

Contemporary Netsuke Exhibition in Hyogo Prefecture.

From Tuesday, January 6 to Tuesday, March 31, the Shosha Art & Craft Museum in Himeji City, Hyogo Prefecture, will host the New Year Special Exhibition "Contemporary Netsuke." Over 250 highly artistic netsuke from our collection will be on display.



Featured in Art Magazine "Bijutsu Techo"

Since its founding in 1948, Bijutsu Techo has been Japan's leading art magazine.

The latest issue (January 2026) features the Kyoto Seishu Netsuke Art Museum and its sister institution, the Seishu Memorial Art Museum, in its book-within-a-book section. This ambitious project explores the relationship between patronage and art through a special feature on Japanese paintings by Shikami Kiyomichi and contemporary netsuke collected by Muneaki Kinoshita, director of both museums.



Classification of Netsuke

Netsuke are classified into the following types according to their shape.



Katabori (Sculpture) Netsuke

he most popular type of netsuke: Many of them have the motifs of persons or animals: Basically, they are carved on all sides.



Manju Netsuke

Thick, flat and circular netsuke that literally look like manju, a steamed-bean-jam bun eaten as a snack: Generally, they are decorated with maki-e lacquer or embossed designs.



Kagamibuta (Mirror Lid) Netsuke

A subtype of manju netsuke, with one side hollowed out and covered with a lid usually decorated with metalwork.



Men (Mask) Netsuke

Smaller imitation of the masks used in Noh, Kyogen and Gigaku play, or the faces of Shichifukujin (Seven Deities of Fortune).



Box-shaped Netsuke

A box-shaped netsuke decorated with techniques such as maki-e lacquer work, featuring a cord passage on the underside of the top plate and a cord hole in the bottom plate.



Ryusa Netsuke

Ryusa is the name of the inventor. It is a subtype of manju netsuke entirely carved with fine open-work.

Special Exhibition for April to June 2026

Netsuke ignites intellectual curiosity "Encyclopedia of Netsuke"

4 "Nature: Scenes of the Season"
■ April 1 (Wed) to 30 (Thu)

5 "Biology: Ode to Life"
■ May 1 (Fri) to 31 (Sun)

6 "Science: Evolution and Wisdom"
■ June 1 (Tue) to 31 (Tue)

We have opened an official YouTube channel. We are posting the latest information and images of the Museum on Twitter and Instagram. We hope you to follow us.



Official Website→



Kyoto Seishu Netsuke Art Museum

The Kyoto Seishu Netsuke Art Museum is the world's only museum dedicated to netsuke, established in the ancient capital, Kyoto. The director of the museum, Muneaki Kinoshita (Chairman and CEO of Sagawa Printing Co., Ltd.) founded the museum in order to "preserve Japanese outstanding traditional crafts in Japan by Japanese people."

We aim to pass on and develop netsuke art and works as a museum open to the community and people with the motto of "attracting people," "fostering and supporting artists," and "cooperating with related organizations."



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The only contemporary netsuke art museum in the world Special Exhibitions of Kyoto Seishu Netsuke Art Museum Boost your fortune this New Year with Netsuke "The Happiness of Netsuke"

The new year has arrived, and in the Japanese zodiac, it is the Year of the Horse. Horses are thought to have arrived in Japan from the Korean Peninsula around the 5th century, and since then, they have supported people's lives and coexisted with them.

Horses are regarded as divine messengers and are also dedicated at shrines. Consequently, horses came to be viewed as special beings that "deliver

wishes" and "bring good fortune." Furthermore, because they advance powerfully, they have been associated with positive imagery such as victory, success, and prosperous business.

In Japanese wordplay, the horse (uma) is associated with "going well" (umakuiku), making it a symbol of good fortune. To pray for a promising start to the year, we focus on expressions of happiness found in netsuke.



Promotional poster

1 Special Exhibition in January

“Netsuke Celebrating the New Year”

■ January 6 (Tue) to 31 (Sat)

The Japanese word “medetai”(auspicious) is said to derive from “mederu”(admire), carrying the meaning of “highly praiseworthy” or “deeply cherished.” The word “mezurasii” (rare) is also said to derive from ‘mederu’ (to admire). Since “auspicious” events are unlikely to occur very often, they can be considered rare. Netsuke have existed precisely to be admired and cherished by people. Invite good fortune with auspicious netsuke befitting the New Year.

2 Special Exhibition in February

“Netsuke that elicit laughter”

■ February 1 (Sun) to 28(Sat)

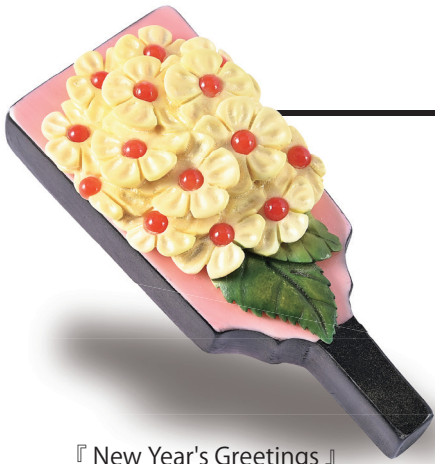
Netsuke brim with playfulness, inviting laughter through wit and humor while offering unconventional perspectives. Laughter is the lubricant of life. In Japanese art, playfulness expresses the free will and challenge that break with tradition. In netsuke, too, playfulness expands free imagination, continually questioning new meanings in the world as it has been. Contemporary netsuke artists also approach their creations while enjoying their own playful spirit.

3 Special Exhibition in March

“Auspicious Beasts Bringing Good Fortune”

■ March 1 (Sun) to 31 (Tue)

Auspicious beasts are imaginary creatures believed to appear as harbingers of celebrations and good fortune. Originating in ancient China, they were introduced to Japan and evolved uniquely to align with Japanese religious beliefs and cultural landscape. Dragons, phoenixes, qilin, sacred turtles, and various other mythical creatures have been deified and become objects of worship. In netsuke as well, auspicious beasts are depicted with an air of dignity.



『 New Year's Greetings 』
SHO (1972～) H7.0cm

The hagoita, which repels evil spirits, is considered a symbol of warding off misfortune. Adorned with the auspicious fukujusō flower.



『 Auspicious Bats 』
KANSUI (1955～) H3.6cm

The word for “bat” is pronounced the same as “happiness.” In Japan, bats symbolize “abundant happiness” and “protecting happiness.”



『 Sea Bream 』
TOUN (1960～) H3.0cm

The king of fish, bearing the auspicious colors of red and white, and regarded as a symbol of immortality, living for decades.



『 Plump Sparrow 』
MANSEI (1975～) H3.4cm

The plump sparrow, puffed up with air in its feathers against the cold, is considered auspicious. Along with the obi knot “Plump Sparrow”.



『 Galloping Horse 』
KANGYOKU (1944～) H4.8cm

In honor of the legendary horse's prestige and glory from the Chinese myth of running a thousand miles in a single day.



『 Three Existences 』
KENJI (1974～) H5.0cm

A pun on the Japanese words for hippopotamus (Kaba) and grilled eel (Kaba-yaki). This piece showcases the artisan's skill in incorporating natural materials.



『 The foolish 』
KUKAN (1968～) H3.5cm

A crow tengu, longing to be a great tengu, pulls at its nose to make it longer. But that's foolish. Just be yourself.



『 Ikkyu Hunts a Tiger 』
TETSURO (1960～) H3.5cm

When the Shogun ordered, “Catch the tiger in the painting,” the clever young monk Ikkyu replied, “Please let the tiger out of the painting.”



『 Short Break 』
AYA (1949～) H3.6cm

Kappa Novels has led to the postwar mystery and entertainment fiction scene. Even kappa takes a short break while reading.



『 Lucky Cats and Book 』
KIHO (1957～) H2.6cm

The beckoning cat, said to invite good fortune, has created a book—a “beckoning book.” It might be the ideal of the book-loving author herself.



『 Prophecy 』
KENJI (1947～) H3.1cm

A legendary auspicious beast that speaks human language, knows all things, and possesses the power to ward off calamities and plagues.



『 Phoenix 』
MOTOMASA (1976～) H5.7cm

The phoenix is considered a symbol of peace and is said to appear when the holy emperor appears, bringing love and rebirth.



『 Phoenix 』
SYUKO (1954～) H4.8cm

Phoenixes come in male and female. They dwell in paulownia trees, feed on bamboo seeds, and are said to live for eternity.



『 Red Dragon 』
SHINYA (1986～) H3.8cm

This work makes full use of red materials, creating a piece that looks like it jumped right out of a fantasy game.



『 Kirin 』
BISHU (1943～) H6.8cm

The kirin is regarded as a benevolent beast, possessing compassion and kindness, never stepping on insects or breaking grass.