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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Making the Past Perceivable: A Visual Record of the World War II Japanese American Internment

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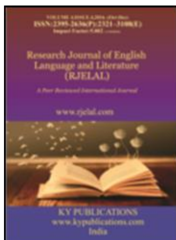

ABSTRACT

This paper talks about the Japanese American internment during the Second World War. The internment experience has been recorded in many scholarly books by Asian American writers, most of them having race difference and conflict with American hegemony as themes. Yet, even after so many years, the general public has little or no awareness about this bleak period. What is even less known is that there were many creative artists in the camps who managed to produce various kinds of works of art, when left miserably within those government-made ghettos. This paper studies these works of art as visual records of the internment, making the past perceivable, as artefacts of a distant and suppressed historical incident. If the texts that sprouted from that spell are read as documentation of the incarceration, then these artworks are nonetheless poignant visual records of the same incident. Giving a critical analysis of this thorny era in America's history, this paper tries to explore a minority community's struggle to reconstruct their lives in the internment camps behind the barbed-wire fences.

Keywords: World War II, internment/confinement, prison camps, memory, history, art, visual representation, *sansei*, silence.

INTRODUCTION

"If I can still make art, I am feeling not so bitter," said Henry Sugimoto, an artist in California who was one among the 120,000 Japanese Americans forced, without due process, to live behind barbed wire in American internment camps during the Second World War. A mass evacuation of the Japanese Americans from the West Coast did occur – these hard-working, law-abiding Americans had to abandon their homes, farms and businesses to be herded into what has been referred to as internment or relocation camps. The camps were located in remote desert areas – no houses, no trees (or anything green) were in sight to heal the spirits – with guards standing in watchtowers and guns pointing down at the internees.

For decades, the story of the mass incarceration of the persons of Japanese ancestry during the Second World War was kept hidden under a mask of silence. It was only during the 1970's that the *Sansei* (the third generation Japanese immigrants) were feeling a strong urge to break the silence over the camps – they wanted their parents and grandparents to tell the world about this thorny era in America's history. And it will not be wrong to say that it was this insistence of the *Sansei* that has broken the silence of the tortured souls and, in turn, has given rise to a number of socio-historical accounts, autobiographies, oral narratives, memoirs, fiction and also poetry. Apart from that, various associations and multicultural projects have also been trying to delve deeper into

the history of the internment experience. Yet, even after so many years, the general public has little or no awareness about this bleak period. What is even less known is that there were many creative artists in the camps who managed to produce various kinds of works of art, when left miserably within those government-made ghettos. This paper attempts to study these works of art as visual records of the internment, making the past perceivable, as artefacts of a distant and suppressed historical incident. If literature that sprouted are read as textual documentation/ manifestation of the incarceration, then these artworks can also be studied as poignant visual records of the same incident. Even more striking is, when the whole world was bent upon taking revenge against (destroying) one another, these people were desperately trying to *reconstruct* their lives behind the barbed-wire fences – "a celebration of the nobility of the human spirit in adversity" (Hirasuna, 2005, p. 7).

In the year 1992, an exhibition of art from the internment camps was organised – *View from Within: Japanese American Art from the Internment Camps 1942-45*. Curated by Karin Higa, the exhibition's display of hitherto unseen art, made by internees while imprisoned in camps, was basically a way of confronting with history, a part of history which they wished to forget somehow. Delphine Hirasuna, also a *sansei*, felt a strong urge to resurrect the buried memories, and an extensive research on her parents and grandparents ultimately brought out "a moving and diverse assemblage of internment arts and crafts," collected together in one book called *The Art of Gaman* (2005). These artworks, in this paper are analysed as an embodiment of personal histories, an open display of wounds that have been purposely hidden for many years. The efforts of Karin Higa or Delphine Hirasuna, as studied here, is just to "forge a continuity with their community's past" (Kuramitsu, 1995, p. 641) and establish a connection with their history in a country which they call their own "home."

A short brief historical overview is presented at the outset to underline the context (the circumstance) under which these artworks were created. Without this, they may seem like some lovely objects, some beautiful pieces of art, something very American, made by American citizens on the American soil. But what actually makes these creative outputs the subject of study here is that they were made by prisoners, when kept confined in the internment camps by their own government, under the banner of "military necessity."

The Context: the Internment Camps

America, as a country, has been a racially diverse one since the very beginning. It is known throughout the world for its demographic diversity. Asian communities did help to define the United States in terms of history, and the most significant one among them had been the Japanese-Americans. The period of massive immigration from Japan to United States was from 1890 to 1924. The Japanese immigrants, as the historian Ronald Takaki writes in *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*, "made bold and dangerous crossings, pushed by political events and economic hardships in their homelands and pulled by America's demand for labor as well as by their own dreams for a better life" (p. 12). The phase was like a window of entry into the "promised land" for the first, second and third generation Japanese, respectively termed as *Issei*, *Nisei* and *Sansei*. The male Japanese laborers worked in railroads, cotton fields, cane fields, textile mills, and sugar plantations with dreams of making fortunes on the American shores. Work was punishing for the hired immigrant laborers. But somehow they had a strong hope that helping to build up the American economy is a way of finding acceptance into the white society and as well as securing a future for their wives and children in this foreign land. Unfortunately the hopes did not materialize and the shape of the dream changed, the most drastic ordeal being the chaotic uprooting during the World War II internment.

December the Seventh of the year 1941 was the day when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, a major American naval headquarters in the territory of Hawaii. This sudden attack had seriously marred the naval base, and led President Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaim that 7th December, 1941 was "a date which will live in infamy." The bombing led

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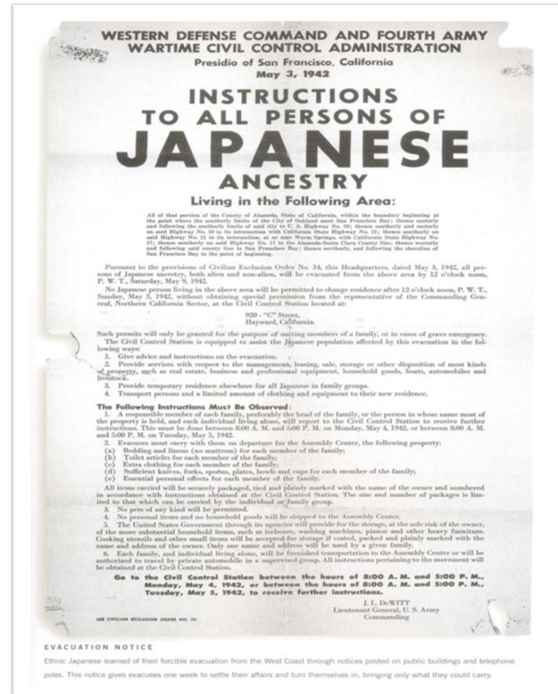
United States declare war on Japan and triggered a flood of hostility against the Japanese American community. Every person of Japanese descent was an enemy for the Americans. Newspapers and radio commentators exaggerated the anti-Japanese sentiments with such headlines (which were totally untrue and made up stories) as "Japanese Here Sent Vital Data to Tokyo," "Jap and Camera Held in Bay City" and "Map Reveals Jap Menace." In short, the Americans began to despise everything Japanese and everyone Japanese.

It was the spring of 1942 – on 19th February of that year, just a few weeks after the Pearl Harbor attack, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the Executive Order 9066, arbitrarily suspending the civil rights of the Japanese Americans (then more commonly known as "the dangerous enemy aliens") by authorizing the evacuation or the internment of "all persons of Japanese ancestry." Nearly 120,000 Japanese Americans, two-thirds of them were the *nisei* who had citizenship status because of their birth, were forcibly removed from their homes on the West Coast and detained in camps for the duration of the War. The evacuation notices, posted on public buildings and telephone poles, ordered the ethnic Japanese to settle their affairs and turn themselves in, bringing "only what they could carry." An anti-Asian agitation on the West Coast, economic competition between the Caucasians and the Japanese Americans, and adding to all these was the wartime hysteria which possibly led the United States government to imprison its own citizens behind barbed-wire fences, without any trial or hearing. Measures were taken in the name of "military necessity." "Evacuation," as Delphine Hirasuna correctly remarks in *The Art of Gaman*:

> became a two-step process, with most evacuees forced to report to temporary "assembly centers" at local racetracks and large fairgrounds, . . . [then shifted to] government-owned sites in desolate inland areas, the so-called "relocation" [internment] camps. (p. 16)

Situated in remote desert areas, they were hastily constructed internment camps to house the evacuees – Topaz in Utah, Poston and Gila River in Arizona, Amache in Colorado, Jerome and Rohwer in Arkansas, Minidoka in Idaho, Manzanar and Tule Lake in California, and Heart Mountain in Wyoming. Meanwhile, the War Relocation Authority (WRA) was established to administer these internment camps.



WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND AND FOURTH ARMY
WARTIME CIVIL CONTROL ADMINISTRATION
Presidio of San Francisco, California
May 3, 1942

INSTRUCTIONS
TO ALL PERSONS OF
JAPANESE
ANCESTRY
Living in the Following Area:

All of that portion of the County of Alameda, State of California, within the boundary beginning at the point where the southerly limits of the City of Oakland meet San Francisco Bay; thence easterly and following the southerly limits of said city to U. S. Highway No. 50; thence southerly and easterly on said Highway No. 50 to its intersection with California State Highway No. 21; thence southerly on said Highway No. 21 to its intersection, at or near Warm Springs, with California State Highway No. 17; thence southerly on said Highway No. 17 to the Alameda-Santa Clara County line; thence westerly and following said county line to San Francisco Bay; thence northerly, and following the shoreline of San Francisco Bay to the point of beginning.

Pursuant to the provisions of Civilian Exclusion Order No. 34, this Headquarters, dated May 3, 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, will be evacuated from the above area by 12 o'clock noon, P. W. T., Saturday, May 9, 1942.

No Japanese person living in the above area will be permitted to change residence after 12 o'clock noon, P. W. T., Sunday, May 3, 1942, without obtaining special permission from the representative of the Commanding General, Northern California Sector, at the Civil Control Station located at:

920 - "C" Street,
Hayward, California.

Such permits will only be granted for the purpose of uniting members of a family, or in cases of grave emergency.

The Civil Control Station is equipped to assist the Japanese population affected by this evacuation in the following ways:

1. Give advice and instructions on the evacuation.
2. Provide services with respect to the management, leasing, sale, storage or other disposition of most kinds of property, such as real estate, business and professional equipment, household goods, boats, automobiles and livestock.
3. Provide temporary residence elsewhere for all Japanese in family groups.
4. Transport persons and a limited amount of clothing and equipment to their new residence.

The Following Instructions Must Be Observed:

1. A responsible member of each family, preferably the head of the family, or the person in whose name most of the property is held, and each individual living alone, will report to the Civil Control Station to receive further instructions. This must be done between 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M. on Monday, May 4, 1942, or between 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M. on Tuesday, May 5, 1942.
2. Evacuees must carry with them on departure for the Assembly Center, the following property:
(a) Bedding and linens (no mattress) for each member of the family;
(b) Toilet articles for each member of the family;
(c) Extra clothing for each member of the family;
(d) Sufficient knives, forks, spoons, plates, bowls and cups for each member of the family;
(e) Essential personal effects for each member of the family.
All items carried will be securely packaged, tied and plainly marked with the name of the owner and numbered in accordance with instructions obtained at the Civil Control Station. The size and number of packages is limited to that which can be carried by the individual or family group.
3. No pets of any kind will be permitted.
4. No personal items and no household goods will be shipped to the Assembly Center.
5. The United States Government through its agencies will provide for the storage, at the sole risk of the owner, of the more substantial household items, such as iceboxes, washing machines, pianos and other heavy furniture. Cooking utensils and other small items will be accepted for storage if crated, packed and plainly marked with the name and address of the owner. Only one name and address will be used by a given family.
6. Each family, and individual living alone, will be furnished transportation to the Assembly Center or will be authorized to travel by private automobile in a supervised group. All instructions pertaining to the movement will be obtained at the Civil Control Station.

Go to the Civil Control Station between the hours of 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M., Monday, May 4, 1942, or between the hours of 8:00 A. M. and 5:00 P. M., Tuesday, May 5, 1942, to receive further instructions.

J. L. DeWITT
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army
Commanding

SEE CIVILIAN EXCLUSION ORDER NO. 34.

EVACUATION NOTICE

Ethnic Japanese learned of their forcible evacuation from the West Coast through notices posted on public buildings and telephone poles. This notice gives evacuees one week to settle their affairs and turn themselves in, bringing only what they could carry.

Figure 1. The Evacuation Notice. [*The Art of Gaman* (p. 11), by Delphine Hirasuna, 2005]

The Japanese were asked to prove their loyalty towards America by doing what the government ordered, and so they had no option other than blindly following the directions of the men in powers. Needless to say, life within these ghettos was miserable – they were provided a bare room with just cots, blankets, mattresses (straw-filled sacks) and a hanging light bulb; worst of all, they were guarded night and day by soldiers with guns and bayonets. Michi Weglyn, herself a former evacuee, reaches deep into the private papers and documents of the internment chapter in her book *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps*. Here she writes:

> With little else to look forward to, food assumed a place of supreme importance for the old and the young, and the queuing up which began well before the meal hour turned into an accepted ritual of camp life. In the driving rain and mud, in whipping sandstorms and under the blistering midday

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> sun, the line leading to food was doggedly held. (p. 82)

After an internment experience of nearly two years, the Japanese Americans were finally allowed to return to the U.S. mainland. The camps were ultimately closed when Japan came to an agreement with United States, which was signed on August 15, 1945, after the massive nuclear attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But, going back without homes, businesses or cash, many were destitute. "Fear of what awaited them back home gripped the internees" (Hirasuna, 2005, p. 123). However, the post-World War II years presented a different America – "racial discrimination was becoming un-American" (Takaki, 1993, p. 400). The Civil Liberties Act of 1988, signed by President Ronald Reagan on 10th August, granted permission for research and public education on the internment experience. This episode should always be remembered, but never to be repeated. "The nation needed, the President acknowledged, to end a sad chapter in American history" (Takaki, 1993, p. 402). This was a small but a significant step towards democracy.

The Visual Journey: I should say that when my eyesight was fixed on the barbed wire and the armed guards and the watchtower, I had a father-in-law who was an artist and he could see the beauty of Mt. Whitney and Mt. Williamson, and he painted these things. Out of the experiences in Manzanar came a great deal of beauty in his life. (Togo Tanaka, *Voices Long Silent*; quoted from Kuramitsu, Dec. 1995, p. 622).

A significant number of those interned had led artists' lives prior to the war. And some of them like Chirua Obata, Henry Sugimoto were active members of thriving art communities of Los Angeles, the Bay Area, and Seattle as well as New York. These people did not let the war curb down their spirits; they sought to make the best of the situation – or rather, they tried to reconstruct their lives behind the barbed-wire fences. And since they were artists, they started to create their own visions of the camp with just a few brushes and tubes of paint. Clearly the images of the camp – the daily lives, the surrounding barracks, the barbed wire and the barren landscape – were compelling subjects for the artists. One finds human creativity released under duress. "Life behind these bleak detention pens, however, was not all deprivation and Dostoevskian gloom" (Weglyn, 1976, p. 82).

WRA created their own records of the daily lives of the internees that was presented to the U. S. public, but almost everything was made up during the photography – it was an artificial community constructed at that particular moment by government employees. As Kristine C. Kuramitsu correctly points out in her article, "[These photographic images] reinforced the perception that internment camps were like summer camps, as they focused only on the visually benign, pleasant aspects of the experience" (p. 623). On the other hand, the internees were prohibited from possessing cameras or any recording equipment inside the camps. In such a situation it was the *insiders*, mainly the writers and the artists, who started to document their camp experience -- to record their day to day camp life (as it was actually lived) on paper and on canvas. Had it not been for them, we, as *outsiders*, would have never been able to capture the real picture of the Japanese American internment camps. Currently, we as readers have a long list of internment narratives, which are read as textual documentation of the episode. However, what is very less known is that presently the Japanese American National Museum has a huge rare collection of internment artworks and artefacts that are nonetheless a visual record of the same incident. Art and literature are equally necessary for going into the depths of any experience -- such a detailed documentation gives us a more comprehensive picture of that era. Thus, this paper tries to delve deeper, recount history, and make the past perceivable through these visual documentations of the Japanese American internment.

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Figure 2. Chirua Obata, *Hatsuki Wakasa shot by MP*. Collection of the artist, Japanese American National Museum. [Photograph: Kuramitsu, p. 632]

"Time, mercifully, has a way of spreading a softening platina over the most painful of life's slights and wounds" (Weglyn, 1976, p. 266). For the ex-internees it took a long span of nearly thirty-five years to heal the psychic damage. The *Issei* and the *Nisei* (whom the author Bill Hosokawa had once called the "quiet Americans") were at first very uncomfortable speaking about the internment years in public. For them, this part of their community's history was to be tossed aside and forgotten – probably because it would generate questions too painful to answer. "[They] chose not to talk about the subject because it stirred a sense of shame and humiliation … and fear of arousing an anti-Japanese backlash" (Hirasuna, 2005, p. 6). But with the passage of time the camp survivors were perhaps able to overcome the grief, the misery and the trauma. Also a "boiling anger" (Weglyn, p. 280) in the *Sansei*, which led them to find out where and why this "silence" lies. The evacuation should be talked about if they are to overcome their "burden of shame" (Takaki, 1993, p. 401). And it will not be wrong to say that this insistence of the *Sansei* has broken the silence of the tortured souls and, in turn, has resulted in the proliferation of Asian American art.

The View from Within is a presentation of some of these artists and their works, whose works were the best and whose personal stories were a testament to their dedication as artists. Masayo Suzuki, while writing a review of the book states:

> I was impressed with the extensive research that must have preceded the production of the book as well as the exhibit. There is surprising amount of information culled from interviews, letters, journals, books, government documents and newspapers. Higa integrates these bits of information and anecdotes with her own analysis into a readable, engrossing narrative. (p. 211-212)

Henry Sugimoto, one of the professional artists to be interned, finds a place in Karin Higa's exhibition. Sugimoto was an "insider" artist, and his works can be interpreted as a true reflection of the camp experience, unreachable by any outsider. Sugimoto was interned in Rohwer, Arkansas. His identity as an artist became very important to him during those days: believing it was his passion to draw, he started to overcome the grief and the sorrow by indulging in painting. And what resulted was -- he sketched the post painful ironies in the lives of the Japanese Americans.

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Figure 3. Henry Sugimoto, "*Nisei Babies in Concentration Camp*," 1943, Jerome concentration camp, Arkansas, Japanese American National Museum. [Photograph: Densho Encyclopedia]

The above figure illustrates the *nisei* children, interned by their own government, pledge allegiance to their national flag. Truly they regarded themselves as Japanese Americans, and not as Japanese in America.

Since art materials were not easily available, he painted on almost anything he could find – sheets, pillowcases, canvas mattresses, covers. Sugimoto's "When Can We Go Home?" is a remarkable work of art which consists of two sets of striking visual images – one, representing the world outside and the other, inner world of the camps. These images seem to swirl around the two central characters on the canvas, a mother and her child, supposedly asking her the question, 'when can we go home?' One can easily discern that the right side contains images of the internment camps: a guard tower, a storage barn. The left half shows images of the outer world -- a skyscraper, a train, a bridge – all of which signals freedom and movement.

Figure 4. Henry Sugimoto, *When Can We Go Home?*, 1943, Oil on Canvas, Japanese American National Museum. [Photograph: Kuramitsu, Dec. 1995, p. 630]

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Mine Okubo, a Nisei artist interned in Topaz, intentionally made almost all her works "tell the story of camp life." In 1946 Okubo published a collection of her sketches under the title *Citizen 13660.* The title is derived from the family number that was allotted by the WRA officials [their entire identity was reduced to a number]. Combining "citizen" with the prison number "13660" indicates the irony of the entire situation. In her charcoal drawings, Okubo powerfully portrays feelings of sorrow, humour, pain, happiness – something which have been overlooked in the context of the war.

Figure 5. Mine Okubo, *Evacuee Mother and Her Children*, 1943. Collection of the artist, Japanese American National Museum. [Photograph: Geok-Lin Lim, Summer 1990, p. 289]

As Kristine C. Kuramitsu asserts in her article:

> Most of her drawings include a self-portrait, which often shows the artist either as a participant in or an observer of the scene. This self-referentiality underscores the fact that it is an autobiographical narrative. (p. 624)

Figure 6. Mine Okubo, *Evacuee Children*, 1943. Charcoal on paper. Collection of the artist, Japanese American National Museum. [Photograph: Kuramitsu, Dec. 1995, p. 627]

Evacuees tried to soften the prisonlike atmosphere of the camps by organising art schools in almost all the relocation sites. Chiura Obata, who had been in the art department faculty at the University of California before he was interned in Topaz, was its chief organiser. Obata saw art as one of the "most constructive forms of education." The schools accommodated approximately eight hundred students ranging in age from five to over seventy years old. The most active art communities existed in Tanforan Assembly Centre (during the summer of 1942) and the Topaz Relocation Centre. Masayo Suzuki, in the review of *The View from Within: Japanese American Art from the Internment Camps 1942-1945* by Karin M. Higa, aptly points out that "for many internees the art school provided a way to pass the undifferentiated spans of time; for others it provided exposure to art, art making and artists" (p. 211). Internees who were trained artists or had a particular skill taught classes in oil and watercolour, life drawing, lettering, poster making, fashion drawing, and other creative subjects.

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The World War II internment also occasioned the production of a variety of crafts, some very splendid objects which seemed to have been lost in the discussion of the period. This paper attempts to uncover some of these craft-making genius, as they are also nonetheless a documentation of how life was lived inside the prison camps. Delphine Hirasuna's *Art of Gaman* presents more than one hundred and fifty examples of art and craft created by the Japanese American internees. Featuring objects painstakingly gathered from museum holdings and former internees, Hirasuna asserts that they but a "physical manifestation of the art of *gaman.*" [The Japanese word *gaman* meaning patience] Hirasuna writes in the Preface why she wanted to bring out such a collection:

> The impetus for this book began in 2000 while I was rummaging through a dust-covered wooden box that I found in my parents' storage room after my mother's death. Inside, I came across a tiny wooden bird pin. From the safety-pin clasp on the back, I concluded it must have been carved in the concentration camp where my parents were held during World War II. (p. 6)

There was a grave injustice being done, a dark chapter, and a "repressed" memory. A *sansei* like Hirasuna just wanted to dig up those memories and scoop out facts from them. They basically have given a voice to their own psychological stress over their parents' incarceration.

Caged within government-made ghettoes, they looked for ways to fill their time. The things made in the American internment camps were made mostly from scrap and discards – packing crates, cardboard boxes, wrapping papers, gunnysacks, wires, tin cans, toothbrush handles and so on. Virtually nothing was thrown away without re-examining its craft-making possibilities. People at each camp tried to create something beautiful with the indigenous materials around them. Tule Lake became famous for the objects made from shells, Minidoka for the stone carvings, Topaz for the objects carved from slate, Jerome and Rohwer for the hardwood furniture and Manzanar for the carved wooden bird pins.

Figure 7. Shell corsages. [*The Art of Gaman* (p. 52), by Delphine Hirasuna, 2005]

Both Tule Lake in California and Topaz in Utah were situated on dry lake beds, but the internees found out that the landscape was scattered with tiny shells. When they started digging a few feet deeper, they discovered innumerable number of shells hidden underneath. They took the shells out, sorted them by shapes and sizes, bleached them and then painted them in different colours. These shells were painstakingly assembled and made into brooches, necklaces and corsages.

Figure 8. Carved birds. [*The Art of Gaman* (p. 76), by Delphine Hirasuna, 2005]

Wood carving of little birds was a prevalent art form in all the camps. The bird was a symbol of inspiration for many carvers. The internees created

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magic out of scrap wood and paint. The artists sketched a bird outline on flat wood, then carved it and finally painted it with realistic colours. Sometimes a safety pin was attached to the back of the bird so that it could be used as a brooch also.

The objects that the *issei* and the *nisei* made in the camps are nothing but "testaments to their perseverance, their resourcefulness, their spirit and humanity" (Hirasuna, 2005, p. 20).

The internment arts and crafts that are mentioned here in this paper are only a small sampling of the numerous creations by the Japanese Americans in the confinement camps. Some lines, quoted below from *The Art of Gaman*, rightly ends this section of the paper:

> Left with too many unstructured hours to brood and worry in camp and helpless to alter their fate, the *Issei* looked for ways to fill their time. For them, arts and crafts became their escape, their survival, their passion, their link to things of beauty. It is not by chance that the greatest body of artwork produced in the camps was done by the *Issei*. This is their legacy. (p. 23)

Conclusion

By the end of the Second World War, the internees, no longer deemed dangerous, were finally released, although it took until 1948 before the last internment camp was closed. Re-entry into America was no less traumatic for the people of Japanese ancestry kept in internment camps till then. When the camps were closed, many of the art objects were thrown out – because they seemed too trivial to ship, especially to those men who had no idea of what awaited them back 'home.' And the things that were taken home were dumped in storehouses or at the back of garages amidst all useless thrown-away junks. "The extreme difficulty of re-establishing their lives on the outside left no time to pursue any artistic endeavors. That chapter ended with the camps" (Hirasuna, 2005, p. 29).

This paper would like to include here (and without which the study somehow remains incomplete) that the WRA officials even encouraged the efforts of theses creative artists. In fact, they praised the activities practised in camp art schools, and even allowed artworks made by internees to be exhibited in galleries across the nation. This might sound quite striking on part of the government, who even did not allow photography or cameras inside the camps. Probably, they were impressed by the artworks, probably they could make money out of the art exhibitions, probably it allowed WRA to present a positive picture to the common public – whatever be the exact reason (we are not quite sure of), it presented the world with a beautiful and diverse collection of Asian American art. Art that are not only works of high calibre, but a visual testament of the World War II Japanese American internment experience.

Most of these rare interment artefacts and artworks have now been donated to the Japanese American National Museum, with the expectation that they would be used for educational purposes and be shared with a large audience. The discussion about this historical chapter concludes with the words of James A. Michener – in his Introduction to Weglyn's *Years of Infamy*, he writes:

> The stoic heroism with which the impounded Japanese Americans behaved after their lives had been torn asunder and their property stolen from them must always remain a miracle of American history. The majesty of character they displayed then and the freedom from malice they exhibit now should make us all humble. (p. 31)

Note: *Densho*, a Japanese term meaning to pass on to the next generation, is an on-line resource of several digitised archival materials concerning the Japanese American internment.

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