

The Artist's Perspective "Netsuke is a Symbol of Freedom"

● What are your beliefs about creating netsuke?

I enjoy creating. I don't really have a special creed, but I like to challenge new frontiers all the time. It is important for me to keep on changing, as they say "a rolling stone gathers no moss".

Netsuke is an art form unique to Japan. Although the craft of making practical objects is attended with some restrictions, I see that as affirmative. While accepting the restrictions inherent in netsuke, I always try to create a work freely as I will for expressing the modern world.

● What is the appeal of creating netsuke for you?

My works cannot be called netsuke unless they meet some necessary conditions. It is through these necessary conditions that the unique and interesting forms of netsuke are created. I really enjoy the process of planning, designing and carving netsuke. There are countless paths to choose from conception to completion. I feel netsuke art is profound.



[Head sliding] H4.5cm

Akira Kuroiwa

Born in Tokyo in 1949. After working as a jewelry designer and lacquer artist, he started to create netsuke in 1992. With his knowledge and skills in various crafts such as metalwork and lacquer, he likes to use new materials to create works based on contemporary themes.



Next Special Exhibition

Okuni Initiated Fascinating Culture. Latest Great Works Have Arrived!

The next special exhibition will focus on the latest work inspired by the historical context of Japanese culture: Izumo-no-okuni, a woman who appeared in Kyoto in the late 16th century, is considered to be one of the originators of Japanese culture. She wore outlandish costumes with many ornaments, danced and performed skits. Her style and performance developed into the traditional performing arts and crafts of later generations, such as kabuki, netsuke and kouta. The images of traditional art have been embodied by contemporary netsuke artists for this exhibition.

- 10 Special Exhibition "Kouta"
Stylish, chic and also amorous
■ October 1 (Fri) to 31 (Sun)
- 11 Special Exhibition "Supreme Selection"
Every Work Is Praiseworthy
■ November 2 (Tue) to 30 (Tue)
- 12 Special Exhibition "Kabuki"
Classical and Formal but Humane
■ December 1 (Wed) to 29 (Wed)

We are posting the latest information and images of the Museum on Twitter and Instagram. We hope you to follow us.

- Awarded 9th Mizuki Jugodo Prize from Yamato Koriyama City, Nara Prefecture
- Featured in the February issue of Katei-gaho
- Featured in the NHK TV program "The Mark of Beauty"



Official Website



Measures to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

- At the entrance the museum staff would measure your body temperature by non-contact thermometer and spray alcohol on your fingers. (If your body temperature is 37.5 degrees (Celsius) or higher, you may be refused to enter)
- We would ask you to write down your full name and address when entering the museum, as a countermeasure in the event that visitors or staff members were found to be a carrier.
- Please wear a mask inside the museum.

Kyoto Seishu Netsuke Art Museum

Contemporary Netsuke is the essence of Japanese aesthetics and craftsmanship. Many artists are creating netsuke works with adding new tastes. Kyoto Seishu Netsuke Art Museum is a museum that specializes in contemporary netsuke. We systematically collect, store, research and disclose documents and materials. Contemporary netsuke reflect social situation, technological progress and people's tastes of each era. Our mission is to contribute to the advancement of culture by researching contemporary netsuke from various viewpoints to investigate the characteristics of Japanese art.



As a leading company in the fields of printing and information processing, Sagawa Printing Co., Ltd. is supporting the Kyoto Seishu Netsuke Art Museum with the aim of passing Japanese culture to the next generation and developing global art.



SUMMER ~AUTUMN Issue. 05

[Index]

- Exhibition Highlights
- Frontier Research Today
- Letter from Museum
- Netsuke Artist's Talk

[Publisher]

Public Interest Incorporated Foundation
Kyoto Seishu Netsuke Art Museum
46-1 Mibukayougosho-cho
Nakagyo-ku Kyoto 604-8811 Japan
Phone: +81-75-802-7000
www.netsuke.jp/



The only contemporary netsuke art museum in the world
Special Exhibitions of Kyoto Seishu Netsuke Art Museum

Wish for More Inclusive Society "Coexistence"

"Peace" is an everlasting and noble idea that all humans desire. Throughout the long history, wars and plagues have threatened people many times, and in those times of horror they have longed for peace. Peace is merely common and mundane everyday life, however in the midst of this global pandemic we all know it is precious and hard to get.

According to Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, there are two types of peace. One is Negative Peace which refers to the absence of overt violent conflict, and the other is Positive Peace which is

based on collaborative and supportive relationships. According to his theory, we believe that Positive Peace must be the soil for nurturing and inheriting culture. The wish for peace can be read from netsuke pieces which have been passed down through both calm and hard times.

In this exhibition entitled "Coexistence," we want you to review the importance of the spirit of "Live and Let Live" from three perspectives through the works of energetic netsuke artists.

7月 根付特別企画
7/1 (Thu) 31 (Sat)
競い合う喜び
《スポーツの祭典》展

ふれあえる
Coexistence
Joy of Competition,
May Peaceful Days Come,
Symbols of Thanksgiving

明日への望み
共生

8月 根付特別企画
8/1 (Sun) 31 (Tue)
穏やかに安らかに
《安息への祈り》展

9月 根付特別企画
9/1 (Wed) 30 (Thu)
感謝をささげて
《日本の祭り》展

京都 清宗根付館
Public Interest Incorporated Foundation KYOTO SEISHU NETSUKU ART MUSEUM
〒604-8811 京都府中京区生田堀通御所町46番地1 (生田寺裏側) 電話: 075 (802) 7000
Please refer to our website for more information
www.netsukekan.jp/ (京都清宗根付館) (検索)

公式サイトはこちら
Instagram Twitter

Promotional poster

Exhibition Highlights

7 July 1(Thu) to 31(Sat)

Joy of Competition

"Sports Festival" Exhibition

With inviting top-class athletes, various sports festivals have been held throughout the world. People are deeply impressed and excited by the sights of athletes' competing for the summit in conformity with the spirit of fair play. We will hold another "sports festival" here, featuring newly created works by contemporary netsuke artists in the hope of realizing peace and equality through sports.



〔Skanda〕
Kukan (1968~) H4.9cm



〔Tradition and Innovation〕
Toun (1960~) H4.9cm



〔Tokyo Gor-lympics〕
Tomoe (1972~) H4.2cm



〔Prayer for Peace〕
Itaro (1961~) H4.5cm



〔Four Sleepers〕
Shigejyo (1963~) H4.2cm



〔Praying Phoenix〕
Tanetoshi (1947~) H5.9cm

8 August 1(Sun) to 31(Tue)

May Peaceful Days Come

"Hope for Tranquil Life" Exhibition

With the wish of the end of COVID-19 pandemic, in this exhibition we will feature netsuke works with hopes for tranquil life. Netsuke is not just a decorative item, but a yorishiro (object including a divine spirit) that reflects an artist's wish or emotion. So we believe that people can empathize each other by netsuke. Please appreciate the works full of familiarity and peace.

9 September 1(Wed) to 30(Thu)

Symbols of Thanksgiving

"Japanese Festivals" Exhibition

Japanese festivals are familiar to people as traditional annual events, but the origins of festivals are magico-religious rituals. Some Japanese festivals started in order to pray for the end of calamities and epidemics. The prototype can be found in an episode of Kojiki, the oldest history book in Japan. In this exhibition, we will show you netsuke works based on festivals passed down from generation to generation.



〔Dancing Cat〕
Aya (1949~) H4.1cm



〔Festival〕
Mitsuyuki (1932~) H5.4cm



〔Fireworks〕
Toshi (1957~) H3.7cm

*The photos are same size as the actual netsuke

Deciphering the origins of "Tomegu fasteners"

Tadakumo Onishi, Curator

At this point, I would like to explore one possibility regarding the small link-shaped implements that were precursors to the Netsuke, and which can be theorized as preceding the Netsuke (referred to as "fasteners" below). In my view, I generally give priority to the written historical materials and paintings produced in the same era as the object being studied. Of course, one cannot deny the possibility that historical materials recorded later may faithfully communicate historical fact. However, for historical materials that were recorded later, the possibility also cannot be denied that ways of thinking and customs surmised to have existed at the time and other various elements may have seeped in during the process of communicating a historical fact, thus producing an altered historical fact. In any case, I would like to give priority to the two types of materials that were produced in the same era, and while drawing from the research results in other fields, recreate the social milieu of the era from my own perspective and explore the arising of the fastener within those social currents.

However, firstly, I have an even simpler question. And that is, were fasteners even necessary when attaching a pouch to oneself? Even when the vessel for carrying something with you is a pouch instead of a pocket, why were they not sewn onto clothing? Or, would tying it directly onto something not be sufficient? In other words, my question is, why was it necessary to have a mediating object, a fastener, between the clothing and the containing vessel? My stance is to commence my examination with this question initially in mind.

That said, since fasteners served as stoppers when hanging a pouch on one's person, first I would like to focus on the attaching of the pouch, the object which the fastener clamps. Firstly, for the old practice of hanging

accessories from the hip area, one example is the attachment of an accessory called gytai, which was a shohei (certificate of passage) used when entering or leaving for a government official on business to the Imperial Court in imitation of the system in China's Tang Dynasty (618-907). Of course, I feel that the fact that gytai gave a sense of unity to people affixing it to their personage, that it was in this sense a "device", will be an important contribution to our investigation moving forward. However, regarding the affixing of these gytai, in exploring the causes and factors responsible for fasteners to arise later, the fact that gytai still do not require fasteners today also seems to indicate that this direction could be fruitless.

And concerning the attaching of a pouch, historical scholar Michihisa Hotate points out that regarding the garb of an upright citizen, of "an adult man", in medieval era Japan, if one was missing either a short sword or a pouch, one was seen as lacking in proof of being an upstanding member of society. This point indicates that the pouches were not necessarily hung from short swords with actual practical usage in mind, but instead that users attached the pouches because doing so was to display a symbol of being considered an upright citizen within his cultural milieu, of "an adult man", which is to say, a pouch carried the specific message of the wearer in social circles. With this point in mind, I look forward to writing again on considerations on the affixing of pouches made while consulting text and image resources from medieval Japan (1185-1573) that occasionally include textual mentions (and image depictions) of pouch attaching.

<Bibliography>

Michihisa Hotate "Koshigatana to Momotaro" (The Short Sword and Momotaro), "Gekkan Hyakka" No. 318 Heibonsha 1989

Letter from Seishu Netsuke Art Museum

NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) has produced an art program named "Bi no Tsubo (The Mark of Beauty)", on the theme of "Netsuke". The program focuses on items in our daily lives, such as tableware, furniture, kimono, food, and architecture, and examines them aesthetically. On March 8, the production staff visited our museum, took video of the exhibits, and

Director Kinoshita talks about the charm of netsuke on TV

interviewed Director Kinoshita. The program was broadcasted on NHK BS Premium on April 9 and 17. In the program, Kinoshita talked about the appeal of netsuke, which can be enjoyed from any angle, and two spirited contemporary netsuke artists, Oikawa Kukan and Michiura Doho, revealed their own creative activities (photo: video shooting at the museum).

