

“Art Behind Barbed Wire” highlights a hidden legacy of World War II

By **Kate Hubbard**
The Asian Reporter

The *hyottoko* mask has the patina of age now, but its rich color and expression are still vivid. Like every item contained within “Art Behind Barbed Wire: A Pacific Northwest Exploration of Japanese American Arts and Crafts Created in World War II Incarceration Camps,” a travelling exhibit currently on view at the Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, the mask has an incredible history as well as a heartbreaking story behind it. Many of the more than 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry who were forcibly removed from their homes, allowed to bring with them only the possessions they could carry, and incarcerated in internment camps during World War II share this history.

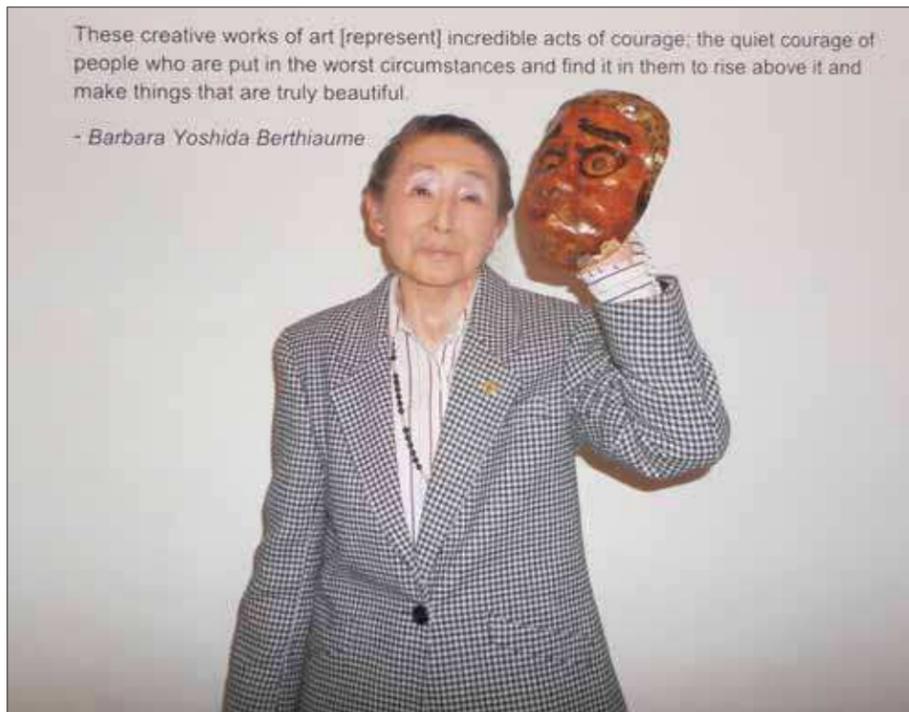
The precious items — now family heirlooms — are on display through November 16. Two lenders of items were kind enough to elaborate about the artwork and provide some history.

Loen Dozono lent a *jubako* box to the exhibit. Dozono’s grandfather used wood found at the camp to create the simple and beautiful box as a wedding gift for her parents. Her father and grandfather were both incarcerated during the war. Her father was discharged from the military because of his Japanese heritage and the day he returned home was the same day his father was arrested and taken away by FBI agents. They went from citizens to “enemy aliens” within two months of the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Life in the camps required immediate adaptation. “While fences were being built around them, they were running outside to the wood piles at night to grab whatever wood they could,” Dozono said.

Shells, rocks, and wood around camp found new life as art because internees utilized whatever materials were available. They had no freedom, but suddenly had a lot of free time, so many expressed themselves artistically.

Despite the challenging conditions, Japanese traditional arts and culture were kept alive. Photos of the camps reveal the grim and barren landscape internees had



These creative works of art [represent] incredible acts of courage; the quiet courage of people who are put in the worst circumstances and find it in them to rise above it and make things that are truly beautiful.

- Barbara Yoshida Berthiaume



ART BEHIND BARBED WIRE. “Art Behind Barbed Wire: A Pacific Northwest Exploration of Japanese American Arts and Crafts Created in World War II Incarceration Camps,” a travelling exhibit currently on display at the Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, features arts and crafts from the Pacific Northwest community created by Japanese Americans in internment camps. Pictured at left is Sahomi Tachibana, who was sent to internment camps at Tule Lake in California and in Topaz, Utah, holding a *hyottoko* mask made by Enjiro Kodani while they were incarcerated. The display also features drawings (right photo), dolls, jewelry, furniture, and more. (AR Photos/Kate Hubbard)

to endure, but “Art Behind Barbed Wire” is full of life and color. It features stunning pieces of art: marquetry, wood carvings, dolls, jewelry, furniture, paintings, drawings, and more.

When asked how she feels about the camps, Dozono said there “is a lot of sadness that so many stories about that time were lost — so much that could have enriched new generations.” She is justifiably proud of her parents and grandparents and all they went through — all they lived through. Pushing aside anger, bitterness, and resentment, they accepted the situation and adapted to it with courage and strength. Creating art gave some internees a meaningful pastime and helped them gracefully bear the burden of their ordeal.

Sahomi Tachibana was in her early teens when she and her family were sent to internment camps at Tule Lake in California and in Topaz, Utah. Having spent time studying traditional dance in Japan, Tachibana was already recognized as a talented performer. In the camps, she taught dance classes and also performed.

One of Tachibana’s dances required three masks: One mask showed a happy but homely woman, one was of the devil,

and one was of an ugly man who was supposed to be a blacksmith. Because she had only two of the masks, an artist in the camp — Enjiro Kodani — offered to make the third one for her: the *hyottoko* mask which is featured in the exhibit. He carved the face of a blacksmith on a sugar beet, layered it with papier-mâché, and painted it.

Tachibana is charming and majestic at 90 years of age. Accompanied by Frank, her husband of 67 years, she spoke about her experiences in camp: “Camp itself wasn’t that difficult. We were fed well, we just didn’t have any freedom.”

Items could be ordered from the Montgomery Ward catalog, Tachibana said, and hardworking women suddenly had leisure time, if nothing else. They made the best of it, taking classes in flower arranging, sewing, dance, and even lapidary. It was up to the internees to keep their culture and arts alive during the incarceration, so they shared it with each other. Tachibana taught traditional Japanese dances, a career she has

continued long after the war. Her dance group, the Sahomi Tachibana Dancers, will be featured at a special event to be held next month.

The performance, which is scheduled to take place at 2:00pm on Sunday, November 30, precedes a screening of *Hidden Legacy: Japanese Traditional Performing Arts in the WWII Internment Camps*, a documentary highlighting the traditional music, dance, and drama kept alive in Japanese-American internment camps. Also participating at the event, which is held at the Hollywood Theatre located at 4122 N.E. Sandy Boulevard in Portland, are *koto* players Shirley Kazuyo Muramoto-Wong and Lita Kazuho Buttolph. To purchase tickets, visit <www.hollywoodtheatre.org>.

The “Art Behind Barbed Wire” is on view through November 16. The Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center is located at 121 N.W. Second Avenue in Portland. To learn more about the exhibit or the film, call (503) 224-1458 or visit <www.oregonnikkei.org>.

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		5	6	1		
8		3		9		
		4			2	
			7	5		3
5		9	1	3		8
6	9	2				
	6			2		
		1	5			4
		2	1	4		

Difficulty level: Medium #56183

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

Solution to last week's puzzle

Puzzle #16742 (Easy)

All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

1	8	5	3	6	9	4	2	7
9	4	2	5	8	7	6	3	1
7	6	3	2	4	1	8	9	5
6	9	7	4	5	2	1	8	3
8	3	4	7	1	6	9	5	2
5	2	1	8	9	3	7	4	6
3	1	9	6	2	4	5	7	8
4	7	8	1	3	5	2	6	9
2	5	6	9	7	8	3	1	4

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