



Friday, 06 March 2009



By Erin Penner

The only two lithographs in *Minidoka on My Mind*, “American Guardian” and “Mix and Match 1,” somehow capture the feeling that emanates from the entire collection, which, with these two exceptions, features exclusively acrylics on canvas. The clean lines and evidently deliberate placement of details — shadows, creases in clothing, facial lines and expressions — make the pieces appear more like woodcuts or frames out of a comic book.

Minidoka was the site of a relocation center for Japanese Americans during World War II. **Roger Shimomura**’s paintings feature barbed wire and soldiers, the dulled colors of a desolate desert landscape and many discomfiting expressions that rest on the faces of the interned. “Desert Garden #4” features a brightly colored flower just beyond the barbed wire and drab wall. A butterfly looks poised to alight on the flower, but neither can change the lives on the inside.

Shimomura visually and emotionally captures the scene described by **Arthur Klienkopf**, the superintendent of education at the **Minidoka Relocation Center**, when he wrote in the relocation center diary that “these people are living in the midst of a desert, where they see nothing except tar paper covered barracks, sagebrush and rocks. No flowers, no trees, no shrubs, no grass. The ... dull, dreary desert existence surely must give these people a feeling of helplessness, hopelessness and despair, which we on the outside do not and will never fully understand.”

Shimomura’s work may never transcend such unfathomable despair, but his sobering pictures are an important step in the healing process.



Roger Shimomura: Minidoka on My Mind

Mar. 6-Apr. 18

Reception: 5:30-7:30p, Fri., Mar. 6

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