Shimomura explains: “ Valeda Daze is a painting with references to comic book images. Valeda is a Greek word meaning wise woman. Valeda goes back to my college days in the late 1950s, and early 1960s, when the sorority system at the University of Washington was for whites only. Persons of color that wanted to have similar experiences had to form their own sororities that were racially directed. Japanese Americans had one for men called Synkoa and for women it was called Valeda.

The triptych format is a metaphor for three generations of Japanese American; Issei, Nisei, and Sansei. The idea was that on the left I’d have a very Japanese view of things, on the right a very white American view and in the middle a mixture of the two cultures.” In the “Yellow No Same” series , he depicts his observation of a double-sided prejudice in American society in which all Asians are lumped into one ethnically interchangeable group. Each image in the series contrasts a male figure taken from Japanese woodblock prints with images of Japanese-Americans in the Minoka camp where Shimomura and his family were interned from 1942-1944. Separating the figures from each of these worlds are discrete lines of barbed wire silhouetted in black. Shimomura states, “To most non-Asians in this country, the differences between the Japanese, Chinese and

other Asian people are either indistinguishable or immaterial. During World War II, this insensitivity was expressed by their failure to recognize the differences between the Japanese people and Americans of Japanese descent. Today, history is being forced to admit the gravity of this error of judgment.” (March 1992)

Shimomura’s intellectual exploration has led him to a more profound understanding of his complex personal history and its relevance to his life as an artist. Concomitant with his shift away from American Pop icons towards Japanese inspired imagery, he was reintroduced with his own background. Using his grandmother’s diaries and his own reflections, he created the “Minidoka” and “An American Diary” series of paintings, a process which allowed Shimomura to reclaim the Japanese part of his heritage and to reconcile it with his upbringing and orientation in America.

After his grandparent’s death, he discovered a rich collection of family documents and memorabilia that inspired him to examine their lives as immigrants and their years of internment. “ The diaries from the war years proved to especially evocative” Shimomura has explained, “inspiring in him both the desire to commemorate this reprehensible period in our nation’s history and to share its lessons with a new generation of Americans.” The paintings are flat, hard-edged forms and bright colors derived from the Pop Art idiom. Japanese motifs and decorative forms are combined with the more mundane world of 1940’s America. A radio, an apple pie, a Bible, and a silhouette of Superman are all depicted. This image of Superman, normally benign, appears to threaten his meditating grandmother. The painting’s attractiveness belies its serious content. Shimomura states the “dichotomy between craft and subject is probably appropriate, like memory brought back to focus.”

Shimomura’s works of art convey a sense of history, of a past still very real to many Japanese-Americans. Through the artwork, the history of the Japanese-American people is given a more immediate sense of reality, making it accessible to the understanding post-modern imagery. His images allow us to confront (often in painful recognition) and embrace another’s ethnicity.

## **Artist’s Story by Roger Shimomura reprinted with permission of the author.**

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My grandmother Toka Shimomura came to this country in 1912 to marry my grandfather, who had been living in the Pacific Northwest since 1906. Toku, who was a decorated nurse in the Japan Imperial Navy, became a licensed midwife of the State of Washington and went on to deliver more than 1,000 babies in the Greater Seattle area. She came out of retirement on June 26, 1939, to deliver me in the house that my parents lived in, located in Seattle’s Central District.

During World War II, after Japanese airplanes had bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, our family was forcibly relocated by the U.S. government to the Puyallup State Fairgrounds to live temporarily, while permanent concentration camps for 120,000 Japanese Americans were being built at 10 locations across the country. My very first recollection of life was my third birthday. I recall walking in and out of the temporary shelter that we occupied in Puyallup, proudly telling everyone that I was three years old. Shortly after that, our family along with more than 10,000 other

Japanese Americans from the Seattle area, were moved to a desolate site in southern Idaho, surrounded by barbed wire and guard towers with machine guns pointed at us. Our camp was called Camp Minidoka.

Prior to the time of the evacuation, my father had been working as a pharmacist at Joseph Hart Pharmacy in downtown Seattle. He was allowed to leave Minidoka approximately 10 months after arriving in camp, provided he seek employment somewhere other than the western sector of the United States. In 1944, my mother, sister and I joined my father in Chicago, Illinois, where he had found employment at a drugstore owned by a German American. I attended kindergarten at Oakenwald Elementary School in South Chicago.

My interest in art started early. Art was always my first love, and my family and teachers reinforced that I was good at art. My grandmother kept my drawings from first through sixth grade. Art served a very special purpose for me when I was growing up. My family was not needy, but there were a lot of things that my friends had that, for one reason or another, I couldn't have. For example, my parents said that cowboy boots were bad for my feet; therefore I knew that I could "have" them only by drawing them out of Sears Roebuck catalogues. Later on when the fad was engineering boots, black leather boots with side buckle, my parents said I couldn't have them since that would associate me with motorcycle gangs. So, once again, I made a lot of drawings of them from every different view.

In 1945, after the war ended, we were allowed to return to our home in Seattle, where I went on and attended Coleman Grade School, Washington Junior High and Garfield High School, graduating in 1957. It was in high school that I developed a serious interest in art, although there was only one art class offered at that time. The two highlights of my senior year were being named yearbook art editor and designing the large plaque of President Garfield that was installed in the floor of the main entrance at Garfield High School.

Despite my father wanting me to study medicine in college, to fulfill his one-time dream of becoming a doctor. I majored in commercial design at the University of Washington, following in the footsteps of my three uncles (on my mother's side), all of whom were successful graphic designers in the Seattle area. Upon graduating, I fulfilled a two-year military obligation, serving most of the time as an artillery officer in Korea.

Following my discharge from the army, I worked as a freelance graphic designer. My biggest account was the Polynesian Pavilion at the New York World's Fair in Flushing, Long Island, where I

designed everything from pavilion signage to menu covers. I discovered at this time that my temperament was not suited to this occupation and began to paint for the first time. For the next year, my love of painting grew in direct proportion to my loss of interest in the advertising profession and I decided to enroll at the University of Washington in the graduate painting program.

Simultaneously to this, I married a woman from Auburn, and we eventually were to have three children, all of whom, to this day, live in the Seattle area. It was during these years that I first began to exhibit my work in local art fairs and festivals. One of the earliest highlights of those years was when I was accepted into the Bellevue Art Museum's Pacific Northwest Arts & Crafts Fair in 1965.

In 1967 I decided to transfer to another graduate school to broaden my education, since I had never really lived outside of the Northwest for any extended period of time. I entered the graduated program at Syracuse University, in upstate New York, graduating in 1969 with a Master of Fine Arts degree in painting. Having made up my mind that I wanted to make a career of college teaching, I accepted a full-time position in the art department of the University of Kansas, in Lawrence.

As a result of being one of a very small minority of Asian Americans in Kansas, I began to paint about issues surrounding my ethnic heritage. My grandmother's diaries, which she maintained for 56 years of her life experience in America, became the inspiration for a series of paintings and experimental theater pieces specifically focusing in upon the internment years. My most recent efforts in painting and experimental theater art have dealt with racial stereotypes, cross-cultural relationships and Japan bashing. Japan bashing means words or acts of prejudice directed against Asians in America.

In the 26 years that I have been working and teaching in Kansas, my work has been seen in more than 70 solo exhibitions and more than 200 group exhibitions in the United States, Canada and Japan. I have written more than 35 performance pieces, which have been seen across the country. In the fall of 1994 I was designated one of nine University Distinguished Professors, across all disciplines, at the University of Kansas, an accomplishment of which I am very proud.



## UNIT OBJECTIVES

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Students will construct a bas-relief triptych and draw upon personal and cultural identity and concerns as subjects and themes for their artmaking. This unit if successful will sensitize students to issues of cultural identity and enhance their knowledge of the historical and political circumstances underlying differing attitudes about ethnicity, heritage and identity in America.

This unit and accompanying lesson plans are designed to be taught as a complete unit or as individual lessons. Each lesson is complete, when joined together; a comprehensive and continuous unit is operated. Although it appears there are too many objectives in some of the plans, please be aware of the time allotment in which I have the luxury to teach. This unit is designed to be taught at the minimum of 26 class sessions. Students prior to beginning this unit will benefit considerably if they are taught MATERIAL CULTURE THEORY AND METHOD by Prof. Jules Prown. Student's analytical skills will be strengthened beyond superficial engagement with the paintings. This methodology will enhance their ability to see more, recognize and appreciate details, and place the knowledge in its cultural perspective. Assessment for the unit has been purposefully left entirely to the reader. I employ the Arts Propel Model (an arts specific assessment methodology\*), These lesson plans are aligned with the National Content Standards for the Visual Arts: Understanding and applying media techniques and processes; Using knowledge of structures and functions; Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, and symbols; Understanding the visual arts in relationship to history and cultures; Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others; Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines.

## STRATEGIES-SUGGESTED LESSON PLANS & OBJECTIVES

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### **Lesson one: Immigration, Stereotyping, the Media and Internment.**

My class periods are all doubles, totaling 90 minutes in length, I am able to deliver a lot of material: lecture, discussion and demonstration, followed usually by art production and student self-analysis and critique. Students are accustomed for the first 10 minutes to perform the warm-up activity on the blackboard. Students usually spend the second half of the period in art production. The beginning of this unit will be a little different. Students will spend the first 30 minutes rendering the "perception" portraits before the lesson.

#### **Lesson one:**

Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Draw in contour lines a representational portrait of a 19th century & 21st century Japanese American.
2. Examine patterns of Japanese immigration and recognize the socio-economic and political conditions of that period.

- a) Develop reasons for Japanese immigration.
- 3. Become familiar with the contributions made by various early Japanese to the building of America.
- 4. Examine issues of exclusion and racism in regard to the U.S. government's immigration policy.
  - a) Discuss "Picture Brides" and how they shaped immigration policy.
  - b) Discuss whether "national security" should supercede constitutional rights and citizenship.
- 6. Analyze and decide whether the internment of Japanese Americans was an act of national security and /or institutional racism.
- 7. Define the term "stereotype" and examine the evolution of Japanese-American stereotyping.
  - a) Examine historical posters depicting the "Yellow Peril"
- 9. Analyze current magazine advertisements that show people in a variety of roles, discussing their perceptions of the advertiser's illustrations of different ethnicities.
  - a. Examine if they reinforce stereotyping of a culture or not.
- 10. Examine the ramifications of stereotyping all non-majority Americans.

Class time: 4 periods (2 double periods)

**Procedure and materials: (paper and pencils)**

- 1. Students entering class will be directed to draw the portraits (these will be put away, to be discussed later)
  - a. Review characteristics of contour lines and speedball nib inking techniques.
    - Point out to students they will be examining early 19th century Japanese immigration experiences to America. Ask students to discuss their own families' histories, what are some of the reasons that led to immigration of their specific ethnic group. Discuss historical overview of Japanese immigration to the U.S.
  - 3. View the film "Picture Brides."
  - a) Discuss the problems the Picture Brides encountered.
  - b) Have students role play the Picture Bride's first impressions of America.
- 4. Discuss and apply the following terms to the Japanese American experience: discrimination, racism, intolerance, exclusion, scapegoating.
- 5. Present and examine historical images depicting Yellow Peril & American Propaganda of the 1940's. Discuss student's feelings about the negative portrayals and the accuracy in depicting Japanese and Japanese-Americans,
  - b. How would they feel if they were Japanese-Americans and they saw these images?

Discuss the power the media has in influencing perception.

what are the similarities and differences between the posters?

where do you think these posters were hung?

what emotions do these posters prompt?

6. Have students examine advertisements in the major magazines.

Explain that they are to find ads that reinforce stereotypes of ethnicity.

Discuss their perceptions and the devices the media uses to perpetuate stereotypes.

Examine what conclusions they have drawn about the people depicted.

Ask students to get out their earlier drawings of Japanese- Americans, (Have students present their drawings to the whole class, taping them to a walls, students will walk around the room carefully viewing all the drawings)

7. a) Discuss what influences (personal or media) do they see in the representations, b) Did they think these are accurate portrayals, if not, how would they change them?

c) Discuss why was this an important activity, what did they learn?

Homework: Students will write 1-2 pages about what each individual can do to help educate society about the devaluing consequences of racism. If possible, include an experience that has occurred to them, a member of their family, or someone they know.

Class time: 3 double periods

## **Lesson Two**

Objectives: Students will be able to:

Students will view the documentary “Children of the Camps.”

Examine the psycho historical aspects of what took place during the Japanese American internment.

Discuss the impact of the internment experience on Japanese American families and the children.

Discuss how students and their families would react in similar circumstances. Could this happen today?

Discuss student’s feelings as they were viewing the film, with whom did they identify with the most, why?

Examine artwork done by internees documented in “A View From Within.”

Develop a sense of empathy by drawing the situations which Japanese American children faced.

Procedure and materials: (paper, mixed media)

1. Review and discuss student’s homework assignment. In order to ensure every one has an opportunity to share their stories/comments, Larger classes should be broken into groups of 6-8 if necessary. Consider sharing your own personal experience(s), students will be more comfortable doing the same. Validate all responses.

2. Show the documentary “Children of the Camps”

Discuss the internment experience on the Japanese-American families and the children, Ask with whom students identified. Discuss their thoughts and feelings as they were viewing the film. Ask them to imagine

and discuss what it would feel like being told they had to leave their homes. How did the Japanese families react? Why? How would they react?

3. Discuss and distribute a copy of Executive Order 9066.\* a. Have students debate the rights of citizens to disobey an Executive Order.

View the paintings, from “The View From Within” (Suggested artworks for discussion: Mine Okubo, “Mother and Children-Crying Baby”; Dan Taneyuki Harada, “Barracks”; and Matsusaburo Hibi, “Topaz-Coyotes

4. come out of the desert”), guide student discussion to interpret on the basis of description and analysis, their own experience, and background knowledge of the period, the meaning of the artwork and how it makes them feel.

b) Students will discuss why the artist painted the painting, and what they think the artist was feeling.

c) Students will be asked to prove their assumptions.

5. Students will draw their own interpretations of life in the camps using a variety of media, placing emphasis on the subject content, the elements of art and personal style. Have students compare and contrast the styles and directions the artists have taken in the “View From Within.” Making note of what tools and media was used, what art elements are stressed in each. I encourage the use of photographic material as resources for drawings. Paintings and photographs are not to be duplicated, but can easily be used as resource material. Spend a little time on this concept.

6. Discuss selective seeing and recording so students understand the concept of choosing what to include and what to leave out in their work. You might also spend a short discussion to emphasize imagination. Imagination is making up things that are not necessarily based on reality, as opposed to the recalling of stored and remembered visual imagery. Both are vital resources for artists.

7. Discuss imagination and its role in Surrealism and other imagined imagery. Help students to establish an understanding of the meaning and use of imagination. Student production should not be limited to only representation.

Class time: 3 double periods

### Lesson Three

Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Read and discuss “ The Artist’s Story.”
2. Observe Roger Shimomura’s art and understand how he used the Japanese American internment as a theme in his work.
3. Students will compare and contrast images of Roger Shimomura’s “Memories of Childhood” to the images in “Children of the Camps”
4. Examine the visual relationship of his American identity and his Japanese heritage.
5. Discuss his use of slick pop art images of painting flat in his work
6. Analyze & identify some of the social issues in the paintings.
7. Become familiar with Ukiyo-e wood blocks
8. Make visual connections from the work of Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol to Shimomura’s work.

Plan Layout: make preliminary sketches for the bas-relief triptych that depicts a personal history : a.

9. Student’s ancestral past, b. Student’s present showing their identity & relationship to America, c. a utopian world where every human being is valued.

Procedure and Materials: (paper and pencils)

1. Students will read “The Artist’s Story.” Ask students to identify how Roger Shimomura’s ancestry might be reflected in his art.

- Show slides from “Memories of Childhood,” explaining to students this series of paintings was originally part of a traveling exhibition titled “Memories of Childhood...so we’re not the Cleavers or the Brady Bunch”. ( Fifteen artists were asked to write stories of their early childhood memories and create ten images based on these stories. Their work was intended to become a picture book for young children.)
2. Distribute color copies of “Memories of Childhood” \* to students
    - a) Discuss how the individual paintings are related to each other.
    - b) Ask students what is Shimomura trying to say to us in painting these images?
    - c) Have students look closely at each one , discuss how the statements for each painting affect the meaning of each.
  4. Compare and contrast images of Shimomura’s “Memories” to the images in “Children of the Camps.” a. Discuss the use of pale muted colors by Shimomura. Examine why he chose this palette.
  5. Introduce Shimomura’s paintings from the “An American Diary” \*
    - a) Ask students how these paintings mirror the social relations of the Japanese-American internees.
    - b) Compare and contrast Shimomura’s depiction of his grandmother in the paintings and her actual photo. What is Shimomura saying about his grandmother assimilation to America? c. Why is his family’s history important to preserve?
    - c) Examine Shimomura’s comic book style appropriation in this series. Guide students in making the connection to work of Lichtenstein and Warhol.
 

How slide of “Valeda Daze.” Ask how does Shimomura appear to feel about each culture and the mixing of two cultures? Is it presented in a positive or negative light? Does the work suggest pressure to adapt to the American culture? Is it possible or desirable to keep cultures separate? Show and discuss other series, “Oriental Masterpiece,” “Issei, Nisei, Sansei,” “The Return of the Yellow Peril”
    - d) Show examples of Japanese-American artist’s connections to their culture and identity: Mitsuo Toshida, Takao Nagai, and portraits (and self-portraits) made by multi-ethnic artists: Dinh Le (“The Temptation of Christ”), Betye and Alison Saar (“Aunt Jemima”), Hung Li (Resident Alien”), Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (“Trade”), Maria Gutierrez (“Biography, 1988”).
      - a) Discuss how each artist appears to feel about each culture and the mixing of two cultures.
      - b) Ask students if the artists are making clear statements, taking a neutral stance or asking a question in the artwork.
      - c) Do the cultural identities depicted in the artworks seem voluntarily taken on or imposed by others?
      - d) Does the artwork imply coercion to adapt to the American culture?
  7. Ask students to read statements made by the artists after viewing the examples of their work. Discuss how this influences the student’s perception of the artworks.

- Students will begin preliminary layouts for the Bas-relief triptychs. Explain to students they will be integrating pop art imagery & flat painting in 3D reliefs on 3 panels (triptych format) depicting their personal histories and hopes for humanity. The first panel will consist of a depiction of their ancestral origins ; the second, a mixture of their ethnicity and American culture; and the third, their view of what a multi-cultural society looks like where every human being is valued. Panel 1. Brainstorm with students about what type of images are representative of their ancestral culture. They should identify their emotional ties (if any) and attitudes. Explain to students these images are purely subjective, and can be juxtapositioned to change their meanings. Encourage sophistication of ideas and visualization. Images within the panels are not restricted to only one panel, students should break out of the panels with some elements if consistent with the narrative. Be creative with the design. Panel 2. Explain this panel is a self portrait which represents the relationship of their two cultures, ancestral and American, answering the question: “Who are you in this society, where is your family from, why did they come here and how do you feel about it ? How are both parts of you cultural identity connected ?”
8. a) Remind students how the artists we studied articulated their own identities. Encourage students to incorporate their own experiences as they integrate their concept of a bicultural identity. Panel 3. Explain this panel symbolizes a synthesis of our cultural unity and declaration of belonging to the American utopian ideal. Brainstorm with students what this would look like? Is it a symbol? metaphoric prose and images? or a labyrinth of mixed images? What kind of viewpoint will you try to show? Humor? Parody? Irony? Optimism?
  9. Have students create a minimum of three thumbnail sketches to choose from before proceeding to a comprehensive layout.
  10. Discuss with students the meaning of each panel, Check for completeness and clarity of narratives.

#### **Lesson Four: Art Production: Bas- relief Triptych**

A bas-relief is a sculpted form which has areas that project but do not stand entirely free from the background, this plan describes how pariscraft can be used in sculpting reliefs.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Plan and construct a Bas-Relief triptych
2. Demonstrate techniques in application of media.
3. Integrate the use of flat painting in their work

Procedure and Materials: Pariscraft, modeling paste, canvas panels, cardboard, modeling tools, acrylic paint

1. Explain to students they will be using their comprehensive layouts for transferring the triptych designs. Demonstrate to students the technique of transfer tracing. Have students transfer their comprehensive layouts, keeping it simple, using outlines, (details are not necessary at this point), onto a piece of tracing paper. Then turning the tracing paper over; cover the lines evenly with graphite from a pencil.
2. Transfer the traced layout to canvas panels (to be used later) and cardboard. Cut out from the cardboard the major shapes and related areas.( If the composition includes a house with a person standing in front of it, tree, horizon line and sky. The house, person and tree should be cut out separately. Overlap and detail after the individual pieces are built up.) Building up is achieved by using dry pieces of newspaper in overlapping patterns or shapes secured with masking tape. Give students the option of either making a high or low relief.
- 3.



- Demonstrate Pariscrafting technique and application: Dip the Pariscraft into water, smooth excess water off, taking care to keep the edges of the gauze flat and smooth, cover the desired area and smooth with moist finger tips. Stress the importance of maintaining distance between the dry Pariscraft and the water source. (Once the Pariscraft has hardened it cannot be reworked, and must be thrown away.) Reinforce the concept of applying the Pariscraft by demonstrating improper application with regard to the smoothing of the edges. When applied, the joining of layers should be imperceptible.
4. Continue Pariscrafting until all built up pieces are covered. Let harden.
  5. Address details. I usually incorporate laminating paper to get the specificity needed. Lamination involves gluing several layers of various thicknesses of paper. Depending on the thickness it can be shaped or molded over a base.
  6. Using the comprehensive layout as a guide, trace and transfer the details of all the major elements. Model with Pariscraft, let dry.
  7. Adhere details to the hardened pieces with modeling paste, refine modeling. Cover the entire piece with modeling paste and smooth. Allow to dry. Using extra fine sanding paper, smooth out excess modeling paste and pariscraft. Allow to dry.
  8. Discuss color and mood. Paint flat the objects of the composition, taking care to insure sides and approximately ¼" of the under surface receives color.
  9. Using the traced layout canvas panel, paint background and attach relief pieces with a glue gun. Touch up edges.
  10. Students will present, critique and discuss their projects.

Class time: 16 classes

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One hour documentary that portrays the stories of six Japanese Americans who were interned as children in U.S. concentration camps. It shows how deeply damaging the personal impact of racism is. Allows the viewers the opportunity to understand culture and familial consequences of growing up a scapegoated minority group member.

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