

# Kintsugi Part II

## The Presence of your Absence.



By Gaby Oshiro & Germano Dalla Pola

We tend to think that whatever is going on in the news won't affect us, but I saw it first hand with my dad, Oscar Takashi Oshiro, how he became the protagonist overnight, not always the kind of main character who makes it out alive. For me this is where painting takes over and becomes the witness, the proof of my father's presence. That he was not the ghost that we lived with for years, or the black and white faded picture on a banner waving on the streets of Buenos Aires during a protest, but a human being who gave his life to make a better world standing up to the repression and injustice of the military dictatorship.

I'd like to catch those ephemeral moments, depict his smile when he wasn't a political activist or a labor lawyer defending factory workers but just my dad.

The gesture itself of creating a new image out of nothing, as a reaction of the action done by his murderers who tried to make his identity disappear, switching his name and those of the other 30 thousands with a number.

I spent more than twenty years drawing, painting portraits, eyes of strangers. Always avoiding the subject that it was right in front of me since I was 5 years old, but that I was never seem ready to face. I carried that emotional

backpack since the day my dad was taken by the Argentinean military dictatorship during the 70's. The weight was always there, or better yet that absence continuously reminding me that I didn't have the definite closure, it was also mixed in with the hope that never dies, the hope to see my father again, unexpectedly, the same way that he was taken a 21st April in 1977.

### **What's Kintsugi?**

It's the Japanese art of mending breakage in pottery, but it's not just a technique, it's also a philosophical idea connected to the wabi-sabi, which is finding beauty on something imperfect and flawed.

I felt that Kintsugi fit as the perfect metaphor to remember those men and women struck by the tragedy of losing their loved ones so suddenly, having their lives in pieces, they found the resiliency and the courage to pick up those pieces and move on, demanding answers from a government that was committing genocide. Embracing the acceptance of change, (*mushin*) like in “*Kintsugi*” the object repaired with gold becomes more beautiful due to its history and flaws.

## Historical Background

Japanese people moved to North and South America for economic opportunities during the first half of the 20th century. Their main goal was to return to Japan once they had the resources. After Japan’s defeat in World War II, most of the Nikkei decided to stay and make the visiting country their home. They kept a tight grip on their roots, and traditions. Most of the Nikkei still considered themselves visitors, so they wouldn’t take part in local politics; they kept to themselves and married among themselves. What the seventeen have in common is that they were outspoken, they took part in politics, they didn’t stay on the sidelines, they considered themselves true Argentineans and they disrupted the status quo, that started with small revolutions at home, like marrying who they loved without worrying about ethnicity.

## Who is a Desaparecido?

The dictatorship eliminated any opposition by using the excuse

of going after armed insurgency groups to exterminate a generation. Violence was the norm, not the exception, employed to maintain power over citizens. Many methods were used to keep up this “social discipline,” as they called it: fear-mongering, censorship, surveillance, exile, incarceration without trials. This state-sanctioned violence culminated in the establishment of secret detention centers throughout the Argentinian territory where citizens could be taken against their will, interrogated, tortured, murdered, robbed their possessions and either buried in mass graves or thrown out of an airplane into the Río de la Plata.

This phenomenon of the “disappeared” or *desaparecido* was the military dictatorship’s attempt to erase opposition, people’s identities, histories, and what they stood for. There are 17 *desaparecidos* Nikkei (Japanese descent) in Argentina that we know of.

## New Point of View for *Kintsugi*, Part II.

The installation comprises seventeen chairs holding 16 (36 in x 36 in) portraits, an extra empty canvas remembering Juan Alberto Cardozo-Higa and also the 30 thousands *desaparecidos* of Argentina. From the day that my father was torn off from our lives, my dad’s chair at the family table was the constant reminder of his absent. The places we visited, the people we knew were always there, everything was the same except for his presence that changed from his physical self, the funny outgoing

dad that would take me to school on his shoulders to a silent space, a memory in my brain materialized in the shape of a chair. His chair was holding his absence, just like the chairs in the installation.

I am coming to terms with the absence, accepting their fate not as a defeat, but I understand that they were taken because of their value for society. The military took the *crème de la crème*, artists, professionals in every field, journalists, poets, etc. The past two years have seen a lot of changes among the relatives and inside myself. Each family has become stronger and realizes that the *desaparecidos* Nikkei lead the way to be part of society and not just guests.

In the first installation at “Espacio Cultural de la Biblioteca del Congreso de la Nación in Buenos Aires, in 2016, was made of doors forming a circle that it was closed with only one door opened inviting the visitors to have a dialogue.

We are all the result of all the events and experiences that shaped our existence, adversity and all that makes us unique beautiful individuals.

After years of silence and carrying the disappearance of our loved ones almost as an stigma I wanted to shout to the world that we’re not hiding anymore, that we are proud of our *desaparecidos*, that we are letting go of the pain and we are wearing the scars and imperfections as “battle scars” and it’s something that made us stronger.

Today the huge absence left by the desaparecidos is still palpable, it's felt as much as their presence was once felt or perhaps even more, there's also the realization that their legacy of openness to other races, their hybrid mentality, integration to their South American country and their commitment to make a better place is alive and kicking with the new generations. After forty- two years in Argentina the relatives of the *desaparecidos* are still looking for justice to be made and answers about the fate of the *desaparecidos*. After all this time these faces on canvas haven't been forgotten.

### **Why is important to remember these stories?**

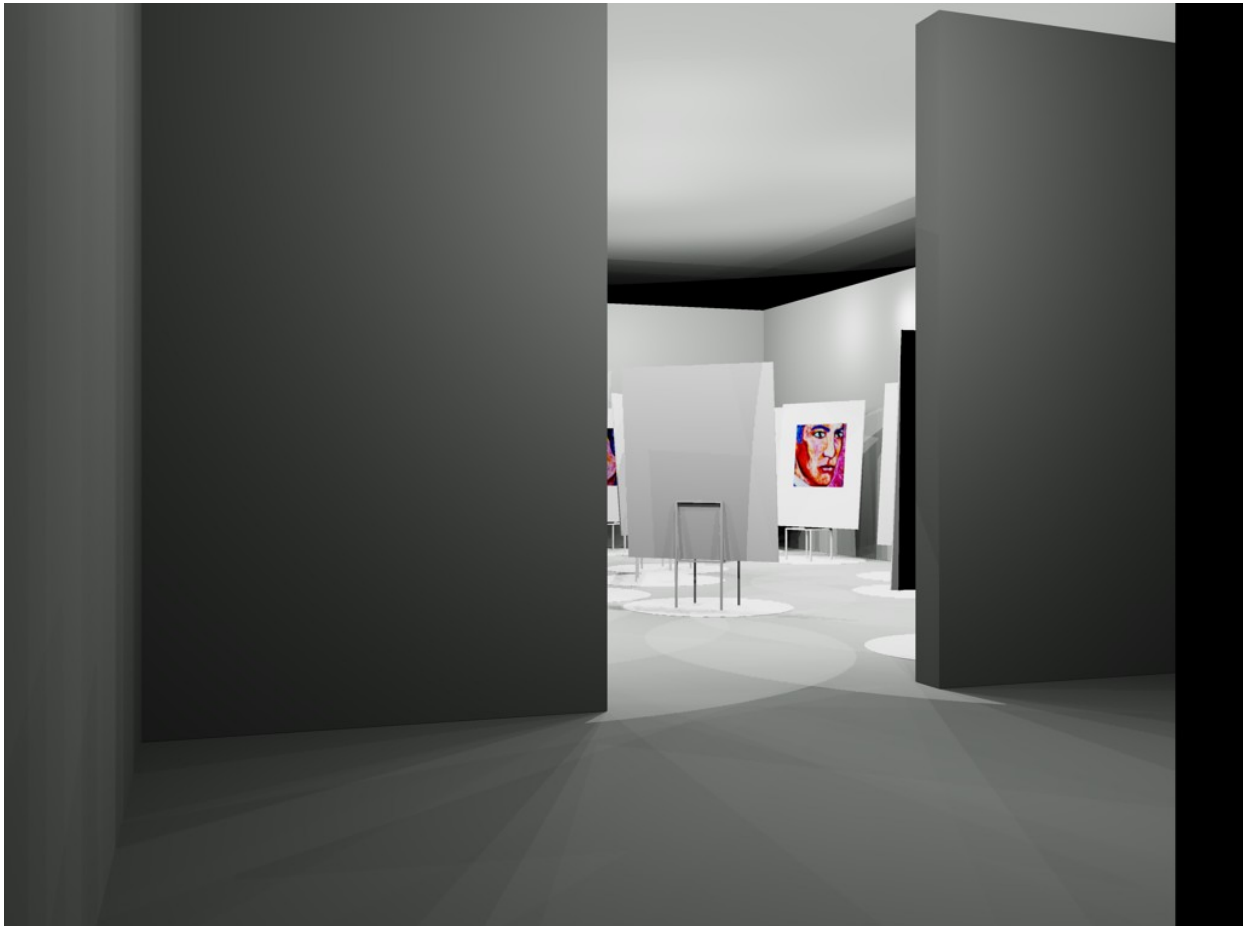
History revisionists are trying to erase the desaparecidos from Argentina's history. Like the Holocaust deniers, many Argentinean politicians deny the number of desaparecidos. Nowadays the government in Argentina has improved since those dark days from 1970's and 1980's, but it is still adopting the same common practices used during the repression of state terrorism like disappearance, torture and murder.

### **Zamba de mi Esperanza**

Zamba de mi esperanza  
amanecida como un querer,  
sueño, sueño del alma  
que a veces muere sin florecer.  
Zamba, a ti te canto  
porque tu canto derrama amor,  
caricia de tu pañuelo  
que va envolviendo mi corazón.  
Estrella, tu que miraste,  
tu que escuchaste mi parecer,  
estrella, deja que cante,  
deja que quiera como yo se,  
estrella, deja que cante,  
deja que quiera como yo se.  
El tiempo que va pasando  
como la vida no vuelve mas  
el tiempo me va matando  
y tu cariño sera, sera.  
Hundido en horizontes  
soy polvadera que al viento va  
zamba, ya no me dejes,  
yo sin tu canto no vivo mas.

The military published a list with forbidden books, movies, music, following song was of the forbidden

This one in particular is one of the songs that my father used to sing with me.  
I wanted to be one of the songs playing during the art show.





In the middle of the gallery, a smaller installation made of “pañuelos” or handkerchiefs.

The Madres de Plaza de Mayo walked around the square to ask silently (protesting was against the law) for their sons and daughters, wearing a white handkerchief on their heads with the name of their desaparecidos. Also, the handkerchief in the traditional Argentinean folklore dance/music called Zamba (not to be confused with Samba) was danced by two, and the woman would wave a handkerchief as she dances and caresses the man with it.

The Zamba's origins can be found in Bolivia, Perú and many other South American countries but was adopted as an official dance and music of Argentina with its own style and sound.

“*Zamba*” is also the word for mestiza (mix of indios and blacks) during the time of Spanish colonies.



"Takashi" acrylics on canvas. 36 in x 36 in.





Hand made chairs/Mixed media/Boards with gesso.



Charcoal on paper,



Frames made of gesso on wood.



Mixed media on paper.



Mixed media on paper





Mixed Media.

<http://goshiro.wixsite.com/goshiro/kintsugi-part-ii-italy-2018-2019>