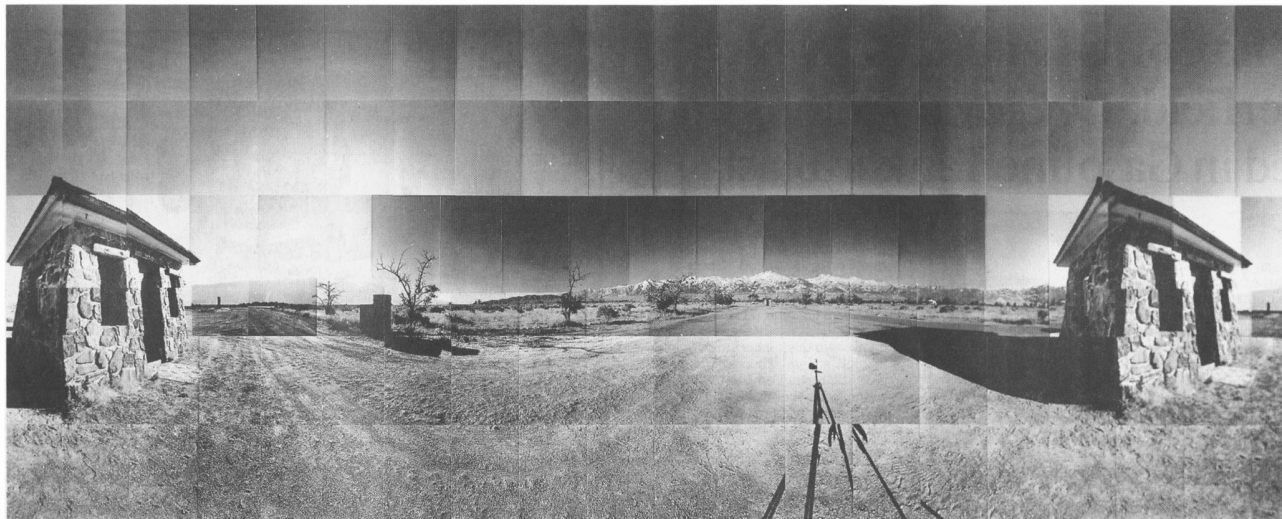


'What we're living with is not always on the surface.'

Masumi Hayashi



MASUMI HAYASHI Japanese American National Museum

Hayashi's "Manzanar Relocation Camp, Guard Gates" from her series on the remnants of World War II internment sites, titled "American Concentration Camps."

Masumi Hayashi, 60; Photographer Was Known for Profound Panoramic Collages

By JON THURBER
Times Staff Writer

Masumi Hayashi, a photographer who used panoramic collages to make beautiful and powerful statements on toxic waste sites, abandoned prisons and remnants of the internment camps that held Japanese Americans during World War II, has died. She was 60.

A longtime professor of photography at Cleveland State University, Hayashi was found shot to death Thursday night near her third-floor apartment in Cleveland, said her son, Dean Keesey of Oakland.

John Jackson, 51, an artist and sculptor who worked as a maintenance man in the apartment complex on the city's west side, was also found shot to death near the ground floor of the building.

Efforts Saturday to reach Cleveland police investigators handling the case were unsuccessful. According to Saturday's Cleveland Plain Dealer newspaper, police arrested Hayashi's neighbor, Jacob Cifelli, 29, in connection with the killings and recovered a handgun at the scene.

News accounts said Hayashi had complained for several months about loud music coming from Cifelli's apartment and had recently called his mother at her workplace.

The two bodies were found by Cifelli's mother, the Plain Dealer reported. It was not immediately known if Jackson had a role in the complaints about the music.

Police said Cifelli had an advanced sound system in his apartment.

"He had a huge setup like something you'd see in a nightclub," Police Cmdr. Ed Tomba told the Plain Dealer.

Cifelli was undergoing questioning Saturday and had not been officially charged with the killings.

Hours before the slayings, Cleveland police had issued a warrant for his arrest for failing to pay a fine on a weapons conviction.

Hayashi had firm roots in Southern California. She grew up in Watts, where her parents ran a small



MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

MASUMI HAYASHI

Works by the longtime professor of photography at Cleveland State University are in the collections of leading museums around the world, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

grocery store.

Friends remembered her fondly Saturday.

"She's the least confrontational person I ever met," said friend Stephen White, a Los Angeles-based photography collector and dealer. "She was a gentle, easygoing person."

"She never quite got the due she deserved," he said. "I always felt she would be more successful as an artist if she was more aggressive."

Hayashi lived in Southern California until she married. She joined her husband, who was then in the Navy, in Florida and earned her bachelor's degree and her master's in fine arts at Florida State University. She joined the Cleveland State faculty in 1982.

She was involved in a range of artistic endeavors, including printmak-

ing, silk screening and photo-transfer quilting, before turning to photography, her son said.

Hayashi developed a systematic photographic style in which she took multiple exposures of a subject and assembled them into panoramic scenes. The finished pieces were large, sometimes 6 feet wide or more.

She created a number of series that generally reflected the decay and loss of parts of the American dream. In one series, she photographed a number of Superfund sites designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In another her subject was abandoned penitentiaries. Her most familiar work to Southern California audiences was "American Concentration Camps," which focused on the internment of people of

Japanese descent during World War II.

Her photographs of the remnants of sites where internees were held had special meaning for Hayashi, because she was born at one, in Gila Bend, Ariz. She also traveled to Canada to research and photograph Japanese Canadian internment camps.

The Japanese American National Museum in Little Tokyo hosted a retrospective of her photography in 2003.

"There's a skepticism about official narratives" in her work, the museum's senior curator of art, Karin Higa, told The Times then. "There's the suggestion of dysfunction between what you see and what you know — what you can't find out."

White noted that much of

Hayashi's work seemed to revolve around the theme of waste.

"She had a sense of unity in her work that wasn't present in others," he said. "Her work was beautiful but not overly dramatized. She made the Superfund sites look beautiful, which was pretty ironic considering the toxic waste underneath them."

Hayashi realized the double-edged nature of her work, once noting: "What we're living with is not always on the surface."

One of her last major projects was a series on temples and other places of worship in India, Cambodia, Thailand and Nepal. Much of her work can be found on her website, www.masumimuseum.com/index.html.

Higa said Hayashi was an artist who continued to push her own practice and try new things.

"She recently started to make collages of Japanese American eyes, specifically the eyes of people who had been in the internment camps," Higa told The Times on Saturday. Hayashi had spent much of the last few months in Los Angeles visiting the former internees in private residences and nursing homes.

Her photography is in the collections of leading museums, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Art, the George Eastman House in Rochester, N.Y., and numerous private collections, among them that of the late Aaron Spelling.

In addition to the retrospective "Sights Unseen: The Photographic Constructions of Masumi Hayashi" at the Japanese American National Museum, her work had been included in earlier group exhibitions at LACMA. Her first Los Angeles-area show was in 1990 at the Andrea Ross Gallery in Santa Monica.

Hayashi's marriage ended in divorce.

In addition to her son, survivors include a daughter, Lisa Takata; her brother, Seigo; and her sisters, Connie, Amy, Nancy and Joanne.

Memorial services in Cleveland and Los Angeles are pending.