

Ben Sakoguchi: Towers

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Contents

Introduction	5
Ben Sakoguchi talking about Towers with Damon Cardwell on November 26, 2016 (eighteen days after the Presidential election)	7
Ben Sakoguchi Biography	31

all images throughout:
Ben Sakoguchi, *Towers*, 2014
acrylic on canvas, wooden frames
53 x 142 in (134.6 x 358.1 cm) installed, 17 panels

Introduction

For over 60 years, Ben Sakoguchi has honed a satirical style of painting to unearth buried histories and expose treacherous power dynamics. Sakoguchi's engrossing and sardonic tableaux depict America the beautiful, haunted by harsher subtexts of discrimination, exploitation, and state-sanctioned violence. His wry critique springs from a lifelong sense of being outside the spectacle of capitalist dreaming.

Ben Sakoguchi was only three years old in 1942 when he and his three siblings and parents were removed from their San Bernardino home and grocery store to a WWII concentration camp. In *Towers* (2014), an ambitious multi-canvas painting, Sakoguchi considers the architecture and scope of the "relocation" program, as well as his own experience and that of 127,000 other Japanese immigrants and citizens incarcerated during the war period. The large central panel is a colorized rendering from a 1945 photo of the dozens of families in Block 13 of the Poston War Relocation Center in Arizona. A young Ben Sakoguchi in short pants and suspenders kneels in the dust. This innocent but grim group portrait is bordered by smaller paintings of ten concentration camps created by Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066. Four of the flanking panels depict watchtowers and water towers, iconic against the wide skies. The quiet structures loom over displaced citizens forced to demonstrate their loyalty while they are denied their basic rights. Tar paper barracks stretch across America's most inhospitable yet breathtaking landscapes. The official population count of each camp is noted in hand-painted lettering. The effect is surreal, yet matter of fact.

Towers, 2014



Ben Sakoguchi talking about *Towers*
with Damon Cardwell on November 26, 2016
(eighteen days after the Presidential election)

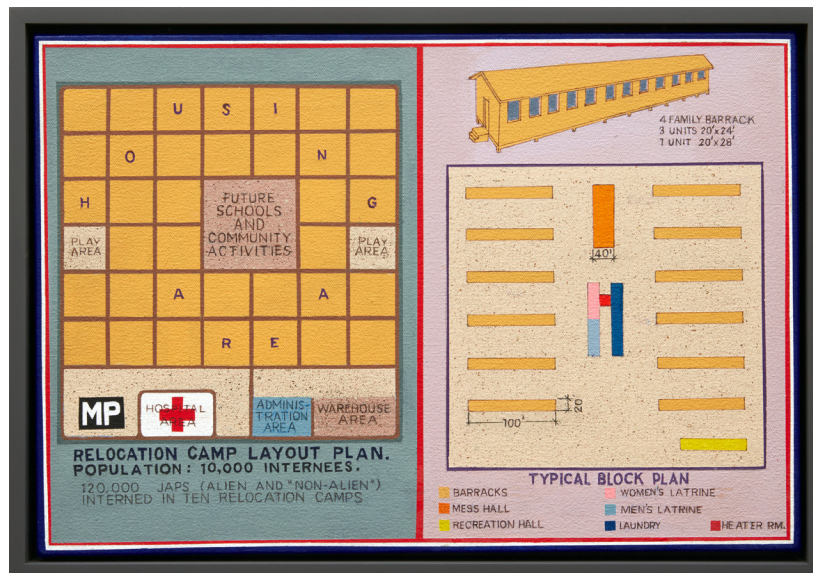


DAMON That's the architecture and the locations of ten of the internment camps...

BEN That's all there were, incidentally, ten. Yeah, there were 10 internment camps. There were assembly centers and things like that, before they built the camps. But all the 120,000 ended up there, at these ten camps. There were other nationals, though—Japanese nationals, consular officials—that were sent to prison camps, basically, or federal camps. And so there's a layer of that, and any Italians or Germans that were suspected of any kind of activity were sent to the respective camp; the difference is they sent all of us—every single one—to these camps.

DAMON Okay, well, now the 120,000 people that were sent to these camps were Japanese, Japanese Americans. But they were all from western states, were they not?

BEN Yes, there were some in inland places that weren't interned. It was mostly the West Coast that wanted this. It was people like Earl Warren, one of our champion civil rights persons, who got his reputation and built himself from Attorney General to the governorship by advocating us moving... all of us. The difference really, is that unlike the Italians and Germans... and I just read an article about how some guy wrote in and said, "See, they interned the Italians and Germans." That's not quite true. Yes, they did, just like they did certain Japanese people that they suspected... if the FBI suspected people of subversive activities. And there were certain criteria, like if you belonged to Japanese clubs and stuff like that. They would send them to federal prison.



DAMON These were the December 9th guys, the FBI...

BEN Yeah, yeah, they rounded up... they came to our house, too... they came to every house. I don't recall the incident, of course... my parents said they came, and they questioned. They took Mr. Abe who lived down the street, because he belonged to a kendo club, which is martial arts. But anyone who belonged to certain... there was a whole thing about a "Black Dragon Society" which is nonsense, you know. But they had this thing like they're doin' today. I mean, just suspected people. Then the FBI said, "Hey, look, these people aren't any danger." All right? They said it. It was Warren and the West Coast people that wanted us out... and everyone wanted us out. You gotta remember that there was a war, that they just got attacked at Pearl Harbor... and the atrocities in China. People were scared. And so there's an estimate: 97% of Californians wanted us out.

DAMON But I vaguely recall seeing a memo that besides FDR, at the federal level, the Attorney General, the Assistant Attorney General, wasn't in favor of this.

BEN Yes, there were a lot of... Rosen... what was his name?... Morgenthal. A couple other guys said, "Hey, you don't need to do this." The federal government... I don't think Roosevelt really had that much interest in it. He wanted to fight a European war, mostly, alright? And so he said there's no problem over there, but it was the Californians who instigated this. And they got their way, that's all. They rounded up everyone, and you got to understand that the rules then were really quite stringent. It was one drop of Japanese blood. One drop. Alright. So that you rounded up orphans in the Mary Knoll orphanage downtown, or mixed kids—oftentimes the families were estranged, and things like this. They brought in Latin countries, Mexico and Brazil and other countries... Peru. Brazil and Mexico fought in the war with the Allies—one in Italy and one in the Philippines—but they sent their Japanese up... Spanish-speaking Japanese. There were Eskimos who

had intermarried up in Alaska with shipwrecked Japanese sailors. But remember, it was one drop of blood, as I said. That's America's system. You know, you got one drop of Black blood in you, you're African American. Look at Obama, he's half and half, yet no one calls him a White president. Tiger Woods is not an Asian golfer. So that's the one-drop theory in America. It's really horrendous. You know what the Germans' criteria was? Jewish? One-eighth. And we can't look at that. We still can't look at that. Hey, are we really that? Yeah, you really are that.

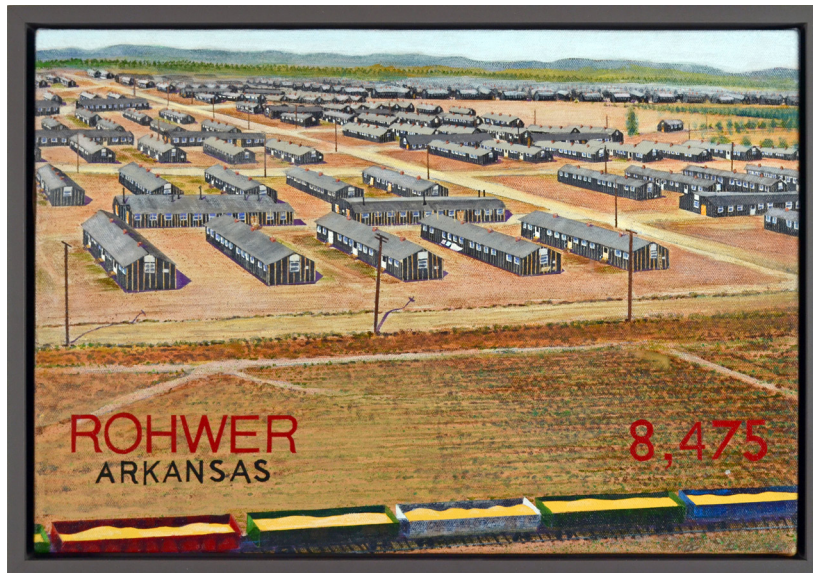


DAMON Did some of the camps have worse reputations than others?

BEN Not worse exactly, but well... if you were in Arkansas, the people really didn't like it there because of the weather. It was a swampy kind of place, Jerome... and Rower. Rower was just up from Mississippi, and that's where the 442 trained, in Fort Shelby, Mississippi, and they were shocked, because they were mostly Hawaiian guys. Remember, Hawaiians were not interned. They went up and visited the camps: "Jeez. What is this?" you know? There's a story that the Hawaiians and the American-born Japanese didn't get along initially. They called them "kapunks" because they had fights, and when the Californians hit the floor they went "kapunk!" But, after the Hawaiians went to a camp, they said, "Shoot, why do these guys volunteer? Like in Hawaii, we were in martial law, but everyone was; but up here these guys are in these camps." And they saw the bayonets. They saw those towers.

My memories... why the towers? Because that's what I remember. Guard towers, and the water towers... see that one behind me there? Thirteen? Thirteen was our block. Every block had one of those and had a number associated with it; other than that, with the tarpaper barracks, they were all the same. Later in the war, you could leave camp, and the thing I can remember is waving at the guards up at the towers as we left.

There was a canal outside that had been built. The camp was built on a nothing place, you know. The guy who wanted it was the Bureau of Indian Affairs, because it was Indian reservation land, and he wanted water and he wanted electricity there, and he said, "If I get a camp here..." And he got it. And it's still there! Look at a map. Jan Google-mapped it for me, and if you look down on this place: farmland, rich farmland, green farmlands now. But when I remember it... we used to walk out that gate, see that tower, and there'd be nothin' but desert out there—and a canal. And we'd go scooping up fish in the canal;



I don't know how they got the fish in there, but we would put them in my Pop's pond. He loved to collect the fish.

DAMON So there was a reasonably good relationship between you kids and the guards?

BEN No, no. There was no contact at all. They were up there. And generally the camp ran itself, just like most camps do; like, even the Nazi concentration camps, they have a certain structure within it (there were no "kapos" or stuff like this). But I can't remember ever contacting a guard. I can't remember ever saying to a white guy who was a guard there... talking to him.

DAMON They didn't walk amongst you?

BEN No, absolutely not. They were separate. They had a separate compound, in fact, for their barracks, over there, outside the camp. And I think I put some charts up somewhere... you can see where they were a separate compound. They were not to fraternize with us.

DAMON They were military?

BEN Of course they were military. Yeah. I think that was probably the most boring detail you can have. As I said, I have no memory of contacting a guard, ever speaking to a guard. I must have spoken to some white doctors or something at one point, maybe, because I broke my arm in camp, but I don't recall that either... who it was. I know all the cooks, all the other service jobs, were Japanese or Japanese American.



DAMON There's probably 100 people in the center portrait here, the residents of block 13. Is that the extent of it?

BEN You know, that was done late in the war. And I can remember that it was kind of haphazard, because I know my aunt's in there, and she was not in our block. So it was kind of like, this is "sort of" block 13. Everyone calls that "Block 13," but I'm sure there's a mixture of people in there. And we barely made it, too; we were playing somewhere else, and someone said, "Hey, go to the baseball field and we're going to take your picture." So we went out there, and that's me and that's my brother. My other family is scattered throughout that picture.

DAMON Were you buddies with most of those kids?

BEN Yeah, you became really close. Remember, there was... there's several books on this: how we became kind of wild-kids, you know, because the parents had lost their authority, in a way. Because the Japanese families were relatively tight; the father's here, and the mother's here, and we do this. But there, your parents didn't feed you, you went to mess hall and ate; they didn't cook in those little... there was no cooking; you go to the bathroom over there; and take a shower over there. You can see them posted: those buildings, they go this way: those are the showers and the toilet. And for Japanese people... to go to toilet... with like, especially the women, they put cardboard, anything to get a partition. But most of the time... for my memories... it was like, you were your own. I think the independence I got... and not quite belonging either.

My mother, she's an American citizen. She was born in Monita, right near Riverside in that area, but was educated in Japan; they often sent their kids there. That wasn't a loyalty—they wanted the kids to have the culture. But my father never... he said, "You're an American kid." And I've heard that many times. They said, and people in Japan said it too, "When you go to America, you're American now. You got to act like an



American, talk like American, do what Americans do, in order to succeed there.”

DAMON Those personal notions of assimilation, they were prescribed?

BEN Yes, yes, we were told to do that. And in fact, that became one of the criteria, you know, for how loyalty was determined.

The Supreme Court finally decided, I think in '44, that if somebody is patently loyal, you cannot incarcerate them. In other words, if you can determine their loyalty. But the question was, how do you determine their loyalty?

Now here's a case in point: Joe DiMaggio's father was an Italian alien. He had a chance to be a citizen. He never took it. That's fine. My father could not become a citizen. It was against the law for him to become an American citizen, so that's the difference. But they interviewed Joe's dad... they knew he wasn't going to be a saboteur. But my father, who never had a police record in his whole life, he was considered a threat. My father literally had his bags packed by the door, after Mr. Abe was sent to prison... to Leavenworth. That story always is poignant to me: His wife was pregnant with Kathleen. He was in the courthouse, and he could see—the jails were on the third, fourth, floor—he could see his house where his wife was, and he was in jail for belonging to a kendo club. She was pregnant, had to go to camp by herself and it was a year, I think, before he could meet her in camp.

And until that '44 loyalty test that my mother took—I don't know if I ever told you about that—but until that point, they said: “Well, how do we determine loyalty?” Now that became a question, but the FBI also had a dossier on all of us. And as I said, they came to our house at one point and interviewed: Any guns? Any radios? Any bow-and-arrows... anything? They cleared us, and we were inland so we didn't go to camp until later. But the early guys were moved in from the coast...





Terminal Island. They were sent to... and people get confused, Santa Anita race track was not a camp, it was an Assembly Center, like Tanforan, and Puyallup (however they pronounce that) up in Washington. So they put them there; anyone off the coast, they moved inland, put them in these temporary things.

The camps had to be built, you know, for 120,000 people (same number as 12 divisions of soldiers) that you would have to feed, and clothe, and take care of their waste products. And that would be 12 divisions you could have in the field—you could've had them out fighting Germany or Japan or whatever. Most of the camps had to be built from scratch in the places that people didn't want to live, the way-outskirts of anything. That's where the towers come in, too; there's no water supply, so they had to pump it up there and bring in a canal or whatever they want to do. So those became kind of landmarks to a kid, if you look at everything flat.

DAMON The notion of loyalty is pretty odd.

BEN Yeah. Oh, yeah. How do you determine it, right? Well, the test case was with the Endo case. Now, Endo was a civil servant in Sacramento who lost her job there. But she was a Methodist, did not speak Japanese, was not involved with Japan at all. And she had a brother in the army—the whole number. She's an obviously loyal citizen of the United States. So they brought her up and said, "Why is this person in camp?" And the Supreme Court has to, of course, say she doesn't belong in camp. But they kept her there until the end of the war, you know, until '45. So the law was established, but then they had a loyalty test. And those are the two questions that... I don't know if I spoke about this before, but my mother had to answer: "Will you renounce all loyalty to the Emperor of Japan? Will you fight for the United States?" They were #27, #28, I think, famous questions. That's a loyalty test, alright? My mother answered "No, no," because her logic was, "Well, wait, I was born in America, you know, I don't have to..." My Pop said, "Why did you answer that way?" Now, he's a Japanese

citizen. He cannot become an American citizen. That's against the law. He could not own property. But he answered, "Yes, I will denounce all loyalty to the Emperor," which meant he had no country. He had no place to go. He had renounced citizenship in Japan, basically, with that question. And: "Would you fight for United States?" "Yes." (He was old, had four kids, they weren't gonna draft him.) But my mother said, "I'm a woman, why would I answer, 'Yes, I'll fight for the United States?'"

Now, if you answered "No, no," you became a No-No Boy. No-No Boys were those kids, and there were enough of 'em, you know—but in a funny way, conversely, they were more American, in a way, because they resisted a law... they said: "You can't... I'm in a camp. How can you ask me this question?" You know? And those were considered disloyal. So they and their families were shipped up to Tule Lake, the camp in Northern California. That's why Tule Lake is famous for the "bad guys." I mean, you sent them there; the "loyal" ones from Tule Lake shifted down here. All the "disloyal" ones from all the camps ended up in Tule Lake, and those people were destined to be sent back to Japan. Many people wanted us all sent back to Japan. Just like today, you know, the "Dreamers" and stuff; kids that've never been there, you know... had grown up in America... knew America inside and out. And there were people who wanted that to happen, just like today.

If you look closely at that center portrait, you'll see that there aren't very many young men there, because they had to make a choice. Either you're going to the military, or you're going to Tule Lake as a No-No Boy. The No-No Boys would actually... this is the stupidity of the war... almost none of them ended up in Japan. That's what I tried to say... it was a protest movement, I think, saying: "You can't do this to me." But they would blow their stupid bugles. They got bugles from the mail-order Sears catalog, and they'd blow, and they'd face the sun and they bow down and all this crap, you know.

So these things may seem... how old? I'm 78... you know... so that's 70 years ago, basically. And you say, "Well, what's that got to do with...?" Jeff Sessions wants to do it. Now. He wants to do this: he wants to say, limit the number of Japanese—not Japanese this time, it's going to be Muslims and Africans and refugees basically—limit them coming to the United States.



DAMON I thought about that family structure. The patriarchal structure was really disrupted; you're in a dorm with several other families...

BEN There were partitions that we put up, so it was basically three families. And so we had the one on the end. I remember, because we could come out and there was a fish pond and my father planted trees and stuff like this. But it was a thin partition, and that's what my mother hated. She hated that and the dust. When she was dying—and she was dying of cancer, so we had a lot of talk together—and so I asked her, “What did you really think of camp?” She said, and her face was fierce, “I hated it. I hated every single day.” And I realized: my gosh, this is really something. To a kid, you don't get it. You're running around, doin' what you want to do. And there was no... you had to go to school and all that stuff, but you weren't beholden to your father, to bring in the food and earn a living, and to your mother to do this.... You could go and eat anytime; you could go to the mess hall—they generally had food times—but you can go there on your own and you could sit with whoever you wanted to. The family didn't have to eat... after the war, my parents insisted that we eat together, except for one that ran the store, the mother (or father). But everyone else had to sit down and we had to say “gochisousama” and all this stuff and wait for my father to sit down and wait for him...

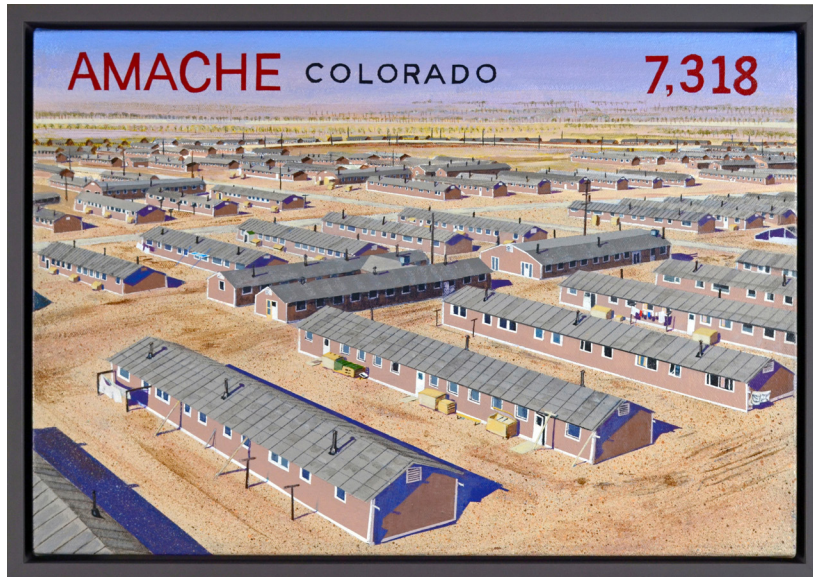
My memory starts with camp, the barracks and the dust... and the dust my mother hated. It would come up through the floors. You could see cracks through there. That, I remember. We would play when we want, we'd do what we want. We'd play marbles where we want to, you know, and we'd wander around the camp anywhere we wanted to.

They just stuck all these people who were... some were farmers, some were professionals, some were... whatever... and they all ended up in this place, together. That quote my sister made is, you know, because we grew up in a barrio: “What are we doing here with all these Japanese people?”

One family was the Hiratas: she was a teacher. That's where my sister got the thing: I want to be like her, this teacher. So there were qualified teachers, you know, some of them were university professors, and you name it. They were all stuck in there together. Like, my father was a grocer, so he became the head of the canteen. And he got nominal, whatever it was, pay—so you wouldn't call him a slave. He was actually working for some kind of money, but it was nominal.

DAMON Prison money.

BEN Yeah, prison money is what it is, and so he ran... he was general manager of the canteen. So they tried to delegate because they weren't prepared, you know. They didn't expect this influx of diverse people, who are everything you can imagine, and every age you can imagine, from ancient, to babies born there. So eventually, they sorted them out, and the internees started to take over a lot of the functions. Pretty soon they were running the camp. The guards never were part of it; there were units—generally MPs—that were just stuck in there and told, hey, you do this, like most army is... you do that... and so they did it.



DAMON What was the transition? By the time you're seven, you're liable to be sensitive to the...

BEN Horrible. Horrible coming back. Not in camp, you felt that's where your family was, and all your friends were. Coming back was horrible. And all the way up until... the first time I really felt... normal... was junior college.

DAMON Wow.

BEN Yeah.

DAMON You were so alienated... from the camp?

BEN Not alienated—I made lots of friends. I was telling you the story about me not remembering going to camp. My father told me that story: I did not go with him, you know. I didn't go with him to camp. We were left behind; my younger sister Helen and I were left behind because we had contacted cousins that had measles. Now, measles is a horrible disease if it's in a crowd of people, because it's airborne and it'll kill people. So they separated us, but my father said that he came to visit me on the night they had to leave. (And they had to leave with just what they could carry. This is late. Early on, I see pictures of people with a lot of luggage. I said, "Wait, that's not our family." You know, my mother had to carry canned milk because she was afraid she wouldn't have enough milk for my 7-month-old sister when she got to camp.)

So they left us behind, but my father said he came to visit me and he said that was the worst day of his life, because... I was strapped down to a bed, strapped down like an animal, he said, screaming, because I didn't want to be left behind and he had to go. Later, they sent us... my sister with a WAC, a military nurse... took us to camp, but I don't remember this at all. It's from him telling me the story. Later though, from the Archives, Jan and I asked for all our files and we got it, and in there is a letter and it says, "Benji's doing fine." (That's what my name was.) "He's playing around." See, I could adapt. I know

how to behave. You learn it fast, man. Don't get on the bad side of this person. Just do what you're told. So, from screaming like an animal, to playing around with the toys. I knew how to do that... you get along. You go through your elementary, your junior high school, up to high school. In high school, I was the only Asian at Pacific High School (my older brother and sister went to San Bernardino High; this was the first year of this school). So, you get along. Every step of the way I can remember having close Black friends at every level; close White friends; close Latino guys; because you were by yourself, basically.

Luckily, my mother was a citizen. She could own property. My mother, not my father. So it's Mary's Cash Grocery. So our store was intact, but they hadn't paid rent for three and a half years. They just took it over, you know, and then they closed the store. It was all closed down because they couldn't run it. And they wouldn't leave, so we kept writing back. In fact, when we came back, my mother had to write a letter. That's one of my other paintings, about asking the Board of Equalization, "Can we have our license back?" Because what are we going to do? You know? Why are there so many Japanese gardeners (at that time)? Because what could they do? You know? You say, "Oh, they're good at gardening, aren't they? Look at them, they love to garden." No they don't! That's a PhD there!

That store could not re-start because certain companies would not sell to my parents. My father said one bread company told him (after the war), "We don't sell to Japs." But the the group that helped us a lot was this Chinese family. Now, you talk about people who suffered under the Japanese, it was Chinese. The Kwock family helped my parents out, selling them the meats that they needed. All of us worked for the Kwock supermarket, eventually, up through high school—every kid in our family. And the Latino people in the area, and the other people just eventually said, "Hey, these people..." just like it should have been at the beginning of the war, "These people aren't a threat. They didn't do it. You know? Yeah, I lost a brother in

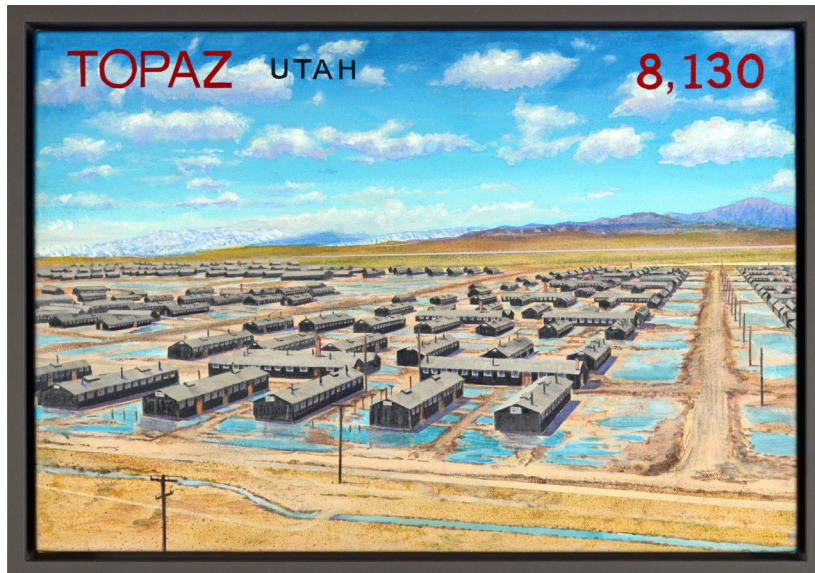
the Philippines, but they didn't kill him, you know?" That's a thing that you feel so... this election is that, again, to me... like... like...

DAMON You've got to be feeling echoes.

BEN Yes. History doesn't repeat itself, but it rhymes, and it's rhyming right now. When I see this guy Sessions talkin' like he does, I said, "That's a rhyme, man." He's back there... again. There are people who voted that way: "Keep 'em out. Kick 'em out." You know? Geez... This other period of your life where you see this thing. It was the first time around. And the key is, can you keep your head enough, you know? If you're 78 years old and haven't lost it totally, you remember stuff that is clear as day to me, all right. That camp, clear as day. Coming back from camp on that train ride, clear as day to me. I can see it in my head. I can see the train turning around the curve and we're in the back of the train and it's movin' this way to San Bernardino. I can remember going to the mission-style building for the first time, seeing this structure. First time I saw a train, "Wow, what is this thing?" you know, in Parker, Arizona. I can remember the bus ride from camp. I can remember (my brother remembers this) Indians starting to come in on horseback. Real Indians! On horses coming in to take over the camp.

Everyone has a story, and most people don't think it's relevant, but it's History. Like right now you made a choice of who you wanted to vote for. That's a choice—just like you did in the occupation of France, or during the war, on this thing. Everywhere, you make decisions whether you like it or not. And the thing about "Which side are you on." Which side are you on? This is the point right here... people showed themselves, who they were: "We're on over here, we want you out." Remember, this was done, not by Congress; and funny thing is, the Republicans were on the other side. Now today, the roles are reversed, because the Democrats were Southern party at that time. This was done by Executive Order. We all know

what an executive order is now, because the President can just sign, and he did. Just like... I think Calvin Coolidge's was an Act of Congress, though; he made a law that—from 1924 to 1965—these certain people couldn't come to America. That's why when they talk about: "Well, they didn't obey the law, so they got to pay, and we got to do..." Shoot, you made the damn law! Change it! You know? Because you made it up. And segregation, was that illegal? No! It was a law of the land. Could Loving marry his African American wife? No, not in Virginia. (When were Jan and I married? We were married in '69. That's '67 I believe, you know?) In '65 I was already teaching, and they finally let anyone from Asia come into America. Well, they had a quota—for everybody, it was an equal quota, according to the population, so it became non-racial. It took LBJ to sign that thing, but Calvin Coolidge signed the first one. They had an anti-Chinese one in 1882.



It's like, over and over and over again. It's like the rhyming. Rhyme, it rhymes, it rhymes, it rhymes. Because the human organism, you... and me... we're all the same as the guy in the cave there, who's paintin' that thing and put his hand up there and spit on the paint... on pigment. That organism has certain instincts and ways of thinking, that... we're the same. And when it comes to crisis points, we act almost the same way. But understand this: that no matter what the crisis is, there are people... people who know. Alright? So, everyone said, "Well, that was just... slavery was just the times." Bullshit!

There are only a couple of groups that really helped out the Japanese. There were two Irish guys whose names escape me. There was the Quakers who helped. Quakers always on the right side of these things, alright? It was not the ACLU, the New York... remember, that's a Democratic, left-wing... they were supporting Roosevelt. They did not support us (until later in the war they did actually, one case) but who did was a the ACLU guy named Al Waring, who lived in LA. He said, "Hey, you can't do this. This is wrong." Almost everybody wanted us out of there; they all wanted it. Just like today, a lot of people will take a Muslim and, pffft, stick 'em in, like that!

Remember, I'm the dying breed. I'm old enough to have remembered the time, you know, but Eddie and others were born in camp, or born just after it. But I remember leaving that place, exactly. But then everyone older than me, like my brother and sister, they're dead and they're dying out, you know, and pretty soon... that's like what the Holocaust people were scared of. When we die out, some guy's gonna go say, "Oh, that never happened." You know, just like that. And the lesson's lost. The lesson here is lost... because it's comin' back, you know? So, that's enough. Yeah.

Ben Sakoguchi Biography

Lives and works in Pasadena, California

- 1938 Born in San Bernardino, California
1956-58 San Bernardino Valley College, San Bernardino, California
1960 BFA, University of California, Los Angeles
1964 MFA, University of California, Los Angeles
1982-83 California State University, Los Angeles

1964-97 Professor of Art, Pasadena City College, Pasadena, California

Solo exhibitions

- 2021 *Chinatown*, Bel Ami, Los Angeles
2020 *Ben Sakoguchi: Made in U.S.A.*, Ortuzar Projects, New York
2017 *Bombs, POTTS*, Alhambra, California
2016 *The Unauthorized History of Baseball in 100-odd Paintings: The Art of Ben Sakoguchi*, The Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles
2012 *Ben Sakoguchi: Paintings 1966–Present*, Cardwell Jimmerson Contemporary Art, Culver City, California
2003 *Ben Sakoguchi: Paintings*, Da Vinci Art Gallery, Los Angeles City College, Los Angeles
2002 *Ben Sakoguchi: Paintings*, Da Vinci Art Gallery, Los Angeles City College, Los Angeles
1999 *Ben Sakoguchi: Painted Works*, Luckman Fine Arts Gallery, California State University, Los Angeles
Postcards from Camp, Roberts Art Gallery, Santa Monica High School, Santa Monica, California
1998 *Souvenirs: Ben Sakoguchi 1978–1998*, El Camino College Art Gallery, Torrance, California
1995 *Ben Sakoguchi: Paintings*, Peppers Gallery, University of Redlands, Redlands, California

- 1995 *Ben Sakoguchi and Joe Soldate*, Space Gallery, Los Angeles
Under One Roof (with Jan Sakoguchi), Rancho Santiago College, Santa Ana, California
- 1992 *Artists of Conscience II: Ben Sakoguchi, Remember Me*, Alternative Museum, New York
Exhibition traveled to Aljira: A Center for Contemporary Art, Newark, New Jersey
- 1988 *Ben Sakoguchi: Remember Me*, José Drudis-Biada Art Gallery, Mount Saint Mary's College, Los Angeles
- 1984 *Masami Teraoka and Ben Sakoguchi*, C.N. Gorman Museum, University of California, Davis, California
Ben Sakoguchi: Twenty Year Survey 1964–1984, Roberts Art Gallery, Santa Monica High School, Santa Monica, California
- 1983 *Ben Sakoguchi*, James Crumley Gallery, Mira Costa College, Oceanside, California
- 1981 *Ben Sakoguchi: Recent Work*, Da Vinci Art Gallery, Los Angeles City College, Los Angeles
- 1980 *Ben Sakoguchi*, San Francisco Fine Arts Museum, Downtown Center, San Francisco, California
Philip Cornelius / Ben Sakoguchi, Aarnun Gallery, Pasadena, California
- 1978 *Douglas Bond, Ben Sakoguchi: An Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings*, Santa Ana College Art Gallery, Santa Ana, California
Ben Sakoguchi, Works, San Jose, California
- 1977 *Ben Sakoguchi: Art Exhibition*, Compton Community College Library, Compton, California
- 1973 *Ben Sakoguchi: Paintings & Etchings*, Zara Gallery, San Francisco, California
- 1971 *Ben Sakoguchi*, Brand Library Art Center, Glendale, California
- 1968 *Ben Sakoguchi: Paintings and Etchings*, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, California

Ben Sakoguchi, Da Vinci Art Gallery, Los Angeles City College, Los Angeles

- 1967 *Ben Sakoguchi: Etchings*, Ceeje Gallery, New York
Ben Sakoguchi: Etchings and Philip Cornelius: Pots, Ceeje Gallery, Los Angeles
Ben Sakoguchi: Etchings, Cowell College Library, University of California, Santa Cruz, California
- 1966 *Ben Sakoguchi: Recent Oils*, Ceeje Gallery, Los Angeles
- 1965 *Ben Sakoguchi*, La Jolla Museum of Art, San Diego, California
- 1964 *Ben Sakoguchi: Recent Etchings*, Ceeje Gallery, Los Angeles

Selected group exhibitions

- 2021 *footnotes and headlines*, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York
Landscape, Bodega, New York
- 2018 *Somewhere in Between*, Kellogg Art Gallery, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, California
Collecting on the Edge, Part II, Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Utah State University, Logan, Utah
- 2017 *One Year: The Art of Politics in Los Angeles*, Brand Library and Art Center, Glendale, California
Legacies, Fine Arts Gallery, California State University, Los Angeles
- 2012 *L.A. Raw: Abject Expressionism in Los Angeles 1945–1980, From Rico Lebrun to Paul McCarthy*, Pasadena Museum of California Art, Pasadena, California
- 2011 *Drawing the Line: Japanese American Art, Design, and Activism in Postwar Los Angeles*, Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles
Sub-Pop, Cardwell Jimmerson Contemporary Art, Culver City, California

- 2008 *Artist as Social Critic: Enrique Chagoya, Betye Saar, Roger Shimomura, and Ben Sakoguchi*, Schneider Museum of Art, Southern Oregon University, Ashland, Oregon
- 2006 *Winter Ball*, Da Vinci Art Gallery and Martin Luther King Jr. Library, Los Angeles City College, Los Angeles
- 2005 *Ghosts of Little Boy: Artists for Peace*, National Japanese American Historical Society, San Francisco, California
- 2003 *In Their Own League: An Exhibition of Baseball Art*, Saddleback College Art Gallery, Mission Viejo, California
- 2001 *3rd International Biennial of Contemporary Art*, Fortezza da Basso, Florence, Italy
- 2000 *46th Biennial Exhibition: Media/Metaphor*, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Made in California: Art, Image, and Identity, 1900–2000, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles
The Big G Stands for Goodness: Corita Kent's 1960's Pop, Luckman Fine Arts Gallery, California State University, Los Angeles. Exhibition traveled to Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Utah; State University, Logan, Utah; Donna Beam Fine Arts Gallery, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada; UTSA Art Gallery, University of Texas, San Antonio, Texas; Beaver College Art Gallery, Glenside, Pennsylvania.
- 1999 *Resilient Images: Reflections On Internment*, National Japanese American Historical Society, San Francisco, California
- 1995 *Impressions of Nature*, Museum of Modern Art, New York
Latent August: The Legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Fort Mason Center, San Francisco, California
Made to Order: America's Most Wanted Painting, Alternative Museum, New York
50 Years, Human Re-Visions or The Nuclear Neighborhood, Peace Museum, Chicago, Illinois
- 1992 *10: Artist as Catalyst*, Alternative Museum, New York
- 1991 *Artists of Conscience: 16 Years of Social and Political Commentary*, Alternative Museum, New York
- 1990 *The Decade Show*, New Museum of Contemporary Art, Studio Museum in Harlem, and Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art, New York
- 1989 *Prisoners of Image: Ethnic and Gender Stereotypes*, Alternative Museum, New York
A Different War: Vietnam in Art, Whatcom Museum of History and Art, Bellingham, Washington. Exhibition traveled to De Cordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, Massachusetts; Mary and Leigh Block Gallery, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois; Akron Art Museum, Akron, Ohio; Madison Art Center, Madison, Wisconsin; Wight Art Gallery, University of California, Los Angeles; Colorado University Art Galleries, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado; Museum of Art, Washington State University, Pullman.
- 1986 *Five at the Towers*, Watts Towers Art Center, Los Angeles
- 1984 *Ceeje Revisited*, Barnsdall Municipal Art Gallery, Los Angeles
Crime and Punishment: Reflections of Violence in Contemporary Art, Triton Museum of Art, Santa Clara, California
- 1983 *The War Show*, Fine Arts Center Art Gallery, State University of New York, Stony Brook, New York
- 1982 *Visual Politics*, Alternative Museum, New York
The Atomic Salon, Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York
- 1981 *Humor in Art*, Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
Crimes of Compassion, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia
- 1979 *Recent Los Angeles Painting*, Lang Art Gallery, Scripps College, Claremont, California
The Artist as Social Critic, Barnsdall Municipal Art Gallery, Los Angeles
- 1978 *The Early Sixties at UCLA*, Frederick S. Wight Art Gallery, University of California, Los Angeles
- 1973 *Askin-Finkelstein-Sakoguchi*, Baxter Art Gallery, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California

- 1971 *Graphics '71 : West Coast, U.S.A.*, University of Kentucky Art Gallery, Lexington, Kentucky.
Exhibition traveled to Paducah Art Gallery, Paducah, Kentucky.
- 1968 *16th National Print Exhibition*, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, New York
- 1965 *Art '65: Lesser Known and Unknown Painters, Young American Sculpture East to West*, American Express Pavilion, New York World's Fair, New York
- 1964 *Imprint*, Pasadena Art Museum, Pasadena, California
- 1963 *19th National Exhibition of Prints*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Damon Cardwell is the former principal at Cardwell Jimmerson Contemporary Art, Culver City (2006-12).

Damon and Ben's conversation took place on the morning of Saturday, November 26, 2016, at Sakoguchi's studio, on the occasion of the 2016 presidential election (eighteen days earlier) with its demonizing of Muslims and other immigrants, and the selection of Jeff Sessions as Trump's attorney general.

Ben Sakoguchi: Chinatown

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