

KOKESHITRENDS



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Tips for New Kokeshi Collectors by Madelyn Molina

Tips for new Kokeshi collectors. I have been an avid collector of Kokeshi for over 10 years. Like most collectors I first started with a single Kokeshi that I thought was "cute" as I continued to learn more about them, I started to redefine which ones I wanted to buy and what I wanted my collection to consist of. I can't say that my likes and dislikes do not continue to change, they do! Especially as new artisans emerge with newly designed pieces. The following four simple tips will help both the new and the not so new Kokeshi collector redefine their collecting aspirations.

1. Learn what catches your eye, what do you like? My first recommendation is that you browse through galleries of Kokeshi dolls before you buy. Look at Vintage, Traditional & Sosaku (creative) Kokeshi styles. Join social groups that consist of Kokeshi collectors who can share their knowledge and experience in Kokeshi collecting. In this way you can gain a better idea of what you like and what to search for when it comes time to add pieces to your collection.

[The following image is a Nanbu Traditional Kokeshi by Susumago Morizo, who was born in 1950 and studied under Master Jitsutaro Susumago. -Soulportal collection]



2. Decide if you want to be a specialized collector or a casual collector. Yes, there is a difference! The best Kokeshi collections are informed and cohesive. I cannot tell you the number of collections that I have come across where the collector has amazing Kokeshi dolls and cannot tell you a thing

about them other than they are Japanese and made of wood. Disappointing to say the least. I personally believe that learning about the Artist, whether or not the piece has a title, the types of wood and materials used, as well as the inspiration behind the art makes your Kokeshi all the more interesting and adds value to your collection.

So if you decide to specialize, keep in mind that you should go in one direction, it is ok occasionally to veer, trust me I do and have, however I try to think of how they can form a synergy and then run with that idea.



Pictured is a Tsugaru, Traditional, Kokeshi Mailer 11 cm tall. It features a Daruma-san on the body with rokuro lathe lines and traditional Ainu patterns. Distributed by the Shimanuki Communication Association in Tohoku in 2012. The wood used is Dogwood. (Soulportal collection).

I personally have created what I refer to as micro-collections within my Kokeshi collection. These tend to fall into specific categories such as Kokeshi mailers or miniatures, the synergy between them and my larger collection is the technique and or coloring used. Sometimes they have the artisan in common, who happens to make both large and miniature types.

3. Learn the Value of your Kokeshi. Check auction sites & collector sites to compare & learn the value of your Kokeshi. This is not always an easy task, Kokeshi are not relatively as well known in the states as they are in Japan. That compounded by the limited information in English, for those of us who do not know Japanese, becomes even more of a challenge. However, I can pretty much gauge the value of any one of my Kokeshi, & I have well over 1800 of them! Granted I spend many hours (days, weeks, months; yes you get the idea), researching so that I can better understand the value of my collection.

4. Have fun! Collecting should not become a chore, the minute you stop enjoying & admiring your collection, or adding to your collection becomes a drag (the I have to get that or my collection is incomplete mentality) you know the time has come to stop, sell, and pick up a new hobby.

HAPPY COLLECTING!

To contact the author of this Story or would like to see a segment in Kokeshi Trends on a specific subject matter related to Kokeshi please send me an e-mail and I will see what I can do. Brossia@soulportals.com