Samurai armor exhibition:
“Lethal Beauty”

A spectacular exhibition of Japanese traditional swords, helmets, and armor will be on display in the Madden Library from April 8 through June 28. The duality of deadly weapon and artistic beauty is the focus of the exhibition, “Lethal Beauty: Samurai Weapons and Armor,” which originated at the Clark Center for Japanese Art and Culture in Hanford. The exhibition includes 65 objects dating from the 13th through 20th centuries, and features superb suits of armor, outstanding helmets, facemasks, swords, and sword fittings and matchlock guns.

The samurai warrior class dominated Japanese political, economic, and social life from the 12th century to 1876, when it was disbanded and they were barred from carrying swords. Besides their mastery of the martial arts, the samurai are noted for their dedication to a high code of honor and their patronage of the arts and Buddhism. They highly prized splendid designs for their suits of armor and swords. Fierce facemasks and fantastical helmets, many in animal shapes, reinforced the powerful image of the warrior. Swords of highly refined craftsmanship were decorated with elaborate mountings. The beauty of these objects gives us a rare glimpse of the unsurpassed artistic expressions of these lost warriors.

Dr. Andreas Marks, director of the Clark Center and curator of the exhibition, will speak on May 6 at 6:30 p.m., preceded by a reception at 6 p.m. This exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Matsuo Tsuchida, the late father of Yuko Brumm, wife of Fresno State alumnus Jim Brumm.

Donor and Advocate of the Year

George Shitara has been chosen as the Madden Library’s 2010 Donor of the Year for his gift of a collection of internment camp newspapers that his family preserved for more than 60 years. This almost complete set of newspapers that attests to an important part of American history is rare and in remarkably good condition.

His niece, Carlene Tinker of Fresno, not only coordinated the donation of this collection to the Library, she also volunteered to digitize every issue so the newspapers can be made available electronically. For this reason, Tinker is being recognized as the Library’s Advocate of the Year for 2010.

In 1942, Shitara, with his nine siblings and parents, were sent from their home in California to the Granada Relocation Center in Amache, Colorado, because they were of Japanese ancestry. After the U.S. entered World War II, all Japanese Americans living on the West Coast were sent first to assembly centers throughout California, Oregon, and Washington, and then to internment camps in remote areas of California, Colorado, Arizona, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, and Arkansas.

Most Japanese Americans remained in the camps until the end of the war. They tried to make the best of a difficult situation by conducting their own schools, creating health clinics, organizing leisure time activities, and producing a newspaper for their communities. These newspapers were very important in fostering a sense of community among the internees and in providing useful information to everyone in the camps.

Shitara, a teenager during this time, lived in the camp barracks with his family. While there, he married his sweetheart Jane Kawana, whom he had met years earlier. They celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary this year. Shitara was drafted into the Army in 1945 and ended the war at Fort Hood, in Texas.

His father, Hyosaku Shitara, collected the Granada Pioneer newspapers while in the camp.
Donor, continued

After his death, they were passed to his daughter, Florence, and then to Shitara, who saved them in a simple cardboard box in his barn for more than a decade until a reunion of the Granada camp survivors prompted renewed interest in them. It was then that his niece, Carlene Tinker, found out about them. A young child during the war, Tinker did not read the newspapers while in the camp, but as an adult she realized their importance for research and how rare it was that a nearly complete set was saved.

When Tinker, a retired counselor for the Fresno Unified School District, and her husband, John Tinker, Fresno State Professor Emeritus of Sociology, offered the collection to the Library’s Special Collections Research Center, it was accepted immediately and with gratitude.

Carlene Tinker comes in twice a week to do the time-consuming, sometimes tedious, work of digitizing the newspapers and considers it a labor of love in honor of the Shitara family and all those who lived in the internment camps. Both she and her uncle, George Shitara, are most deserving recipients of this recognition. We thank and congratulate both of them.

Centennial piano concert

The Leon S. Peters Ellipse Gallery was the setting on November 19 for the inaugural concert of the Library’s renovated Centennial Steinway grand piano. For an audience of almost 100 guests, Professor Andreas Werz of Fresno State’s Music Department performed selections from Haydn, Beethoven, Stockhausen, Listz, Wagner, and Chopin.

The evening began with a wine and hors d’oeuvres reception adjacent to the gallery and dessert was served during intermission. As a prelude to the performance, Dean Peter McDonald presented a short history of the concert grand piano, which was built in the 1870s in honor of the country’s centennial observation. The College of Arts and Humanities donated the Centennial Steinway to the Henry Madden Library where all may enjoy it.

Dean McDonald introduced Kyle Kirkland, Chairman of Steinway Instrument Company, and Bill Lyles, the lead donor for the project to restore the piano. Also attending were Don Larson, donor of our world-class International Exhibitions and Fairs collection, and Tammy Lau, head of the Library’s Special Collections Research Center, where the collection is housed. Because this model piano was displayed at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, the Centennial Steinway is included in the International Exhibitions and Fairs collection.

As the second of this model ever made, our piano is the earliest known example of the Steinway Centennial grand pianos that still exists. It is considered the direct precursor to modern grand pianos despite its ornate Victorian style.

From 1976 to 2002, the piano was exhibited as part of the Smithsonian’s Centennial exhibition in Washington, D.C. It was completely renovated by Steinway & Sons in New York with a new soundboard in 2009-2010, thanks to the generosity of Lyles and other donors.
Dean’s update

This past year was an outstanding one for the Madden Library. Fresno State is celebrating its centennial and the Library is playing a central role in making it a success.

We are staging exhibitions and hosting events with alumni and cultural groups to reach new and diverse audiences. Nearly 40,000 patrons visit each week, a record-breaking number. We provide the most welcoming space on campus for study and networking, along with exceptional services, peerless collections, stimulating cultural events, and cutting-edge technology. This is no small achievement in an era of state budget cuts and ‘doing more with less’.

Gifts to our Books Matter! fund have allowed us to keep pace with demand despite reduced state funding. Donor contributions support not just the book collections, but research materials as well. One example where donors have made a significant contribution was this year’s purchase of the Web of Science database. This database indexes the 10,000 most significant research journals worldwide in the sciences and social sciences. In addition to journal articles, it also indexes all of the bibliographic citations in each article. By searching Web of Science, users find not only the newest articles relevant to their topic, but also all of the studies in the past that contributed to that research. Web of Science is critical to faculty and graduate students because it allows them to get a comprehensive view of all other research relevant to their projects—and this database would not be available without the support of donors like you.

Thank you for being our partners in this wonderful enterprise. Warm thanks for your continued support of the Madden Library.

Peter McDonald, Dean of Library Services

“The Fresno Art Scene”

Bob Ogata, artist and founding member of Fig Tree Gallery, spoke to the Friends on November 12 about “The Long Perspective on the Fresno Art Scene.” With the assistance of his wife, Ogata compiled an engaging visual tour of Fresno’s art scene from circa 1950 to the present.

As a student at Fresno State in the 1960s, Ogata was instrumental in getting student art displayed in public places. He received permission from the owners of The Californian Hotel for the first-ever art show of Fresno State students. Ogata went on to teach at Fresno High and continued his art. Public art spaces were very scarce, so he and a group of like-minded artists founded Fig Tree Gallery, intended to be a place for local artists to display current work. Originally located in a renovated residential space near Van Ness and Divisadero, it survives to this day at 644 Van Ness, and is the oldest artist’s cooperative in the United States.

Ogata recalled the period of art ‘censorship’ during the ’60s that began in the wake of the removal of a drawing of a nude female figure that had been submitted to the Fresno Fair. In protest, local artists banded together and created a collective show, which was displayed in the Del Webb building downtown. Fresno downtown pedestrian areas began showcasing the work of local artists, including Joyce Aiken, Jean Ray Laury, Stan Bitters, Clem Renzi, Peter Vouklkos, and Varaz Samuelian.

In the 1970s, many influenced by Judy Chicago, filled Fresno’s art scene with an explosion of art. Chicago pioneered a unique program that melded Feminist Art and art education at Fresno State. In 2009, the university hosted an exhibition titled “A Studio of their Own: The Legacy of the Fresno Feminist Experiment,” showcasing the work of students from Chicago’s first Feminist Art program. The ’70s also saw the first gallery (Gallery 25) dedicated to the work of local female artists.

In his discussion of the 1980s, Ogata talked about the Centennial Art show titled “Fresno 277” in the Old Administration Building, now a part of Fresno City College. The title was a tongue-in-cheek reference to the city’s overall national ranking at the time.

‘Art Hop’ arrived in the ‘90s, first hosted at the Fresno Transit Building. It is so successful that now there are two monthly events: one for the central Fresno area, the other with venues in northern Fresno. The Fresno Art Museum, too, has continued to be a showplace for local artists.

Ogata concluded the evening by showing some of the images from his 25-year retrospective show, “Between Figure and Ground,” as well as some from his work on Japanese internment camps. The evening was a fascinating tour through the history of the visual arts in Fresno. All attending left with a warm appreciation for this man, his work, and the rich heritage of Fresno artists.
Look for these Friends programs during Fresno State’s Centennial Year, 2010-11:

2011

♦ **March 11**: “A Century of Educational Innovation” by Rick Hansen, Fresno State professor of English, with a tour of University High School featuring UHS Chamber Singers.


♦ **May 6**: Reception for “Lethal Beauty: Samurai Weapons and Armor” exhibition.

Call us at 559.278.5790 if you want more information or if you would like to become involved. Programs are subject to change.

Our programs are free of charge for the Friends of the Madden Library. Not a member? We would love to have you join us. Please visit our web site at www.csufresno.edu/library/campaign/friends.php

For a list of all upcoming events in the Madden Library, please go to www.csufresno.edu/library and click on the first tile at the bottom, “Library Events.”