"Home" Revisited in Roger Shimomura's Minidoka

by Samantha Lyons

To Roger Shimomura, home during World War II was a four-walled barrack, identical to its neighbors, surrounded by open blue sky but enclosed with barbed wire. Shimomura's lithograph *When I moved to Minidoka, all of my friends lived close to me*, from his artist book *Memories of Childhood* (1999), visualizes this place in a scene of childhood inspired by his internment experience at Camp Minidoka in Idaho, where he and his family were detained from 1942 to 1944. In the print, two small figures, represented only through their hands and partial views of their limbs on either side of the frame, play catch in front of two barrack-like structures (Fig. 1). These dark buildings, connected by threads of black barbed wire visible in the background, press uncomfortably close to the picture's foreground, creating a restricted and compressed sense of space. The lithograph is compartmentalized into hard-edged, schematically rendered forms: the barbed wire's sharp lines echo both the rivets in the barracks and the foreshortened horizon line, while the structures' vertical wooden slats further divide the composition into a series of rigid lines and angles. Adding to the scene's regimented linear appearance, the thin, translucent sheets of Japanese *goyu* paper placed over the image in the artist's book leave traces of faint vertical lines in the weave, an overlay that emphasizes the grid-like composition and creates the impression of prison bars. The image's schematic formal effects heighten the sense of confinement and alienation, suggesting that even though the two small figures in the scene engage in play, they are prisoners within this environment.

This article considers how Shimomura's depictions of Camp Minidoka engage with social, cultural, and psychological notions of home. Throughout his oeuvre, most noticeably in the *An American Diary* and *Memories of Childhood* series, Shimomura depicts his family's living spaces and daily activities both before and during their internment. I argue that Shimomura's depictions of the internment camp that focus on both the physical space of home and the familiar activities enacted within unfamiliar spaces, render an uncanny version of home, revealing the trauma of dislocation as they engage with the everyday behaviors and routines associated with the term. In his pop art-styled depictions of the camp barracks, Shimomura does not normalize these spaces as home; rather, through specific formal and textual strategies, he heightens their uncanny qualities—what Freud termed the *unheimlich* (unhomely)—rendering familiar spaces into something strange

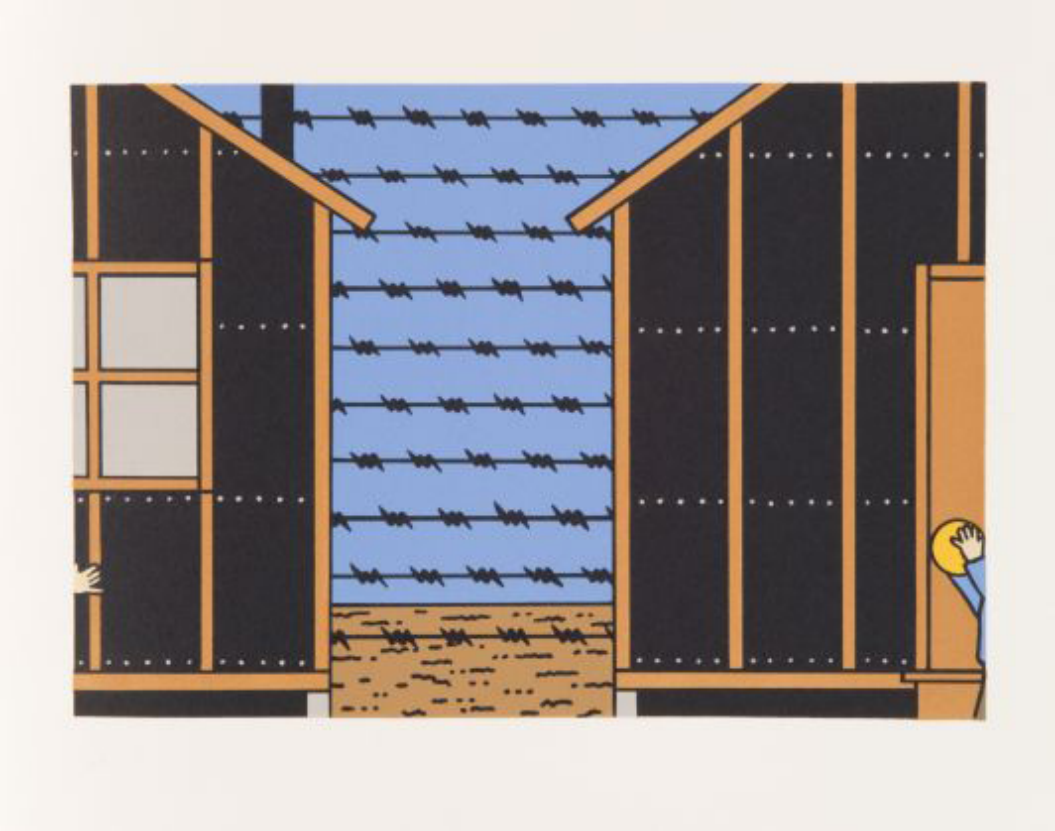

Fig. 1. Roger Shimomura, *Memories of Childhood: When I moved to Minidoka, all of my friends lived close to me*, 1999, color lithograph, 10 x 12 1/16 inches (25.4 x 30.7 cm). Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. Museum purchase: Lucy Shaw Schultz Fund, 2002.0045h

and disturbing. Depicted in unsettling representations, Shimomura's scenes of camp life emphasize the loss of home through empty and unfamiliar interiors, spatial disorientation, and the palpable vulnerability of the figures exposed to the viewer's scrutiny.

As an artist, Shimomura's prints and paintings of life in the camps formally underscore visualizations of exile and loss. However, a crucial part of his practice explores the recuperative measures of artmaking employed by fellow interned individuals. While this article begins by examining how Shimomura's art explores the loss of home through specific compositional strategies and subject matter, the second section considers how the artist's curatorial endeavors seek alternative formations of homemaking that were put into practice by camp residents. Shimomura's curatorial project *Shadows of Minidoka*, a 2011 exhibition featuring objects originally created by incarcerated Japanese Americans and later collected by the artist, explores the role of artmaking as an important practice in producing a meaningful sense of place.

Visualizing "Home" and the Japanese American Internment Experience

Shimomura's artistic output has continually engaged with the forced incarceration of his early years by featuring scenes of daily life in the camps. Several series of prints and paintings represent and reimagine the memories of his family in these camps, including *Minidoka* (1978–79), *Diary* (1980– 83), *An American Diary* (1997), *Memories of Childhood* (1999), and *Minidoka on My Mind* (2006–10). Since 1978, Shimomura has continuously returned to the site of Minidoka—both physically, at the location in Idaho, and symbolically, in his various prints, paintings, and installations. A rich literature exists on the internment camp as subject in Shimomura's art, including William Lew's exhibition and accompanying catalogue *Minidoka Revisited: The Paintings of Roger Shimomura*, which analyzes specific works from *Minidoka*, *Diary*, and *American Diary* that focus on Japanese American internment subjects. In addition to his own chronological essay on Shimomura's engagement with internment camps throughout these series, Lew also includes essays from an interdisciplinary group of scholars who consider Shimomura's internment subjects from their respective disciplines of history, philosophy, feminist studies, and law, among other fields.[1] Several recent dissertations have also made valuable contributions to existing scholarship, including Stacey Uradomo's 2005 "Legacies: Family Memories, History, and Identity in Japanese American Art," which draws upon the concept of postmemory, a term formulated by Marianne Hirsch to describe the transmission of traumatic personal and collective memories from one generation to the next by means of stories, images, and other mediated forms. Uradomo explores how Shimomura's scenes of incarceration—as well as his larger engagement with Japanese American history and identity—are shaped by his grandmother's diary.[2] Allison Morgan McCormick's 2013 dissertation, "Rhetorical Pop: The Art of Roger Shimomura," further expands the discussion of Shimomura's internment images, as she argues that a "secondary iconography" is apparent in the artist's works through his appropriation of *ukiyo-e* elements, parody, and other visual sign systems.[3]

Most relevant to my focus on home is Emily Stamey's 2009 dissertation, "Pop, Place, and Personal Identity in the Art of Roger Shimomura."[4] Stamey explores the significance of place in Shimomura's representations of his various residences. Her study pays particular attention to the culturally distinct locations in which Shimomura has lived, namely Seattle, Washington and Lawrence, Kansas, and their impact on the artist's depictions of Japanese American experience and ethnic stereotypes. Stamey argues that the artist's formative experiences in both locations—particularly his racialized experiences as an Asian American in the Midwest—helped shape his representations of a third place, Camp Minidoka, as:

> these two different contexts consistently allowed Shimomura to look

> back on Minidoka, and the historical moment of which it was a part, from the perspective of those in the Midwest for whom it is relatively unknown and disconnected and from the perspective of the Japanese American community in Seattle for whom it is an integral part of their family history.[5]

While Stamey's dissertation meaningfully engages with the cultural impact of *place* on Shimomura's art, defined by the author as a "location of meaning," her study leaves room to explore further the notion of home in Shimomura's depictions of camp life and how his later curatorial contributions can be considered as an alternative practice to establish sites of collective meaning.[6]

While the concept of home has been widely analyzed in the fields of social geography, sociology, and psychology, there is no consensus on a single definition. It can be a physical place, interconnected with a particular structure, location, or nation.[7] It can also be a symbolic space, imbued with memories, feelings, and meanings.[8] As social geographers have articulated, it can act as a boundary between public and private space, and the inside and outside world.[9] A psychological model considers home as a symbolic extension of one's self, where one's ability to act upon and modify the dwelling and freely express one's ideas and values is interpreted as a subconscious expression of the self. Home also functions as a space for accommodating a psychological need for privacy.[10] The dual need for autonomy and privacy provides the foundation for the "home as haven" model, a concept that scholar Shelly Mallett defines as a familial realm clearly differentiated from public space and removed from public scrutiny and surveillance.[11] In this particular model, home serves as a refuge, a space that fulfills a basic human need for personal well-being, privacy, comfort, and safety. However, for those detained in internment camps, these definitions of home become radically destabilized. As Martin Heidegger contends, "Not every building is a dwelling," as the latter term indicates a structure that provides a sense of comfort and belonging.[12] Moreover, not every home or homeland carries the same kinds of inclusive and stable associations for its inhabitants, particularly for those who have been forcibly relocated through the systematic efforts of their own government.

In 1942, Roger Shimomura and his mother, father, and grandmother were only a few of the 120,000 Japanese Americans living on the West Coast who were removed from their residences in the single largest forced relocation in U.S. history.[13] His family lived in a temporary assembly center, Camp Harmony in Puyallup, Washington, for four months before moving to a more permanent internment area at Minidoka in Jerome County, Idaho.[14] The camp was opened on August 10, 1942 and closed on October 28, 1945. While operable, its maximum population peaked at approximately 9,397 citizens.[15] Like many other internment camps, Minidoka was located

in an isolated and desolate area, built on undeveloped federal reclamation land.[16] Identical and austere barracks, roughly twenty feet wide by 120 feet long, served as makeshift living units and filled the camp space along with other communal buildings and facilities.[17] Families were assigned individual apartments based on their size, spaces which averaged about twenty by twenty feet per unit. Each barrack lacked proper insulation to keep the space properly heated, cooled, and clean. Kitchens and bathrooms—two spaces of the home traditionally associated with family gathering and privacy, respectively—did not exist in the barracks. Rather, meals were served in large mess halls and individuals waited in line for communal bathrooms. As Stamey notes, although the barracks were euphemistically referred to as "apartments," they often lacked the autonomy one associates with the term.[18] Life was crowded, confined, and difficult for most families living in these temporary housing structures. In Shimomura's own words, "The barracks when first occupied were antithetical to the visual concept of 'home.'"[19]

Shimomura visualizes the contrasting living environments of the camps and his family's home in a series of paintings called *An American Diary* (1997). The thirty paintings that comprised this series follow his family's physical surroundings before and during internment and were each based on a diary entry written by Shimomura's grandmother, Toku Shimomura.[20] When exhibited, the artist accompanied each painting with a wall panel transcribing a specific passage from his grandmother's diary.[21] Shimomura's inclusion of his grandmother's diary entries, which describe events both mundane and deeply personal, adds a new layer of meaning to Shimomura's treatment of these living spaces, one that further unsettles our understanding of the meanings of home, comfort, and security. In an early work in the series, *American Diary: December 31, 1941*, Shimomura depicts the family's suburban Seattle home; it is dated before his family's relocation (Fig. 2). The second, *American Diary: August 17, 1942*, features the new and bleaker environment of Idaho (Fig. 3). In *American Diary: December 31, 1941*, the artist presents an interior view of a room in an orderly and well-furnished middle-class home, complete with picturesque views of snow-capped mountains outside the window. The room is comfortably furnished with soft furniture, cheery bright yellow curtains and a framed landscape picture on the wall. The accompanying entry from Toku's diary is transcribed by the artist as follows:

> At last, today will end this year which has been full of changes. This has been the first time in my life that I had to encounter such horrible events. All of the family got together and spent time in the warmth of the house. There is nothing as precious as family gatherings. We did a lot of house cleaning preparing for the New Year.[22]

Toku's diary entry and her grandson's visualization of home at first appear to present a moment of relative normalcy within the turbulent time of World

Fig. 2. Roger Shimomura, *American Diary: December 31, 1941*, 1997, acrylic on canvas, 11×14 inches (27.9 x 35.6 cm). Private collection. (Photo courtesy of the artist, © Roger Shimomura.)

Fig. 3. Roger Shimomura, *American Diary: August 17, 1942*, 1997, acrylic on canvas, 11×14 inches (27.9 x 35.6 cm). Private collection. (Photo courtesy of the artist, © Roger Shimomura.)

War II, particularly in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor. Although her entry begins with an anxious reflection on the previous year, her words offer a reassuring sense of family and community. While Shimomura depicts an orderly and comfortable living space, he intentionally renders an empty home; the warmth and fullness described in Toku's diary is noticeably absent. This vacant domestic space, in contrast to Toku's description of family togetherness, seems to already visualize the loss of home for Shimomura's family in the following year. An image that without Toku's text could be read as tidy and comfortable now appears quiet and empty, devoid of the people and activity that make a space meaningful. The room seems more like an isolated fragment of interior space, rather than as a coextensive part of a family home. The blue sky seen through the windows is rendered as a flat, matte blue—the absence of any reflection or glare in the window panes makes it seem as if there is no glass present, indeed no barrier at all to protect inside from outside. An enclosed room suddenly opens up to the outside world, disturbing one's perception of familiar spaces and negating the feelings of safety and comfort one associates with home.

The uncanny, empty suburban home featured in this painting finds distinct formal parallels with the prison-like camp setting seen in *American Diary: August 17th, 1942*. The painting features another wall text diary entry from Toku Shimomura written on the same date:

> We arrived at Arlington, Idaho, unnoticed, at 5:30 a.m. Everybody looked terribly depressed. After lunch, the heat increased. Barely alive, we continued on. We made it to Rock Mountain at 2:30 p.m. We changed to buses, and after a two and a half mile ride we arrived at the newly built camp at 4 p.m. Though the camp was still unfinished we could see the grand scale of this city near the mountains. We stared in amazement. I was assigned to Block 5-B-6, apt. A. After cleaning the dust from the room, I went to bed.[23]

With a similar palette of golden yellow, blues, and browns, the artist makes a clear formal connection between the two paintings. The black latticed strokes delineating the window panes in *American Diary: December 31, 1941* echo the intersection of lines created by the barbed wire and the barracks' wooden slats in *American Diary: August 17th, 1942*. Although the strict ordering of horizontal and vertical lines remains consistent, the position of the viewer and the setting has radically changed. In the former painting, Shimomura places the viewer within the interior space of the living room, both compositionally and, with the addition of the diary entry, narratively. Looking out upon the landscape from within the first image, the viewer journeys out of the home and towards Minidoka in the second, where the viewer occupies space outside of the camp. Sharp lines of horizontal barbed wire demarcate inside from outside. As contemporary viewers, we are outsiders to the camp, but the relationship between our own position and the subject

matter remains undetermined. The sudden transition from inside to outside creates a disorienting effect in the viewer, destabilizing a fixed sense of place as one moves from one side of a scene to another and creating an uncanny moment of spatial disturbance.

Fig. 4. Ansel Adams, *Baseball Game at Manzanar Relocation Center*, 1943, gelatin silver print, dimensions unknown. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, reproduction number, LC-A35-4-M-56

Fig. 5. Dorothea Lange, *Pledge of Allegiance, Raphael Weill Elementary School, San Francisco*, 1942, gelatin silver print, 13 3/8 x 10 1/16 inches (34 x 25.6 cm). Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, reproduction number, LC-USZ62-17124

While many of Shimomura's artworks project a similar sense of unease brought on by shifts in spatial orientation, not all of his depictions of domestic interiors are uninhabited. Throughout the *American Diary* series, Shimomura represents residents partaking in a range of quotidian activities including eating, cleaning their living spaces, washing laundry, and celebrating birthdays. Such representations may be considered alongside similar scenes in the highly selective internment camp imagery released to the public during World War II, as they too offered a seemingly normal representation of home. Photographs by government-hired War Relocation Authority (WRA) photographers like Ansel Adams and Dorothea Lange produced a then-definitive record of the internment experience for the U.S. public. These photographs highlight the camps' inhabitants and their everyday activities, reinforcing a benign summer camp-like representation of internment.[24] Published photographs usually did not emphasize the interiors of barracks or the difficult living conditions many faced, but rather illustrated the leisure activities, productive labor, or civic

obedience displayed by those who were incarcerated.[25] Adams' photograph of a game of baseball at Camp Manzanar or Lange's of young students reciting the pledge of allegiance reassured those on the outside that containing Japanese Americans was the right course of action, and that life was continuing as usual for those who were interned (Figs. 4 and 5).

Shimomura's representations of daily life in the camps provide an alternative account to the dominant wartime depictions of the internment experience, largely influenced by the perception of artificiality in the pop art style he adopts. Unlike the problematic WRA photographs, whose black-and-white documentary quality presented a seemingly factual yet highly selective, manipulated view of life in the camps, Shimomura's graphic, comic-book style paintings instead highlight the superficial, packaged qualities of previous representations.[26] The ironically bright views of Shimomura's Minidoka, full of vivid, cloudless skies and smooth uninflected surfaces, offer formal choices that offset the false naturalism of photographic representations, as does his strategy of merging depictions of everyday activities with surprising and unsettling reminders of imprisonment. In many of his prints and paintings, Shimomura chooses to show the very things the government had required Adams and Lange to avoid: views of barbed wire, watchtowers, and armed soldiers. These jarring additions become the compositional and thematic elements that structure Shimomura's scenes of camp life.

In the early work, *Minidoka No. 3 (Diary)* (1978), which is also based on Toku's diary entries, Shimomura depicts his grandmother in the foreground holding a brush and paper (Fig. 6). Although the woman's form takes up two thirds of the painting, the glimpse of bright sky in the upper right-hand corner, which contrasts with the darker color palette of the surrounding walls and floor, draws the eye to the painting's upper-right corner, where a mother teaches a child to walk. The figures are positioned in front of a door, beyond which seven slim lines of barbed wire echo the horizontal lines of the floor. Through such intrusions, everyday events associated with home, including childrearing and familial bonding, become charged with a sense of confinement and immobility. Appearing on the threshold of the door, positioned between inside and outside, the mother instructs her child to move on his own, yet his very movement and autonomy remains circumscribed by the camp's threatening borders. Similar obtrusive elements are also found in the series *Memories of Childhood* (1999), which the artist describes as "images that are scraped from the linings of my mind—not necessarily what I remembered specifically, but what I respond with when I think of Camp Minidoka."[27] Throughout this collection of prints, a young Shimomura engages in predominantly solitary activities in or around the barracks. In the work entitled *When I caught the chickenpox, my mom and I had to live alone*, a young boy appears alone in the corner of an empty barrack,

Fig. 6. Roger Shimomura, *Minidoka No. 3 (Diary)*, 1978, acrylic on canvas, 59 7/8 x 72 1/16 inches (152.1 x 183 cm). Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. Museum purchase, 1979.0051

Fig. 7. Roger Shimomura, *Memories of Childhood: When I caught the chicken-pox, my mom and I had to live alone*, 1999, color lithograph, 10 x 12 1/16 inches (25.4 x 30.7 cm). Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. Museum purchase: Lucy Shaw Schultz Fund, 2002.0045l

crouching to look at a mouse (Fig. 7). The formal qualities of his blue and white striped shirt are echoed in the upper right corner, where a glimpse of blue sky can be seen through a window lined with barbed wire.

Shimomura's depictions of Minidoka present an uncanny version of the everyday activities associated with home, especially those unassuming practices that result from one's sense of comfort and security by living in a particular place. In their articulation of home and place, social geographers Edward Relph and David Seamon describe how neighborhoods and communities have particular rhythms to them that arise naturally and without directed intervention. Relph's term for this is "existential insidedness"—when a place is experienced without deliberate and self-conscious reflection.[28] Drawing upon Relph's ideas, Seamon formulates the concept of place-ballets and space-routines, where people experience positive and dynamic exchanges through a series of everyday habits.[29] Even the internment camps resonate with Seamon's idea of place-ballet, in that new patterns and routines were experienced and repeated, and new communities were forged and perhaps strengthened; however, the controlled circumstances under which these patterns emerged makes them anything but natural or freely experienced.

Shimomura frequently depicts the uncanniness of daily routines enacted within unfamiliar spaces by emphasizing the alienation of his subjects. Not only are the figures typically represented in isolation or in partial views, but they are also seen repeating ordinary activities in a sequential progression of fragmented, isolated spaces. The serial, comic-book style of the narrative's thirty paintings, each 11 by 14 inches, lays out internment in a repetitive arrangement of individual tasks and actions. His figures play, eat meals, and read books. Shelter and everyday routines—markers of home—are consistently presented, yet the lack of autonomy ascribed to the subjects inhabiting these scenes and performing such activities heightens the sense of unnaturalness.

Karen Higa has effectively argued that Shimomura's art can be seen as a response to the insensitive refrain often used to justify the internment: if Japanese American citizens maintained some semblance of normal life in the camps, then it might not have been too much of a hardship.[30] Shimomura does represent the banal and celebratory aspects of daily existence, yet the power of his works—and the critique launched against the power structures that allowed such a sustained event to occur—can be interpreted in his formal strategies. His paintings and prints focalize the relentlessly controlled and bound aspects of his subjects' daily activities through their isolated, fragmented, and depersonalized presentation. Returning to Higa's claims, it is this "sense of silent oppression" that stays with the viewer long after disengaging with the images.[31]

Fig. 8. Roger Shimomura, *Memories of Childhood: One time a friend from Seattle came to visit me while I was in camp*, 1999, color lithograph, 10 x 12 1/16 inches (25.4 x 30.7 cm). Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. Museum purchase: Lucy Shaw Schultz Fund, 2002.0045t

As previously noted, Shimomura's works frequently manipulate the composition's spatial dimensions to suddenly change the viewer's position or confuse distinctions between interior and exterior space. These formal choices often present an ambiguous sense of inside and outside as one moves through the artist's depictions of camp life. In many of his works, Shimomura implicitly asks viewers to consider their own sense of place and belonging by how he situates them compositionally. In *One time a friend from Seattle came to visit me while I was in camp* from *Memories of Childhood*, a young Shimomura speaks to a light-haired boy, while a female figure, visible only by the lower third of her body, stands in front of Shimomura (Fig. 8). The two boys are separated by seven thin black lines of barbed wire that extend beyond the picture's cropped edges. Placed on the same side of the fence as Shimomura and his mother, we are both inside the camps as intimate observers, aligned with the artist and other Japanese Americans whose identities as American citizens were called into question during the war, and outside this barrier, at a remove from time and place.

The barbed wire that structures Shimomura's works also serves as a barrier between inside and outside and between those who are "in place"

(those outside of the camps perceived as American citizens) and those who are "out of place" (Japanese Americans interned in the camps). In such images, the common belief of home as haven, elaborated in Mallett's essay as private domestic space protected from the outside world, exists only for those beyond the fences, which do not protect the inside from outside, but rather the outside from the inside.[32] During wartime, these measures were justified as protecting Japanese Americans from harm, when of course this national policy involved a great deal of personal loss for those who were interned.[33] Home as haven is a bankrupt concept for those on the inside. Rather than a haven or space of protection, these spaces served to contain, to keep the so-called "enemy aliens" away from the general populace.

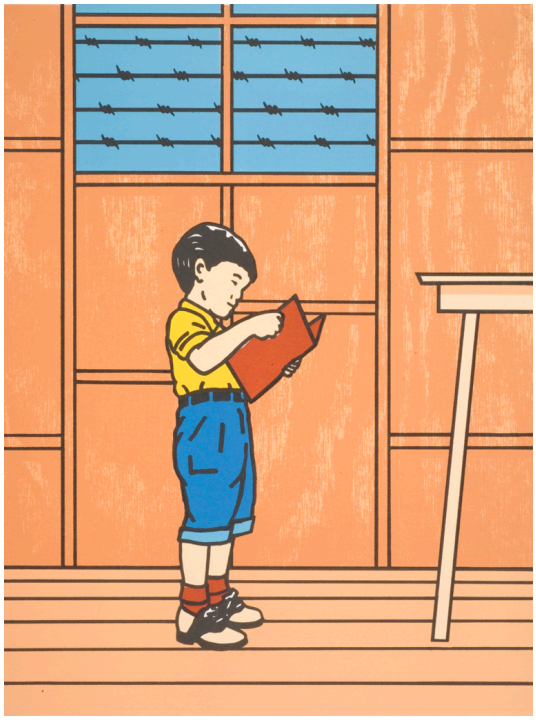

Fig. 9. Roger Shimomura, *American Citizen #2*, 2006, color lithograph, 15 7/8 x 11 7/8 inches (40.3 x 30.2 cm). Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. Gift of the artist, 2007.0094

Shimomura's *American Citizen #2* aptly references the contradiction of reconciling homeland as both a terrain where one was born and as a place of non-belonging for people who are targeted for their cultural and racial identities (Fig. 9). It is a work whose title suggests a sense of estrangement from one's nation. In this lithograph print, a young Shimomura stands alone in a barrack, reading a red book. Another barbed wire window appears directly above him, its rectangular shape and horizontal barbed lines emulating the stripes of an American flag. The barbed flag serves as a dark reminder that one's homeland can quickly turn into a violent place of marginalization and alienation for entire communities.

Shimomura's shifting stylistic references can also be situated within this discussion of loss of home and identity. In his early series *Minidoka* (1978-79), Shimomura touches upon stories from the internment camp in a style reminiscent of Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints, while later series, such as *Memories of Childhood*, adopt the visual vocabulary of pop art.[34] These works possess the strong graphic sensibility of commercial design, with flat, unmodulated colors, bold linear compositions, and dark figural outlines. In

her essay, "Delayed Reactions," Lucy Lippard points out the disjointed and humorous nature of Shimomura's cultural mixing, an approach that underscores Western perceptions of Japanese art rather than their historical realities. She writes, "By juxtaposing modern American objects and styles with nineteenth-century Japanese costume and styles, especially *ukiyo-e* prints from the 'floating world' of the lower classes, he reveals another kind of floating world, that of the 'homeless' or 'multicentered' bicultural America."[35] Lippard's assessment of *ukiyo-e* prints as a nineteenth-century phenomenon highlights how Eurocentric attitudes, largely shaped by European collectors and artists, perpetuated the Orientalizing myth of *ukiyo-e* imagery as authentic contemporary representations of Japanese culture, despite the fact that the genre had developed much earlier in Japan's Edo period (1603-1868). Lippard further explores homelessness as a metaphor to describe the unanchored multicultural visual vocabulary that Shimomura uses, as he frequently draws from both American and Japanese cultural contexts. In the *American Diary* and *Memory of Childhood* series, he integrates internment imagery in the familiar commercial stylings of pop art, a strategy that creates tension with the "otherness" of Japanese-American identity. Shimomura's deft use of an artistic style popularized in the mid-twentieth century by and typically identified with white male American artists such as Andy Warhol, James Rosenquist, and Tom Wesselmann, features marginalized figures and political events often excluded from the subject matter these artists tended to draw from, namely the palatable figures and products of mainstream white culture.

Shimomura also plays with pop art's familiar aim for subversive effect. The pop style of Shimomura's Minidoka works pull in viewers with their surface appeal before their content can be fully understood. Perhaps the most compelling aspect of Shimomura's style, with its vibrant colors and eye-catching graphic quality, is that it belies the emotional and traumatic content surrounding such a formative event. It depicts the internment experience of the everyday in a relatively bright, yet seemingly artificial fashion. The cartoonish quality of his paintings and prints present a visually simplified depiction of life in the camps. Shimomura's deployment of a recognizable and easily consumed American art style becomes all the more disturbing once visible elements of imprisonment, such as barbed wire and watchtowers, become apparent. Moreover, the decision to position contemporary viewers both inside and outside of the camps, occupying the place of both the interned and the viewer, further compels viewers to question one's homeland as a secure and inclusive place, producing an uneasy and unanchored sense of home across place and time.

Like thousands of other imprisoned citizens, when Shimomura's family arrived at the camps, they were housed in identical blocks of impersonal barracks. Eventually the barracks at Minidoka became more

domesticated as materials such as scrap lumber became available and residents were able to build their own furniture. Household items such as curtains, furniture and bedding from Sears and Roebuck catalogues were ordered by camp residents and used to decorate individual spaces.[36] These physical changes made to the barracks do not appear in Shimomura's *American Diary* and *Memories of Childhood* series—indeed, the artist has indicated most of his camp depictions feature the barracks in their original and unadorned state.[37] While "home" is present in Shimomura's works, it is largely conveyed by what is not there, rather than what is. Image after image features figures alone in empty barracks, or outside unadorned buildings, without the personalization, privacy, and security that define an individual's sense of home. Shimomura's works show the absence of home as something not only defined by physical and geographical estrangement, but also as a loss of those qualities and objects most associated with it.

Making a Home Elsewhere: The Exhibition and Display of Japanese American Internment

In the field of humanistic geography, home acts as a central place of significance and meaning, where people experience and modify their living space to create a place of comfort and belonging.[38] As Shimomura's artwork indicates, for those forcibly interned in temporary barracks, the act of homemaking in an inhospitable environment remained tenuous. Instead of looking at the physical space of the barracks as a site for homemaking, one may turn to artmaking as a more autonomous practice pursued by interned individuals, and as arguably the closest activity to homemaking and community building in a traditional sense. As a collector and curator, Shimomura has explored the role of artmaking as an important practice for those who were interned. The following section explores the artist's curatorial involvement in displaying objects created by interned individuals who extended acts of creativity and agency outside of the barracks to produce a meaningful sense of place.

As Jane Dusselier argues in her study *Artifacts of Loss: Crafting Survival in Japanese American Concentration Camps*, many imprisoned Japanese Americans turned to artmaking practices as a means of recovering personal identity, as a survival practice, and to create a portable sense of place.[39] In opposition to the depersonalized living spaces of the camps, Shimomura turns to the creative output of those who lived there to provide visual accounts of loss and displacement, self-preservation, and personal identity. The most prominent voice in Shimomura's art, as previously discussed, was his grandmother. In addition to writing daily diary entries, Toku Shimomura also wrote haiku poetry, which often expressed thinly veiled anger about her internment.[40] Other examples of creative expression include the cultivation

of desert gardens and uniquely patterned clothing, creations that gave a sense of individuality and familiarity in an otherwise unfamiliar and hostile place. Camp residents also pursued art practices in the form of landscaping projects and Japanese arts and crafts classes.[41] Shimomura has described his own memories about the formation of artistic classes at Minidoka. According to the artist, the Japanese American community was quick to establish educational and creative opportunities in the camps; among them were classes in traditional Japanese musical instruments, writing haiku and poetry, as well as classes in *sumi-e* (or ink wash painting). His grandmother participated regularly in these artistic activities.[42]

The inclusion of Toku's diary entries in his representations of Minidoka serves as one of many actions Shimomura has taken to make visible the voices of Japanese American internees. In addition to incorporating his grandmother's writing in his art and exhibitions, Shimomura has also been active in collecting and displaying works by other Japanese American artists and camp residents. In 2011, Shimomura helped organize *Shadows of Minidoka*, an exhibition held at the Lawrence Arts Center, Kansas, and contributed essays for its accompanying catalogue.[43] For this exhibition, Shimomura evoked a wide variety of Japanese American wartime experiences by displaying objects created in camps, including not only art and craft objects, such as jewelry made from sea shells, lamps made from local sea scraps, handmade furniture, and rock vases, but also deeply personal and individualized objects of remembrance like high school yearbooks and poetry books. These objects were displayed alongside official wartime records, including government documents justifying the policy of internment, to suggest the impact of mass internment on a personal level. On the importance of displaying these objects, the artist states:

> I think the war time products made by camp incarcerees were a testament to their positive creative spirit…I think it helped that I have always been a collector of objects. It seemed a natural extension of this interest to turn this passion to any physical evidence related to the camp experience.[44]

In adjacent galleries at the Lawrence Arts Center, Shimomura displayed works from *Minidoka on My Mind* (2010), a series of thirty paintings that similarly engage with the subject of internment.[45] Shimomura's artwork and his accompanying collection of objects created by interned individuals develops an important and ongoing conversation between past and present representations of Japanese American experience. *Shadows of Minidoka* and related exhibitions devoted to representing personal stories of Japanese American internment through material culture create important spaces of meaning, where individual voices may be recovered, expressed, and experienced.[46]

While the internment camps acted as sites of confinement and surveillance, they nevertheless were active places for the production of

individual and collective memory. The camps became sites of artistic production and communal experience, reconstituted by those on the inside into some semblance of *a meaningful place*, even if their designation as "home" remains in question. Shimomura connects his own experience and artistic production to these exhibitions by including images and objects of his family, including his grandmother's diaries, which became important source materials for his future work. In this sense, his own practice—as an artist and as a politically motivated citizen—is fundamentally intertwined with the project of making a place for the memories of internment camp residents.

To think about belonging or dwelling in a place founded upon exclusionary practices naturally calls for a nuanced discussion of home in relation to the lived experiences of camp residents, and for an understanding of how artmaking, rather than homemaking, became a recuperative measure for combatting the fragmenting effects of displacement. Roger Shimomura's continued engagement with representing internment through his own artistic and curatorial practice effectively explores the fraught context of home both within and beyond its physical boundaries. While his own art shows the internment camps as living spaces founded on institutionalized racial oppression, Shimomura's curatorial activities offer an expanded and deeply felt examination of home's absence through the creative practices of other exiled and marginalized American citizens. In opposition to the empty, uncanny homes depicted in his art—unhomely spaces that reveal the disorienting effects of displacement and loss—the objects and activities represented in such curatorial endeavors uncover the material realities of internment and create powerful accounts of the absence of home.

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Notes

1. William Lew, *Minidoka Revisited: The Paintings of Roger Shimomura* (Clemson, SC: Lee Gallery, Clemson University, 2005).

2. Stacey Uradomo, "Legacies: Family Memories, History, and Identity in Japanese American Art" (PhD dissertation, University of Southern California, 2005). On postmemory, see Marianne Hirsch's study of Holocaust remembrance in the second generation of family survivors: Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29,1 (Spring 2008): 103-128. https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2007-019.

3. Allison Morgan McCormick, "Rhetorical Pop: The Art of Roger Shimomura" (PhD dissertation, Florida State University, 2013).

4. Emily Stamey, "Pop, Place, and Personal Identity in the Art of Roger Shimomura" (PhD dissertation, University of Kansas, 2009).

5. Stamey, "Pop, Place, and Personal Identity," 167.

6. Ibid., 122.

7. See: Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, *Home* (London: Routledge, 2006); Marcus Cooper, *House as a Mirror of Self: Exploring the Deeper Meaning of Home* (Berkeley, CA: Conari Press, 1995); C.P. Gilman, *The Home, its Work and Influence* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002). Significant articles and chapters in edited volumes include: Huma Bhabha, "The World and the Home," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, eds. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Carole Després, "The Meaning of Home: Literature Review and Directions for Future Research and Theoretical Development," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 8, 2 (1991): 96-115; Alison Blunt and Ann Varley, "Geographies of Home," *Cultural Geographies* 11 (2004): 3-6. https://doi.org/10.1191/1474474004eu289xx.

8. Blunt and Dowling, *Home*, 2.

9. See: Irwin Altman and Carol M. Werner's edited volume *Home Environments* (New York: Plenum Press, 1985).

10. Després, "The Meaning of Home," 100.

11. Shelly Mallett, "Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature," *Sociological Review* 52,1 (2004): 71. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2004.00442.x.

12. Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 347.

13. Jeffrey F. Burton, *Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites* (Tucson: Western Archaeological and Conservation Center, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2000), 1.

14. Marita Sturken, "Absent Images of Memory: Remembering and Re-enacting the Japanese Internment," *Positions* 5,3 (1997): 692. https://doi.org/10.1215/10679847-5-3-687. Although the term "concentration camp" was used frequently at the time, this term carries different associations than the Nazi death camps stationed throughout Europe during World War II. The Japanese internment camps were isolated and desolate, although few government or military deaths were inflicted.

15. Camp Harmony makes its first appearance in Shimomura's art in his *Minidoka* series (1978-79). In *Minidoka No. 1 (Notification)* and *Minidoka No. 2 (Exodus)*, the artist depicts the evacuation announcement and chaotic migration in a style reminiscent of Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints. These earlier paintings on camp experience, while significant in the trajectory of Shimomura's stylistic and thematic development, remain outside the scope of this paper.

16. Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor, and Harry H. L. Kitano, eds. *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), xxi.

17. Burton, *Confinement and Ethnicity*, 38.

18. Stamey, "Pop, Place, and Personal Identity," 161.

19. Interview with Roger Shimomura conducted by the author, December 6, 2013.

20. Susan L. Smith, "Midwife at Minidoka: Toku Shimomura and World War II," in *Minidoka Revisited: The Paintings of Roger Shimomura*, ed. William M. Lew (Clemson, SC: Lee Gallery, Clemson University, 2005), 56.

21. Stamey, "Pop, Place, and Personal Identity," 53-54. Roger Shimomura

received funding from the Civil Liberties Public Education Fund in 1996 to create these paintings, which toured the country as a group until 2001. The exhibition was organized by the Smithsonian Institute and traveled to the following museums: Bellevue Art Museum (2002), Chicago Cultural Center (2001), Boise Art Museum (2001), San Jose Art Museum (2001), National Museum of American History (2000), Phoenix Art Museum (2000), Japanese American National Museum (1999), Indianapolis Museum of Art (1999), Mississippi Museum of Art (1999), Steinbaum Krauss Gallery, New York (1999), Priebe Gallery, University of Wisconsin (1998), Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, Philadelphia (1998).

22. "Roger Shimomura: An American Diary series, 2002-2003," Greg Kucera Gallery, accessed November 29, 2013, http://www.gregkucera.com/shimomura_diary.htm.

23. Ibid.

24. Kristine C. Kuramitsu, "Internment and Identity in Japanese American Art." *American Quarterly* 47,4 (1995): 623. https://doi.org/10.2307/2713369.

25. The U.S. government did not publish images that appeared to indict WRA policy. See: Jasmine Alinder, *Moving Images: Photography and the Japanese American Incarceration* (Champaign, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

26. Recent discussions about the ambivalence of documentary photography and photographic objectivity have been explored in several publications and exhibitions, including the anthology *Photography and Doubt*, ed. Sabine T. Kriebel and Andrés Zervigón (New York: Routledge, 2017) and the exhibition *Faking It: Manipulated Before Photoshop* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2012).

27. "Roger Shimomura: Small Paintings – Minidoka on My Mind, February 18 – March 27, 2010," Greg Kucera Gallery, accessed December 2, 2013, http://www.gregkucera.com/shimomura_minidoka.htm. In her catalogue raisonné of Shimomura's prints, Emily Stamey notes that plans emerged to have the works in this series commercially reproduced as a children's book. Although this plan ultimately fell through, Shimomura created an artist's book instead. Emily Stamey, *The Prints of Roger Shimomura: A Catalogue Raisonné, 1968-2005* (Lawrence, KS: Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, in association with University of Washington Press, 2007).

28. David Seamon, "Body-Subject, Time-Space Routines, and Place-Ballets,"

in *The Human Experience of Space and Place*, ed. Anne Buttimer and David Seamon (London: Croom Helm, 1980), 161. See also Edward Relph's discussion of existential insidedness in Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976).

29. John Agnew, *Place and Politics: The Geographical Mediation of State and Society* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 36. "This sense of place reinforces the socio-spatial definition of place from *inside*, so to speak. The identification with place that can follow contributes yet another aspect to the meaning of place: one place or 'territory' in its differentiation from other places *can* become an 'object' of identity for a subject. This is *not* the same as community in the sense of a way of life based on a high degree of personal intimacy and sociability." Agnew, 27-28.

30. Karen M. Higa, "Barbed Wire and Barracks: Roger Shimomura's Paintings and Collections," in *Shadows of Minidoka: Paintings and Collections of Roger Shimomura*, ed. Janet Jaeger (Lawrence, KS: Lawrence Arts Center, 2011), 15-17.

31. Ibid, 17.

32. Mallett, "Understanding Home," 70-73.

33. Alice Yang Murray, *Historical Memories of the Japanese American Internment and the Struggle for Redress* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 22. "Few Americans questioned Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt's call to remove Japanese Americans from the West Coast because they shared his assumption that Japanese Americans were members of an enemy race and were predisposed to be spies and saboteurs. People throughout the nation had long viewed both Japanese immigrants and their American-born children as suspicious foreigners, but the West Coast had a particularly virulent history of racism." Ibid.

34. Kazuko Nakane argues that Shimomura's use of traditional Japanese aesthetics derived ironically from his misidentification as a Japanese artist in the United States. See: Kazuko Nakane, "Not Made in Japan: Roger Shimomura's Paintings and a Japanese-American Identity," in *Roger Shimomura, Delayed Reactions: Paintings, Prints, Performance and Installation Art from 1973 to 1996* (Lawrence, KS: Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, 1995), 21.

35. Lucy Lippard, "Delayed Reactions," in *Roger Shimomura, Delayed Reactions*, 7. In context, Lippard does not explicitly identify *ukiyo-e* prints as origi-

nating in the nineteenth century and, one can reasonably assume, recognizes their historical connection to the broader Edo period.

36. Shimomura, interview.

37. Ibid.

38. Blunt and Dowling, *Home*, 11.

39. Jane E. Dusselier, *Artifacts of Loss: Crafting Survival in Japanese American Concentration Camps* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 1.

40. Anne Collins Goodyear, "An American Artist," *American Art* 27,1 (2013): 88.

41. Dusselier, *Artifacts of Loss*, 52.

42. Shimomura, interview.

43. *Shadows of Minidoka: Paintings and Collections of Roger Shimomura* (Lawrence, KS: Lawrence Arts Center, 2011).

44. Shimomura, interview.

45. In addition to *Shadows of Minidoka: Paintings and Collections of Roger Shimomura*, the artist has also curated an exhibition featuring the works of Japanese American artist Jimmy Mirikitani. In 2006, Shimomura curated Mirikitani's first solo exhibition, titled *Jimmy Tsutomu Mirikitani*, at the Wing Luke Asian Museum in Seattle. Mirikitani (1920-2012), a Japanese American citizen who received some artistic education in Japan, was sent to Tule Lake, California, where he was incarcerated for nearly four years. Like Shimomura, Mirikitani created art that drew upon his experiences while in the camps. Although it extends beyond the scope of this article, Mirikitani's life, which is partly documented in Linda Hattendorf's 2006 film *The Cats of Mirikitani*, provides a compelling counterpoint to the discussion of home and homelessness for Japanese American incarcerees in the decades following the war. See also Michael J. Shapiro, *Cinematic Geopolitics* (London: Routledge, 2009), 86.

46. Shimomura's curatorial projects stand alongside several important recent exhibitions, including *The View from Within: Japanese American Art from the Internment Camps, 1942-1945*, curated by Karin Higa at the Japanese American National Museum in 1992, and permanent exhibitions at the Smithsonian's

American History Museum in Washington D.C. and Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles that have bolstered the visibility of important voices previously left out of American historical narratives. Internment representations have also been expanded beyond the museum space. As Elena Tajima Creef contends, representations of Japanese American wartime experiences has moved beyond artistic and academic realms and has reached forms of popular visual culture: "In the last twenty-five years, the visual archive of camp representation has noticeably expanded with the new body of work by Asian American filmmakers and video artists who continue to explore the historical trauma heaped on individuals and families," 17, in *Imaging Japanese America: The Visual Construction of Citizenship, Nation, and the Body* (New York: New York University Press, 2004).