

SEIZAN GALLERY

TOKYO NEW YORK

MINÉ OKUBO





MINÉ OKUBO (1912-2001) b. Riverside, CA

Miné Okubo was a Japanese American painter and illustrator whose lifelong commitment to the human figure became a profound act of witness, resilience, and affirmation. Best known for her groundbreaking illustrated memoir *Citizen 13660*, which chronicles her incarceration during World War II, Okubo approached drawing and painting as tools for both documentation and humanization. While detained at the Tanforan Assembly Center and later at the Topaz Internment Camp, she produced thousands of images capturing the daily realities of confinement with clarity and restraint. After the war, her practice evolved formally but remained centered on people—especially women and children—rendered first in bold, graphic charcoal and later in richly colored pastels and oils. In her later portraits, softly modeled figures adorned with flowers and luminous hues convey tenderness, vitality, and quiet strength, marking a shift from the stark urgency of her camp drawings to a more expansive celebration of life. Rooted in what she described as “a concern for the humanities,” Okubo’s work consistently affirmed dignity in the face of displacement and injustice, positioning portraiture not merely as representation, but as an enduring testament to presence and belonging.

A Nisei (second-generation Japanese American) artist, Miné Okubo worked prolifically as an illustrator and painter and became a prominent figure of Japanese modern artists such as Chiura Obata and Matsusaburo Hibi. Her oeuvre has been widely reappraised and newly recognized in recent years. A traveling group exhibition, *Pictures of Belonging: Miki Hayakawa, Hisako Hibi, and Miné Okubo*, curated Dr. ShiPu Wang is currently on view at the Monterey Museum of Art and is scheduled to travel to the Japanese American National Museum. Okubo’s works are held in the collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Japanese American National Museum, the Oakland Museum of California, and the Center for Social Justice & Civil Liberties, among others.

CURRICULUM VITAE

MINÉ OKUBO

EDUCATION

- 1936 MA University of California at Berkeley, CA
- 1935 BA, University of California at Berkeley, CA

SOLO EXHIBITION (by selection)

- 2025 Portraits, SEIZAN Gallery, New York, NY
- 1993 Into the Light: Miné Okubo, Bank of Boston Gallery, sponsored by the Japan Society of Boston
- 1988 New York Community Redress Celebration, Roosevelt Hotel, New York
Illustrations from Citizen 13660 and Trek, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Burlington, CA
- 1985 Miné Okubo: A Retrospective 1942-1985, Catherine Gallery, New York
- 1983 Solo Exhibition and book signing, Basement Workshop Gallery, New York
- 1981 The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, Roosevelt Hotel, New York
- 1980 Thousand Branches Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 1977 A View from the Inside, Oakland Museum, CA
- 1974 Citizen 13660 Comes Home: Miné Okubo Exhibits Her Paintings for Her Friends and Fellow Townspeople, Riverside City College Art Gallery, Riverside, CA
- 1973 Months of Waiting, Chandler Pavilion, Los Angeles Music Center, CA
- 1972 Miné Okubo: An American Experience, with catalogue, The Oakland Museum, CA
- 1968 Image Gallery, Stockbridge, Massachusetts
- 1961 California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco
- 1958 Santa Barbara Museum of Art
- 1951 Mortimer Levitt Gallery, New York
- 1945 New School for Social Research, New York
- 1944 Japanese, European, Camp works, Rockefeller Center, New York
- 1941 Two solo exhibitions of European Impressions, San Francisco Museum

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (By selection)

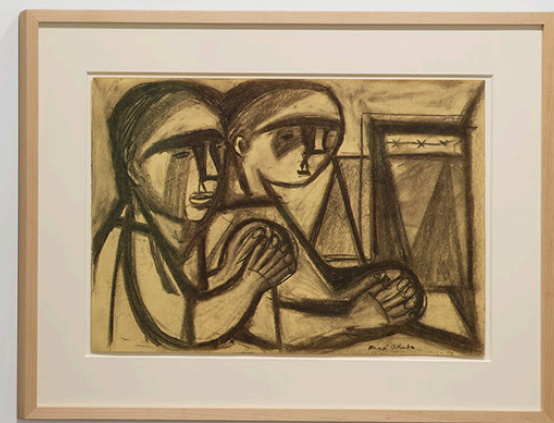
- 2023 THINGS SHE CARRIES: Miné Okubo/ Aya Fujioka/ Yukiko Hata, SEIZAN Gallery, New York, NY
- 1996 WPA Color Prints: Works from the Federal Art Project, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
- 1992 The View from Within, Japanese American National Museum/U.C.L.A. Wright Art Gallery, Los Angeles
- 1991 National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.
- 1989 Hastings-on-Hudson Gallery, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY
- 1982 Images in Isolation, San Francisco State University
- 1980 Basement Workshop, Asian American Artists, New York
- 1979 Dragon and the Chrysanthemum, Summit Visual Arts Center, Summit, NJ
- 1977 A Half Century of Japanese Artists in New York 1910-1950, Azuma Gallery, New York, NY
- 1975 Transcendent Blossoms, Syntex Corporation, Palo Alto, CA
- 1972 Group Exhibition of Japanese American Relocation Camp art, California Historical Society, San Francisco, CA
- 1960 San Francisco Art Association Annual
- 1954 Downtown Gallery, New York
Art Institute of Chicago Annual

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- The Oakland Museum, Oakland, CA
- Private Collections in: Berkeley, Los Angeles, New York, Oakland, Riverside, San Francisco, Woodside, California

AWARDS & HONORS (by selection)

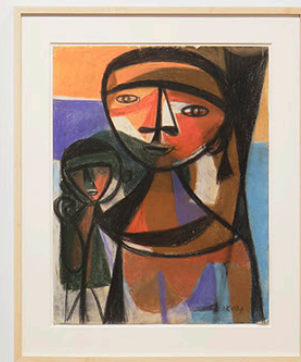
- 1991 WCA Honor Award, National Women’s Caucus for Art Conference, 12th Annual Ceremony, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.
- 1988 Selected one of 12 women pioneers in the history of California by the California State Department of Education
- 1984 American Book Award for Citizen 13660, Before Columbus Foundation, 5th Annual Award, Wheeler Auditorium, University of California at Berkeley
- 1974 Distinguished Alumni Award, Riverside Community College, CA



INSTALLATION VIEW OFF: *MOTHER*
FEBRUARY 12 - MARCH 14, 2026



INSTALLATION VIEW OFF: PORTRAITS
JANUARY 9 - MARCH 1, 2025



INSTALLATION VIEW OFF: *PORTRAITS*
JANUARY 9 - MARCH 1, 2025



INSTALLATION VIEW OFF: *THINGS SHE CARRIES*
NOVEMBER 9 - DECEMBER 16, 2023



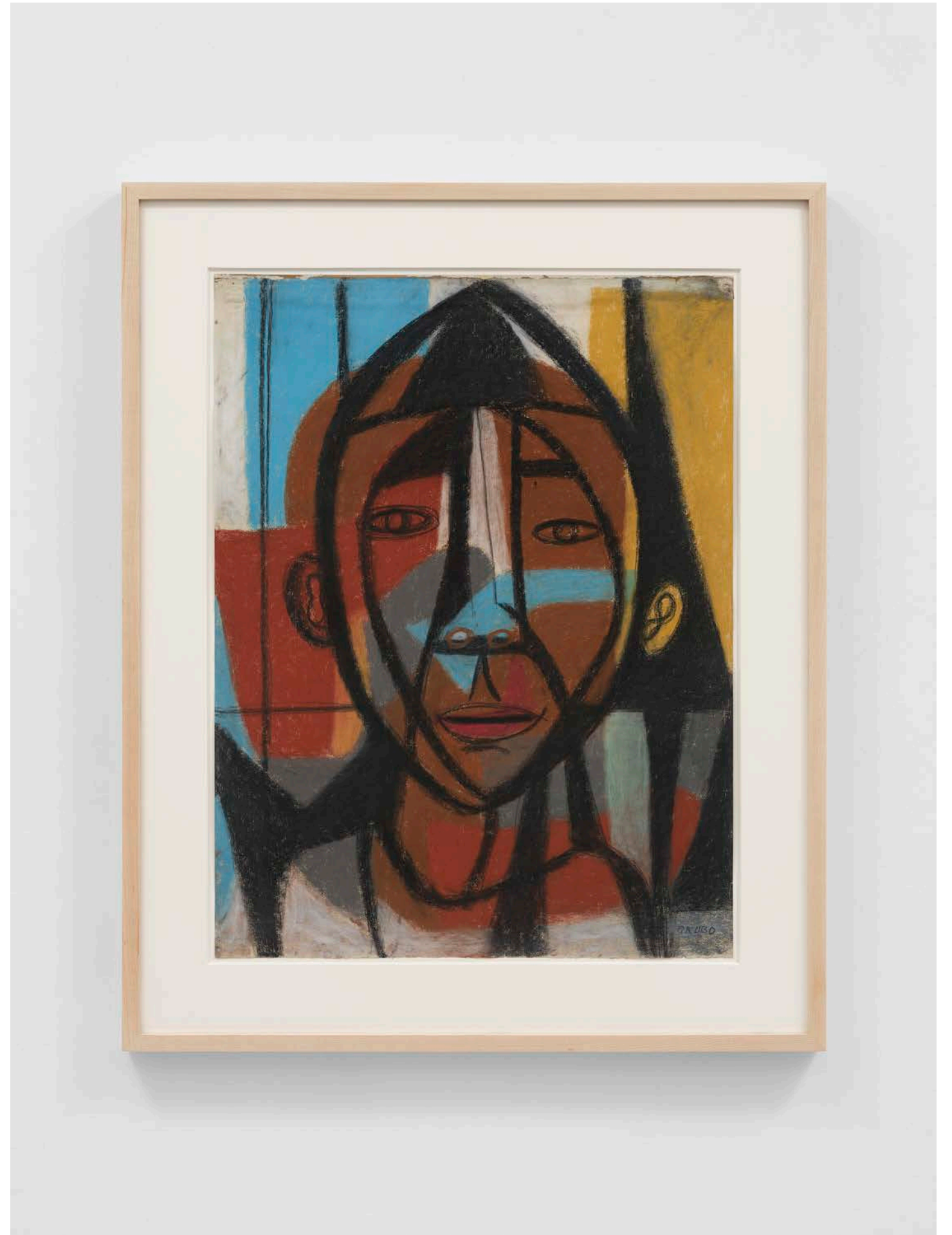
Miné Okubo
Untitled (Girl with Flower), 1970s
Mixed media on paper
14.8 x 10.4 in (37.5 x 26.5 cm)
17.7 x 13.4 x 1 in (45 x 34 x 2.5 cm) Framed



DETAIL
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Untitled (Girl with Flower), 1970s
Mixed media on paper
14.8 x 10.4 in (37.5 x 26.5 cm)
17.7 x 13.4 x 1 in (45 x 34 x 2.5 cm) Framed

SEIZAN GALLERY

Miné Okubo
Untitled, 1940's
Charcoal, pastel on paper
24.8 x 18.7 in (63 x 47.5 cm)
31.6 x 25.6 x 1.5 in (80.2 x 65.1 x 3.8 cm) Framed





Miné Okubo
Untitled, 1940's
Charcoal, pastel on paper
24.8 x 18.7 in (63 x 47.5 cm)
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For inquiries
director@seizan-gallery.com