



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

Roy Leeper and Gaylord Hall collection of Miné Okubo Papers, circa 1940-2001, in the Archives of American Art

Jayna M. Josefson

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Smithsonian Institution Asian Pacific American Initiatives Pool

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Roy Leeper and Gaylord Hall collection of Miné Okubo papers
Date:	circa 1940-2001
Identifier:	AAA.okubmine
Creator:	Okubo, Miné, 1912-2001
Extent:	1.4 Linear feet
Language:	The collection is in English.
Summary:	The Roy Leeper and Gaylord Hall collection of Miné Okubo papers measure 1.4 linear feet and date from circa 1940 to 2001. Roy Leeper and Gaylord Hall were long-time friends with and patrons of Okubo from the late 1950s until her death. The collection contains letters, writings, and sketches by Okubo. Among the printed materials is a copy of the 1944 special edition of <i>Fortune</i> magazine which was sympathetic to Japanese Americans interned during World War II and for which Okubo was hired to illustrate. Also found are scattered documents relating to Hall and Leeper.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Roy Leeper and Gaylord Hall donated the collection of Miné Okubo papers in 2001.

Related Materials

Riverside City College in Riverside, California also holds the Miné Okubo papers.

Processing Information

The Roy Leeper and Gaylord Hall collection of Miné Okubo papers were minimally arranged upon receipt. In 2017, Jayna Josefson fully processed and prepared a finding aid with funding provided by the Smithsonian Institution Asian Pacific American Initiatives Pool.

Preferred Citation

Roy Leeper and Gaylord Hall collection of Miné Okubo papers, circa 1940-2001. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center. Contact Reference Services for more information.

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Biographical / Historical

Miné Okubo (1912-2001) was a Japanese American painter, illustrator, and author. She is known for her book *Citizen 13600* in which she described her experience at the Topaz War Relocation Camp in Utah through prose and drawings.

Born in Riverside, California in 1912, Okubo began her arts education at Riverside Junior College and transferred to the University of California, Berkeley where she completed her BA and MA in Fine Arts (where she first met Roy Leeper). In 1938, she received an award to travel and study under Fernand Léger in Paris. When World War II began in Europe, she moved back to California and worked under the Federal Arts Project. She produced some solo murals and also assisted Diego Rivera on his Treasure Island mural *Pan American Unity*, (1940).

In April of 1942, Miné Okubo and one of her brothers were sent to the Tanforan Assembly Center under Executive Order 9066, which forcibly interned over 100,000 Japanese and Japanese-American citizens living on the West Coast of the United States. Six months later, they were sent to the Topaz War Relocation Camp in Topaz, Utah. There, Okubo taught art in the camp's school and often sketched camp life. She was art editor for the camp newsletter *Trek*, a supplement to the *Topaz Times*.

In 1944, *Fortune* magazine published a sympathetic special edition on the Japanese and Japanese American internment during World War II. The magazine hired Okubo to illustrate two of the articles. She was permitted to leave the camp and move to New York City, where she remained for the rest of her life, working as a painter and illustrator. She wrote and illustrated a book about her experiences in the Topaz confinement camp, *Citizen 13600*, which won the American Book Award in 1984. Miné Okubo died in 2001. Medical doctor Roy Leeper befriended Miné Okubo while they were both students at the University of California. Later, he and his partner dentist Gaylord Hall were reintroduced to Okubo and her artwork by a mutual friend. They began a life-long relationship with Okubo, both as friends and collectors.

Scope and Contents

The Roy Leeper and Gaylord Hall collection of Miné Okubo papers measure 1.4 linear feet and date from circa 1940 to 2001. Roy Leeper and Gaylord Hall were long-time friends with and patrons of Okubo from the late 1950s until her death. The collection contains letters, writings, and sketches by Okubo. Among the printed materials is a copy of the 1944 special edition of *Fortune* magazine which was sympathetic to Japanese Americans interned during World War II and for which Okubo was hired to illustrate. Also found are scattered documents relating to Hall and Leeper.

Biographical materials consist of Roy Leeper's medical licenses. The bulk of the collection is comprised of Miné Okubo's letters, many of which are illustrated, to Hall and Leeper discussing her health, career, their purchase of her artwork, and mutual friends. Other correspondents include Howard Hamilton and Doris and Harry Tono. Writings and notes by Okubo include a statement about the pricing of her artwork and a list of artwork. Leeper and Hall's personal business records concern the purchase and loan of Okubo's artwork for exhibitions.

Printed materials include a 1944 edition of *Fortune* magazine devoted to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. The issue includes reproductions of Okubo's illustrations of life in the World War II internment camp in Topaz, Utah. Photographs include snapshots of Okubo at an exhibition with her art and of works of art. Sketches and drawings depict mostly cats and flowers.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged as 7 series.

Missing Title:

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1942-1994 (1 folder; Box 1)
- Series 2: Correspondence, 1957-2001 (0.8 linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 3: Writings and Notes, circa 1940-circa 1970 (3 folders; Box 1)
- Series 4: Personal Business Records, 1957-1998 (0.1 linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 5: Printed Material, 1944-2000 (0.3 linear feet; Boxes 1-3)
- Series 6: Photographs, circa 1940-circa 1990s (3 folders; Box 1)
- Series 7: Artwork, 1960s-1997 (0.1 linear feet; Boxes 1-2)

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Art patronage
Asian American art
Asian American artists
Asian American authors
Asian American illustrators
Asian American painters
Japanese American art
Japanese American artists
Japanese Americans -- Forced removal and internment, 1942-1945
Women artists
Women authors
Women illustrators
Women painters

Types of Materials:

Drawings
Illustrated letters
Photographs
Sketches

Names:

Central Utah Relocation Center
Hall, Gaylord
Hamilton, Howard
Leeper, Roy
Tono, Doris
Tono, Harry

Occupations:

Authors -- New York (State) -- New York
Illustrators -- New York (State) -- New York
Painters -- New York (State) -- New York

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, 1942-1994

1 Folder (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Biographical materials include Dr. Roy Leeper's medical licenses from the states of Virginia and California.

Box 1, Folder 1 Medical Licenses, Roy Leeper, 1942-1994

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Series 2: Correspondence, 1957-2001

0.8 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: The bulk of this series consists of letters from Miné Okubo to Gaylord Hall and Roy Leeper. Many of the letters begin by mentioning her mood or health and she often inquires about the health and activities of Hall and Leeper and their mutual friends, although they do not tend to be overly personal. Okubo references her artistic process, specific artworks purchased by or of interest to Hall and Leeper, and acknowledges receipt of payment for a work of art. Many of the letters are illustrated in pen or colored pencil.

There is also one letter from Leeper to Okubo; a letter to Howard Hamilton; and scattered letters between Doris and Harry Tono, Okubo, and Leeper and Hall.

Arrangement: Some letters greet both Roy Leeper and Gaylord Hall in the letter but are addressed to one on the envelope; those letters are organized based on the addressed envelope.

Box 1, Folder 2	Miné Okubo to Gaylord Hall, 1965
Box 1, Folder 3	Miné Okubo to Gaylord Hall, 1966
Box 1, Folder 4	Miné Okubo to Gaylord Hall, 1968
Box 1, Folder 5	Miné Okubo to Gaylord Hall, 1969
Box 1, Folder 6	Miné Okubo to Gaylord Hall, 1971
Box 1, Folder 7	Miné Okubo to Gaylord Hall, 1972
Box 1, Folder 8	Miné Okubo to Gaylord Hall, 1973
Box 1, Folder 9	Miné Okubo to Gaylord Hall, circa 1960-circa 1970
Box 1, Folder 10	Miné Okubo to Howard Hamilton, 1991
Box 1, Folder 11	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1957
Box 1, Folder 12	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1958
Box 1, Folder 13	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1959
Box 1, Folder 14	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1960
Box 1, Folder 15	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1961
Box 1, Folder 16	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1962
Box 1, Folder 17	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1963
Box 1, Folder 18	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1967

Box 1, Folder 19	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1969
Box 1, Folder 20	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1970
Box 1, Folder 21	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1971
Box 1, Folder 22	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1972
Box 1, Folder 23	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1973 Jan-Oct
Box 1, Folder 24	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1973 Nov-Dec
Box 1, Folder 25	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1974 Jan-Mar
Box 1, Folder 26	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1974 Jun-Dec
Box 1, Folder 27	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1975
Box 1, Folder 28	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1977
Box 1, Folder 29	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1978
Box 1, Folder 30	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1979
Box 1, Folder 31	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1980
Box 1, Folder 32	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1981
Box 1, Folder 33	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1982
Box 1, Folder 34	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1983
Box 1, Folder 35	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1984
Box 1, Folder 36	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1985
Box 1, Folder 37	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1987
Box 1, Folder 38	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1988
Box 1, Folder 39	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1989
Box 1, Folder 40	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1990
Box 1, Folder 41	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1991
Box 1, Folder 42	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1992

Box 1, Folder 43	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1993
Box 1, Folder 44	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1994
Box 1, Folder 45	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1995
Box 1, Folder 46	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1996
Box 1, Folder 47	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1997
Box 1, Folder 48	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, 1998
Box 1, Folder 49	Miné Okubo to Roy Leeper, circa 1957-circa 1980s
Box 1, Folder 50	Roy Leeper to Miné Okubo, 1998
Box 1, Folder 51	Miné Okubo to Doris and Harry Tono, 1987-1998
Box 1, Folder 52	Doris and Harry Tono to Gaylord Hall and Roy Leeper, 1998-2001

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Series 3: Writings and Notes, circa 1940-1970

3 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Writings by Miné Okubo include a statement concerning the pricing for her artwork and a list of works of art. There is also one note, likely written by Roy Leeper.

Box 1, Folder 53 Statement on Pricing, by Okubo, circa 1966

Box 1, Folder 54 List of Works of Art, circa 1960-circa 1970

Box 1, Folder 55 Note, likely by Leeper, circa 1940

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Series 4: Personal Business Records, 1957-1998

0.1 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Personal business records mostly concern Roy Leeper's and Gaylord Hall's purchase and loan of artwork by Miné Okubo. There are price lists; receipts and statements for payments received by Okubo, many of which mention specific works of art; and records from loans of their Miné Okubo artwork to the San Francisco Museum of Art and the Oakland Museum of Art for exhibition. A certificate of authenticity is for a Japanese ivory figurine, although it is not clear who owned the piece.

Box 1, Folder 56	Certificate of Authenticity, 1962
Box 1, Folder 57	Exhibition and Loan Records, Oakland Museum of Art, 1995-1998
Box 1, Folder 58	Exhibition and Loan Records, San Francisco Museum of Art, 1957
Box 1, Folder 59	Price List, circa 1960
Box 1, Folder 60	Receipts, 1966-1973
Box 1, Folder 61	Statements, 1963-1985

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Series 5: Printed Material, 1944-2000

0.3 Linear feet (Boxes 1-3)

Scope and Contents: Printed materials concern Okubo's career as an artist and writer, including her experiences in the World War II Japanese American confinement camp in Topaz, Utah. There is a brochure and program for award events, clippings, a publication in Japanese concerning Executive Order 9066, exhibition announcements, issues of periodicals; and a poster featuring Okubo as a courageous California woman. Also found is the 1944 issue of *Fortune* magazine featuring Okubo's illustrations for two articles, "Issei, Nisei, Kibei" and "The Citizen-Subject...Tightens His Belt and Wipes Off His Smile."

Box 1, Folder 62	Award Publications, 1974-1984
Box 1, Folder 63	Clippings, 1972-1998
Box 1, Folder 64	Executive Order 9066, circa 1990s
Box 1, Folder 65	Exhibition Announcements, 1980-2000 Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 2, F1
Box 1, Folder 66	Fortune Magazine, 1944 Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 2, F3
Box 1, Folder 67	National Japanese American Historical Society, Nikkei Heritage, 2000
Box 1, Folder 68	Poster, circa 1990s Notes: Oversized material housed in OV3
Box 2, Folder 1	Oversized Exhibition Announcement from Box 1, F65, 2000
Box 2, Folder 3	Oversized Magazine from Box 1, F66, 1944
Overize 3	Oversized Poster from Box 1, F68, circa 1990s

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Series 6: Photographs, circa 1940-circa 1990s

3 Folders (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Photographs are of Miné Okubo with her art at an exhibition; portraits of Roy Leeper or Gaylord Hall; and photographs of Okubo's works of art.

Box 1, Folder 69 Miné Okubo, at an Exhibition, circa 1986

Box 1, Folder 70 of Roy Leeper or Gaylord Hall, circa 1940

Box 1, Folder 71 Works of Art, circa 1990s

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Series 7: Artwork, 1960s-1997

0.1 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2)

Scope and Contents: Found here are Okubo's painted sketches and drawings depicting cats and flowers, some of which may have been used for her holiday cards.

Box 1, Folder 72	Paintings and Drawings, by Okubo, circa 1960s-1980s
Box 1, Folder 73	Prints, by Okubo, 1977-1997 Notes: Oversized material housed in Box 2, F2
Box 2, Folder 2	Oversized Prints from Box 1, F73, circa 1980

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