

Serafin Moreno

Mrs. Staples

VPA 313

22 October 2013

Chiura Obata's influence on western art

was a strong artist.

Chiura Obata is an exemplary individual when speaking in the context of the art world.

His Asian influence on western art and artists can be directly attributed to his striving demeanor.

His influence on the western arts, particularly ^{on} the central coast of California, can be appreciated

as a marriage between eastern and western aesthetics. Although he was born and raised in Japan,

Obata had an influential impact in both the central coast, Monterey Bay, and the Bay area, in

particular San Francisco. Chiura Obata is most definitely known for his naturalistic style of

painting, with this being said, ^M much of his best art works came as a result of being relocated to an

internment camp, in a desolate part of California, after the attacks on Pearl Harbor by Japan on

December 7, 1941. Obata had a major impact on western society at a very young age, he and a

few of his friends, artists, decided that there should be no prejudice in the art world and

established an art association known as the East West Art Society, which held its first exhibition

at the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1922. This exhibition allowed artists from any ethnic

background to submit art without any fear of ridicule, discrimination or bias due to race. Obata's

naturalist style of painting, scenic landscapes is an obvious trait that ^{he} Chiura more than likely

attained as a young man in Japan. His renditions of scenic landscapes were able to shed light on

Serafin - You are jumping around in time a bit.

Asian aesthetics, which he helped introduce in his paintings and that were welcomed by many of his students.

Chiura Obata's many achievements and aspirations came to a halt during World War II. He and his family were directly affected by the Executive order 9906 sanctioned by the United States government, dictating that any and all descendants of Japanese ethnicity must relocate to internments camps due to the widespread fear of treason and Japanese espionage on the west coast. According to Elizabeth Cooper's article on Chiura Obata, published by Sullivan Goss: An American Gallery, "Chiura Obata transcended time and space, and managed to discover beauty even in the harshest of circumstances". Using his uncanny ability to portray an image in its simplest form Obata achieves the portrayal of a story using a visual ^{medium} median which often ~~times~~ conveyed a message within the context of the painting itself.

During his stay at the Tanforan internment camp, it is evident that Chiura Obata refused to be transformed by the situation. His depictions of life within the gates allow^{ed} his spirit to venture past the restraints of military personal and the gates that restrict him and his family from leaving. "Despite his personal losses and the difficult conditions at Tanforan, Obata refused to be dispirited" (Hill 35). According to the book Topaz Moon, Obata would never succumb to giving up on art. Upon his arrival to Tanforan he decided to establish an art school within the confinements of the camp that would focus on Fine Arts, Commercial Arts, and Techniques. His naturalistic style of art suffered while being interned. Before being relocated to Tanforan, Chiura Obata enjoyed the outdoors, as reflected in many of his Yosemite Valley paintings. Almost immediately, his style of painting underwent a dramatic transformation from his lively, colorful,

naturalistic style to a more gray obscured style depicting the harsh conditions in which they lived. ^{italics} Silent Moon, one of his most famous paintings painted while being held at the Tanforan Relocation Center, depicts the conditions and elements endured in the barren deserts.

Chiura Obata's second and final relocation to Topaz, Utah certainly had a daunting effect on him and his family. Many of his paintings and sketches lacked detail, which can be perceived as a cry for austerity, in which he depicts people relegated to the confinements of the gated encampment. These demonstrations of simple, but powerful paintings had emblematic meanings behind them, which allowed for Obata to convey the oppressed individuals that were held behind the gates, with unpretentious sketches and paintings

"We are in the middle of a world war. What is our hope? What is our goal? ...

The highest aim and hope of art is a high, strong peace. In front of his high aim the evil side of humans-including racial discrimination, egotism, selfishness, and hatred-are simply exposed".

-Chiura Obata, 1943

Much can be denoted from the simplicity of Obata's sketches which had many aspects and resembled the aesthetics of Asian art. Using these aesthetics, he is able to depict life through the use of images that tell a story of anguish and agony, which can be seen in the faceless expressions in many of the people we see depicted in the images. Although, the images tell of a story of hurt, we are also able to see, how many of the Japanese that were interned did not allow for the environment in which they were forced to lived, to predetermine their everyday lives. Chiura Obata's painting serve as a reminder of the hardship endured by many Americans of

Japanese descent during World War II, in particular those people that were forced to relocate to internment camps. It is evident ~~to see~~ how his influence of simplicity ~~if~~ beauty, transformed the art realm, in particular on the west coast, both while he was detained in the internment camps and when he taught at the University of California, Berkley.

Scrapin. You've got some excellent research here.
Your paper reads a bit like a rough draft with a need for some clarity & proofreading.

B+

Work cited

[1] Cooper, Elizabeth. *Chiura Obata*. Sullivan Goss: An American Gallery. N.d. Web. 18 Oct 2013.

[2] Hill, Kimi Kodani. *Topaz Moon: Chiura Obata's Art of the internment*. Heyday Books. 2000. Print.

[3] Obata, Chiura. *Japanese*. Immigration/Liberation: Personal Stories. N.d. Web. 18 Oct. 2013.