

***Resistance at Tule Lake:***  
**a hidden history of protest led by transnational Japanese Americans**

Konrad Aderer  
Film Director

Tule Lake War Relocation Center, near the California-Oregon border, began as one of ten concentration camps where the U.S. government incarcerated 110,000 Japanese Americans during World War II. As the war drew to a close, the government required adult incarcerated to fill out an infamous “loyalty questionnaire” to become eligible for release. More than 12,000 Japanese Americans refused to give unqualified answers affirming their exclusive loyalty to the U.S. and volunteering for military service. These dissidents earned themselves the stigma of "disloyal" classification by the U.S. government and confinement at the newly designated, militarized Tule Lake Segregation Center. U.S.-born Japanese educated in Japan, known as *kibei*, played key roles in resistance to the oppressive policies of the incarceration regime. They also created a distinct cultural movement in the confines of Tule Lake, publishing a literary journal written in Japanese, articulating experiences and points of view that diverged and sometimes clashed with those of the Americanized *nisei*. The PBS documentary *Resistance at Tule Lake* brings to light ways that transnational identities shaped the history of wartime incarceration, and provides a jumping-off point for ongoing research on *kibei* culture in the camps.

## **Haroldo de Campos and Tomie Ohtake: the Yu-gen Experience**

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In 1998, the work of Brazilian naturalized Japanese artist Tomie Ohtake found in the poems of Haroldo de Campos a transpoetic mirroring. The result was the composition of the engraving album YU-GEN, exhibited that same year at the Nara Roesler Gallery in São Paulo. In the engravings, the texts, originally typed, are now calligraphed in their visual works, offering as a result a hybrid object, poem-engraving. More than the translation between artistic languages (from poem to print, from typography to calligraphy) a kind of manifesto of aesthetic values between cultures has been created (from the Japanese tradition to modern art). Translation became, as Haroldo de Campos proposed, a metamorphic transcreation. The dream of the book that late avant-garde poetry in Brazil has now sought is scattered on the loose canvases of an engraving album, whose originals are scattered throughout several art collections. Haroldo de Campos' work had several dialogues with visual artists over the five decades in which it unfolded, with Hélio Oiticica the one that transformed it most. In his post-utopian phase, however, the rapprochement with Tomie Ohtake, who in 1994 also illustrated his translation of the no play Hagaromo, and to whom he dedicated a poem in Crisantempo, was important in shaping what is meant by poetry. This means that Tomie Ohtake's work, at first unsuspected displacement, rehearses a reading of contemporary poetry through the album YU-GEN.

**Foujita, Japanese**  
**— French artist, confronted Japanese American & Japanese Brazilian**

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The artist Foujita (1886-1968) was born as a Japanese in Tokyo in the middle of the Meiji period but lived more than half of his eighty years outside of Japan. At the time of his death, he was a French citizen and a Catholic. Having left Tokyo for Paris for the first time in 1913, he says that by the end of the 1940s he had traveled around the world three times. Among all his wanderings, it is remarkable that, at the beginning of 1930s, he visited South and Central America for about two years. In 1920s Paris, Foujita had already met several South and Central American artists (including Japanese-Americans like Yasuo Kuniyoshi), but when he traveled around these countries from 1931 to 1933, he was surprised to encounter Japanese immigrants. This paper aims to show the relationship between Foujita's social network in 1920s Paris and his visit in South and Central America at the beginning of 1930s, especially in Brazil.

## The Immigrant Avant Garde in Orígenes Lessa's 'Shonosuké'

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Among the fifteen short stories in Brazilian author Orígenes Lessa's collection *Passa-três* (1935), "Shonosuké" is at once consistent with the author's characteristically ironic disposition toward Brazilian society, and the sole work to represent the latest entrants into its so-called racial democracy: the Japanese. It depicts an impresario named Clemente Vidal, who discovers an impoverished Japanese street artist, the eponymous Shonosuké, earning a living doing portraiture in the bars of São Paulo. Vidal concocts a scheme to build up this exotic other precisely in order to expose the falsity of an artistic scene that traffics in hype rather than substance. He succeeds beyond his expectations as the young man is elevated to the highest echelons of the art world as the second coming of the celebrated School of Paris artist Foujita Tsuguharu, whose four-month long visit to Brazil in 1931-32 made a lasting impression on a nascent but growing vanguard of Brazilian modernism. When Vidal's hoax is ultimately revealed, the art world is suitably chastened and the "japonezinho" commits suicide, completing what had been from the outset a fairly banal Orientalist caricature in its own right. Yet Vidal's final words, which complete the narrative, pivot away from the artist's downfall to perversely insist, "What's interesting is that Shonosuké was really a man of genius,"<sup>1</sup> after all.

In an effort to resolve the several paradoxes embedded in "Shonosuké," this paper offers comparative literary and art historical perspectives on the place of the Japanese immigrant in prewar Brazil and Brazilian modernism. First, it reads back into the text's four references to Foujita, delving into his modernist exchanges with literary and artistic counterparts such as Mario de Andrade, Candido Portinari, and Ismael Nery. It then articulates the structure of comparison by which the Japanese newcomer Shonosuké could duplicate the internationally acclaimed artist's triumphs. Still, even as the short story shines a light on this fictitious and short-lived "Brazilian Foujita," it occludes occurrences elsewhere. In contrast to Lessa's Shonosuké, the Japanese immigrant artist as a harbinger of the avant-garde in fact traces back to the dawn of Brazilian modernist painting and contemporaneous establishment of the Japanese immigrant artist collective known as the Seibikai in 1935. By the same measure, Lessa's unintentionally allegorical depiction of the precipitous rise and fall of the young artist would prove devastatingly accurate to the challenges that lay ahead for the Japanese in Brazil.

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<sup>1</sup> Orígenes Lessa, *Passa-Três*, 237. All translations are mine.

**The Nikkei Community as Prison in Higashide's *Adios to Tears* and Yamashita's *Brazil-Marú***

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Ethnic communities and their corresponding suburban residential and business areas or “ethnoburbs” (ethnic enclaves) are often represented in literary works as a refuge from mainstream society for immigrant characters and their descendants. It is in their ethnic enclave where they are free from racist or xenophobic harassment, and free to communicate in their native language and enjoy their cultural practices. This essay, however, focuses on counternarratives to this assumption, as expressed in Seiichi Higashide’s testimonial *Adios to Tears* and Karen Tei Yamashita’s novel *Brazil-Marú*; more specifically, on Nikkei representations of their diasporic ethnic community as a prison house whence characters long to escape. Although this is, of course, not an exclusively Nikkei phenomenon, it is important to point out the contrast with the traditional literary representation of the Japanese community as a tight knit social group that harbors its members from Nipponophobia and where solidarity reigns.

**Social Representation of Nikkeys Artists in the Brazilian Imaginary.  
From Pre-War to 1970.**

Monica Okamoto  
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This workshop intends to discuss the social representation of Japanese-Brazilian artists (immigrants and their descendants) in the fields of fine arts and photography, focusing on the period from pre-war to 1970. The demarcation is justified by being a temporal space still poorly studied and understood by historians, art critics and curators. It is interesting to know that internationally awarded works such as the photographic production of immigrant farmer Haruo Ohara (1909-1999) remains unknown to most of the Brazilian public. The fine arts, on the other hand, achieved greater insertion and social prominence, benefited, in a way, by a specific historical context and the founding of the *Seibi* group in 1935 which, by congregating artists, institutionalized Japanese-Brazilian art. With regard to this issue, we intend to explore the role of Japanese-language newspapers in Brazil that actively acted in shaping Nikkei thought and opinion (until the mid-1980s) and had a strong role in the dismantling of the *Seibi* group in 1970. Thus, in addition to press articles, minutes of the *Seibi* group, collections of photos and paintings, I also intend to use interviews with artists and their families, curators and critics of art and photography as sources of investigation in an attempt to reconstruct the memories of this ethnic-racial group and to understand its social representation in the Brazilian imaginary.

## **Nipo-Brazilians artists: identities**

Michiko Okano  
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The identity of Nipo-Brazilian artists is diverse and hybrid. There are artists with Japanese ascendance who are passionate about Japan, be the traditional arts or the pop arts in thematic, aesthetic and technique approaches. Some of them have had experiences in Japan whereas others have not, an important feature that reflects in visual representations. Some negative criticism may also be perceived in some artworks. On the other hand, some artists reject any Japanese identity and strongly embrace Brazilian ways of life. We have encountered those who consider themselves citizens of the world, in the trans-ethnic perspective, without any national identifications as well as others, whose artworks can be included in the concept of minor transnationalism. Floating identities could be traced in artists who still are or had been in Japan: they walked the roads from the deconstruction of an imagined Japan to the reconstruction of a new vision of identity. The presentation will focus mainly in the example of artists of two exhibitions under my curatorship: UnCommon Gaze: Japan Revisited (2016) held at Oscar Niemeyer Museum, Curitiba, Brazil and Transpacific Borderlands: The Art of Japanese Diaspora in Lima, Los Angeles, Mexico City and São Paulo (2017/2018), held at The Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles, EUA.

## **The Seibikai, Pioneers of Japanese Brazilian Art**

Roberto Okinaka

Curator, Museu Afro Brasil

It is exactly one hundred and twelve years since the first Japanese immigrants disembarked at the Port of Santos, in São Paulo, in search of a new life, thereby inaugurating a mutually productive exchange of customs, traditions, and efforts that extend to the present day. The intense shock of adaptation, the sacrifices focused on the future, and sense of estrangement suffered by these “aliens” to the diversity of life in Brazil did not prevent them from rapidly shaping and being shaped by Brazilian art and its cultural environment. Already by the second decade in the wave of mass migration, some of the figures who would go on to become the most representative Japanese Brazilian artists of their generation had arrived in Brazil, the most prominent among them Tomoo Handa (born in Utsunomiya in 1906 and died in Atibaia, São Paulo, in 1996), whose family emigrated in 1917. This paper will explore the formation of the artistic collective known as the Seibikai (the abbreviation for São Paulo Art Group in Japanese) by Handa et al, as well as its postwar revival characterized by the turn toward abstraction by such leading figures as Manabe Mabu, Flávio Shiró, and Tomie Ohtake.

## **K.T. Takahashi : Transnational Japanese American Writer and Activist**

Greg Robinson

Université du Québec à Montréal

Although his North American career spanned less than a decade, Kazutomo (a.k.a. Kadzu Tomo) Takahashi (1862-1931) was the first ethnic Japanese writer and intellectual to receive mainstream attention for his writings. Born in Japan, he attended University of Michigan, then moved to Montreal, Quebec in the late 1880s, where in addition to working as a writer and publicist, he operated a book and magazine store. He was a prolific writer of essays and short fiction, as well as a lecturer on Japan and a civil rights activist. In his most enduring contribution, the 1897 pamphlet “The Anti-Japanese Petition,” Takahashi defended immigration rights for Japanese in Canada. He urged white employers in British Columbia to employ Japanese immigrants, who intended to stay and build Canadian society, rather than hiring white American migrant workers who would take their earnings and return south. He thereby countered popular anti-Japanese sentiment by turning nativist arguments on their heads. Takahashi’s career allows us to consider how cosmopolitan Japanese immigrants on both sides of the 49th parallel negotiated their racial status and their sentiments of belonging.

## **“Meriken Jappu:” The Japanese-American Literature of Hasegawa Kaitarō**

Xavi Sawada  
Yale University

Hasegawa Kaitarō (長谷川海太郎, 1930-35) was one of the most widely read and financially successful writers in early 1930's Japan. His professional writing career lasted only ten years owing to his premature death, but this gave readers enough time to avidly consume hundreds of his short stories, embellished travelogues, and opinion essays in the late twenties and thirties. His fictional works, which ranged from detective and love stories to lowbrow period pieces, were quickly adapted to film by the major studios Shochiku and Nikkatsu. One Hasegawa character, the cagey swordsman Tange Sazen (protagonist of a series published under the pen name Hayashi Fubō), persisted as a popular hero into the postwar years as a result of his repeated cinematic reinterpretation. Hasegawa's status as a mass fiction writer has, however, contributed to an unfair devaluation of his more experimental pre-1929 writings that focus on his experiences as a Japanese immigrant to the United States between 1920 and 1924. This presentation examines Hasegawa's experiences as a student, worker, and self-styled “wanderer” in the U.S. of the Roaring Twenties, and evaluates how the literary form of his earlier writings helps bring to life an idealized, transnational Japanese-American male subject for Japanese language readers. One goal of the presentation is to test the extent to which both the particular kind of Japanese-American subject Hasegawa depicts, as well as the idiosyncratic language he uses in service of this depiction, distinguish Hasegawa from other Japanese émigré writers (writing in Japanese) in this period, and allow us to place his writings within a canon of interwar literary modernism.

## **Migrations and Mass Imprisonment in the Art of Henry Sugimoto**

Edward Tang

University of Alabama, Dept. of American Studies

This presentation focuses on several wartime and postwar works by Henry Sugimoto (1900-1990), a prolific Issei painter who was imprisoned with his family and other Japanese Americans in the Jerome and Rohwer camps in Arkansas. I interpret this work by considering Sugimoto as a “racialized cosmopolitan.” In the 1930s, the artist thought of himself as a cosmopolitan in the Western artistic tradition when donning a black beret and favoring French Post-Impressionist styles and methods. But his time in the camps during World War II spurred him to also assess through social realist paintings his enemy alien status and the links between incarceration and racial prejudice. After the war, he expanded his artistic vision by rendering scenes of prewar Japanese immigration to the United States and implicitly connecting these pieces to his portrayals of the mass imprisonment. As a result, we can see in this later period Sugimoto’s creation of a broader transpacific epic of Japanese American experiences during the early to mid-twentieth centuries.

## **Yasuo Kuniyoshi's Latin American Images**

Tom Wolf  
Bard College

Yasuo Kuniyoshi was a prominent Japanese American artist in New York in the years between the two world wars. In this talk I will examine several little known works of his that feature Latin American subjects. In 1935 he travelled to Mexico and made two lithographs of Mexican scenes that I will discuss in relationship to works by other Japanese artists who visited the country during the same period. In 1940 Kuniyoshi made four drawings as ads for Macy's Havana Cigars. They were reproduced in several New York newspapers and make a marked contrast to other cigar ads from the time, in part because they represent workers in Cuban tobacco fields. I will present these works and contextualize them.