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MAM Exhibit Documents Account of Daily Life as a Japanese American WWII Detainee

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The Missoula Art Museum is honored to present *Witness to Wartime: The Painted Diary of Takuichi Fujii*, which catalogs the work of Takuichi Fujii (1891–1964), a modernist artist who left a remarkably comprehensive visual record of his experience during World War II as a Japanese American detainee. Fujii was born in Hiroshima, Japan, and immigrated to Seattle in 1906 at the age of 15. In 1942, Fujii and his family were forcibly removed by the U.S. government from their home in Seattle and relocated first to a temporary detention site in Puyallup, Washington, and then to the Minidoka incarceration camp in southern Idaho. Fujii remained at Minidoka until 1945 when the camp was permanently closed.

During his three years of incarceration, Fujii kept a detailed, illustrated account of the daily life and routines of the incarceration camp. Additionally, he painted 130 watercolors that expound on the diary entries and include self-portraits, sketches, landscapes, and more. Historian Roger Daniels called Fujii’s collection of work “the most remarkable document created by a Japanese American prisoner during the wartime incarceration.” This exhibition is the first time the collection has been publicly shown.

Barbara Johns, art historian and curator of the exhibit, said of the show “This stunning body of work sheds light on events that most Americans did not experience, but whose lessons remain salient today.” Her research on Fujii culminated in a book titled *Hope of Another Spring: Takuichi Fujii, Artist and Wartime Witness* (University of Washington Press, 2017).

Witness to Wartime: The Painted Diary of Takuichi Fujii is presented in collaboration with the exhibit *Looking Like the Enemy: Issei Internment at Fort Missoula*, which opens at the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula in October. The exhibit features artifacts and first-hand accounts of detainees of the Fort’s Alien Detention Center, which was operated by the Department of Justice from 1941 to 1944. A free virtual curriculum about these exhibitions is available through MAM’s distance-learning platform, Museum as Megaphone. Visit missoulaartmuseum.org for more information.

Witness to Wartime: Takuichi Fujii is curated by Barbara Johns, Ph.D., and the traveling exhibition is organized by Curatorial Assistance Traveling Exhibitions, Pasadena, California. This exhibition is supported by the CARES grant from Humanities Montana and generous sponsorship from A&E Design. *Witness to Wartime: The Painted Diary of Takuichi Fujii* is on view at the Missoula Art Museum from October 1 through December 19, 2020.

About MAM: Founded in 1975 and accredited by the American Association of Museums since 1987, MAM is emerging as the leading contemporary art museum in the Intermountain West. MAM is situated on the traditional, ancestral territories of the Séliš (Salish or “Flathead”) and Qlispé (upper Kalispel or Pend d’Oreille) peoples. MAM is committed to respecting the indigenous stewards of the land it occupies. Their rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Montana and to the work of MAM. MAM is a fully accessible, free public

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museum boasting eight exhibition spaces, a library, and education center in the heart of Missoula's historic downtown.

If you would like more information about this topic, please call Brandon Reintjes at 406.728.0447 or email brandon@missoulaartmuseum.org.