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Denver Art Museum presents *The Life and Art of Tokio Ueyama* in summer 2024

Explore Ueyama's life and his crucial role as an artist and educator at the Granada Relocation Center, known as 'Amache' in southeast Colorado



DENVER – March 19, 2024 –The Denver Art Museum (DAM) announces the debut of *The Life and Art of Tokio Ueyama*, opening July 28, 2024, and on view through June 1, 2025, in the Western American Art Gallery on level 7 of the museum's Martin Building. *Tokio Ueyama* will be included in general admission, which is free for everyone 18 and under as well as for museum members.

Born in Japan, Tokio Ueyama moved to the United States in 1908, aged eighteen, and made a home here until his death in 1954. This exhibition tells the story of Ueyama's life, including his early days as an art student in San Francisco,

Southern California and Philadelphia, his travels abroad in Europe and Mexico, his role as artist and community member in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles, and his unconstitutional incarceration during World War II at the Granada Relocation Center, now the Amache National Historic Site, in southeast Colorado.



Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, Tokio and his wife Suye were among more than 120,000 Japanese Americans forcibly relocated by federal order away from the West Coast and into American concentration camps. More than 10,000 people were unconstitutionally incarcerated at Amache in the following years, making it the tenth largest “city” in Colorado at the time. There, Ueyama taught adult art classes to 150 students. Amacheans strove to create a sense of normalcy through work, community activities and diverse artforms even while battered by extreme temperatures and wind, surrounded by barbed wire fences, and shadowed by eight armed guard towers. After their return to Los Angeles in 1945, the Ueyamas founded the store Bunkado, which continues to thrive in the heart of Little Tokyo.

“This exhibition tells a story of a time in Colorado’s history, of a place where Americans experienced dislocation and loss, and, more importantly, displayed unimaginable resilience, tenacity, and creativity in the face of prejudice,” said

Christoph Heinrich, Frederick and Jan Mayer Director of the DAM. "Stories like that of Tokio Ueyama remind us that there remain many facets of the American West yet to be understood and acknowledged, including the integral role of diverse peoples of Asian descent."



Organized and curated by the DAM's Director of the Petrie Institute of Western American Art, JR (Jennifer R.) Henneman, Ph.D., this exhibition features more than 40 paintings loaned to the museum from the Japanese American National Museum and Ueyama's family, whose combined efforts to preserve his artwork and archive have allowed the story of this accomplished and cosmopolitan artist to be told at the DAM for the first time.

Engaging with diverse communities, including Amache survivors and descendants, those associated with the Japanese American diaspora, the National Park Service, and the University of Denver, has been a focus for the exhibition team of the Petrie Institute of Western American Art at the DAM.

"The Petrie Institute continues to expand American art histories, seeking underappreciated or overlooked artists and unexpected stories," Henneman said. "The life and work of Tokio Ueyama fits well within the mission of the Institute while revealing that there are many stories yet to be told, including those that touch upon some of the country's most challenging histories."

Visitors will learn the story of an overlooked artist with special attention to the Colorado story of Amache.

The Life and Art of Tokio Ueyama is organized by the Denver Art Museum. Support is provided by the donors to the Annual Fund Leadership Campaign and the residents who support the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD). Promotional support is provided by *5280 Magazine* and CBS Colorado.

Planning Your Visit

The most up-to-date information on planning a visit to the Denver Art Museum can be found online under the [Plan Your Visit](#) tab. Use this page to find details on ticket pricing, public transit options and access information. General admission for museum members is free every day. Youth aged 18 and under receive free general admission everyday thanks to the museum's Free for Kids program. Free for Kids also underwrites free admission for school and youth group visits.

About the Denver Art Museum

The Denver Art Museum is an educational, nonprofit resource that sparks creative thinking and expression through transformative experiences with art. Its mission is to enrich lives by sparking creative thinking and expression. Its holdings reflect the city and region—and provide invaluable ways for the community to learn about cultures from around the world. Metro residents support the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD), a unique funding source serving hundreds of metro Denver arts, culture and scientific organizations.

For museum information, visit www.denverartmuseum.org or call 720-865-5000.

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Image Credits:

Image 1: Tokio Ueyama, *Self Portrait*, July 1943. Oil on canvas; 18 × 16 in. Bunkado, Inc. © Estate of Tokio Ueyama. Photo by Joshua White. Image courtesy Bunkado, Inc.

Image 2: Tokio Ueyama, *The Evacuee*, 1942. Oil on canvas; 24 × 30-1/4 in. Courtesy Japanese American National Museum: Gift of Kayoko Tsukada, 92.20.3. © Estate of Tokio Ueyama.

Image 3: Tokio Ueyama, *Untitled (barracks with basketball hoop)*, 1944. Oil on canvas; 18 × 24 in. Courtesy Japanese American National Museum: Gift of Kayoko Tsukada, 92.20.7. © Estate of Tokio Ueyama