

Frank Taira



(1913-2010)

JAPANESE AMERICAN ARTIST

Frank Taira received his art education in San Francisco. With the onset of World War II, Taira was interned for several years. During his internment, he taught art alongside fellow Japanese American artist Chiura Obata. Following his release, he moved to New York City, where he has lived and worked until his death in 2010.

BIOGRAPHY

Frank Morihiko Taira was born on August 21, 1913 in San Francisco, CA of Japanese parents. From 1935-1938, Taira studied at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco (now the San Francisco Art Institute). His instructors at CSFA included some of the modernist powerhouses of the West Coast art scene: Victor Arnautoff, Otis Oldfield and the director of the school, Lee Randolph. In 1940, he won first prize at the school's student exhibition. In these early years, he did not limit his studies to the visual arts; he also studied voice at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

In 1939, he exhibited at a juried show at the San Francisco Museum of Art (now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) and at the Oakland Municipal Gallery. Shortly thereafter, Taira was invited to prepare a one-man show at the San Francisco Museum of Art. He was a resident of San Francisco until 1942, when he was interned at Tanforan in San Bruno, and then sent to the Topaz Internment Camp in Utah.

As with many Japanese Americans, Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 interrupted Taira's promising career for the duration of World War II. He, along with Chiura Obata, George Matsusaburo Hibi and Mine Okubo, taught art at the Topaz Camp. Upon his release, he moved to New York City where he remained until his death. While in New York, he further continued his education at Columbia University in 1945, the Arts Students League, and the New School for Social Research. He also pursued studies in guitar.

Taira works primarily in oil, although he has also worked in bronze, watercolor and pen and ink. His powerful pen and ink drawings from the early 1950s document an 18-month stay in a TB sanitarium. Many of his pieces have won prizes in juried shows. His work has been exhibited both in the United States and Italy.

Taira's body of work reflects his journey from a classical training through an experimental phase of semi-abstractness, and his gradual return to realism in the late 1960s. After WWII, Taira decided to focus on creating beauty and peace through his art. "I try to control both strength and sensitivity while working," said Taira, "all art must resort to personal feelings, the harmony and vision within you." The themes in his work reflect that decision.

Credit/Information: http://www.sullivangoss.com/frank_Taira/