

At the “KYOTO MARATHON 2026” We introduced Netsuke.

The KYOTO MARATHON also serves as an opportunity to showcase the charms of Kyoto tourism to runners. We set up a display booth featuring contemporary netsuke at our museum, which was viewed by over 360 people. This provided an opportunity for visitors to discover our museum as a new tourist attraction.



An “Mobility Museum” event featuring next-generation mobility.

An exhibition event featuring Toyota's next-generation mobility platform, the e-Palette, was held. For this event, our museum collaborated with students from Kyoto Notre Dame University. We displayed contemporary netsuke, panels, and 3D netsuke featuring mascots designed by the students. Visitors also had the opportunity to paint the 3D netsuke.



A Guide to Materials Used in Netsuke

Here is an introduction to the various materials used in netsuke.

- Ivory**
 Ivory has moderate hardness (2.5 on the Mohs scale) and density and has long been prized as a high-quality material with a beautiful grain. The oldest surviving example in Japan can be found among the Shōsō-in treasures from the 8th century. Netsuke have been used since the 17th century. In the 19th century, ivory figurines and netsuke became popular as gifts for foreigners. During the Shōwa period, there was a demand for personal seals. Currently, while import and export to and from other countries is prohibited, their circulation within Japan is permitted.
- Boxwood**
 Boxwood is dense and strong, making it ideal for fine carving. It is widely used in netsuke. In Japan, Asama (Ise), Mikurajima, and Satsuma are renowned for their boxwood. Recently, imported Siamese boxwood has been used as a substitute, but it is a different species from Japanese boxwood.
- Tortoiseshell**
 This is the shell of the hawksbill sea turtle, which inhabits tropical seas. Its naturally formed patterns and translucent hues are beautiful, and it has been used to make hairpins and combs. Tokugawa Ieyasu also used a pair of tortoiseshell spectacles. In netsuke, it is used for inlay work depicting animal eyes, and we use it sparingly to ensure it is cherished.
- Deer antlers**
 These are the distinctive antlers of male deer, which are shed and regrown every year. They are highly durable and resistant to drying, and because they take dye well, they are often used in netsuke.
- Lacquer, Japan**
 Lacquer, a tradition dating back to the Jōmon period, features a wide variety of techniques, including the use of gold powder and blue mother-of-pearl, colored lacquer, and the inlay of various materials.
- Boar's tusk**
 Although teeth are difficult to carve because they are covered in hard enamel, they have a magnificent luster.
- Ebony**
 Heavy objects sink into water. The properties vary in Southeast Asia and Africa.
- Mahogany**
 Native to Central and South America, it is used in high-end furniture. It is finished without staining.
- Amber**
 A fossilized natural resin formed from ancient tree sap and other substances, which is also used in jewelry.
- Mammoth tusks**
 Extracted from the permafrost of Alaska and Siberia. Only carefully selected materials are used as ivory substitutes.
- Coral**
 This is a gem-quality coral that grows deep in the sea at depths of 100 meters or more.
- Unicorn Tusk**
 This is the elongated tusk from the left side of a narwhal. It was a precious item considered more valuable than gold.
- Resin**
 Synthetic resins, such as epoxy resin, are materials unique to the present day.
- Ceramics**
 Clay allows you to freely shape and paint your creations, offering a wide range of expressive possibilities.
- Glass**
 This is one of the materials unique to the present day. The transparency and hues of glass are truly captivating.
- Nuts (Walnuts, Tajuana Nuts)**
 We engrave on the surface of the walnut's hard shell. Tajuana nuts are used as a substitute for ivory.
- Metal**
 Gold, silver, copper, and aluminum are used in netsuke. There are also metals with formulations unique to Japan.

Special Exhibition for July to September 2026

Netsuke ignites intellectual curiosity
 “Encyclopedia of Netsuke”

- 7 “Nature: Scenes of the Season”
 ■ July 1 (wed) to 31 (Fri)
- 8 “Biology: Ode to Life”
 ■ August 1 (Sat) to 30 (Sun)
- 9 “Science: Evolution and Wisdom”
 ■ September 1 (Tue) to 30 (Wed)

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.”



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.



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The only contemporary netsuke art museum in the world Special Exhibitions of Kyoto Seishu Netsuke Art Museum Netsuke ignites intellectual curiosity “Encyclopedia of Netsuke”

Since netsuke are created by transforming virtually any conceivable idea into a work of art, they are often likened to a universe in the palm of one's hand. They encompass every field of human knowledge, spanning all disciplines and covering every conceivable subject. It is no exaggeration to call them an Encyclopedia of Netsuke. The term “encyclopedia” is derived from the Greek phrase “egkúklios paideia.” This

is a compound of “egkúklios” (meaning “circular” or “complete”) and ‘paideia’ (meaning “education”), and refers to an education based on knowledge gathered in a comprehensive, circular manner. Here, you can see the accumulation of curiosity about the unknown world. In this article, I will systematically summarize and introduce the diverse world of netsuke, much like an encyclopedia.

日本橋

Netsuke ignites intellectual curiosity “Encyclopedia of Netsuke”

現代根付が
知的好奇心
をくすぐる

根付百科事典展

2026年4月1日(水) ~ 6月30日(火)

4月 [自然] 季節を彩る風物詩展
 5月 [生物] 輝きの生命讃歌展
 6月 [科学] 進化と英知の物語展

Exhibition in June 「Science: Evolution and Wisdom」

Exhibition in May 「Biology: Ode to Life」 • Special

Special Exhibition in April 「Nature: Scenes of the Season」

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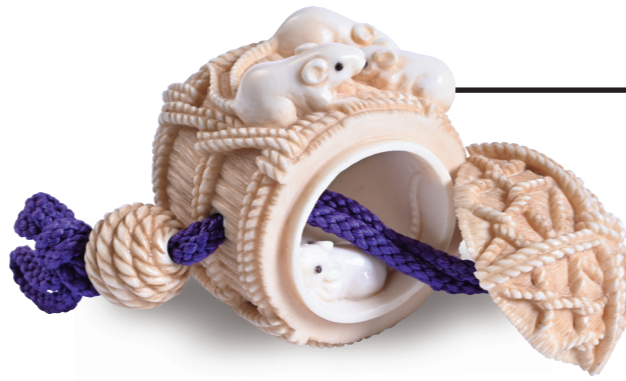
Promotional poster

4 Special Exhibition in April

“Nature: Scenes of the Season”

■ April 1 (Wed) to 30 (Thu)

Although cherry blossoms are simply plants, they herald the arrival of spring and hold a cultural significance deeply intertwined with the Japanese sensibility. People have long admired the beauty of seasonal flowers. Many annual events are named after flowers, making them a hallmark of each region. In this special exhibition, we explore Japanese culture through the lens of netsuke, which depict a wide variety of plants and natural scenes.



『 Bountiful Harvest 』
KENJI (1947~) H3.9cm

In this work, the rice bales symbolize a bountiful harvest, while the mice represent the wish for a prosperous lineage.



『 Kitchen Stove 』
JIN (1956~) H3.2cm

The kitchen stove not only supported daily meals but was also regarded as a sacred place, serving as the heart of the household.



『 Plumed Cockscomb 』
MOTOMASA (1976~) H3.8cm

In this piece, a butterfly is placed alongside the cockscomb flower, creating an overall silhouette that resembles a rooster's head.



『 Firefly 』
SHUKO (1954~) H4.5cm

Fireflies, which thrive only in clean rivers, have become rare in recent years, but their ethereal beauty has remained unchanged since ancient times.



『 Tea Girl 』
AKIRA (1949~) H4.1cm

In early May, when new buds begin to appear on the tea plants, women are busy picking the tea leaves.

5 Special Exhibition in May

“Biology: Ode to Life”

■ May 1 (Fri) to 31 (Sun)

Encyclopedias are a treasure trove of new knowledge, and surely everyone has experienced the thrill of turning the pages of the unknown. While it is estimated that approximately 8.7 million species of living organisms inhabit the Earth, about 86% of them are still considered undiscovered (unknown). With the theme of “An Ode to Life,” this special exhibition presents a vibrant wonderland featuring humans, living creatures, and creatures yet to be discovered.



『 Every Storm Will Pass 』
AKEMI (1960~) H5.1cm

Just as the fury of nature eventually subsides and peace returns, so too do life's hardships not last forever.



『 Start of Summer 』
SUMI (1944~) H3.2cm

In this summer-themed piece, a woman leaning back dramatically conveys a sense of innocence and openness.



『 The Princess and the Pea 』
Susan WRAIGHT (1968~) H4.5cm

From Andersen's fairy tales. To discern what is genuine, one must look beyond appearances.



『 Bountiful Catch 』
TADATSUNA (1966~) H2.3cm

The sight of a fisherman chasing a large fish reminds us of the interconnectedness of life in nature and the sheer determination involved.



『 Leap Forward 』
KUKAN (1968~) H6.3cm

This work embodies the will to move forward in life through symbols of courage, determination, and resilience.

6 Special Exhibition in June

“Science: Evolution and Wisdom”

■ June 2 (Tue) to 30 (Tue)

Science seeks to uncover the workings of the world through observation and experimentation. In the case of netsuke, artists sometimes translate into their works the sense of dissonance that arises from the discrepancy between the scientific world and the unknown or unseen “something” that lies beyond it. One of the true joys of netsuke is that it draws our attention to mysteries that science cannot explain and to the contradictions of society.



『 Kaguya 』
TOUN (1960~) H2.0cm

Earth as photographed by the lunar exploration satellite “Kaguya.” This netsuke combines cutting-edge technology with the ancient



『 Look to the world 』
RIHO (1954~) H2.8cm

Oda Nobunaga was a warlord who actively embraced the cutting-edge technology and scientific rationality of his time.



『 Dr. Fabre and Summer Vacation 』
IZUMI (1968~) H2.5cm

The French entomologist Fabre was sent to live with his grandparents as a child and grew up in a natural setting.



『 Gutenberg's printing press 』
SGIGEJYO (1963~) H2.8cm

Around 1445, Johannes Gutenberg of Germany sparked a printing revolution with the invention of movable type.



『 The Great Wave off Kanagawa 』
ZANMAI (1967~) H4.3cm

A masterpiece born from Hokusai's keen eye for observation. The swirling shape of the crest of the Great Wave aligns with modern fluid