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[Figures 63–64, p 152–153]

The editors of Scapegoat have asked contributing authors to connect design, architecture, and art to work for the abolition of prisons, and to use intellectual production, activism, and idealism to this end. So, how may architectural writing support prison abolition? How may we challenge our activism and activate our idealism through knowledge production? And broadly speaking, how should we write about incarceration, design, and art?

The book I am currently writing addresses some of these questions. Entitled Dislocations and Relocations: Building Prison Cities for Japanese and Japanese Americans During World War II, it engages with built environments, the architecture, and the material culture of incarceration. More specifically, it is a study of the material culture of the mass incarceration of “persons of Japanese ancestry” during World War II, one of the few notable voids in the literature on the war.<sup>-1</sup> It is an architectural and planning history of semi-permanent prison cities built to hold “people of Japanese ancestry” during World War II.

As intellectual work, Greg Robinson has pointed out that this incarceration has become a mini-industry within Asian American studies, the subject of thousands of books, plays, poetry, days of remembrance, museum exhibitions, documentaries, and feature films. So, how useful would another book on the incarceration be? Robinson, himself a scholar/activist, has provided his own answer to this dilemma of overproduction: the prison camps remain oddly resistant to incorporation into mainstream narratives of American history, even as efforts to understand the event proliferate and ongoing research has accessed formerly unknown archival documents, oral history testimonies, un-catalogued collections, and other material.<sup>-2</sup>

My initial work in creating an architectural history of the incarceration began with a seemingly simple question: “What architecture?” As I discovered in my initial research somewhat counter-intuitively, there were numerous architects, some canonical,

1  
Lynne Horiuchi, Dislocations and Relocations: Building Prison Cities for Japanese and Japanese Americans during World War II (Seattle: University of Washington Press, forthcoming 2015).

2  
Greg Robinson, After Camp: Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 1.

involved in producing built environments for this mass incarceration effort. Though nominally a subject of architectural history, little substantive research has been produced on the building, planning, and design of the so-called Assembly and Relocation Centers, government euphemisms for the prison cities. The incarceration is remembered primarily as a violation of constitutional rights with a historical legacy to be corrected, such as Jim Crow laws, spatial segregation, and other types of egregious racial discrimination.

My developing understanding of prison cities as a type of architecture and urbanism generated a series of other questions: How important were these architects in the production process? How do I find the material to produce histories of the building of prison cities? Do we start by looking at prisons as architectural objects to contain prisoners? Do we examine the histories of architects and their bodies of work for clues? Do we frame the production of built environments around militarization and the politics of the moment? What do we know about the planning for the prison cities? How may we interrogate the role of national sovereignty and power, both Japanese and American, in creating the prison environments? What do we know about the prisoners as designers and builders?

The discovery early in my research that major architects were involved in designing the prison cities motivated me to focus first on the ethics of architectural practice. This also shifted my inquiry away from the documentation of canonical architecture. Some of the San Francisco Bay Area's most socially progressive and pre-eminent modernist architects of the 1930s and 1940s, such as Vernon DeMars and Garrett Eckbo, were involved in designing prison cities for the Japanese American incarceration as federal employees of the Farm Security Administration (FSA).

DeMars only began to realize the implications of his work when two of his Japanese American colleagues, Siberius Saito and Hachiro Yuasa, were removed from the FSA Region IX and XI office in San Francisco and relocated to Assembly Centers. Ironically, because the FSA had been relatively open to hiring minorities and women, the FSA architects found themselves assigned by the U.S. Army to design community plans, schools, staff housing, and the specifications for the very concentration camps that their colleagues were to inhabit. Before

World War II, Asian Americans rarely practiced as architects, so the presence of Yuasa and Saito in the FSA office was itself an extremely rare example of Asian American architectural practice in the late 1930s and early 1940s. In the Japanese American community, professional opportunities were dismal for Nisei (second-generation Japanese Americans born to Japanese parents) in pre-war urban areas.

Demars and Eckbo left little information about their design work for Assembly and Relocation Centers. So their participation in the process became a focus of my first chapter, centred around the question, “What would you do if you were asked to design a prison city for your colleagues?” The question functions as a kind of corollary for practice inside and outside the prison cities, and wherever one might be located in production processes as an architect, prisoner, artist, engineer, planner, policy maker, government administrator, vernacular builder, community builder, contractor, or consultant. These categories were not mutually exclusive: for example, architects were imprisoned, and community planning tasks and goals involved the work of the prisoners and their jailors, etc.

There were numerous concentration camps and prison cities built to imprison Japanese and Japanese Americans during World War II. My study looks primarily at the ten semi-permanent prison cities authorized by President Franklin D. Roosevelt under Executive Order 9066. These were camps that the U.S. government named “Relocation Centers” and located in largely isolated rural areas of the western United States and Arkansas. Prior to being sent to Relocation Centers, “people of Japanese ancestry” from the West coast of the United States, the southern half of Arizona, and Alaska were held temporarily in Assembly Centers near Japanese American communities and then sent to Relocation Centers. The FBI, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), and the Departments of War and Justice had initiated a parallel process in December 1941, following Pearl Harbor, which resulted in the creation of concentration camps—correctly referred to as internment camps—for “enemy” aliens, citizens of Axis nations considered threats to national security. The War Relocation Authority built additional camps for particular administrative functions, such as Isolation Centers for disciplining prisoners identified as “troublemakers.”

Without specifying particular ethnic groups, Presidential Executive Order 9066, a brief, two-page document, was issued on February 19, 1942. FDR authorized the Secretary of War and his designated military commander, General John L. Dewitt, to head the Western Defense Command and Fourth Army, stationed at San Francisco's Presidio:

(T)o prescribe military areas (...) from which any or all persons may be excluded and with respect to which the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restrictions the Secretary of War or the appropriate Military commander may impose in his discretion (... and) to provide for residents of any such area who are excluded therefrom, such transportation, food, shelter, and other accommodations as may be necessary (...) until other such arrangements are made to accomplish the purpose of this order.<sup>-3</sup>

E.O. 9066 also authorized the military to use federal troops and other federal agencies with state and local consent to enforce compliance. It asserted that extreme caution in protecting “against espionage and against sabotage to national-defense material, national-defense premises and national defense utilities” would result in victory. With such broad authority, the military took control over any person they wished to exclude from any military area they defined.<sup>-4</sup>

Yet, the military was cautioned to carry out exclusions only when they could be justified by “military necessity,” at the specific instruction of FDR. The decision to authorize the army to remove Japanese and Japanese Americans was contested at high policy and cabinet levels, and while it did involve debate about the role of citizenship, there was little discussion about what threats women and children might pose. General DeWitt claimed that, by reason of race and false reports of espionage or collusion, Japanese Americans were potentially loyal Japanese subjects, ready to die for Japan, and that the absence of any confirmed espionage was precisely the reason to incarcerate them. DeWitt conflated Japanese immigrants and American born citizens of Japanese ancestry into one category—the

“Japanese.” Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, California Governor Culbert Olson, Attorney General Earl Warren, and Los Angeles Mayor Fletcher Bowron, among others, gave credence to the purported threat of the Japanese American community to national security, contrary to military intelligence and FBI reports. Japanese American communities, along with a small pool of individuals generally without organizational support, protested proposals to remove Japanese American communities from their homes, but their efforts went unnoticed or were glossed over.

The spatial authority of E.O. 9066 was the legal key to the mass incarceration. The military was able to remove approximately 120,000 “persons of Japanese ancestry” by issuing Civilian Exclusion Orders forcing them to move from specifically bounded areas in military zones in the Western United States, Alaska, and parts of Arizona where they were considered potential threats to military security based on their ethnic and racial affinities. The military thus gained jurisdiction over “people of Japanese ancestry” by categorizing the entire group as “Japanese” and displacing them from the normative rule of law as well as spatially. The orders did not specify people of German or Italian ancestry, nor did they involve the 157,905 people of Japanese ancestry living in the territory of Hawaii. Subsequently, FDR issued E.O. 9102 on March 18, 1942, creating the War Relocation Authority (WRA) as a sole-purpose agency for the administration of excluded “persons of Japanese ancestry” removed from the military areas and then imprisoned in spaces such as Assembly Centers and Relocation Centers.

As Giorgio Agamben elucidates, concentration camps theoretically constitute states of exception, which he defines as “a no-man’s-land between public law and political fact, and between juridical order and life.”<sup>5</sup> Taking concentration camps such as Auschwitz as his primary examples, he observed the power of the state to create differentiated spaces through exclusion and the resulting absence of juridical order: “(W)hat is outside is included not simply by means of an interdiction or an internment, but rather by means of the suspension of the juridical order’s validity—by letting the juridical order (...) withdraw from the exception and abandon it.”<sup>6</sup> For Agamben, a point of imbalance between public law and political

5  
Giorgio Agamben, State of Exception, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 1.

6  
Giorgio Agamben, Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 18.  
footnotes

fact created by political crises produces a state of exception, resulting in the creation of sites such as concentration camps, internment camps, or prison cities that require an ordering of space outside an exclusionary space.

The Relocation Centers, as the U.S. government euphemistically named them, were concentration camps in this sense and not just “camps,” as Japanese Americans have often referred to them to minimize their stigmatization. The prison cities were not constituted as prisons under penal law, and they were subject to only one congressional law, Public Law 503, which criminalized non-compliance with exclusion orders. So the means for forcing the population to move into concentration camps was the threat of criminal law. The Relocation Centers were administrated under E.O. 9066 and not by normative penal law, although the prison city boundaries were enclosed with barbed wire and guard towers.

Agamben further distinguishes between the simple spaces of confinement sites and the space of concentration camps as absolute spaces of exception. While many normative urban functions had to be established in the American prison cities for Japanese and Japanese Americans in which normative rule of law had been suspended, the prison cities existed in a liminal form without official local, state, or regional status except through federal power. Conditions in the Relocation Centers existed in constant tension between the WRA’s attempt to run the concentration camps as if they were normative American towns, and the prisoners’ participation in, or protest of, civic functions in the cities in which they were imprisoned. The Centers thus essentially functioned as states of exception outside of the rule of law.

In spatial, material, and historical terms, three major characteristics distinguish these prison cities as exceptional American urban spaces: 1) the abrogation of civil rights—both Japanese and American; 2) the significant scale of the cities as part of American domestic war-time production; and 3) the participation of the prisoners in the building projects themselves, based in part on New Deal utopian ideals for co-operative living. While these prison cities resonate with Agamben’s work, they differ definitively from other comparative types, such as the German concentration and

death camps in the force of their disciplinary violence, and in local, regional, historical, and national contexts.

While the architects' roles in the design process were important, they were of course limited among the myriad of factors that led to the construction of the concentration camps. In Dislocations and Relocations, I am interested not only in how architects produced these prison cities as states of exception, but also in asking basic questions about the design, planning, construction, and representation of imprisonment. The basic questions of each chapter are designed to provoke ways of thinking that address Scapegoat's challenge to how we may begin to abolish prisons.

As an architectural historian, I am most interested in the material conditions of the prison cities. Who planned, designed, and constructed the concentration camps? At the macro level, how did the policy direction and planning take place? How did the government build the camps? Who directed and profited from this work? How did they find the raw materials to build the camps when materials were being rationed during the war? What did the prisoners do with their new environments? What did the prisoners themselves plan, design, and build? Finally, how did the government and the prisoners materially constitute national loyalty, citizenship, and community within the prison cities?

I've organized the chapters thematically to engage major discourses in the fields of architecture, urban studies, and Asian American studies. In the first chapter, I focus on the ethics of architectural practice, examining a wide range of architectural practices—professional, vernacular, and commercial, and ethical problems of designing and building concentration camps. Gathering together a kind of portrait gallery of people in the profession, I review individual and interrelated roles in different kinds of practice to provide a broad examination of the range of individual agency, or lack thereof. The goal is to lay out the uneven participation of designers, planners, and builders in order to define who had more or less power. The subjects of the incarceration were obviously not static objects or victims, and there were clear hierarchies of power for those inside and outside the prison cities. For example, as part of their professional trajectories, incarcerated Japanese and Japanese

American architects were disenfranchised, impoverished, and forcibly moved to concentration camps. On their release, they had to re-establish their careers from scratch. This was the uneven ground of competitive career development for all Japanese residents and Japanese Americans unjustly positioned as racial and ethnic subjects, regardless of their pre-war economic or professional circumstances.

In the second and third chapters, I document the government policy, urban planning, and building of the Relocation Centers. As a state project, the mass incarceration was at a scale that only the largest New Deal public works projects had witnessed. The New Deal meta-organization of powerful federal agencies and land development in the western United States, plus the utopian ideologies of socially oriented programs of New Deal agencies, had a profound impact not only on the production processes of the mass incarceration, but also on policy formation and administration.

However, the most dominant power was leveraged by the military in the process of producing concentration camps. Through the use of spatial jurisdictions, the military was able to claim nearly totalitarian control of large areas of the United States to create and organize disciplinary spaces for which they were able to capture large flows of capital and administrative power to implement the project. It was one of the largest domestic projects undertaken by the U.S. military, rivalled only by the provision of housing for troops and prisoners of war. Under E.O. 9066, the military retained control of the project just long enough to remove “persons of Japanese ancestry” from military areas and to build the camps, offering contracts and engaging the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and others to supervise construction. The Western Defense Command then transferred some of the administrative jurisdiction over the camps to the WRA on December 31, 1942, as defined by an earlier memorandum of agreement from April 17, 1942.

The process of creating the concentration camps was complex, requiring coordination across existing federal, state, and local jurisdictions, and the participation and work forces of numerous public agencies and the prisoners themselves. In addition to the FSA, the Census Bureau, the National Regional Planning Boards, and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, powerful land development



agencies were recruited, such as the Bureau of Reclamation, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the U.S. Forest Service, the Civil Conservation Corps, the Soil Conservation Service, and the National Park Service. Planning for the concentration camps was a sophisticated and complex process involving topographical surveys, industrial and agricultural infrastructure, and opportunities for the use of evacuee labour in war-related industries and land development.

The building of the camps consumed enormous quantities of raw materials and resources with priority clearance through the Army Quartermaster, resources that might have otherwise been diverted to war efforts abroad. As a housing project, two sets of prison cities was to accommodate a population of 130,000 people each. In the first set, seventeen temporary Assembly Centers completed in approximately three months—and in the second set, ten semi-permanent Relocation Centers. Thus, the plan constituted housing for a total aggregate population of 260,000, across a total area of 361,740 acres. Using the U.S. Army and the WRA budgetary reports, an approximate, conservative estimate for the cost of the project between 1942 and 1946 is around \$300 million, unadjusted for inflation and without accounting for the expenditures of all participating agencies, non-profit organizations, nor the prisoners' expenditures in the concentration camps and productivity losses related to their imprisonment.

The focus of the fourth chapter is community building, of which I found abundant archival examples during my research. Although the agency of the inmates was very much limited by government policies and the overwhelming dominance of the military, it is possible to lift some of their projects to the surface of the historical record, supplemented by a rich collection of oral history accounts and secondary information. Once they arrived at the Assembly and Relocation Centers, Japanese and Japanese Americans planned, built, and created for themselves urban infrastructure, recreational facilities, and gardens, in addition to creating new government facilities and buildings. Indeed, some of the community building in Relocation Centers was incorporated into WRA building and industrial programs; inmates built infrastructure such as roadways, canals, and dams for wages one-tenth of the going commercial rate. WRA projects were

realized through industrial programs, but officials sometimes tolerated completely informal building. Some of the schools at the Colorado River Relocation Center, for example, were built with adobe bricks manufactured on site.

Gardens were abundant, often developed with water elements, formal Japanese rock gardens, and shade according to the needs of regional climates. Barrack interiors took on inventive modifications as they were adapted to a wide range of tastes, personal expressions, and needs. In addition to the facilities provided by the government, the prisoners established nearly parallel urban social infrastructure, such as schools, churches, libraries, and recreation facilities, in spite of the limits of the disciplinary control of the WRA. For example, cooperative enterprises such as canteens, a “moyashi-ya” or mung bean shop, a tofu factory, shoe repair, beauty shops, and other co-operative businesses funded the construction of recreation facilities in the Colorado River Relocation Center, providing some relief from oppressive state management. Profit from the co-ops often went directly into the recreation facilities, though they were required to pay rent for space and buildings to the WRA. Community building ranged from micro to macro levels, and from the official to the clandestine, with a remarkable persistence, tenacity, and rhythm.

The final chapter examines the punitive nature of the physical material environment of the American concentration camps as a way to understand the dilemmas of national belonging. Having been denied the rights of American citizenship and imprisoned for alleged disloyalty to the United States, Japanese Americans agonized over their approvals or criticisms of U.S. government actions. Japanese residents in the U.S. were denied the right to naturalize as American citizens, so expressing support for the U.S. had the potential to render them stateless. Dominant power and racialized segregation in all the camps were part of the visible material force and design of the concentration camps, most insistently in the monotonous environments of the repeating barrack units. Military guards were housed in separate compounds and kept watch twenty-four hours a day. Searchlights swept through the camps at night. Military police were used to control access points and perimeters, guard jails within the concentration camps, serve as military escorts, and suppress

disturbances or riots. As per military protocol, no fraternization with civilians was permitted.

In 1943, the Tule Lake Relocation Center was transformed into a Segregation Center for prisoners considered “disloyal,” where the punitive force of everyday material environments intensified. Through a mandatory registration and survey process, the WRA asked all camp prisoners, including the Issei (first-generation Japanese immigrants), to foreswear allegiance to the Japanese emperor and swear allegiance to the United States or face relocation to Tule Lake and possible repatriation to Japan. Legally barred from naturalization as American citizens and uncertain of their fate after the war, the survey questions forced the Issei into a stateless condition as traitors to Japan if they swore allegiance to the U.S. or as disloyal inmates subject to repatriation if they swore loyalty to Japan. The survey, which required responses, also asked if they would bear arms to defend the United States; not responding risked segregation at Tule Lake. Political positions greatly impacted the future possibilities of all prisoners, determining whether they would be resettled, serve the military in racially segregated units, enrol in college, or be subjected to other types of incarceration for resisting government orders. Indeed, these difficult decisions split up family units and fragmented community support.

The conversion of the Tule Lake Relocation Center into a maximum-security facility required additional housing for 6,000 persons, for a total population of 18,000; additional fencing topped with barbed wire; additional watchtowers and searchlights; and a significant expansion of the military police compound. Following a prisoner strike at the camp in 1944, the WRA and the military imposed martial law, built temporary stockades, permanent stockades, and jails. Transnational tensions that remained somewhat below the surface in other Relocation Centers erupted at Tule Lake Segregation Center, where the difficult decisions of identifying one’s homeland were part of the everyday chaos of life within this concentration camp.

In understanding the processes by which prison cities are built, we may better understand the nature of the civil justice issues we must pursue to abolish prisons. The processes are inextricably linked to our concepts of national belonging that must be addressed

in answering the question, “What would you do if you were asked to design a concentration camp for your colleagues?” Eckbo and DeMars were quite silent about their participation in building prison cities, which may only be understood in more detail through government records. The way in which they related to their colleagues, moreover, raises questions about their interaction with Yuasa and Saito following the war. Both returned to architectural practice in Berkeley, California immediately after the war, with Saito eventually settling in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. For Saito and Yuasa, this meant rebuilding their professional practices after years of disruption and imprisonment for no other reason than their race and ethnicity. They returned to a generally hostile society and without much of the professional support they had held at the moment of their incarceration. This comparatively uneven development of their practices grossly contradicted the assumptions of fair and equal treatment that most Americans ideologically believe normative.

The material production of concentration camps is one element in the practice of architecture not often included as part of the discipline’s canonical oeuvre. As large-scale projects sited in liminal spaces under extra-jurisdictional and extra-juridical sovereign powers, the prison cities designed for Japanese and Japanese Americans are important historical examples of the socio-economic and political American architectural landscape. They embody the militarization and capital flow of government funds for racialized mass incarceration and disenfranchisement with practices that relate directly to contemporary events. Fears of sabotage that fuelled the construction of American concentration camps legally and materially haunt the imagined threats ethnic and racialized subjects pose to the national security of the United States today. For example, Agamben illustrated the biopolitical significance of states of exception related to the USA Patriot Act issued on November 13, 2001. This Act eerily mirrors E.O. 9066 in allowing the Attorney General to arrest any alien suspected of activities that endanger the national security of the U.S. The synchronicity between E.O. 9066 and the Patriot Act is doubly alarming because of the historical continuity they constitute.

The larger functions of military dominance, the violation of civil liberties, the encoding of people as racially inferior, and their

material confinement are directly related to how American society functions. The book I am writing is intended to draw out the processes and practices of building concentration camps in all their complexities. Revealing the inter-relationships between high architecture, vernacular architecture, urban designs, socio-economic infrastructure, and disciplinary environments will widen the spectrum of practices that are normally considered in prison building. And by better understanding the historical legacy of these inter-relationships, it will hopefully provide more insight into phenomena such as violence targeting difference, the criminalization of people of colour, the detention of immigrants assumed illegal or the racialized violation of civil rights—so that we may abolish prisons.

### Acknowledgements

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## ↓ Dislocations and Relocations: Designing for Prison Cities, pp 105–117 ↓



Figure 63: Block units of fourteen barracks and communal mess halls, laundries, and latrines built to Army standard specifications, June 1, 1942. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library

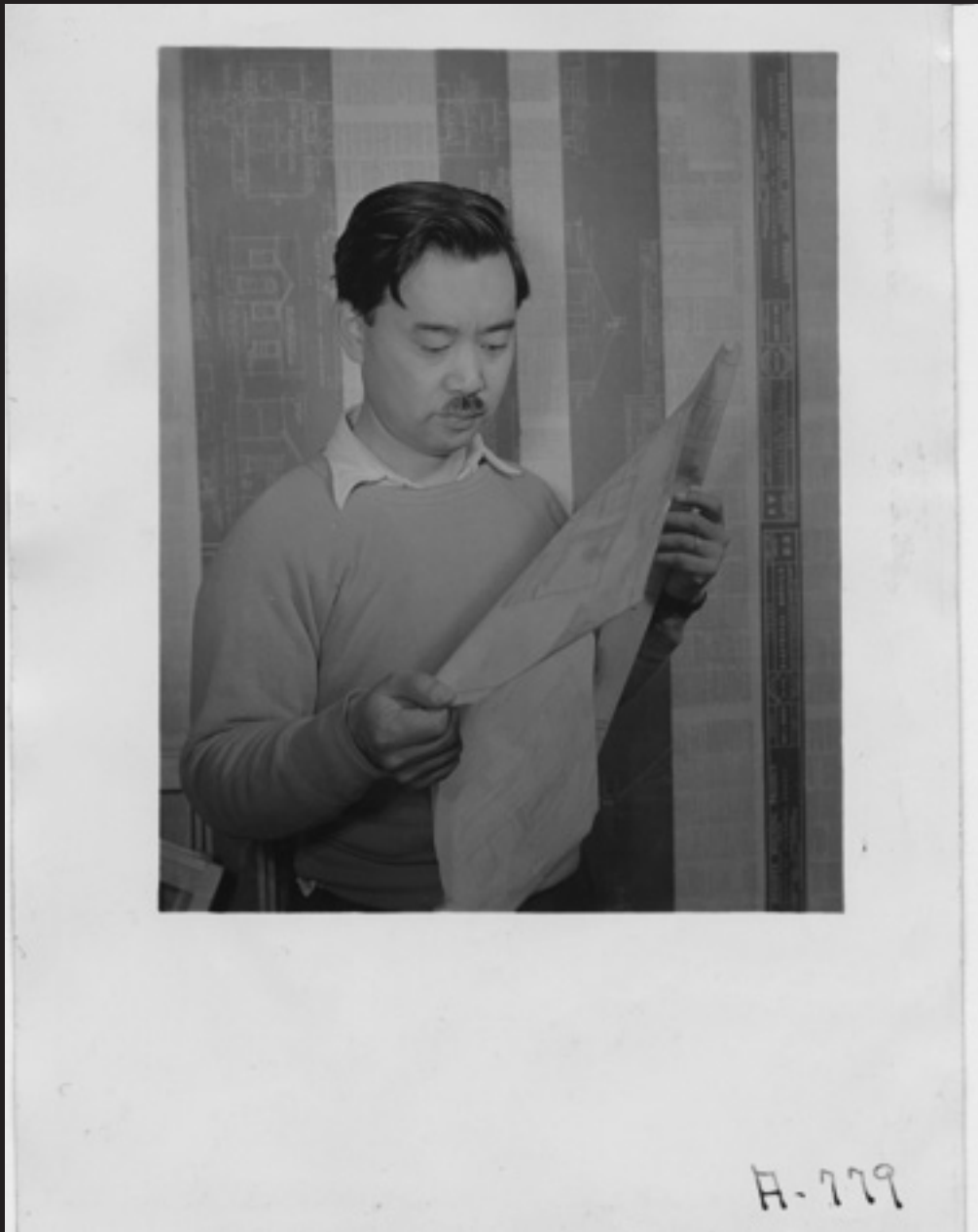


Figure 64: George Nakashima creating a model apartment at Minidoka Relocation Center, December 9, 1942. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library