Organized by Tina Yapelli
University Art Gallery
San Diego State University

Wendy Maruyama
The Tag Project / Executive Order 9066

Organized by Tina Yapelli
University Art Gallery
San Diego State University
Dedication

The Tag Project / Executive Order 9066 is dedicated to the hundreds of volunteers who participated in the recreation of nearly 120,000 Japanese American internment identification tags. The following organizations were instrumental in facilitating tag-making events: Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego; Buddhist Temple of San Diego; Pioneer Ocean View United Church of Christ, San Diego; San Diego Japanese Christian Church; Kiku Gardens Retirement Community, Chula Vista; Art Produce Gallery, San Diego; Advancement Via Individual Determination Program, Poway High School; School of International Studies, San Diego High School; Nikkei Student Union, San Diego State University; Furniture Design and Woodworking Graduate Program, San Diego State University; Nikkei Student Union, University of California, Los Angeles; internment camp pilgrimage organizers Manzanar Committee, Minidoka Pilgrimage and Tule Lake Committee; James Renwick Alliance; and Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville.

Most importantly, The Tag Project / Executive Order 9066 honors my grandparents and their fellow Japanese Americans whose families were forced from their homes in 1942. This project is dedicated to them and to their legacy of resilience and hope.

Wendy Maruyama
Introduction by Tina Yapelli

Suitcases, footlockers and steamer trunks—artifacts from the forced journey of Japanese Americans in 1942—set the stage for Wendy Maruyama’s exhibition at the University Art Gallery. Assembled at the exhibition’s entrance, these history-rich containers have been transformed by the artist into a site-specific installation that initiates a different type of journey: a viewer’s journey back in time. Maruyama’s two recent bodies of work subsequently guide the viewer to consider the forced evacuation of Japanese Americans from their homes, jobs and schools to the inhumane conditions of ten internment camps erected by the United States government—their government—at the height of World War II. Maruyama leads us to imagine, to symbolically witness, the places and events of the mass incarceration of an entire segment of the American population during one of the most shameful moments of the country’s past.

Once inside the Gallery proper, the viewer encounters Maruyama’s impeccably handcrafted wooden wall cabinets and assemblages from her series Executive Order 9066. These spare works, incorporating tarpaper, porcelain shards, an excerpt from the U. S. loyalty questionnaire, photographic imagery of the interment camps and other allusive items, conjure the cruel settings of the Japanese American confinement. Primarily horizontal in form, the cabinets in particular evoke the desolate landscape and barren environment of the camps, while making indirect reference to the people who inhabited them. In addition, bamboo fishing poles, left behind when West Coast fishermen were evacuated inland and required to pursue livelihoods separate from the sea, have been configured by Maruyama as a found-object artwork with a broad expanse that echoes her predominant cabinet format.

Further along the metaphoric journey of Maruyama’s exhibition, the viewer enters her large-scale sculptural installation, The Tag Project. Here, the nearly 120,000 individuals who were imprisoned in the camps are expressly and explicitly memorialized. In counterpoint to the wide, landscape-referential works of Executive Order 9066, The Tag Project comprises ten tall, figurative arrangements of strung paper tags suspended ceiling-to-floor. These hanging specters populate the Gallery with the spirit of the people who are commemorated by name, number and camp location on Maruyama’s convincing replicas of internee identification tags—one for each child, woman and man who suffered the indignities of internment.

Wendy Maruyama’s artworks, by courageously addressing the Japanese American internment during World War II, succeed in bringing attention to this far-reaching tragedy. And in doing so, they create an opportunity for education and awareness, which in turn have the potential to engender greater empathy toward and acceptance of all peoples. Maruyama brings the viewer back to the present with a future aim: to ensure that this type of injustice never again occurs. Her goal requires a collective willingness to heed the hard-learned lessons of history that Executive Order 9066 and The Tag Project convey.

Acknowledgments

The Tag Project / Executive Order 9066 project was realized through the collaborative support of several generous sponsors. This catalogue was made possible by the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program, administered by the California State Library, and the San Diego State University Art Council. The exhibition and opening celebration were sponsored by the San Diego State University Art Council; additional support was provided by the School of Art, Design and Art History and the College of Professional Studies and Fine Arts. Mira Nakashima’s lecture was sponsored by the SDSU Art Council with assistance from Miyo and Mitch Reff and the Mingei International Museum. The inaugural
celebration was organized and sponsored by the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego. Funding for When Dreams Are Interrupted—San Diego was provided by the California Council for the Humanities California Stories Fund and the California Arts Council.

The Tag Project series was funded in part by a grant from the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program, administered by the California State Library. Additional funding and project administration support was provided by the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego. Additional funding also was provided by the San Diego chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League and the San Diego State University Art Council.

The artist and gallery director would like to extend special thanks to the following individuals who contributed their time, enthusiasm and dedication to the project: Linda Canada, Koye Miura, R. Hausel and Gwenn Monita of the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego; Mary Ann Eger and Susan Pollock of the San Diego State University Art Council; guest speaker Mira Nakashima; videographer Xavier Vasquez; catalogue essayists Susan Hasegawa and Barbara McElhanie; The Tag Project photographer Kevin J. Miyazaki; catalogue graphic designer Monica Kemp of Instructional Technology Services; BEW equipment technician Todd Pastidge of the School of Art, Design and Art History; Gallery Exhibition Design students Natasha Harris, Ronald Moya, Alexandra Perez-Demola and Amanda Zweifel; and University Art Gallery student assistants Ramla Mohamoud, Aicha Soule and Diana Juarez.
A Sansei Legacy
by Susan Hasegawa

This black and white photograph of the Mochida family captures both the chaos and orderliness of evacuation day. The family is posed in travel clothes with small rectangular tags hanging down from coats and luggage. Each tag includes the person’s name, an identification number, and other directions to regulate a large-scale forced migration. The outwardly calm faces mask a world turned upside-down where children could pack only what they could carry, business owners had to hastily get rid of inventory, home owners depended on friends and neighbors to care for property, and farmers abandoned crops in the ground to follow military orders to evacuate. They were on their way to assembly centers and then relocation centers, collectively called “camp” in the Japanese American lexicon, in the months following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, almost 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry were starting the long journey of exile inland, vacating the West Coast exclusion area.

Early in 1942, as the full resources of the United States mobilized to fulfill the commitment to become the “arsenal of democracy” during World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt quietly signed Executive Order 9066. It delegated power to the Secretary of War and military commanders to take necessary actions to secure the West Coast from Japanese attack. Gripped by war hysteria and racial prejudice, military leaders, journalists and politicians voiced
fears of sabotage and spying by the local Japanese American community. “Military necessity” was the justification for the removal of all persons of Japanese ancestry from the western halves of Washington and Oregon, the entire state of California and the southern border areas of Arizona. The U.S. government created ten War Relocation Authority (WRA) centers and a number of Justice Department facilities to imprison Issei (first generation Japanese immigrants) and their American citizen Nisei (second generation) children. There were no cases of espionage or wrongdoing. The only crime of the Issei and Nisei: looking like the enemy.

Families were forced into places like the Tanforan and Santa Anita racetracks, euphemistically called “assembly centers,” where horse stables and hastily built barracks became their temporary homes. As the WRA constructed larger relocation centers in inland states and on sparsely populated government land, places named Manzanar, Poston, Tule Lake and Heart Mountain became new prisons for inmate families. Isolated barracks, communal dining halls and public toilet facilities were all part of camp life for the duration of the war. The camps had armed military guards and barbed-wire fences to keep internees confined.

Forced removal and American concentration camps defined the wartime experience for most West Coast Japanese Americans. However, for a small number of “invisible internees” who were not in camp, World War II was just as devastating. For Wendy Maruyama’s mother, Reiko Maruyama, the aftermath of Pearl Harbor also meant a forced migration and numerous hardships. Fearing for the health of his wife, Wendy’s grandfather, Tokutaro Furukawa, obtained permission from the Attorney General to move the family in early March, 1942 from San Pedro, California, to Crowley, Colorado. The Furukawa family abandoned a fully-furnished home purchased the year before to find a dilapidated shack to house an extended family of fifteen people. With neither electricity nor running water, the Furukawa children were shocked at the inhospitable living conditions. Tokutaro found himself a “fish out of water.” He had owned a successful wholesale fish market in California, but had little applicable job skills in rural southeastern Colorado. With no experience in agriculture, Tokutaro started growing sugar beets and onions. The Furukawa family finally found adequate housing and with the assistance of friendly neighbors eked out an existence farming.
The lives of internees and Invisible internees intersected during the war. Due to the nationwide labor shortage, internees were allowed to become migrant workers outside of the exclusion area and leave camp. Invisible internees helped camp internees resettle in large cities like Denver and small towns like Crowley. Many adventurous Nisei took advantage of the opportunity to relocate to urban centers such as Chicago and Minneapolis, while many Issei were allowed to become migrant workers outside of the exclusion zone, harvesting sugar beets and other seasonal crops. The Furukawa family reunited with friends laboring as temporary workers when they moved briefly to Clearfield, Utah. However, sharecropping in Utah was not successful and the family returned to Crowley. The Furukawa children, who had faced daily bullying and physical abuse on the school bus in Utah, were much relieved to go back to Colorado.

By allowing seasonal workers to engage in employment during the war, the WRA was preparing internees to leave camp. Ironically, the same individuals whose loyalties were questioned while living on the West Coast were now deemed appropriate to work in states outside of the exclusion zone. In 1943, camp internees could take a loyalty oath, complete an extensive personal history application, find a job outside of camp, the WRA was preparing internees to leave camp. Invisible internees helped camp internees resettle in large cities like Denver and small towns like Crowley. Many adventurous Nisei took advantage of the opportunity to relocate to urban centers such as Chicago and Minneapolis. While many Issei were allowed to become migrant workers outside of the exclusion zone, harvesting sugar beets and other seasonal crops. The Furukawa family reunited with friends laboring as temporary workers when they moved briefly to Clearfield, Utah. However, sharecropping in Utah was not successful and the family returned to Crowley. The Furukawa children, who had faced daily bullying and physical abuse on the school bus in Utah, were much relieved to go back to Colorado.

The lives of internees and Invisible internees intersected during the war. Due to the nationwide labor shortage, internees were allowed to become migrant workers outside of the exclusion area and leave camp. Invisible internees helped camp internees resettle in large cities like Denver and small towns like Crowley. Many adventurous Nisei took advantage of the opportunity to relocate to urban centers such as Chicago and Minneapolis. While many Issei were allowed to become migrant workers outside of the exclusion zone, harvesting sugar beets and other seasonal crops. The Furukawa family reunited with friends laboring as temporary workers when they moved briefly to Clearfield, Utah. However, sharecropping in Utah was not successful and the family returned to Crowley. The Furukawa children, who had faced daily bullying and physical abuse on the school bus in Utah, were much relieved to go back to Colorado.

With the discovery of the Nazi death camps, the term became equated with the persecution and extermination of millions of innocent people. These atrocities did not occur in the case of Japanese Americans; however, they were detained and confined in prison-like conditions simply because of their ethnicity.

1. The Wartime Civil Control Administration oversaw evacuation and organized the ideal “exclusion” zones. On a specific date, evacuees were ordered to report to a central location, taking only the possessions they could carry, and under military supervision they were escorted to an “approved destination.”

2. The term “concentration camp” is derived in the American Heritage Dictionary as “a camp where . . . enemy aliens and political prisoners are confined.” Federal officials, including President Roosevelt, used the term “concentration camp” in government documents during the war. With the discovery of the Nazi death camps, the term became equated with the persecution and extermination of millions of innocent people. These atrocities did not occur in the case of Japanese Americans; however, they were detained and confined in prison-like conditions simply because of their ethnicity.

Japanese Americans were victims of racism and war hysteria in the middle of the twentieth century, but by the turn of the twenty-first century these previously marginalized people were active agents in shaping our collective memory. Wendy Miyawaki and her Sansei cohorts are active participants in memorializing the legacy of a dark period in U.S. history, remolding the mainstream public of the many lessons of World War II.
above: Zenmetsu (four view); opposite: Zenmetsu (detail)
Arts in Conversation
Recent Work by Wendy Maruyama
by Barbara McBane

Wendy Maruyama’s two closely-related multipart projects, The Tag Project and Executive Order 9066, explore the personal, political and social effects of a painful episode of American history: the mass incarceration of ninety percent of the Japanese Americans living in the United States in 1942 within hastily-constructed concentration camps located in remote, harsh areas of the country. As part of the evacuation process, each internee was labeled with a paper identification tag stamped with a number, his or her name, and a concentration camp destination; identical tags were attached by strings to suitcases and luggage. The Tag Project was first inspired by Dorothea Lange’s photographic documentation of the camps, which often shows Japanese Americans wearing these conspicuous ID tags. For Maruyama, the tags became “like the Jewish stars sewn onto clothing during the Holocaust.” The Tag Project began with Maruyama creating a tag for each person—approximately 1,500 individuals—incarcerated from the town of Chula Vista, California, where she grew up. Maruyama’s own immediate family members were not among those interned. Instead, they voluntarily (if unwillingly) relocated inland to Colorado—a dislocation that carried its own traumatic difficulties, as Japanese Americans were not welcomed in middle America. Maruyama was born in Colorado a few years later; as she learned more about the internment history as an adult, Maruyama was surprised at the general silence that surrounded it. Many internees were reluctant to reactivate the shame and pain of the experience by openly discussing it. She also was surprised at how many non-Japanese Americans knew nothing or little about this history. Even collaboratively, dislocation and internment left a traumatic emotional residue on her family, her community and herself. For Maruyama, the process of making the Chula Vista tags had a socially binding and healing effect. Conversations about internment allowed her to forge friendships across social barriers, and she bridged what had sometimes been a painful generation gap between herself and older members of her own community.

Eventually, Maruyama resolved to make a tag for every single Japanese American interned in all ten concentration camps—a massive undertaking. Quickly grasping the need for The Tag Project to be collaborative, she organized tag-making workshops through church groups, galleries, advocacy and activist organizations, and annual pilgrimages to internment camp locations. The workshops took the form of old-fashioned sewing bees: people gathered, exchanged stories, asked questions and made tags. Participants came from diverse backgrounds and varied widely in age. The participation of those with a direct experience of internment or voluntary relocation opened up conversations and avenues of learning for
Maruyama also enlisted the involvement of the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego, which has become a partner in the production and exhibition of The Tag Project. The Tag Project is a process that includes collaborative, participational workshops and networking, but it is also a set of replicated artifacts with a material form. This form consists of ten massive hanging sculptural objects (one for every internment camp), each comprising 5,000 to 20,000 ID tags: a cascading avalanche of fluttering paper on red strings, strung together and hung a few inches above the floor on a steel ring suspended from a steel cable attached to the gallery ceiling. Each cluster of tags is about eleven feet high, nearly two to more than three feet wide, and weighs up to 150 pounds. In Maruyama’s words, “each group hovers or levitates on its own. They all look like large looming ghost-like figures and they slowly rotate or move with the slightest breeze.” They also rustle and murmur as they rotate. Maruyama compares them to a group of people or ghosts, and also to a grove of trees. To experience the tags, you wander through the grove, or among the ghosts.

The Tag Project and Executive Order 9066 mark a watershed moment in Wendy Maruyama’s career: There’s a ‘before’ and an ‘after.’ Before these bodies of work, Maruyama had established herself as one of the preeminent furniture designers and makers of her generation. She was also well known as a highly-respected educator who had established San Diego State University’s furniture design and woodworking program as one of the country’s top-ranked. Her work had been shown in the best venues: the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Cooper Hewitt Museum in New York, the Renwick Gallery of the National Museum of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. It had been sought after by high-end collectors and acquired for the finest collections. Maruyama was and continues to be honored with numerous prestigious grants and awards.

Before The Tag Project and Executive Order 9066, Maruyama was known as a ground-breaking furniture designer who helped dissolve “the barriers between functional objects and aesthetic objects made for contemplation first—and use second.” During her graduate training at the Rochester Institute of Technology, she took a special interest in a mastery of craft she associated with her heritage, pursuing the highly-honed skills of the Japanese woodworker. Her preoccupation with craft was soon tempered by a turn in a different direction, as she incorporated sculptural shapes, bright colors, textures, carved surfaces and elements of the fantastic into her work. Part provocateur and part master craftswoman, she boldly explored personal narratives, humor and intimate relationships; she asked how furniture might tell a woman’s story. The Shut Up and Kiss Me lipstick cabinet (1999), the Ooh La La vanity (1992), or the You Tarzan Me Jane four-poster bed put the gendered and erotic functions of furniture on display. Before The Tag Project and Executive Order 9066, Maruyama’s work was known for its cheekiness, irreverence, sensuality and eclecticism.

Artists often describe furniture as a vehicle for communication. Maruyama invested herself fully in her art, pressing the meaning of this metaphor to its limits. As her gallerist and benefactor of the 1990s, the late Peter T. Joseph, once commented, “her work is much more than a laudable metaphorical mode of communicating,” born with a hearing impairment that often “left her self-conscious about her speech. Wendy explains that because she sometimes feels uncomfortable going out to face the world, she sends her work out to face it for her. The result, and the reward for us, is sensual, even passionate, furniture—furniture that enfolds us.” This performative aspect of Maruyama’s work—that it seems to stand in for Maruyama herself and to have a related, strong aura of embodiment or creatureliness—has been
frequently remarked. Thus, her work is described as showing “an agile sense of the body, human and otherwise, that gives many of her pieces the uncanny quality of being alive; seemingly animated through and through.” These creaturely objects have somehow eluded the category of furniture altogether.4

After the expressive furniture phase of the ‘90s, Maruyama’s work moved in other directions that began to anticipate the work we find in The Tag Project and Executive Order 9066. It was no longer based on the object alone, but took an increasing interest in questions of identity and cultural narrative. Instead of exuberant sculptural forms, she explored digital and other media, and the tensions and contradictions between tradition and innovation. A multiple series of works she developed between 1994 and 2004 were inspired by several trips to Japan, and demonstrate her transitioning direction at that time. The Tokonoma (“alcove”) series, for example, drew on the architectural form of an alcove in the Japanese home devoted to aesthetic contemplation. Each piece included a natural twig or branch and had a specific theme. Maruyama will draw on this form again—along with the butudan or home shrine—for the wall cabinets of her most recent series, Executive Order 9066, where each work is dedicated to a different Japanese internment camp, or to a theme of internment. Land of the Free, for example, references the tokonoma tradition of featuring an ornamental branch, but here the barren and twisted wood evokes both the harshness of the camp environment and the recycling of scavenged or found bits of wood found in gaman (“perseverance”) art produced by internees.5 An earlier Executive Order 9066 piece, Poston (not in exhibition), replaced the natural twig of the tokonoma with a vertical twist of barbed wire. A Question of Loyalty is dedicated to the Tule Lake camp, where resistant internees were segregated.6 The Watchtower incorporates a photo transfer of an image by internee and revered photo-documentarian, Toyo Miyatake. On the right side of the cabinet, black wooden rice bowls are stacked behind glass, evoking the butusugi, or religious relics, placed inside a butudan. A similar incorporation of domestic objects sanctified (and broken) by use is evoked in Zenmetsu (“annihilation”). In Fractured (not in exhibition), wood harvested from Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello estate, combined with a tarpaper background and shaped into sliding doors that collide, makes a layered reference to Jefferson’s role as author of The Declaration of Independence ironically set against the Japanese American reality of imprisonment. Also, given Jefferson’s mixed-race family and his association with suppressed histories of black-white race relations, this piece by implication extends Maruyama’s meditations on hidden histories and racial discrimination to include a broader canvas of American history.

A change of direction in the early 2000s toward the themes and materials of Maruyama’s current projects is also noticeable in her work for a currently-touring exhibition, The New Materiality: Digital Dialogues at the Edge of Craft. One piece, You’re a Sap, Mr. Jap, was part of the original Executive Order 9066 series, and consists of a large rectangle covered with the kind of black...
tarpaper used to construct internment camps. The black rectangle is inset with a small video monitor positioned at a child’s eye level. A Popeye cartoon from the 1940s (and two other similarly racist animations from the same era) play in a continuous loop accompanied by a ditty that Maruyama remembers singing along with as a child: “You’re a sap, Mr. Jap, you make a Yankee cranky / You’re a sap, Mr. Jap, Uncle Sammy’s gonna spanky.”

The young Maruyama’s simultaneous pleasure in the cartoon (she says, “Popeye and Looney Tunes were my favorites”) and her dawning comprehension of their racist intent (and that this racism was aimed at herself and her own ethnicity) bespeak one aspect of the cultural contradiction that made Maruyama’s full appreciation of the depth of the trauma of the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II—and the residual effects of this trauma on subsequent generations—a gradually-emerging one. But as the silence about—or frequent ignorance of—this history clarified itself to Maruyama, it also propelled her to embark on the ambitious project of education, remembrance, dialogue, cultural exchange and community-building that underlie The Tag Project. The fact of the history and the material reality of the camps are commemorated, elegized and sanctified in Executive Order 9066.

In Dorothea Lange’s photos, the ID tags that are the central metaphor tapped for The Tag Project have the striking effect of reducing each person and their simple possessions—a suitcase, a duffle bag—to a state of interchangeability. In Maruyama’s earlier work, the performative relationships between herself and her own created objects partake of a similar (and different) subject-object collapse. A continuity is suggested in the arc of Maruyama’s work: an implicit—and profound—reevaluation of the meaning of craft. Craft becomes an active exchange between maker, made object and witness or audience. The internment camp photos by Dorothea Lange and Toyo Miyatake embedded in the Executive Order 9066 series (as well as the series itself) make us witnesses to this chapter of American history and compel us to contemplate its implications for a “then” and a “now.” As many internment camp survivors and their descendants are well aware, lost or under-acknowledged histories come back to haunt us. And perhaps this accounts for the resonance in Maruyama’s description of the turning and whispering tag masses as “ghosts.”

Haunting can take many forms. Maruyama observes that “because of the internment, Japanese Americans had a burning desire to be accepted as ‘real’ Americans and so they tried to raise their families to be as American as possible. … We had to be ‘perfect.’” She adds that now, though, “a lot of younger people and children [face] this history not with bitterness but with the goal of preserving the memory of the terrible experience and working toward peace and against racism and intolerance. … What started as a shameful experience for the internees became one of advocacy and education.” Maruyama speculates that part of the reason for this change of attitude is a recent openness toward speaking about the
Cultural and art critic Grant H. Kester proposes a contrast between artists whose work descends from traditions of object-making—where the artist “deposits an expressive content into a physical object” and where this content is “withdrawn later by a viewer”—and artists who orchestrate collaborative encounters and conversations that go well beyond the institutional confines of the gallery or museum.9 We might imagine Maruyama’s earlier craft-based work in the first lineage, and her work on The Tag Project in the second. Artists of the former type, according to Kester, are “content providers,” while the latter type are “context providers”: they creatively adopt a “performative, process-based approach to art-making.” Artists working in this second mode share certain assumptions about the broader social and political world, and about “the kinds of knowledge that aesthetic experience publicly. The change of sentiment grew, she says, after 9/11, as Japanese Americans witnessed hate crimes against Arab Americans. Those who were most aware of the internment camps history became the most vocal “because there seemed to be a danger that what happened in 1942 could repeat itself with the Muslim community.”

We remember and connect to our pasts in different ways. According to Maruyama, a strong source of inspiration for her work has been Betye Saar’s powerfully haunting assemblages made from cast-off domestic furnishings. Saar uses abandoned objects to fashion new ones that narrate African American history and race relations; as series of collaged and re-assembled trays re-tells the story of black servitude as a strategy for survival, or a series of re-purposed windows re-frames looking relations and our understandings of “inside-out.” Saar re-enacts African American history by repurposing cast-offs retrieved from non-institutionalized or “ unofficial” historical sources (flea markets, thrift stores and attics), thus Maruyama—hearts of a different generation and a different historical and ethnic legacy—activates our awareness in multiple ways that include the “official” institutions of historiography (history museums, schools and galleries), but also amateur modes of history-making: folk-art, handicrafts, storytelling and sewing circles. By drawing on a range of modes for engaging her audience—artist-collaborator publics in actively fashioning their histories, Maruyama revitalizes her double role as an artist and an educator, and lifts it to a new register. Cultural and art critic Grant H. Kester proposes a contrast between artists whose work descends from traditions of object-making—where the artist “deposits an expressive content into a physical object” and where this content is “withdrawn later by a viewer”—and artists who orchestrate collaborative encounters and conversations that go well beyond the institutional confines of the gallery or museum.10 We might imagine Maruyama’s earlier craft-based work in the first lineage, and her work on The Tag Project in the second. Artists of the former type, according to Kester, are “content providers,” while the latter type are “context providers”: they creatively adopt a “performative, process-based approach to art-making.” Artists working in this second mode share certain assumptions about the broader social and political world, and about “the kinds of knowledge that aesthetic
experience is capable of producing.1 Understanding these two contrasting ways of working sheds light on the trajectory of Maruyama’s professional career, and also on the relationship between the two projects on display in the current exhibition. Just as the Wendy Maruyama of the 1990s broke barriers in then-current assumptions about the nature of ‘craft,’ the Wendy Maruyama of the 2000s is again breaking down certain practical and discursive divisions: this time, between the “content provider” (in Executive Order 9066) and the “context provider” (in The Tag Project). By bringing Kester’s two approaches to art-making into active, engaged conversation with each other, Maruyama expands our understanding of art-making and helps us come to terms with the finally integral relationship between the art and craft of creating new social relationships and new knowledge forms, and the art and craft of fabricating meaningful, beautiful objects.

1 Anticipating a severe disruption of life, Maruyama’s grandfather took the initiative to move the family inland to Colorado before the official issuance of Executive Order 9066.


5 The word “gaman,” which means “to accept what’s with patience and dignity” (and so related to a state of mind or an attitude rather than a formal or material style) is generally applied to the arts and handicrafts produced in the camps. See Delphine Hirasuna, The Art of Gaman: Arts and Crafts from the Japanese American Internment Camps 1942–1945 (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2000).

6 In 1943, internees were asked to answer a so-called “loyalty questionnaire.” Those who answered “non” to questions 27 and 28 regarding willingness to serve in the U.S. military and to swear “unqualified allegiance to the United States” were sent to the camp at Tule Lake, which had been designated a “segregation center” for separating the ‘disloyal’ from the ‘loyal’ internees.


8 ibid.


Barbara McBane is a freelance writer, scholar, artist and film editor. Former Head of Curatorial Studies at the Art Institute of Chicago, she holds an MA in art history and an MA in French and has a PhD in modern art history from the University of California at Santa Cruz. She has worked on several projects for the United States Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, and has written on a variety of topics for various publications.

Checklist of the Exhibition

Dimensions are noted in inches; height precedes width and proceeds depth. Works are lent courtesy of the artist unless otherwise noted.

The Tag Project

The Tag Project, 2008–2011
Ten works, paper, ink and thread
Installation dimensions variable

Amache
Minidoka
Gila River
Heart Mountain
Poston
Jerome
Rowher
Manzanar
Topaz
Mishima
Tule Lake

Executive Order 9066

Furusato, 2012
Wood, ink and cloth
33 x 47 x 1.5

Mihramatsuri (Girl’s Day), 2011
Wood, tarpaper, glass and 1940s-era doll
24 x 30 x 2

Landlocked, 2011
Wood, tarpaper, nails and found objects
20 x 30 x 2
Installations of Archival Objects

Unchain, 2012
Bamboo fishing poles with line, leaders and hooks used by Japanese American fishermen prior to internment. Installation dimensions variable.
Four fishing poles and tackle from the collection of the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego.

Untold, 2012
Suitcases and trunks used by Japanese American internees. Installation dimensions variable.
Six suitcases and twelve trunks from the collection of the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego.
Three suitcases courtesy of the artist.

Video
The Tag Project by Wendy Maruyama, 2011
Video and sound, 4:38
Videography by Xavier Vasquez
Music by Kodo, Nanafushi, remixed by Bill Laswell

Illustrated Works Not in Exhibition

Fractured, 2010
Oak (reclaimed from Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello Estate) 7 x 55 x 7
You’re a Sap, Mr. Jap, 2008
Tarpaper, nails and video 48 x 48 x 3
Sharp Up and Kiss Me, 1999
Polychromed wood, mirror, wire and nails 16 x 6 x 4
Ooh La La Vanry, 1992
Polychromed wood, mirror and silk 30 x 65 x 20

Archival Objects Not in Exhibition

Western Defense Command and Fourth Army, Wartime
Civil Control Administration; Instructions to All Persons of
Japanese Ancestry (excerpt), 1 April 1942
Ink on paper 22 x 14
Collection of the Japanese American Historical Society
of San Diego, Donald H. Estes Collection
Dorothea Lange for the United States Department of the
Interior, War Relocation Authority; Members of the Mochida
Family, Awaiting Evacuation, 8 May 1942
Gelatin silver print, dimensions unknown
Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration

Original caption: Hayward, California. Members of the Mochida family, awaiting evacuation bus. Identification tags are used to aid in keeping the family unit intact during all phases of evacuation. Mochida operated a nursery and five greenhouses on a two-acre site in Eden Township. He raised snapdragons and sweet peas. Evacuees of Japanese ancestry will be housed in War Relocation Authority centers for the duration.
Biography of the Artist

Wendy Maruyama received a Bachelor of Arts degree from San Diego State University and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Rochester Institute of Technology. Maruyama has exhibited her work nationally, with solo exhibitions in New York, San Francisco, Scottsdale, Indianapolis, Savannah and Easthampton, New York. She also has exhibited her work internationally in Tokyo, Seoul and London. Her work is included in the permanent collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London; the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston, Australia; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Museum of Arts and Design in New York; the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston; the Mint Museum of Craft + Design in Charlotte, North Carolina; the Fuller Craft Museum in Brockton, Massachusetts; the Mingei International Museum in San Diego and the Oakland Museum of California. Maruyama is a recipient of several prestigious awards, including the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program Grant and the Japan-United States Friendship Commission Grant. She has received numerous Visual Artists’ Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and has participated in the Fulbright Scholar Program with a residency in the United Kingdom.
above: Kubo (detail); opposite: The Tag Project (detail)