By Gretel Sarmiento
ArtsPaper Art Writer

We are often moved by art, but what is art moved by? Tragedy. Joy. Death. Life.

Two dramatic exhibitions now on view at the Morikami Museum feature artworks born out of ashes and out of the necessity to cope with loss.

Running through Jan. 31, Wendy Maruyama: Executive Order 9066 revives a particularly sad time to mark the 70th anniversary of the closing of the last Japanese internment camp. Jimmy Tsutomo Mirikitani is meant as an exploration of an artist’s life through his work because it deserves to be known. Both are armed with truth and heart.

The 1942 campaign that dragged thousands of people of Japanese ancestry — even American citizens — out of their homes into internment camps is the core of Executive Order 9066. Maruyama doesn't just touch upon this chapter; she drags it from the pages of the history books and plants it right in front of us in the form of name tags and suitcases used during the move.

Included in this exhibit are wall-mounted cabinets and objects made and owned by the internees. One example is the bird pins said to have been gifted to internee Yone Yoshioka from a fellow internee at Poston, Ariz. Each pin is attached to a twig using metal wire. An odd display consisting of a large black square features an opening from which a short Popeye film can be watched. The film is titled You Are a Sap, Mr. Jap.

But the most commanding section is the 10 gigantic paper lamps suspended from the ceiling representing the 10 internment camps in the United States. Each consists of identification tags — sporting names and numbers, 120,000 all told — that were recreated by this third-generation Japanese-American artist. The names of all 10 camps are reflected on the floor, below each lamp. Maruyama called this The Tag Project. Its massive volume makes the event an undeniable fact and seems to restate it: Yes, this happened.

Among these camps, one based in California — Tule Lake — was home to the Japanese-American artist being explored in the second exhibit. Named after its protagonist, Jimmy Tsutomu Mirikitani features less somber adaptations of equally traumatic experiences. Colorful child-like drawings take on big serious subjects such as the atomic bomb and the Sept. 11 attacks. The compositions are similar, with the vivid colors making up for the simplicity in execution. Oversize structures appear overwhelmed by bright orange flames and black smoke clouds. Ant-size figures are shown trapped at the bottom.
Organizers promising best-yet roster for 10th annual Festival of Arts Boca

By Steven J. Smith
ArtsPaper Art Writer

The 2016 Festival of the Arts Boca promises a compelling lineup of international superstars, thinkers, authors and performers, according to festival chairman and executive producer Charlie Siemon, who unveiled the season Friday at the Mizner Park Cultural Arts Center.

“The 10th Annual Festival of the Arts Boca will be our most celebrated and memorable yet,” Siemon told a gathering of several hundred supporters at the kickoff event. “We have much to be proud of throughout our decade of bringing the best and brightest in dance, classical music, performing arts and literature to Boca Raton.”

Violin superstar and conductor Joshua Bell will headline the festival, which runs March 4-16, splitting time between the Mizner Park Amphitheater at 900 Plaza Real and the Cultural Arts Center at 201 Plaza Real.

Bell will serve as both soloist and conductor in a performance of Vivaldi’s Four Seasons with the Lynn Philharmonia on March 16.

The festival will open with a showing of the 1981 film Raiders of the Lost Ark on March 4, presented with a live orchestra. The film, which introduced the character of Indiana Jones (portrayed by Harrison Ford), features a striking score by Academy Award-winning composer John Williams and will be performed live to picture by the Henry Mancini Institute Orchestra, which is based at the University of Miami.

Other musical highlights will include jazz trumpet legend Herb Alpert and his wife, Grammy Award-winning singer Lani Hall (March 6); Cirque de la Symphonie (March 12); a night of symphonic jazz with the Joey Alexander Trio, the Symphony and conductor Constantine Kitsopoulos (March 11); and a new family-friendly production of Tchaikovsky’s The Nutcracker (March 13).

Siemon attributed the festival’s decade of success primarily to the hard work put in to organize and present it to enthusiastic audiences. “Also, we really have emphasized bringing in great artists,” he said. “We’ve had the best of the best, and that’s what brings people in — supporters, sponsors and attenders.”

In addition, the Festival of the Arts Boca will continue its Authors and Ideas program, presented with CNN host Fareed Zakaria, who will discuss Global Hot Spots and Trends: The Next Security Crisis (March 7). Also contributing to the program will be author and professor Dr. Robert Sapolsky, who will present “The Biology of Good and Evil” (March 8).

Rounding out the program, author and Pulitzer Prize finalist Laila Lalami will discuss her novel The Moor’s Account (March 9) and Dr. Jay Winter, professor of history at Yale University, will explore World War I and its impact on the 21st century.

Now this season is a free, official Festival of the Arts Boca app — a digital pocket guide featuring GPS directions, schedule of events, ticket purchasing, contests, links to social media channels, videos, sneak previews of upcoming performances and more. Users will be able to access up to-the-minute schedule changes, emergency information and traffic updates. To download, visit the app store on your mobile device and search for Festival of the Arts Boca.

When asked what will make this festival’s 10-year celebration unique, Siemon just smiled.

“I think every one we’ve done has been unique,” he said. “Our speaking program is wonderful, our artists are fantastic and we’re really happy and excited about the movie, which has been digitally remastered. And the score from John Williams is just spectacular. We hope everyone will come on out. It’s going to be a great festival.”

Ticket prices range from $15 to $225. For more information, go to www.festivalboca.com or call 866-571-2787.

Violinist/conductor Joshua Bell is the headline. Photo provided