

Order 9066 Memorial Garden

A Public Art Proposal in Honor of UC Berkeley alumni
and faculty impacted by the internment of Japanese
Americans during the World War II period of 1942-1946,
as imposed by Executive Order 9066

Public Art and Belonging
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context

- WWII
 - Around 500 University of California, Berkeley students sent to internment camps
 - Indirectly imposed, institutionalized racism against Japanese following the Pearl Harbor attack
 - Enacted by Franklin D. Roosevelt through Executive Order 9066
- 70 years later (2009–10)
 - 131 degrees granted
 - The majority of recipients, by this point, had already passed or were too ill to receive their degrees in person
- What did the university do?
 - Robert Gordon Sproul (UC President) contacted schools for help in serving interned students (Kell)
 - Committee on Fair Play organized; political organization and documentation (ibid.)
 - Research and documentation by faculty (ibid.)
 - Organization of visits and book donations to camps (ibid.)

visual draft



{ view from proposed location }

features & significance

- The proposal features a **pseudo zen garden**, inspired by Kyoto style moss gardens, which are more stable under harsh weathers than traditional zen gardens featuring raked sand and small rocks
 - The proposal builds off of a small grove of cherry blossom trees at the university planted in honor of Japanese alumni incarcerated during WWII
- A **stone memorial**, a traditional form of monument, is inscribed with the identities of the students as an acknowledgement and recognition to honor those who had been unable to officially receive their degrees
- **Wooden benches serve to invite people to the space**, and are backless per tradition and in order to allow a free sense of direction, where people are free to embrace both parts of the feature: the cherry blossom trees and the garden
- Refocusing attention on the existing grove, expands on its significance and extends its honorary purpose
- Expanding on historical context, as its purpose and the plaque detailing it is rather unassuming
- Centering and examining the legacy of Japanese internment

education

- In a dual sense, this proposal extends through education by:
 - Serving as a platform to educate people that come to the space the history of internment and the impact it had on Berkeley students
 - Reinforcing the universal value of education
- The fact that education was forcibly withheld from a group of people based on institutionally racist grounds must be recognized
 - Difficulty of visibly and meaningfully acknowledging this injustice against their right to education
 - Installation as a physical manifestation as this acknowledgement and promise
- Grants a permanent presence to juxtapose the temporary, seasonal blossoming of the cherry blossoms
 - Instills a focus on the continuity of the importance of recognizing and remembering the tragic events that conspired so closely to campus.
 - It is important to recognize the historical significance of the institutional dislocations that have always followed Japanese immigrants

urban presence

- Our proposed site is located next to the cherry blossoms and next to Mulford Hall.
- There is traffic in both directions with the cherry blossoms dividing the street, and a very small plaque in front of the trees.
- The plaques do not have much presence because it is on a grey stone and has a very neutral color. Many people who pass by do not notice the plaque.
- So, our proposed site will cover most of the grass area next to the cherry blossoms.
- This way, most people will notice the artwork and notice that we are commemorating Japanese American students during WWII.
- The fact that cherry blossoms recurrently bloom in the spring “makes these trees a fitting, living, and vibrant memorial to those students,” according to Michael Omi, Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies at Cal.

symbolism

- Cherry blossoms
 - Impermanence; the trees bloom only for a few months each year, but are exquisitely vibrant when in bloom. In a sense, it serves as an annual sight that garners attention as a significantly special and treasured event.
- Stone memorials
 - Endurance with dignity
 - Constant, but non-obtrusive presence
 - Generally unassuming material, but when placed in the right context, it is able to stand out
- Zen-style gardens
 - Promote contemplation and meditation, offers peace and a space of neutrality
- Redirection of attention to significance of the nearby grove

culture

- First (Issei) and second (Nissei) generation Japanese Americans
 - Stone garden inspired by traditional Japanese gardens
 - In Japanese culture, beauty and memorial are features that are greatly cherished
 - Traditionally thought of zen gardens are meant for rather flat land and are subject to weather, since they are delicately shaped and of sand
 - Alternatively, implementing a Kyoto-inspired zen garden with intricate patterns of moss allows a juxtaposition of the cherry blossoms, which are impermanent, and the memorial itself, which is permanent and strong against weather
- Berkeley environmentalism
 - Minimal water use
 - Non-synthetic materials
 - Minimal maintenance needed
 - Zero waste initiative

universality

- Most people passing by the street are busy to go to work or to class, and this artwork creates a new space in campus for people to pause and reflect on the campus's history.
- The zen garden is a place that encourages all people to meditate or contemplate.
- We hope that people can learn the country's history of racism and also think about the progress made against racism.
 - The project serves to acknowledge the issues of institutional racism raised in the past, while condemning its premise
- The government continues to incriminate people based only on race, and our proposed artwork promotes viewers to more closely examine both our past and present policies.

notes on design

- Considered additions:
 - Benches within the cherry blossom trees to provide more space for people to sit and admire the blossoms
 - Cons: The location in between two streets is inherently inconvenient, not very inviting for people to go up to aside from taking pictures on a low traffic day
 - The addition of the benches besides a lawn behind a sidewalk on the opposite side of the road seems the best way to create an inviting environment while still drawing attention to the blossoms. Another row of benches above allows for more space as well as an overall view of both features.
 - Rain shelter
 - Pros: quaint, protective space existing along the lines of both private and public
 - Shelter from the elements (wind, rain, sun) while traveling through campus
 - Allows for clear displays of historical information on its interior walls
 - Cons: Shelters light, little rainfall when blossoms are most prominent, may block view due to the slope of the lawn
 - Led to the idea of a moss garden along the idea of a structure that is impervious to weather conditions

further notes

- A complete list of students impacted by the internment (around 500 from Berkeley alone), is not currently publicly available online
 - Furthermore, very few students were able to participate in the honorary graduation ceremony held, as many were either passed on unable to attend
 - It feels as if honorary atonement for those impacted is incomplete
- Due to the current pandemic situation, it is difficult to reach out to pull Berkeley records in order to find a complete list, if kept
 - Potentially, a further research project would extensively track the families of those impacted and bring more complete closure and recognition to them
 - If the proposal were approved for installation, the hope is that it will provide an open and safe space that can progressively incorporate the names of all the students, as well as honoring notable accomplishments by Berkeley students/staff in regards to bringing awareness and justice for social reparations of the internment period.

notable figures

- People who have made significant impact on the preservation and awareness efforts for the Japanese American community regarding internment may be highlighted through plaques on the benches (ideally the stone memorial is large enough to inscribe the names of all impacted alumni).
- Chiura Obata: UC Berkeley professor who had created many paintings of his experiences with culture and his trauma with the impact of the war
- Norman Y. Mineta: UC Berkeley graduate, former California Congressman, former US Commerce Secretary under Clinton administration, and former US Secretary of Transportation under Bush administration, was instrumental in the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which granted \$20,000 in compensation to every Japanese American interned.
- Miné Okubo: published *Citizen 13660*, a collection of 189 drawings recollecting her experiences during Japanese internment, and testified before the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. Her work has become quintessential in many university courses on Asian American history and is touted as one of the most important references for life in internment.

annotated bibliography

Brechin, Gray. *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin*. Univ. of California Press, 2007, pp. 280–311.

We used this reading to develop a more holistic understanding of Berkeley's history. In particular, this reading sheds light on the university's direct involvement with the war effort and some of the political and racial history of the university.

Dinkelspiel, Frances. "Remembering Berkeley's Japanese Community on 75th Anniversary of Executive Order 9066." *Berkeleyside*, 9 May 2017.

This article gives concentrated detail on the Japanese American experience in Berkeley leading up to, and following, internment. We used this reading when considering the relevant cultural context of our artwork.

annotated bibliography (cont.)

Helen, et al. “The Meaning of Cherry Blossoms in Japan: Life, Death and Renewal.” *Not Without My Passport*, 9 Sept. 2019.

This is a description of the symbolic nature of cherry blossoms in Japanese culture. We used this source to obtain a better understanding of the grove, and to focus our attention on the more permanent meaning of our artwork.

“Japanese Garden Design: A Helpful Illustrated Guide.” *ShizenStyle*, 14 Mar. 2019.

This article gives tips and considerations for aesthetic choices when designing a Japanese garden. We used this article when determining how to design our small rock garden.

annotated bibliography (cont.)

McGreehan, Mike. “Taeko Oda, 96, Longtime Berkeley Resident, Fondly Remembered for Her Endearing Nature.” *East Bay Times*, East Bay Times, 5 Dec. 2017.

Taeko was just one of the many students who were prevented from graduating. This article documents the real, lived impact of internment on individuals (as opposed to outsider speculation). This better motivated our vision for our artwork to be for the affected individuals, as well as those—as Taeko warned—who may be affected by similar circumstances in the future.

Tolchard, Henry. “A Look Back on Berkeley's Past with Asian American Students.” *The Daily Californian*, 25 Mar. 2018.

This article gives in fine detail the student experience of dealing with stigma and discrimination, mostly by Japanese American students, but also involving other Asian American students. This gives us a better concrete picture of how the pains of racism extend far beyond the target.

annotated bibliography (cont.)

Wenger, Gina Mumma. “Art of the Incarcerated: Art-Making in the Japanese American Internment Camps.” *Visual Inquiry: Learning & Teaching Art*, vol. 5, no. 2, June 2016, pp. 163–174.

This book is a collection of artwork made by Japanese Americans, especially schoolchildren, in the camps. We used this as a reference for what kind of artwork might or might not be culturally relevant and historically sensitive.

Willett, John. “Art in Public.” *Art in a City*, Liverpool University Press and the Bluecoat, 2007, pp. 89–113.

This reading depicts the history and reception of various public artworks. It emphasizes the importance of culturally sensitive and community-driven art. We used this reading when considering what features might make our plans desirable or not within the community.