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Smithsonian Receives Collection from Japanese American Painter Roger Shimomura

National Museum of American History Commemorates Day of Remembrance

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History will commemorate the signing of Executive Order 9066 in 1942 by President Roosevelt, on its anniversary, Feb. 19, with a special evening program. The event, “Day of Remembrance: Japanese American Incarceration and the Art of Identity with Roger Shimomura,” will combine history with art and focus on the multifaceted Japanese American artist.



Along with all of his grandmother’s diaries, the Museum recently collected Shimomura’s “Memories of Childhood,” a series of small acrylic paintings illustrating Toku Machida Shimomura’s journal entries, which she began when she left her Tokyo home in 1912 to live in the United States. During this year’s commemoration, Shimomura will donate the rest of his extensive collection of camp materials: scrapbooks, identification cards, objects made in camp. The diaries, which span 56 years of her life, include her account of the World War II incarceration experience.

As part of the event, the museum will also screen a film clip of Shimomura from an upcoming documentary film by David Ono; and visitors will be able to view artifacts highlighting an upcoming exhibition about Executive Order 9066. A panel discussion with Shimomura and Ono, and a spoken-word performance by Regie Cabico will conclude the evening.

Shimomura, who works as a painter, printmaker, performance artist, professor and collector, combines Japanese ukiyo-e woodblock prints, comic book characters and pop culture symbols to address the issue of American identity - including ethnicity and the views of the Japanese American experience. Having spent several childhood years (1941 and 1943) in the Minidoka Camp in Idaho

with his grandmother Toku Machida Shimomura, the experiences recorded in her diaries strongly influenced his work.

The Day of Remembrance observes Roosevelt's signing of Executive Order 9066. During the opening months of World War II, nearly 120,000 Japanese Americans, two-thirds of them U.S. citizens, were forced out of their homes and into detention camps established by the U.S. government.

Through incomparable collections, rigorous research and dynamic public outreach, the National Museum of American History explores the infinite richness and complexity of American history. The museum helps people understand the past in order to make sense of the present and shape a more humane future. It is currently renovating its west exhibition wing, developing galleries on business, democracy and culture. For more information, visit <http://americanhistory.si.edu>. The museum is located at 14th Street and Constitution Avenue N.W., and is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (closed Dec. 25). Admission is free.

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