

Grand opening of the "Seishu Memorial Hall"

SEISHU MEMORIAL HALL, a sister building of KYOTO SEISHU NETSUKU ART MUSEUM, had its grand opening on Tuesday, April 1, 2025. This memorial hall, directed by Muneaki Kinoshita, Chairman Emeritus of the Board of Sagawa Printing Co Ltd, also exhibits works created and collected by artists and specialists who responded to the "encounters" and "challenges" that he valued in his life. We hope you will visit the museum.



Newspaper advertisement announcing the opening

new series Tinged with strange fates.

HISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY NETSUKU

The Birth of Contemporary Netsuke: A Fateful Encounter with a Foreign Collector

Around the 1970s, Japan was in a period of economic growth that led people to question existing values and move toward social change and self-development. The postwar demand for ivory figurines and netsuke for export was to follow classic themes such as the twelve animals of zodiac, and to create an efficient division of labor in the workshop. Young ivory artisans, inspired by the global trend toward modern art, began to practice the "one artist, one work" principle, in which the artist is responsible for the entire creation of the piece.

In 1971, Mr. and Mrs. Robert and Miriam Kinsey^{*1}, netsuke collectors from the U.S., visited Japan and had the opportunity to meet with netsuke artists. The Kinseys encouraged netsuke artists to create Netsuke with a modern sensibility and individuality rather than relying on tradition. Bishu Saito, who specialized in animal sculptures, adopted Western sculptures by Brancusi and others, as well as

geometric abstract forms, and presented "Landing Water" 1971, which gave a fresh impression.

The young artists reaffirmed their creative direction, leading to the "Contemporary Netsuke" movement. In 1977, "Contemporary Netsuke" (written by Miriam Kinsey)



BISHU 「Landing on Water」
ivory H3.5cm 1971

was published, and in the same year, a netsuke study group was established by the artists.

^{*1} Robert Kinsey (1916-2015) began collecting after seeing netsuke in the arcade of the Imperial Hotel. He was president of Westin Aircraft Company of the United States. He served as president of the International Netsuke Society. He is known as a leading collector of contemporary netsuke and was a close friend of Muneaki Kinoshita, the museum's director.

Special Exhibition for July to September 2025

The Charm of Japan through Netsuke.

"Amazing Netsyke! This is Japan!"

7 "Brilliance of traditional arts"
■ July 1 (Tue) ~ 31 (Thu)

8 "Summer Fun for Yokai Monsters"
■ August 1 (Fri) ~ 31 (Sun)

9 "Samurai and Oiran (courtesans)"
■ September 2 (Tue) ~ 30 (Tue)

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"



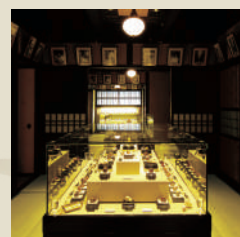
Official Website→



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.

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.



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The only contemporary netsuke art museum in the world

Special Exhibitions of Kyoto Seishu Netsuke Art Museum

The never-ending challenge of contemporary artists “Future Vision of Netsuke”

Netsuke have been passed down through the generations as a uniquely Japanese sculpture, competing between the realm of fine art to be admired and the realm of crafts to be cherished. And the challenge of contemporary netsuke artists continues unabated. This exhibition is an overview of netsuke at the forefront and an attempt to foresee the future vision of netsuke. Netsuke utilize a wide range of Japanese craft techniques. As long as the netsuke is

large enough to fit in the palm of the hand, has a rounded shape, and has a hole for the string to pass through, artists can freely express their ideas and aesthetic sensibilities in terms of materials, techniques, subject matter, and methods of expression. What kind of map of the future will be rewritten for the netsuke, which has been the product of Japanese carving techniques and all types of craft styles? This exhibition will explore the diversity of netsuke techniques.



Promotional poster

4 Special Exhibition in April

As if alive, a vibrant moment
“Extraordinarily Skillful Sculpture”

■ April 1 (Tue) ~ 30 (Wed)

Most netsuke are carved from a single block of material into a complete statue. Since the material cannot be added, the viewer can feel the tension of not being allowed to make any mistakes. Although it is supposed to be made of hard material, the superb technique, which seems to start moving at any moment, is so impressive that it is hard to believe that it is the work of human beings.



『 General Basara 』
ITARO (1960~)
H6.7cm
General Basara is known as the Dog God. In the work, a child is made to play with a puppy as if he were the general.



『 Selling loquat leaf tea 』
TOUN (1960~)
H3.1cm
A drink made by infusing loquat leaves and Chinese herbs. Peddlers carrying a balance pole were a popular summer event.



『 Confidential Talk 』
KUKAN (1968~)
H4.0cm
Is the witch whispering to the heroine a sign, a pointer to love, fate, or an invitation to another world?



『 Bravery Tyohi 』
TETSURO (1960~)
H5.4cm
He pursues realism by carving the entire statue out of a block of wood with thorough observation.



『 Fields of Spring 』
AKEMI (1959~)
H7.1cm
This work is an openwork carving of a field full of various flowers blooming in spring and early summer.

5 Special Exhibition in May

Japanese skills amaze the world
“Brilliance of Japanese Lacquer”

■ May 1 (Thu) ~ 31 (Sat)

During the Heian period (794-1185), an elegant dynastic culture blossomed around the emperor and aristocrats. In the early Edo period (1603-1867), the original form of netsuke was used in Kabuki dances with gorgeous costumes in the capital of Kyoto, and later netsuke became the face of urban culture as ornaments for intellectuals. The people of Kyoto developed a lustrous and graceful sense of beauty.



『 Blessed Treasure 』
UNRYU-AN (1952~)
H2.0cm
The treasure design is raised three-dimensionally and painted with colored lacquer.



『 Hibiscus Flower 』
TERUO (1936~)
H4.0cm
A hibiscus flower is compared to a “beautiful woman. The flowers are inlaid in layers of lacquer.



『 Flying Cranes 』
MASAYUKI (1954~)
H4.2cm
The crane is a symbol of longevity and marital bliss, and is an auspicious subject for long-lasting happiness.



『 Season of love 』
SYUKO (1954~)
H4.2cm
Raden (sea shells embedded in lacquer and polished out) is one of the decorative methods of lacquer.



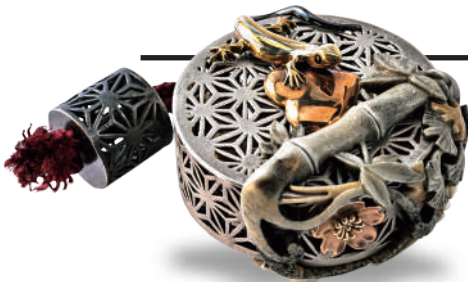
『 Happiness 』
SHOYO (1947~)
H2.1cm
This piece is delicately carved on a bare wood surface and painted with colored lacquer.

6 Special Exhibition in June

Gorgeous contrasts of rare materials
“Prestige of Goldwork and Inlay”

■ June 1 (Sun) ~ 30 (Mon)

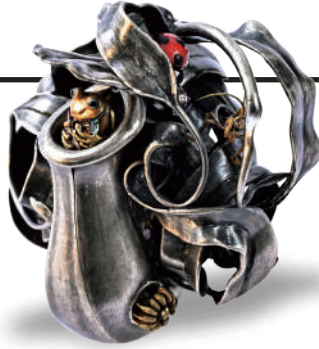
Metalworking requires a mastery of the art of inlaying several different materials with differing characteristics. During the Edo period (1603-1867), the superb techniques used in sword accessories reached the world's highest level of skill. 1990s saw the entry of netsuke artists from jewelry and precious metal processing, making metalwork an important technique in contemporary netsuke.



『 Japanese Word-chain 』
MANSEI (1975~)
H4.2cm
This is a work in the style of solving riddles using the Japanese word chain game as a clue.



『 Patrol 』
KAORUKO (1993~)
H7.1cm
Japanese giant dragonfly (Onyanma javanica) has a habit of patrolling the same areas over and over again.



『 Nepenthes Rafflesiana Jack 』
HIROMITSU (1954~)
H7.1cm
The work features a rare frog that inhabits the Nepenthes rafflesiana, a well-known insectivorous plant.



『 Lobster in Octopus Trap 』
TOUN (1960~)
H2.4cm
Octopuses are fond of lobsters. Octopus hunters hide lobsters in octopus pots. The octopus is associated with great happiness.



『 Tiger in Bamboo 』
AKIRA (1949~)
H29cm
This work concentrates a variety of skills in engraving, sculpture, and lacquer craftsmanship.