

With the aim of promoting netsuke, during the special dance performance by a famous Kabuki actor in the theatre of the Kyoto University of the Arts from September 2 to 5, 2021, contemporary netsuke works whose motifs are Kabuki, lion, monkey and tortoise were displayed in the lobby. It is an example of the external exhibitions that the museum is promoting. We are committed to encouraging as many people as possible to experience the charm of

contemporary netsuke and to rediscover the beauty of Japanese traditional culture. In order to pass on netsuke art to the next generation, it is very important to discover new netsuke artists. The exhibition of netsuke at the Kyoto University of the Arts was a very meaningful for us, because we could give many art students the opportunity to appreciate contemporary netsuke works. We will continue to actively hold exhibitions in museums throughout



The Artist's Perspective (Oikawa KUKAN) "Netsuke Is a Stage"

● Netsuke is a stage

Netsuke is an artform of functional beauty, and it can be broadly classified into two types. One is a method of simplifying and curving the subject for a rounded effect. The other is a method of combining several subjects and constructing the work in a layered approach. However, I believe what both methods have in common is that the artist expresses a worldview through the work. In other words, the artist imbues the piece with story. Thus, the allure of Netsuke is that the work is in essence a stage, and various characters unfurl their stories. The world presented is of course a mere figment of the imagination, but if the person viewing and contemplating the work feels an offhand sense of happiness or the courage to take another step forward, a hope for tomorrow, this makes me very happy. In that sense, I am a director who has borrowed the title of fictionist.

● The essence hidden within fantasy

Netsuke is, in its essence, a form of art for enjoying fantasy. It is also a device that sets the heart free amidst fantasy. If you merely lay out facts, people may not interpret that as a representation of the pure truth, so I try to hide the essence of things within fantasy, adding my viewpoint and interpretation as an artist. In order to do that, a slight bit of reality within that fantasy is vital. Harmony with the central theme is born through the process of investing the piece with a connection to story instead of merely carving a subject. And encouraging interpretation of this while weaving in an array of foreshadowing threads invites one into the worldview of the piece. Because of this, Netsuke is an intellectual game as well as a treasure trove of unexpected thrills and discoveries. It is an art form in which ideas spark ever newer ideas, stimulating an ever-expanding web of imagination.

● The role of Netsuke in the contemporary era

Netsuke pieces do not exist solely for the artisan. The time a piece will spend with its owner (the patron) is much longer. The artisan merely

cares for the piece for a short period of time. This principle has not changed in the four centuries since the inception of Netsuke.

Standing in the viewpoint that Netsuke works are created for the owner and internalizing the attitude towards living and personal sense of self of the owner, I get a keen sense of how the owner has attached the Netsuke décor to his hip with dignified resolve and a solemn expression on his face. This was most definitely a personal choice to display Netsuke to others, and a blossoming of personal style for the wearer. The exact origins of the word Netsuke are unclear, but I like to think that the ne in Netsuke is named after the wearer's the wearer's kokoro ne (bottom of the heart) or sho ne (temperament, mindset). In our current digital and virtual society, there is a trend towards a weakening in the corporeal presence of physicality and actual objects in the world, and the generation of depersonalized "masses" as diversification advances. I believe that what people desire more and more within that environment are physical, corporeal objects and unconventional individuality. And Netsuke offers all of those qualities.

Oikawa KUKAN

Oikawa KUKAN is a Netsuke sculptor. In his quest to pursue sculpted beauty infused with dynamic energy, he imbues his work with unbridled imagination and story, developing a new frontier for Netsuke.



【Goemon】H4.9cm



Special Exhibition April to June 2022

Where Art Meets Handicraft “Secrets of Contemporary Netsuke”

4 “Metalsmith and Inlay Techniques”
■ April 1 (Fri) to 30 (Sat)

5 “Superb Elegance of Lacquer Art”
■ May 1 (Sun) to 31 (Tue)

6 “Beauty of Delicate Carving”
■ June 1 (Web) to 30 (Thu)

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.



[Index]

- Exhibition Highlights
- 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

“Impressive Works” by Contemporary Netsuke Artists

We wish you a happy new year and look forward to your continued patronage in 2022.

The first exhibition of the year will focus on three contemporary netsuke artists with unique styles. About half a century ago, a movement began among contemporary netsuke artists to break away from traditional design and to aim for a new way of expression, valuing contemporary aesthetic sense. In the 1970s, with the exception of a small number of quality article, the status of netsuke was lower than that of large ivory carvings, and the production was generally based on a division of labor. These netsuke were produced in response to orders from abroad, and the motifs were usually standardized to suit Europeans'

taste. In the midst of this situation, there emerged an artist who, instead of a division of labor, carry out the whole process by himself. A new trend has emerged in which artists are using their own creativity to produce high quality netsuke on a contemporary theme. Contemporary netsuke has been evolving by incorporating the latest techniques and innovative motifs. This exhibition features ambitious and unique contemporary netsuke artists: in January, Tetsuro, with his powerful and elegant works using intricate carving techniques; in February, Dosai, with his nostalgic and gentle style; and in March, Toshi, with his fantastic work optimizing the omnidirectional nature of netsuke. We hope you will enjoy this exhibition.

現代作家による『心に響く創作根付』展

Impressive Works by Contemporary Netsuke Artists

1
～冴えわたる彫技～
森 哲郎 展
峻厳な頂きを目指す、孤高の求道者
2022年1月6日(木)～30日(日)

Intricate Carving Techniques
Special Exhibition “Tetsuro”
A lone seeker on the way to a high summit
January 6 (Thu) – 30 (Sun)

2
～しみじみとした情趣～
工藤 道齋(茂道) 展
幻想と詩情があふれ、心癒される微笑み
2月1日(火)～27日(日)

Heartwarming and Approachable Style
Special Exhibition “Dosai”
Soothing Smiles, Full of Fantasy and Nostalgia
February 1 (Tue) – 27 (Sun)

3
～あふれだす物語～
田神 十志 展
物語のコラージュが生み出す、新しい神話
3月1日(火)～31日(木)

Tales Are Flowing Out
Special Exhibition “Toshi”
New myths created by a collage of tales
March 1 (Tue) – 31 (Thu)

京都府立総合文化センター 京都市中京区五本木町四丁目4番1号 電話：075-362-7000

Public Interest Incorporated Foundation
KYOTO SEISHU NETSUKU ART MUSEUM
〒604-8811 京都市中京区五本木町四丁目4番1号 電話：075-362-7000

netsukekan.jp/

1 Intricate Carving Techniques

A lone seeker on the way to a high summit
Special Exhibition “Tetsuro”
■ January 6 (Thu) – 30 (Sun)

Tetsuro was Born in 1960 in Tokyo. He studied oil painting at the Tokyo University of the Arts, where he learned academic art theory and techniques. He started making netsuke in 1994, when he happened to see a TV program about netsuke artists. After that, he studied under Mr. Kengo Sekido, who is known as a famous collector of antique netsuke, and established his own style of realism. His works are characterized by dynamic configurations that look like they’re about to move, and by the precision and uncompromising brilliance of his carving knife technique. Each of his works has an overwhelming presence you cannot ignore.

2 Heartwarming and Approachable Style

Soothing Smiles, Full of Fantasy and Nostalgia
Special Exhibition “Dosai”
■ February 1 (Tue) – 27 (Sun)

Dosai was born in 1950 in Aomori Prefecture. His real name is Shigemichi. fascinated by the works of 19th century netsuke masters, in 1996 he began to attend the school of tusk carving, learning traditional techniques. His netsuke are characterized by their roundness, and is approachable and gentle. In 2013 he began using the inscription "Dosai" on his netsuke. His netsuke provide viewers with heartwarming and nostalgic impressions. Recently he has also been working on Kabuki themed pieces.

3 Tales Are Flowing Out

New myths created by a collage of tales
Special Exhibition “Toshi”
■ March 1 (Tue) – 31 (Thu)

Toshi was born in Shizuoka prefecture in 1957. Before Netsuke, he was involved in the study of natural science and the creation of hands-on museum displays. He was fascinated by the touchable nature of netsuke and started to create them in 2009. He has been working on subjects that remind us of the depth of nature and the pride of the Japanese people.



『Gods of Thunder and Wind』 H4.3cm
In Buddhism, the wind and thunder gods are members of the Twenty-eight Sects to protect the thousand-armed Kannon. The artist has combined these two deities in a configuration that can be enjoyed omnidirectionally.



『Yorozuyo-Mai』 H6.3cm
To celebrate the emperor’s accession to the throne, a dance performance called "Yorozuyo Mai" was held at the Ise Shrine. Inspired by the sublime dance, the artist created this prestigious wood carving netsuke.



『Shi Jin』 H4.9cm
Shi Jin is a popular character in Water Margin, one of the earliest Chinese novels. This netsuke represents a scene in which he defeats bandits. The artist has skillfully adapted Utagawa Kuniyoshi's ukiyo-e woodblock print to give it a sense of dynamism.



『Kisshoten』 H5.4cm
Kisshoten is the goddess of beauty, fertility and prosperity. The treasure ball on her left palm and the sign by the fingers of her right hand are said to have the power to remove people's misfortunes and make their wishes come true. The clouds on her back represent good omen.



『Happy Family』 H3.7cm
This netsuke depicts a cheerful and happy family who are enjoying their time at home, even though they have to refrain from going out to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The artist's wish is to restore peace and tranquility to our lives.



『Akita Kanto Matsuri』 H8.4cm
Akita Kanto Festival is held to ward off bad luck and to ensure a good harvest. The Kanto is a 10-meter-long bamboo pole with 46 lanterns hanging from 9 bamboo rods tied to the main pole. At festivals, performers show great skill in placing poles on their bodies. The artist has made good use of the shape of the antlers to create this piece.



『Kabuki Sanja Matsuri』 H6.3cm
"Sanja Matsuri", of which plot is that two fisherman brothers who pull a statue of Kannon out of a river become possessed by spirits, but drive them away successfully. The artist chose take up theme in the hope that COVID-19 would be dispelled.



『Illusion of Okuni』 H4.3cm
This netsuke depicts a Kabuki actor Bando Tamasaburo V who has played Izumo no Okuni, known as the founder of Kabuki. The work brings out the bewitching charm of onnagata (male actors who play female roles).



『Bancho Sarayashiki』 H5.3cm
From the late Meiji to the Taisho period, a new trend in kabuki emerged. 'Bancho Sarayashiki', which depicted the psychology of the modern Japanese individual, was one of the most popular plays of the period. This netsuke represents its highlight scene.



『Image of Prince』 H7.7cm
Inspired by Saint-Exupéry's "The Little Prince", the artist created this netsuke. The prince has a red rose in his hand, and at his feet there is a fox, the symbol of wisdom who told the prince that the most important things are invisible.



『Kalavinka Smiles』 H4.5cm
Kalavinka is an imaginary creature in Buddhism, whose upper part of the body is human and the lower part is a bird, and it is said to sing with beautiful voice. The artist created this work to commemorate the change of era name to Reiwa and the invitation of Olympic Games.



『Tripartite Talks』 H4.1cm
This netsuke depicts three young ladies chatting friendly with lovely smiles. The artist has taken care of the position of the girls, so that it looks like they are really talking. This piece is full of charm that makes you want to caress it in the palm of your hand again and again.



『Lucky Left Side of Horse』 H4.1cm
"Hidari-uma" a horse facing left is considered a symbol of good fortune in Japan. Based on such a legend, the artist has created a netsuke of hidari-uma in a round shape.



『Express Messenger Benkei』 H4.2cm
Benkei was a subordinate of Minamoto no Yoshitsune, a samurai commander of the late Heian period. This netsuke depicts Benkei who is working as an express messenger. Benkei carries his lord on the transportation box. We can easily guess that he is a loyal subordinate.



『Kitsunebi』 H3.9cm
In Japan, the will-o'-the-wisp is often witnessed in the midsummer and a turn of season. Some Japanese local folktales tell that they are exhaled from the mouths of foxes. This netsuke depicts a mother fox teaching her cub how to exhale them.