

KOKESHITRENDS

JOURNAL

We Will Rise Again

12/2020 | VOL 5 ISSUE 4

Free Publication

こけし



ARTISTS:

Alexa Fitzgibbon
Koito Junji
Yahagi Ichiko
Yamazaki Yuko
Tokumaru Etsuko
Nozawa Megumi

Kokeshi Stories:

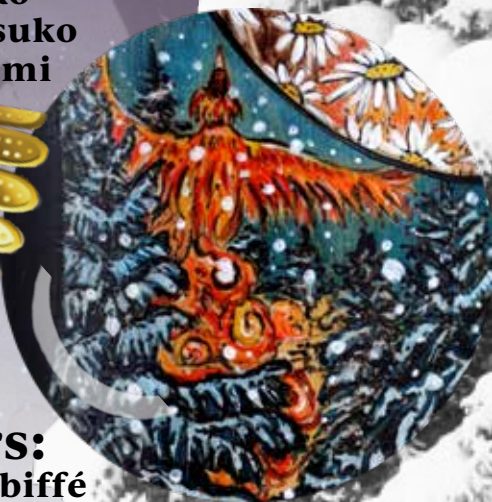
Songs and
Dances
by Beverley
Webster

Collectors:

Amandine Rebiffé
Dominique Gaillard
Emi Yonezawa
Hoangmy Phan

Authors:

Michael Evans/
Robert Wolf



Chiasa by
Alexa Fitzgibbon

Sometimes, You Need To Fall Down To Rise Up.

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Welcome to the 4th
Quarterly Edition of KT 2020

Founder's Letter

FOLLOW US



Dear Reader,

This year, the world is a little different. For many people the Covid-19 pandemic has taken precious lives. Like a fierce storm, it carried in towering waves of illness, poverty, and food insecurity. Experiencing this storm has been maddening for many of us. Here at KT we feel and understand the many phases of this storm and the resulting loss and challenges that have become part of our daily lives. We extend our heartfelt condolences to all of you who have suffered a loss; and for those who are ill we wish you a speedy recovery.

Although this storm has taken its toll, our faith in humanity's resiliency has not wavered. We strongly believe that there is light at the end of the tunnel and we press ahead with the hope of redemption, rebirth and strength for a new start, keeping our eyes on the goal of renewal and reasserting our joy and happiness.

This year's final cover is a Kokeshi inspired work created by Alexa Fitzgibbon, a commissioned piece that came to me as I thought of all that has been 2020. Alexa has captured my vision in a way that no words could have expressed, expanding on the basic idea and creating a wonderful work of art that clearly demonstrates the evolutionary stages of the life of a Phoenix, representative of the many stages of life. I hope you find solace in the idea and beauty of it. For this KT, our pages will reflect the ongoing theme of renewal. We hope it brings a smile and a feeling of joy to you during these very challenging times.

Wishing you and your families the very best for the new year. May 2021 be full of love, joy, and happiness and bring with it a spirit of restoration and renewal.

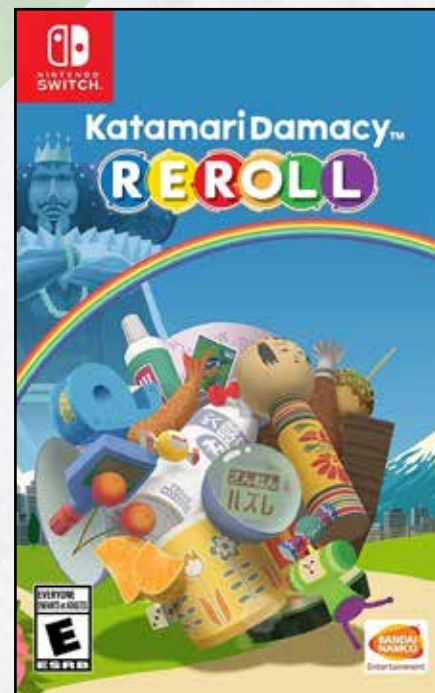
As always, I'm grateful to all the contributors that volunteer their free time to make KT happen, for the artists, collectors and of course, you, the readers. Thank you for accompanying me on this journey.

KT is actively engaging with you all through social media, so feel free to stop by and say "Hi". Please remember to [subscribe](#) and follow/like us on [IG](#) and [Facebook](#)! See you there!

Sincerely,

Madelyn

Welcome...



Kakeshi sighting:
Nintendo Switch
Katamari Damacy™
REROLL features a dentō
Kakeshi on its cover.
Spotted by KV member
Cheaneulle E DeRosier.

Understandably,
kawaii food and
dessert themed
Kakeshi are still
going strong with
collectors.

Seen @[Kokesia](#)



We found this
adorable Kakeshi
inspired large-sized
lamp at [Mr. Maria](#).

Material:
Polyethylene
Remote Controlled
36 X 33 X 63 CM



2021 YEAR OF THE OX

Trending...



Umeki Naomi
2021 Year of
the Ox Edition



Shida Kikuhiko
2021 Year of
the Ox Kinoko
mashup!



Kokeshi
Needle Kits
by Cohana.
Available
in 4 unique
colors.

Spotted on:
[Rakuten](#)



These little,
Kokeshi
inspired
massagers are
made of vinyl.
They come in
a selection of 6
unique types.

Spotted on:
[Rakuten](#)



Have you always wanted to have your
very own name-hanko? Yamagata
craftsman, Shido Kikuhiko, is
making beautiful Kokeshi with a
custom hanko
in a variety of
designs.

Seen
[@shoubidou80](#)





Interview by: Madelyn Molina
Featured Artist:
Alexa Fitzgibbon of Kiki's Dolls
Instagram: [@lex_in_the_north_sea](https://www.instagram.com/lex_in_the_north_sea)
Home Base: Shetland, Scotland

Alexa Fitzgibbon is a DIY creative and outdoor person. In her free time, she loves to upcycle furniture and build things like shelving units. Alexa loves to go for walks with her dogs, mainly in the hills and at the beach (finding shells and driftwood!) where she lives now in Shetland, Scotland. She also used to hike a lot in the mountains when she lived in France. Alexa also loves to read, although she never seems to have enough time for it these days! Kokeshi Trends is honored to present her work and artistic journey.

KT: Your Instagram name is @lex_in_the_north_sea. Any specific story behind the name?

Alexa: My nickname "Lex" was given to me by a very dear friend who happened to be the very first person I met when I came to Shetland, Scotland, about 14 years ago. He passed away 3 years ago; I treasure this name even more since. A lot of people here only knew me by this name really, and when it came to finding an Instagram name, I added that to the North Sea where Shetland is. I'm quite new to Instagram so it was a mission to find a name that was not taken!

KT: I'm sorry for the loss of your dear friend.

KT: When did you learn about Kokeshi?

Alexa: I have always loved Japanese culture. I grew up reading "Manga"; all my heroes came from Japanese comic books. I can't say when I started loving Kokeshi; I was young, but I got my very first one when I was at university. I knew then that I was going to collect more! I don't have the biggest collection, compared to a lot of collectors, but I really treasure each one. Also, because many were given to me as birthday and Christmas presents from my family.

KT: How long have you been making Kokeshi inspired dolls? Have you apprenticed with a Kokeshi maker, or did you learn to make them on your own?

Alexa: For my 30th birthday, my partner surprised me with a Kokeshi that he had wood-turned himself from walnut wood. He gave it to me to wood burn and paint the way I wanted. She was my very first one. A few years later, I got a wood lathe as a birthday present from him, so I could try to wood-turn my very own. I made two for Christmas presents for my family. That was 2 years ago. Fast forward to the *Corona* virus crisis and lockdown in March; I wasn't allowed to work, and I decided to make a doll with my **Akita Inu** on her as a memory piece. He passed away a year ago. I thought it would be a lovely way to carry his memory. I posted her on Instagram and I had a few messages saying I should sell them, and a friend asking if I could make one for her! I started making



more, and more messages came. I have never studied with a Kokeshi maker. I taught myself how to use my lathe and how to make my own dolls. I have always liked drawing. I draw on my dolls in the same way as I would draw on a piece of paper.

KT: Was there something specific about Kokeshi that inspired you to begin to create your own? Do you personally own any, or have a favorite Kokeshi artist?

Alexa: When I mentioned that I wanted to create my own, it was so I could make a blue Kokeshi! I had been on the lookout for a specific Kokeshi for years. I had seen her in a photo from a shop in Japan. She had a night sky and a moon. I have never managed to find her, but I decided to make my first Kokeshi so I would have a blue one. It seemed to be a color that you couldn't get very often.

I have a few Kokeshi, about 35 I think, and I do have favorite artists! I have to say that I am unsure about the real name of my favorite artist, as it took me a while to find a

page that would mention his Kokeshi and his name, "**Kojoyo**". Other favorite artists of mine are **Sekiguchi Toshio** and **Yasunobu Oki**.

I do have a favorite Kokeshi, not just because I love her, but because she was a gift from my mother. She is by **Yasunobu Oki**, but I have **Kojoyo** and **Sekiguchi** ones that follow really closely.



KT: Can you tell us a bit about the tools you use to create your Kokeshi inspired dolls? Do you use wood blanks or create the wood shapes yourself?

Alexa: I wood-turn the shapes myself. I use mainly sycamore wood. I love the grain and I'm familiar with how my paint will react once I start the illustrations on the kimono. Also, it's quite a light-colored wood, so it's an ideal "blank canvas" to paint on. I have a set of standard chisels, with my favorite one. I use pyrography to burn the outline and illustrations, then acrylic paint for the colors. I have a set of very small paint brushes to make all the details on my Kokeshi.

KT: Tell us a little about your design process. How do you decide what type of doll you want to create?



Alexa: The design process will really start with the shape of the doll. I mainly make oval shape figures, as I have found they inspire me more. I feel like I can really give them a spirit! Once I have my shape, I will pencil in the face, the hair, and kimono lines first.

This will come out naturally following the shape and the grain in the wood. I always have hair flying in the wind. It has become one of my

trademarks. I feel like it makes them more “alive” and “spirited”. Then I will start the kimono illustration process. Most of the time I will have an image in my head, the main sleeve, and I will gradually build the rest around that main sleeve. I get my inspiration from everywhere: colors I see in the landscape, but also from the seasons, elements that I love (some flowers, kites, gardens), and a feeling I want to share as well. I want my dolls to embody the spirit of what they carry on themselves, as if they protect the essence of what I have drawn on them.

KT: I recently contacted you with a request to create a phoenix Kokeshi. You created an amazing, highly detailed Kokeshi with a unique story. Can you share with us the details of how you went about creating the story with different scenes and unique elements on her Kimono?

Alexa: When you got in touch with me to create your Kokeshi, you asked me if I could work the theme of renewal/rebirth and include a phoenix and daisies in it. It was very interesting to work on that project because it was my first commission that had a complex theme, but also that gave me the freedom to work it the way I wanted.

When I think about a Kokeshi, I have to work on a double level. There is the drawing /message, but also the aesthetic of the doll itself and her kimono. I have to make it so the colors and illustrations balance themselves and create a harmonious look as a piece of clothing. And at the same time, I have to work the main theme and unfold a story with the elements the commissioner requested.

If that balance isn’t right, the Kokeshi will look messy or too busy, and the story will be hard to read.

I knew I wanted to create a night scene, as I wanted the phoenix to really stand out, and in daylight it would have been harder. I decided to include the snow, partly because it was a third “color” that could contrast with my dark blues and oranges, but also because of the symbolism of snow as nature’s white canvas, which tied in with my theme of renewal. The daisies would be opened around the phoenix, who is often described as having the same brightness and power as the sun, and would be closed as silhouettes in the background in the night. The mountains in the background echo the majesty of the phoenix, and the starry sky with shooting stars speak about the wishes and dreams that come with one’s rebirth / renewal.

The other pieces of the kimono can be interpreted in different ways; but it shows the evolution of the phoenix. A circle of life, from the tiny burning feather, to the baby phoenix, to the big first flight (which happened in a snowstorm, and can symbolize being put to the test, e.g. learning to weather the storm). Then there is the wise one on the main sleeve looking at all the possibilities against his white canvas.

Danica by Alexa



Christine by Alexa



Also, I associate night to a period when time seems to slow down and people reflect on their lives and their thoughts. I built every scene around those feelings, trying to keep a balance between the colors and elements. I believe that when the elements, the story and the aesthetic all tie together, it really creates a spirit for my doll.

KT: I love that you ask your customers to name their dolls. I named her Chiasa, which means 1,000 mornings.

I have seen some of your other works that I just love. You made several commissioned Kokeshi, one with a beautiful cabin, another with a raven, and yet another with a Viking ship! So many unique ideas and variations in themes. Do you envision a story before beginning to create your works?

Alexa: Before I start a doll I always develop a vision and story. When I work on commissions, I transcribe what I am given into a vision as well. I will always think about the elements and the theme before I begin. The ideas will all start shaping a picture in my head. Sometimes it's quick; other times when I have to tie in more complex elements, it will take me longer.

KT: Some of the Kokeshi you make are a request from customers like myself. I just provided some basic details of what I would like, but you took it to a whole new level, honestly much more than I could have imagined. Do customers often give you the freedom to let your creativity flow with some basic ideas, or do you have some of those challenging customer stories?

Alexa: In general, I would say that my customers have always given me a lot of freedom to work the elements they requested. But your doll is special in the sense that its theme is a complex one and I don't think I would have done it justice if I had only focused on the aesthetic side. I wanted it to tell a story. I wanted those elements to all be meaningful so that she would truly embody what she is carrying inside her. I could have just drawn a nice phoenix, and some lovely scenes around her, but then I don't think she would have

embodied the meaning of her spirit.

In many of my other dolls, I had to catch the feeling of a place or a garden. So, it was about working the different elements to create an enchanted place. For the Viking one, it was working the elements and the colors to give her that pride/warrior feel. I haven't had a challenging customer as of yet. I really want to do justice to what customers are after, and I wouldn't take payment for a doll if I wasn't sure they liked her!

KT: Do you have some memorable feedback that a customer has shared with you that really gave you joy?

Alexa: I've had so much positive feedback that it is hard to choose, but my 5-year-old niece asked if she could have one of my Kokeshi for her birthday last July. My niece had decided all the elements that she wanted, in advance. When I started working on it a month later, I asked my niece again what she wanted, expecting her to have changed her mind as most children would, but her request was identical. My niece wanted her little dog sailing a boat and her cat as a kitten. When my niece saw the doll, she was so excited and happy. She hugged the doll and spent the following hour just carrying it around and telling the doll stories. She looked at the doll's sleeve and started making a story with what would happen with her dog sailing. Seeing my niece's reaction made me really happy, and even more so that she could see a story and kept it going! It also reminded me of what Kokeshi used to be and how they started.

KT: How can potential customers request a commission or buy your beautiful Kokeshi inspired works?

Alexa: The best way to do that is to send me a private message on my Instagram!

KT: Is there anything more you would like to share with our readers about your work?

Alexa: My Japanese Kokeshi have brought me a lot of smiles and they are a constant presence in my room/office. I hope my Kokeshi bring the same to my customers!

SEEDLING PROJECT



November 21, 2020

[Megumi Nozawa](#)

Seedling Project
by Madelyn Molina

Megumi Nozawa is a wonderfully talented sōsaku Kokeshi maker based in Japan. Look at her beautiful work and you're immediately transported to a place of joy and happiness. Megumi-sensei incorporates a vast variety of subject matter into her works, bringing her Kokeshi to life. KT is honored to continue to collaborate with Megumi-sensei for the Seedling Project.

I spotted this beautiful girl in Megumi-sensei's Facebook feed and fell in love with her. She is titled 母の思い出 meaning Memories of a Mother. It is a reflection of a vivid and happy childhood memory of her youth. As a child, Megumi-sensei had to travel a long way to and from school, arriving home in the late evenings. In the winter months it was dark. Megumi-sensei recalls a rainy dark night when her mother walked all the way from home to meet her and her siblings with a lantern and umbrella. This Kokeshi expresses that memory.

Being a June baby, I was drawn to this Kokeshi because of her Hydrangea flowers, which bloom in June and symbolize heartfelt emotion and a desire to understand deeply. So, I asked if Megumi-sensei would create one for the Soulportals collection. She kindly accepted my request.

The Making of 母の思い出

The first step is always to select a good-sized and beautiful piece of wood that will help birth the vision Megumi-sensei has for it. Once the wood has been selected, she carefully outlines the design onto the wood. She chisels away at her outline until the design elements such as the kimono and, in this particular design, the umbrella have been clearly defined.

Although the wood is bleached prior to carving, this particular piece of wood revealed dark undertones.

START TO FINISH

Megumi-sensei asked me if this discovery would be all right or if another should be created with a lighter wood. The choice was to keep it as it was. The wood would decide her spirit.

Once the outline has been carefully created, the following step is to use pyrography to outline the design and create the amazing fine hair details that Megumi-sensei pours her energy into. The results are immaculate. The last steps include selecting the colors of each design element, the kimono, flowers, hair, umbrella and skin tone, and then adding several coats of wax to finish the piece. The finished result brims with joy and beauty.



Fun Tidbit:

On April 8th annual ceremonies are held celebrating Buddha's birthdate. Buddha statues are anointed with sweet-tasting hydrangea tea to celebrate the sweet rainfall that was present that fine day.

KOKESHI STORIES: SONGS AND DANCES

BY BEVERLEY WEBSTER



Min'yō (Japanese Folk Songs)

Min'yō are Japanese folk songs that originated from the chants of workers while they were carrying out monotonous tasks such as working in the fields or weaving baskets. Different regions have their own min'yō reflecting the major occupations of the people who live there. As well as being sung collectively while working they were also sung at village festivals and as an offering of thanks to the gods at religious ceremonies.

Love, pursued or unrequited, and the ups and downs of relationships are a common theme in the min'yō that are best remembered by the Japanese today. Humor also plays a part.

Otemoyan

Otemoyan, a humorous folk song from Kumamoto prefecture, is about a newly married young bride who complains about the perceived ugliness of her husband due to his smallpox scars. She loves him, but she feels ashamed to be seen with him, so she has only a small wedding ceremony. The irony is that the girl's nickname Otemoyan ("little lady Otemo") hints at the fact that she might not be all that attractive herself.



Aizu Bandai-san/Ohara Shosuke

The most famous min'yō across Japan is Aizu Bandai-san ("Aizu's Mount Bandai") which, as the name suggests, originated in the Aizu region of Fukushima prefecture. The song celebrates the beneficence and beauty of Mount Bandai and has been sung at local Bon Odori festivals for many years. Perhaps the most memorable part, however, is the comical chorus, added in the 1930s. It tells the story of Ohara Shosuke, a local wastrel, and how he lost his money. Loosely translated it goes:

"Why did Ohara Shosuke lose his fortune?
Because he loved to oversleep, drink sake and
take long baths in the morning.
That's why Ohara Shosuke has no money!"



Lullabies

As well as soothing songs sung by mothers to encourage their babies to sleep, there are a great number of Japanese lullabies that seem to have more sinister or intensely moving lyrics. The Japanese word for lullaby, “komoriuta” (which translates as “babysitter song”) reflects the practice of children from poor households being sent to live with the families of richer farmers or merchants to look after their children.

These babysitters were young themselves, ranging from about five to twelve years old, and their work was little better than slave labor. As well as having a baby tied to their back all day, they may also have been expected to look after toddlers and other young children of the family, as well as washing diapers in the river and other household chores. Their work was unpaid; and they were often far from home and given meagre rations to eat and coarse clothes to wear. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the songs they made up to amuse themselves, and hopefully get their charges to sleep, have sad lyrics reflecting their loneliness and increasing bitterness and despair.



Tsugaru lullaby (“Mokko no Komoriuta”)

One such lullaby comes from Kizukuri-machi in the Tsugaru region of Aomori Prefecture. The lyrics harken back to the Mongol invasions of the late thirteenth century:

“If you cry, the Mongols will come from the mountain. Don’t cry, sleep.

If you cry, a devil will come from the village to get you.”

Dances

There are a wide variety of traditional dances in Japan, often specific to a region or village. Many may have originated as folk dances or religious rituals performed to bring on a good rice harvest or an abundant fishing catch. They can still be seen today as they form elements of Noh and Kabuki theatre and are performed at festivals and events across Japan. The two main styles are Mai and Odori.

Mai



Mai has its roots in Noh drama and can be traced back to the thirteenth century. Noh Mai is a refined dance consisting of several forms, such as circling movements and slow shuffles, which are put together and repeated in such a way as to reflect elegance and beauty. Dancers sometimes wear a mask

and use props, such as a fan. A later variant is Kyo-mai, originating in Kyoto in the seventeenth century and heavily influenced by the sophistication and manners of the Imperial Court.

Mai dances are generally performed to the music of Japanese flutes and small drums, although there are also sections

that may be accompanied by vocalists or percussion instruments. It is said that the Mai dance style still reflects the beauty of ancient dances dedicated to the gods.

Odori

Odori comes from the Kabuki dance-drama tradition and dates back to the early seventeenth century. It is more energetic and gaudy than Mai, and includes a variety of steps such as leg lifts and turns. Some dances, particularly the Bon Odori seen at the local Obon Festivals in August, have become separated from the story and are pure dances, often performed in unison by a large number of dancers.

Although Odori began as an avant-garde alternative to Noh, nowadays the two forms of dance are often both as stylized and as highly-prescribed as each other.

Odori Dance Kokeshi



Shakkyô-mono/Renjishi

Shakkyô is the name of a Noh play featuring an energetic lion dance near the end. The word Shakkyô means stone bridge and refers to a specific place of pilgrimage near the summit of Mount Seiryô in China where a magnificent stone bridge spans a deep ravine. The stone bridge is guarded by lions ("shishi") and is said to lead to the paradise of Monju, the Buddhist deity of spiritual wisdom.

The lion dance in this Noh play inspired many Kabuki plays and these are classified as Shakkyô-mono ("Shakkyô pieces"). One such piece is the moving dance of two lions known as Renjishi.

Renjishi features two actors who dance together, telling the story of a father lion

preparing his son for the difficulties of life. Initially, they dance with hand-held lion masks in front of the symbolic backdrop of a pine tree. The highlight of this section is when the father shishi, portrayed with white hair, kicks his red-haired cub over the edge of the ravine and waits to see whether the courage and strength he has trained into his cub are enough to enable him to climb up again.

After a comic interlude, followed by some rousing music evoking the mountain scenery, the shishi father and cub return. This time the spirit of the lions is expressed by gorgeous brocade costumes, full makeup and large wigs made of yak hair. Their vigorous dance is a final celebration and reflects their status as the "king of the beasts".



KOKESHI TRENDS

SONGS AND DANCES

WORD SEARCH

I	L	O	Y	K	K	A	H	S	O	N	G	S
A	O	U	K	N	M	J	M	M	S	Q	Z	Z
D	T	I	L	A	O	I	K	H	W	D	Y	L
N	E	H	I	L	N	D	O	Z	S	B	M	T
A	M	S	D	Y	A	S	O	E	Y	J	Y	D
B	O	I	O	T	U	B	C	R	O	D	N	N
U	Y	J	Q	K	T	N	I	H	I	L	W	V
Z	A	N	E	Y	A	D	A	E	L	Y	J	Z
I	N	E	M	D	N	R	J	Q	S	P	K	D
A	Q	R	L	Y	A	Q	Y	Q	B	W	V	Y

- MINYO
- OTEMOYAN
- AIZU BANDAI
- OHARA
- SHOSUKE
- LULLABIES

- MAI
- ODORI
- RENJISHI
- SHAKKYO
- SONGS
- DANCES



Featured Collector: Amandine Rebiffé
Country of Residence: France
Instagram: [@izouvou](https://www.instagram.com/izouvou)

Amandine Rebiffé is French and lives in Brittany. When she was 6, her great-grandfather gave her a book about China and she has been enamored with Asia ever since. She is part of the generation that grew up with Japanese pop culture, such as anime and manga, which is what gives her a sense of familiarity with the urban landscapes and daily life of Japan. Japan has cast its alluring spell on Amandine. Kokeshi Trends is honored to learn more about her Journey and love of Japan and its culture.

Please tell us a bit about yourself.

When I discovered Miyazaki Hayao's movies, I really fell in love with Japan and started to learn more about its history and culture. I then studied Japanese language and culture at college and had the chance to live in Nara Prefecture for a year and a half, one year as an exchange student and six months as a waitress in a restaurant. A professor back in France was always saying to us, "Don't stay too long in Japan or else you'll be swallowed and won't want to come back". And that's exactly what happened! I had to come back to France for personal reasons, but Japan had already put its spell on me and I had a long sort of mourning phase. More than 10 years later, I still consider Japan as my country of heart.

On another note, I've always been a collector of collections, as my relatives called me. There is something comforting in collecting, but also challenging as you can set goals and be very satisfied when

you finally find the rare piece you've been looking for. My parents had a thrift shop and sometimes had some antiquities on sale, so I grew up surrounded with vintage items. I learned some things about how to recognize the different styles of furniture or ceramics, how to date them, their market value. But I've never been interested about the price value of things. What interests me is the craftsman's skills and if the item sparks joy.

When and how did you first become interested in Kokeshi?

I always had a strong interest towards craftsmanship and Japan has tons of beautiful and interesting folk crafts. Surprisingly, I'm a late Kokeshi collector. Although I lived a bit in Japan, I never bought a Kokeshi at that time. First, I wasn't living in a Kokeshi area. Second, as a student, I was broke, so I was mostly spending my free time visiting free temples and shrines, walking in residential areas and attending matsuri. I was already into craftsmanship like ceramics and kimono; but thankfully, I wasn't into Kokeshi back then!

I only knew Okappa style Kokeshi, like the ones Usaburo makes, until one day I saw a dentō Kokeshi at a friend's house in France. I found it so beautiful I started to read some



Impossible favorite one: Takahashi Seishi



materials about dentō Kokeshi: how it was made, the strains, the history ... I found it fascinating and I soon had the project to collect one Kokeshi from each strain (I was so naïve back then). The problem is, the more you learn about Kokeshi, the more you want! I was quite reasonable at first, but then I went to Tōhoku and things escalated quickly! I bought about a hundred Kokeshi there and thought it would be enough for a while; but it was too late. I became a Kokeshi addict!

Can you tell us a bit about your first Kokeshi and how it came to be yours?

The first one was a gift from my dad twenty years ago and was a sōsaku Kokeshi. Although I still love her, it didn't trigger the urge to collect, so I wouldn't consider this one as my first. The first one I fell in love with was an ejiko by Tayama Izumi, in 2018. I loved the simplicity of the pattern and the delicate brush strokes used to paint the face. Today, Tayama Izumi is still one of my favorite artisans and I was lucky enough to meet her in person and visit her workshop when I went to Tōhoku. It seems we shared the same interests in Kokeshi, as I loved most of the Kokeshi from her private collection. That's when I realized I had a type and I wasn't collecting at random.

Do you have a favorite Kokeshi that you would never part with?

That is an impossible choice to make! Of course, there are some Kokeshi I love more than others, but there are so many I treasure! I love a lot this Yajirō Kokeshi made by Takahashi Seishi in 1977. Yajirō is my favorite strain and I just love the patina of the wood and its overall look. You can't see it on the



picture, but despite its age, the colors are still vivid. The artisan used bright yellow, blue and red, plus a bit of pink for the cheeks. It's also the tallest one I have so far (39 cm) and it is the first one I bought in Tōhoku, on the very first day of our arrival in Sendai. We were so weary with the travel and jet lag, but we wanted to discover the city, so we went aimlessly (and slowly) on a walk until we found a lovely vintage kimono shop that also sold some vintage Kokeshi. We were far from the hotel, we were tired, but I knew I couldn't leave without it! So, we took a walk in Sendai, going from place to place, with this big and heavy Kokeshi that didn't fit entirely in the backpack. Its head was sticking out! Two weeks later, we came back to Sendai and to this nice vintage shop and we found a rattle Kokeshi made by Sato Bunkichi. This shop was full of treasures, plus the owner was adorable.



Do you collect both sōsaku and dentō Kokeshi? If no, which do you collect? If yes, do you have a preference between the two styles and why?

I'm mostly a dentō girl. I just love how the artisans manage to create beautiful and different Kokeshi within very limited specifications. I also

love to see how a style evolves with the master/student transmission. I started collecting a few sōsaku lately though, and it seems I'm more into the naïve-looking type. Although I now have a few sōsaku on my wish list, dentō is still my favorite style. I like omiyage Kokeshi too, especially if they're depicting a place I visited in Japan. We had the chance to find one in a thrift shop in Japan-- an omiyage with a pattern depicting the Yokote

Yokote Kamakura Matsuri



Kamakura Matsuri. Just a few days earlier, we were at Yokote for this festival and enjoyed the Kamakura, which are snow domes typical of Tohoku. For this matsuri, people cooked local meals inside them to share with the visitors.

Do you like or have a preference for both vintage and newly made Kokeshi?

I love both! As I said earlier, I like to see how a style evolved, so you have to acquire some vintage ones. I would like to collect

Kokeshi of each craftsman from some lineage, like the Ōnuma/Sakurai one for example. I started with an easier lineage: the students of Sato Zenji using the same patterns he used. I still have some to find, but it's so fun to set goals! Plus, I love how the color of wood changes with time. It's like the Kokeshi has a history of its own; like I'm a temporary companion and it will meet other companions later in its life. I also love new ones, for two reasons. The first is there are fewer and fewer Kokeshi artisans and some struggle to live from their art, so I want to support them as much as I can. The second is I love to see how some manage to transcend their respective strain's codes to create more modern Kokeshi. It seems there is a regaining of interest, thanks to those modern dentō Kokeshi, which are often cuter.



Sato Zenji Tsugaru Lineage

About how many Kokeshi would you say you have in your collection, where do you keep them and how do you care for them?



I would say that at the beginning of 2020 I had about 30 Kokeshi and now I'm around 250 (as I said, it escalated quickly). They're displayed mainly in the living room; but as the collection grew, I had to display some in other places like in the study room and in a bookshelf on the corridor. I think I'll have to start putting some in boxes for now, because I ran out of space. We had planned to move out in 2020, but with the pandemic the project is on hold. Hopefully, I'll have more Kokeshi-dedicated space in the next house (I already negotiated that with the hubby).

Luckily, I live in a very temperate place; it's not too hot, not too cold and not too dry nor humid. So, the conditions are very good for Kokeshi and I'm very careful to not place them in a sunny area, to avoid color fading. I just dust them from time to time and that's all!

How do you decide which Kokeshi to add to your collection?

I have a wish list with some specific Kokeshi on it (sometimes from a specific artisan, sometimes I'm just looking for a pattern). But mostly, I go with whatever Kokeshi I fall in love with, which is a lot because the more I learn about Kokeshi, the more types of Kokeshi catch my eyes. For example, I wasn't a huge fan of Tsuchiyu Kokeshi and now I love this strain. This makes the choices very difficult now; I want to buy them all! I also had the bad idea to start collections inside the collection. As a huge daruma fan, of course I collect daruma Kokeshi. I also started an apple Kokeshi collection, although I have lately tended to gather some other fruit Kokeshi, so it might change to a fruit Kokeshi collection. I'm actually struggling to not start a kagami mochi Kokeshi collection. If I had to find a common denominator, I guess it would be that I have a soft spot for cute Kokeshi.



Kokeshi featuring Daruma-san

Why do you collect Kokeshi?

At first, I wanted to collect one Kokeshi of each dentō strain, because I love folk crafts and it was part of my Japanese folk crafts collection. But then, Kokeshi really grew on me and they became a collection on their own. They bring so much joy! I love to discover that two very different Kokeshi I bought are from the same artisan, which means there is something in his/her style I appreciate. I also love to discover who was the student of which artist. I also love to learn about the patterns and the places they're from. Tōhoku is such a beautiful place and you can sometimes find patterns distinctive of the region, like Ainu patterns and apples for Tsugaru Kokeshi. And I just love the beauty of them. Plus, I've always loved wood; it has a warm and hearty feeling, almost soothing.

Tōhoku folk craft - Kokeshi by Cookies and an Akabeko



I would like to believe that Kokeshi are growing in popularity. If you could influence the future of Kokeshi, what would you want to do to ensure that the craft continues on for future generations?

I think so too, and I'm so glad of this growing popularity! (Even if some artisans are so popular it's becoming very difficult to get Kokeshi from them, but I prefer it that way). With the pandemic, I guess the situation is difficult lately for a lot of artisans and local producers. As soon as I can, I try to buy new Kokeshi to help them. I would love for more Japanese online shops to sell abroad, but that's still rare.

One of my dreams would be to work with local museums in France and to organize Kokeshi exhibitions, explaining what Kokeshi are, how they are made, the types of Kokeshi, their evolution, and to initiate the public to the wonderful world of Kokeshi and maybe sell some vintage and new Kokeshi at the occasion to spread the Kokeshi love to new collectors.

I would also love to do a road trip in Japan dedicated to Kokeshi workshops and make a cartography of the workshops you can visit, with pictures of the artisans working, their private collections and some explanations about the places (places of interest, other local crafts, local delicacies, history of the place).

Are you familiar with the term destashing? Is this something you practice when growing your collection? If yes, how do you go about selecting which ones to part with?

It's something I do with some of my collections, mostly for books I lost interest in. It hasn't happened yet with Kokeshi, but when I started collecting, I bought some Kokeshi at random, just because they were from a strain I was looking for. So, although I'm not ready to destash Kokeshi yet, I know that if I would have to, I could say goodbye to those ones. As for the others, as long as I'm in love with them, they won't be going anywhere anytime soon!

Has collecting Kokeshi created additional interest in Japanese arts, culture, etc.? If yes, what sort of interest?

I was already a huge fan of Japanese culture before collecting Kokeshi, so it hasn't changed a lot in this area. But it had an influence. Each time I travel to Japan, I try to discover a different region. When I had the chance to go back to Japan in 2020, of course I chose Tōhoku, mostly because of Kokeshi. It helped me discover so many interesting places and facts about this region. I really want to go back there and discover more places; there are still so many to visit (including Kokeshi workshops!).

Is there anything more you would like to share with your fellow collectors?

I often see people asking if some Kokeshi is valuable or not. I would say it doesn't matter if it's a pricey one or not, just follow your heart! What matters is that you love it, not the price value of it.

And don't go to Japan if you're not ready to become even more addicted!

Naruko Onsen





Koïto Junji



6

Matsushita Sei



1

Hirano Takako



5-2

Takahashi Nanami



2

Araki Yoshie



The Kokeshi Paris Project is the brainchild of Nicolas-Yvan Perrot, a Kokeshi aficionado who has been working with Paris artists to create an exclusive collection of Kokeshi inspired works. The ultimate goal is to introduce Kokeshi into mainstream art venues, demonstrating that what was once a simple child's toy is so much more.

Although there are currently 6 installations, one of them, has a twin and thus there are 7 unique Kokeshi inspired works.

Please [download](#) our prior KT issues for full articles on each of the KPP Kokeshi works.

Hirano Takako



Sugiura Kyoko



Kaita Junji





October 2020
[Kokeshi Paris Project](#)
Nicolas-Yvan Perrot

Interview by Madelyn Molina
Contemporary Artist: [Koïto Junji](#)

Koïto Junji is a sculptor and contemporary artist born in 1954 and living in Paris, France. He is an award-winning artist who creates visual feasts of food-themed art. He has contributed the 6th installation to the Kokeshi Paris Project.

KT: Please let me congratulate you on creating an incredibly beautiful work of art. When Nicolas approached you about his project, did you know right away that you wanted to take part in the project?

Koïto-san: Takako Hirano, the printmaker who made the fifth Kokeshi doll in the Kokeshi project, is an old friend of mine. She gave me an overview of the project and said, "Nicolas is a very good person and I would love to have you do it," so I accepted right away.

KT: When you saw the blank Kokeshi pieces, what were your thoughts? Did you immediately think of what you would create?

Koïto-san: I have been sculpting since I was 18 years old, and since 1993 I have been creating with the theme of "eating" or "food". I wanted to make a Kokeshi that was also related to the theme of food.

KT: Can you share with me a bit about your creation process? What came to mind when you decided on the color and design scheme for the Kokeshi? What materials did you use to create it?

Koïto-san: After looking at the blank Kokeshi for a while, I noticed that it

resembled the shape of an upside down 18-day radish (In Japan, it's called a 20-Day radish). So, I made the head a slightly reddish-white color and the body a leafy green. The material was first painted with wood glue to make it slightly three-dimensional, and then painted with acrylic paint. Then, I finished it with several coats of transparent varnish.

KT: What feeling would you like the Kokeshi to convey to viewers?

Koïto-san: I love humor, so I hope it lightens your spirits when you see it.

KT: Is there anything more you'd like to share about your experience, working with the Kokeshi Paris Project?

Koïto-san: We hope to have a large number of artists involved and hope to have an exhibition in the future.



Koito Junji

Seven ice cream cups

フルーツパーラー Sept coupes de glace



氷まつ茶

Kakigori au thé vert matcha,
12.2cm×12.2cm×16.1cm, 2012
Matcha green tea kakigori



フランボワーズのメルバ

Framboises melba,
12cm×12cm×13.8cm, 2012
Raspberries melba



メロンパフェ

Parfait au melon, 9.6cm×8.8cm×19.7cm, 2012
Melon parfait



ミックスフルーツパフェ

Parfait aux fruits, 11cm×10cm×17.8cm, 2012
Fruit parfait



バナナとフランボワーズパフェ

Parfait à la banane et framboise,
8.8cm×11.1cm×19cm, 2012
Banana and raspberry parfait



クリームあんみつ

Ammitsu à la crème,
12.5cm×12.5cm×8.4cm,
2012
Ammitsu with cream

氷イチゴ

Kakigori aux fraises,
12.2cm×12.2cm×16cm, 2012
Strawberry Kakigori



Collector's Nook

Featured Collector: Dominique Gaillard
Country of Residence: Belgium
Instagram: [@Domilov1](#)

Dominique Gaillard is an active member of the [KokeshiVillage](#) Facebook group. She lives in a small town in Belgium with her partner and his 3 children. She works as a Sales Assistant for a consulting company that mainly supports pharmaceutical companies. Almost all of her free time goes to looking for, buying, and researching Kokeshi. KT is happy to share her Kokeshi Journey.

When and how did you first become interested in Kokeshi?

It all started with a trip to Japan in 2015. Two weeks of hopping around with a whole group of friends but I didn't buy any Kokeshi. It wasn't until I got home that I fell completely in love with them. I started looking for them online.

Can you share with us a bit about your first Kokeshi?

I bought my first sōsaku Kokeshi online from a nice Polish lady. It was a small white Kokeshi made by Genji Yamada. Back



then, I had little to no knowledge about them. I just bought it because I liked it. This year I received my first dentō Kokeshi as a birthday gift from my friends. It was a wonderful Kijiyama Kokeshi made by Sasaki Kazuo. I now have more than 55 dentō Kokeshi, and counting... I'm still looking for a nice Oshin and Zaō type to complete all strains.

Do you have a favorite Kokeshi that you would never part with?

That's a very tricky question because I have multiple favorites. But apart from the Kijiyama that I received for my birthday, I would never part with my big chunky Kobayashi Inosuke, because it's very hard to find and it was the first big Kokeshi I was able to buy. In fact, while I was buying other smaller Kokeshi, the seller suggested this big one to me. In the picture it seemed quite large, but I was actually very surprised by her size and weight when she arrived. My Issetsu Kobayashi dolls have also found their forever home.



Do you collect both sōsaku and dentō Kokeshi? Do you have a preference between the two styles and why?

The first 4 years I only collected creative Kokeshi; I have a lot of okappa (bobbed hair) Kokeshi. But ever since I received this beautiful Kijiyama, it kickstarted my interest for the traditional ones. I don't have





a preference; both styles have great pieces. It only makes it much harder for me to choose when buying.

FAVORITE Kokeshi



Do you like both vintage and newly made Kokeshi? Do you have a preference for new or vintage?

I like both vintage and new Kokeshi. But I think vintage Kokeshi have more soul; they are richer. Sometimes I wonder where they come from and who took care of them. Some of my vintage Kokeshi have a story; I just love that! One time there was this lady who was selling Kokeshi that belonged to her mother who passed away. I promised her that I would take good care of them. She found comfort in that thought. Isn't it great to be able to care for someone else's legacy? I wish the same for my collection after my lifetime.

About how many Kokeshi would you say

you have in your collection, where do you keep them and how do you care for them?

I don't have the exact number but there are more than 200 pieces in my collection. They are all displayed in the living room and in my home office. I keep them out of the sun. We have a temperate climate so I can just display them without being worried that they would crack. I dust them quite frequently when moving them around. Some of them I have treated with beeswax, while others are just perfect the way they are.

How do you decide what Kokeshi to add to your collection?

First I consider the look, and then the price. When the shipping fee is too high, I will not buy it either. I keep an inventory of my dolls because it happened that I bought the same doll twice. Now I have a never-ending wishlist. I like cute couples or multiple Kokeshi of the same design in different sizes and very big or tiny Kokeshi.

Why do you collect Kokeshi?

I have always been a collector, like mini perfume bottles and Coca-Cola stuff when I was a teenager. Twenty-five years later, I guess it was time for something new. Now I am very passionate about my collection. I try to learn new things about Kokeshi, Japanese culture, architecture and arts and crafts. It's also great to show my dolls when friends come over.

I would like to believe that Kokeshi are growing in popularity. If you could influence the future of Kokeshi, what would you want to do to ensure that the craft continues on for future generations?

I haven't really thought about this yet. I



don't have children of my own so maybe my collection will be sold one day. Kokeshi are indeed growing in popularity. I personally think that a lot of people see them as perfect items to go with their vintage interior. But for me it goes way deeper, the love for an object that has been made with so much attention and precision. When you know the background, it's even more beautiful.



Are you familiar with the term “destashing”? Is this something you practice when growing your collection? If yes, how do you go about selecting which ones to part with?

Yes, of course! My collection is getting bigger and the available space is getting smaller, so I had to make the heartbreaking decision to let go of some dolls. Most of them are omiyage or just designs that don't fit anymore with the others. When they don't appeal to me anymore, then it's time for them to go. As a result, I am more critical about the looks of my dolls.

Has collecting Kokeshi created additional interest in Japanese arts, culture, etc.?

Totally! I love Japanese gardens, the Japanese culture in general, architecture and arts and crafts. But most of my time is consumed by looking for Kokeshi.

Is there anything more you would like to share with your fellow collectors?

I have experienced that most beginners just go online and look for random web shops. But not all sellers have good knowledge about their merchandise. Most of these vintage/antique dealers overprice because they think they have rare pieces, when mostly they are selling omiyage Kokeshi. Following [Kokeshi Trends](#) (along with the [SoulPortals database](#)) and [Kokeshi Village](#) will help you to better understand these precious creations. You should also look for videos on how they are made. The process is very intriguing!





Artist Name: Yahagi Ichiko 矢作 一子

Contact:

siroyahagisan@docomo.ne.jp

yahagi@r8.dion.ne.jp

Payment Methods: Bank Transfer

Name of Kokeshi:

Beloved Daughter 愛娘

Studio Address:

東京都八王子市越野19-18

19-18 Koshino, Hachioji City, Tokyo

Yahagi Ichiko

矢作 一子

Yahagi Ichiko is a female Kokeshi artisan who was born in Kaga City, Ishikawa Prefecture in 1952, and currently resides in Hachioji City, Tokyo. She started training to make Kokeshi in her 40's and has since won numerous awards for her beautiful creations. Her Kokeshi range in a variety of sizes, and in themes that embody Japanese traditional aesthetics. Yahagi-san also spends time on another favorite hobby, *suibokuga*, ink painting.

KT: How old were you when you became interested in making Kokeshi?

Yahagi-san: When I was 40 years old, there was a Kokeshi exhibition at a nearby department store. I was impressed by the sensei's work, and I asked him if I could study with him.

KT: What was the name of the sensei whose work impressed you?

Yahagi-san: Dr. Tanaka Nobue. He passed away over 10 years ago.

KT: The majority of Kokeshi makers are men, and few female makers are seen. Are there any challenges or difficulties being a female Kokeshi maker in a male-dominated industry?

Yahagi-san: Basically, there is no difference between men and women in making Kokeshi. So, there is no need to worry about making Kokeshi.

KT: Please tell us about the inspiration behind your design.

Yahagi-san: First, I take the ideas that come to my mind and turn them into drawings. I then send them to a Kokeshi wood supplier. The wood supplier asks me for the type of wood I'd like to use and creates the shape. Then, I use that as the starting point for my own work.

KT: Can you tell us a bit more about your tools; for example, wood and type of paints that you use? What do you prefer to work with?

Yahagi-san: Most of the wood is made from Mizuki (dogwood), but there are also cases where Zelkova and Cypress are used. Dyes are used for face painting, and I use dyeing powders. For tools, I use engraving chisels and pyrography pens.

KT: You are an amazing artist; what would you say is the most important part of making a Kokeshi?

Yahagi-san: I believe that facial expressions are the most important.

KT: Do you have a favorite design or motif that you like to use on your Kokeshi?

Yahagi-san: I want to make good use of traditional Japanese patterns and colors.

KT: Is there a message you want your art to convey to the viewer?

Yahagi-san: Since the material is wood, I hope to not only create a cute Kokeshi but also to convey the beauty and aesthetic of wood.

KT: There are many beautiful designs on Kokeshi dolls. The dolls often are full of symbolism, Japanese culture and traditions. Can you help us to understand how tradition, culture and symbolism influence your work?

Yahagi-san: Many of my Kokeshi works are dressed in kimono. I hope to express in each of them the beauty of traditional Japanese patterns, designs and coloring.

KT: Did you ever imagine that you would win awards for your artwork? How does it feel to be an award-winning artist?

Yahagi-san: I started out making Kokeshi as a hobby. So, when I got an award, I was encouraged and thought I could do it!

KT: What advice would you give to an aspiring Kokeshi Artist?

Yahagi-san: If, like me, making Kokeshi dolls is not your main business, I hope you can continue to do it freely and enjoyably for a long time!

KT: Do you personally collect other makers' Kokeshi dolls? If yes, who are some of your favorite artists?

Yahagi-san: I haven't collected anything in particular, but I like the works of **Tomidokoro Fumio-sensei**, **Kato Tatsuo-sensei**, and **Oki Yasunobu-sensei**.

KT: What memorable responses have you had to your artwork from Kokeshi collectors?

Yahagi-san: Several times, I have been asked to create a piece of art by people far away after seeing my work on the Nihon Kokeshi Kōgei-kai website!

KT: Is there something more you would like to share with KT readers?

Yahagi-san: When you think of "Kokeshi", it is more common to think of "traditional Kokeshi", but I hope you will understand that there are also "creative Kokeshi".

KT: Lastly, do you have a Facebook or Instagram account? Will you consider Paypal as a payment option for foreigners who may want to purchase your Kokeshi work?

Yahagi-san: I'm not good with computers or smartphones, so currently no Facebook and Instagram or Paypal but I am going to learn and start!

Thank you so much for accepting our invitation to share your craft with us. A special thank you to **Megumi Nozawa** who introduced your work to me and arranged the contact for this interview.





花あそび
Hana-asobi
Playing with
Flowers



- 1952 1997 National Modern Kokeshi
Exhibition New Face Award
- 1998 National Modern Kokeshi
Exhibition Crafts Association
Award
- 1999 National Modern Kokeshi
Exhibition Minister of Education
Encouragement Award
- 2012 All Japan Kokeshi Concours
Ministry of Economy, Trade and
Industry Commercial Information
Policy Director's Award
- 2013 All Japan Kokeshi Concours
Ministry of Economy, Trade and
Industry Commercial Information
Policy Bureau Director's Award

Japan Kokeshi Crafts Association,
Creative Kokeshi Class Lecturer
Lives in Hachioji City, Tokyo



YAHAGI ICHIKO



MINORI みのり
HARVEST



KOKYŌNO-UTA 故郷の詩
HOMETOWN POETRY



UME KINU 梅衣_
PLUM CLOTHES



KOUME 香梅
FRAGRANT PLUM
BLOSSOMS



FUKU BIJIN 富久美人
A PLEASANTLY PLUMP
BEAUTY



YOROKOBI 喜び
JOY

Yoshino 吉野
Hanami Yoshino Sakura
Cherry Blossom Viewing



Gallery Shin

ギャラリーシン

Interview by: Madelyn Molina

Featured Shop: Gallery Shin

Owner: Emi Yonezawa

Web-Shop Japan: <http://www.gallery-shin.jp/>

Etsy (Overseas Shop): Shin Crafts

Facebook: [@galleryshin.miyagi](https://www.facebook.com/galleryshin.miyagi)

Instagram: [@galleryshin_m](https://www.instagram.com/galleryshin_m)

Home Base: Japan

Matsushima

TAGAJŌ Gallery Shin is here.

Sendai



KT: Please tell us about yourself, where you are located, and what you do.

EY: I am Emi Yonezawa, born and living in Tagajō City, Miyagi Prefecture, Tōhoku. I studied crafts and design at the Art University; my major was metal works. After the university, I worked at hotels as a receptionist and as public relations staff. I opened my shop in my home town in 2009.

I learned how makers, like chefs and craftsmen, are often shy types. They have a lot of knowledge but keep it to themselves. Maybe those with high skills let their products speak for themselves. I try using language, on their behalf, at my shop.

KT: Tell us about your shop “Gallery Shin”.

EY: Gallery Shin was opened in 2009 in Tagajō City which is my home town. In the beginning, I was mainly selling pottery and some Kokeshi dolls. I made some original Kokeshi with pottery at this time.

In 2011, there was a big earthquake and huge tsunami in Tōhoku. One third of my town was destroyed, even though Tagajō is over 4km from the ocean. I also encountered the Tsunami and my car was carried away. This experience led me to handling Kokeshi dolls more. On that day, so many things had disappeared in a moment; that meant a lot of reconstruction. But it would not be the same as before. I

thought about what I should save, as a person involved in crafts. The answer was “Kokeshi doll”. Now I’m learning about Kokeshi dolls, the same as you.

KT: You have a special relationship with local Kokeshi Artists. Can you tell us a little bit about the artists your shop represents, the kind of Kokeshi you sell, and if you take special requests for certain types of Kokeshi?

EY: I mainly handle Sakunami style Kokeshi dolls, which are made by **Hiraga Teruyuki**. He is the last person who makes dolls in the Sakunami area of Sendai City. (The other Sakunami style craftsmen are living in another area.) Now I’m trying to build a relationship with **Kakizawa Yoshinobu** in Naruko and **Abo Masafumi** (Tsugaru). They are younger artists in the Kokeshi profession. Usually, when I order some Kokeshi dolls from craftsmen, I just give them the theme of the Kokeshi doll. For example, ‘sakura’, ‘momiji’, ‘colorful’ and so on. I don’t ask them about the specific pattern of doll so much, because of their character. **Hiraga-san** doesn’t like to make the same Kokeshi dolls and **Kakizawa-san** doesn’t like making the same dolls as someone else. (That is the reason Kakizawa-san doesn’t make Santa Claus Kokeshi dolls yet. He said that he can’t find his own style of Santa Claus yet.) I want them to make Kokeshi with their own vision and create what they want to make. It takes some time, so there are a limited number of craftsmen in my

shop now.

KT: How do you decide which Kokeshi artists to feature in your shop? What specific things do you look for?

EY: The important thing is if the craftsman uses his brush well. For a long time, brush strokes have been a main element in Japanese ink and watercolor painting and also in Japanese calligraphy. Handwriting by brush, in itself, also creates artistic images.

KT: What makes your shop the best place to buy Kokeshi?

EY: You can enjoy some stories about Kokeshi dolls. For example, Mr. Hiraga’s grandmother’s story with his baby sitter Kokeshi doll type, and why Kakizawa-san doesn’t make his own style Naruko Kokeshi doll. Good Kokeshi dolls were created because of some challenging times. I hope Kokeshi with their own kind of story will be in stock soon.

KT: Where can we find your shop?

EY: My physical shop is located between Sendai City and Matsushima. Both places are famous for tourism in Miyagi.

KT: Where do you ship; which countries do you not ship to?

EY: I have shipped my Kokeshi dolls to the USA, some countries in Europe, one country in the Middle East and few in Asia. I haven’t yet sent them to Canada, Taiwan and China.

Gallery Shin

ギャラリーシン



KT: Is there something special about your shop that you would like to share with us?

EY: Now I am preparing some old books. These were published in the 1960's ~1970's.

KT: Do you also collect Kokeshi? If yes, what is your favorite Kokeshi to collect and why?

you get when you think about Kokeshi?

EY: If I talk about the meaning of Kokeshi dolls for me, Kokeshi is mostly the same as my home town. For Miyagi citizens, almost 100% of families had Kokeshi dolls in our houses, at least those who were born in the Shōwa era (1926~ 1989), even if we were not collectors.



EY: I collect some family line Kokeshi which I am handling at my shop. For example, Kenzo (1887~1949), Kenjiro (1918~2012) and Kenichi (1943~2007) Hiraga's dolls. They are Teruyuki Hiraga's great-grandfather, grandfather and his father. I would also get Denzaburō Kanou's (1898~1940) Kokeshi. He is Hiroshi Kanou's grandfather.

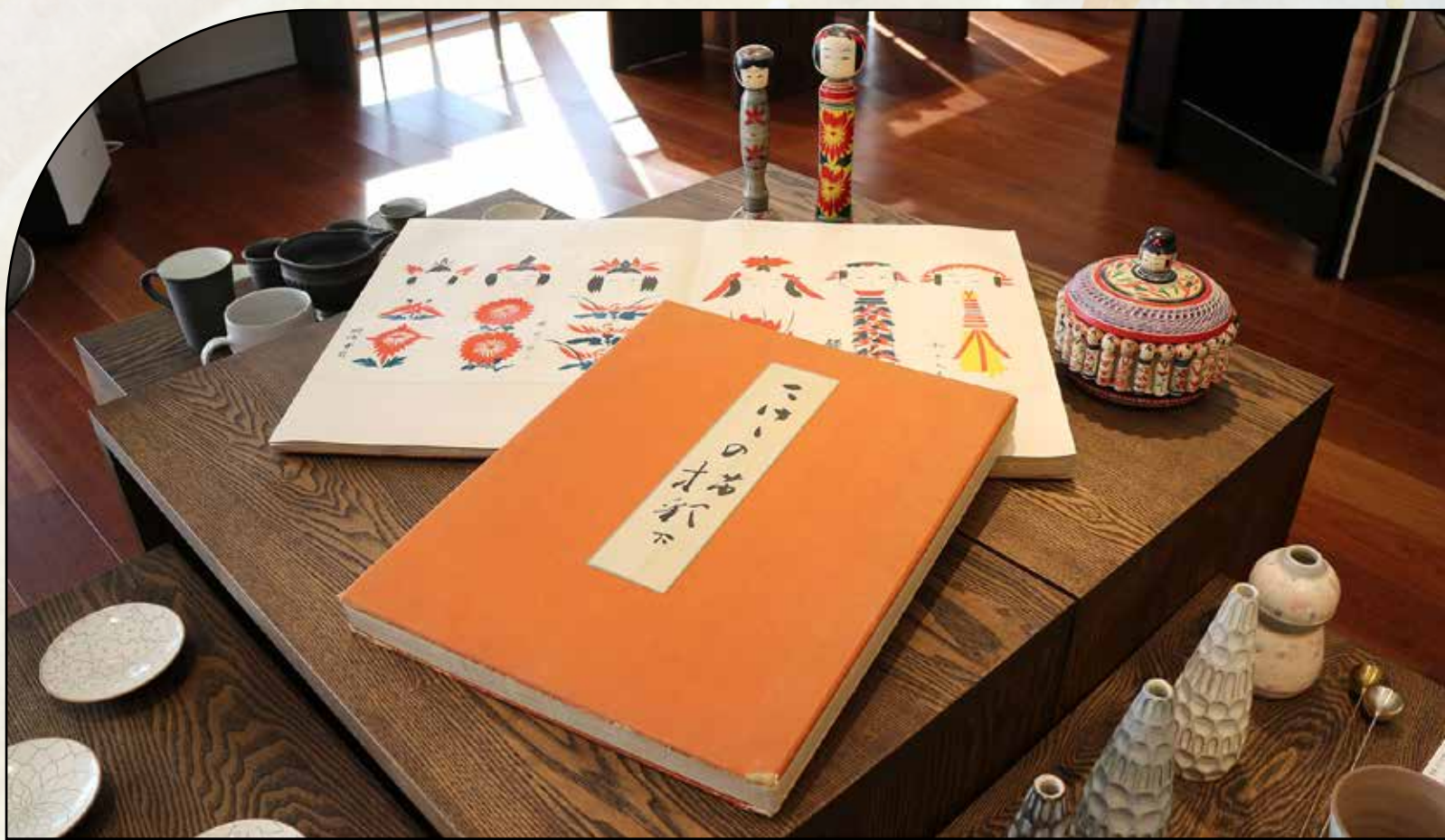
KT: What is the best way to describe the feeling

Honestly, when I was in my 20's, I turned away from Kokeshi dolls because I dislike hearing "Oh, you look like a Kokeshi doll". It was a common comment to Miyagi people when we said where we came from. Kokeshi are definitely a symbol of Miyagi Prefecture! Then, some years later, when I became an adult, I could forgive Kokeshi dolls. I am not similar to a Kokeshi doll anymore.

I think some kind of folk toys, like Kokeshi, are similar to dialects. We are losing those words and intonation these days. I was embarrassed by my dialect when I was young, so I changed my intonation to normal Japanese. Finally, I lost my Miyagi-ben. (ben is dialect in Japanese.) But sometimes I look back on it with a sense of nostalgia.

prefectures, Kokeshi is only the mountainside's culture, so not everyone has their own Kokeshi dolls in their house.

Thank you, Yonezawa-san, for sharing your Kokeshi story with us. We are so happy to be able to learn about Kokeshi and have people share their love and passion for Kokeshi with



Kokeshi dolls are very Tōhoku and country dolls. But I can't imagine my prefecture without Kokeshi. I don't want to say "save the Kokeshi", but I hope Kokeshi dolls and craftsmen are always around.

Note: In Miyagi Prefecture, the mountainside and oceanside are closer than in other prefectures of Tōhoku. Therefore, mountain and ocean culture were mixed. In the other

the rest of the world. I love buying from your shop. You always have beautiful new Kokeshi and I look forward to finding more beautiful works as you grow your Kokeshi relationship with local artists.



December 2020

Interview by Madelyn Molina

Yamazaki Yuko has loved crafts since childhood and tried everything from sewing to embroidery and knitting. Once she became an adult, she learned western dressmaking (repurposing old cloth) and knitting and was able to sell her creations. She also found her way to sōsaku Kokeshi dolls. In her most recent years, she has learned watercolor painting, and uses her sketches of people and flowers to create Kokeshi dolls.

Yamazaki-san loves animals, and her pets have always been a part of her life. She has three dogs: a bichon frisé, a Labrador retriever and a Doberman pinscher. To add to her lively environment she has parrots, an African grey parrot and a white-bellied caique parrot. Yamazaki-san also likes sports, tennis and road bikes. Since she moved from Saitama City to Yokohama City in search of nature last year, she got a 400cc motorcycle license and is actively enjoying touring with her sons. Kokeshi Trends is honored to share the work of Yamazaki-san with our readers.

KT: How old were you when you became interested in making Kokeshi? How old were you when you made your first Kokeshi?

Yamazaki-san: My mother loved Kokeshi dolls. She was always coming home from her travels with a Kokeshi doll in her arms, so I guess I naturally fell in love with the dolls too. I was 35 years old when I actually became interested in creating them.

I was so moved by the works of the late Yoshida Takashi that I visited his studio. He is a great craftsman and I respect him for his personality and his work. One day he gave me some materials, and said "If you like it

Yamazaki Yuko

山崎 裕子



that much, make it,” and so I carved a Kokeshi to take home. He was happy.

In fact he was so pleased, when I carved it, that he accepted me as his only student. Under his guidance I was able to learn and create Kokeshi.

KT: The majority of Kokeshi makers appear to be men. There are few female makers. As a female maker, are there any challenges or difficulties being a Kokeshi maker in a male-dominated industry?

Yamazaki-san: At first, I wondered whether, as a hobbyist, I could create works that would stand along with those of the professionals. There is nothing at all troubling about working in a male-dominated world of Kokeshi makers.

We have already had fine pioneering women creators such as **Aoki Ryoka**. As a result, I along with **Yahagi Ichiko** and **Tokumaru Etsuko** started a Kokeshi-making program in *Urawa* with the goal of fostering artists. In a twelve-year period we produced about ten creative Kokeshi artists.

KT: Please tell us about the inspiration behind your designs. Can you walk us through one of your design processes?

Yamazaki-san: I started creating works, from the design up, four years ago, and I was able to do this because I have learned how to use a wood-working lathe. Since I am able to control every step from the very inception, I'm able to realize my creative goals.

Regardless, I decide on the theme first. The theme and title of the work need to be carefully considered. If I mess that up, I'm lost. In my case, I decide the age of the character, and the historic period. From there, the form and the motifs inevitably follow. When you start a work that has been so carefully conceived, it progresses smoothly. A fun and wonderful world grows from the well-considered design of a creative Kokeshi, a world that includes many artistic elements, such as sculpting, carving, polishing, drawing and painting.

KT: Can you tell us a bit more about your tools; for example, the wood and type of paints that you use? What do you prefer to work with?

Yamazaki-san: I carve with chainsaws, lathes, electric carving machines, chisels, carving knives, etc. I also use pyrography and color with dyes, face pigment, Sumi-ink, and acrylic paint. Recently, I am also using watercolors. I am probably the only female artist

who uses both a lathe and a chainsaw.

KT: You are an amazing artist; what would you say is the most important part of making a Kokeshi?

Yamazaki-san: The key element is to bring the material to life with careful forethought. It is to create with the aim of giving life again to a tree that has lost its life. Kokeshi are about simplification and abstraction. In other words, creating unique figures and expressions within a deformed mold. That is the difference between Kokeshi and sculpture. Above all, Kokeshi must be cute and beautiful, and the work must move the viewer's heart.

KT: Do you have a favorite design or motif that you like to use on your Kokeshi?

Yamazaki-san: Nothing in particular, but I have a lot of birds and flowers. In the future, I also want to incorporate elements of my sketches into my Kokeshi paintings.

KT: Is there a message you want your art to convey to the viewer?

Yamazaki-san: I would be

happy if you smile the moment you see it and if you can feel the warmth emitted by the wood material. It's the warmth of life, something that is not found in glass, metal or plastic.

KT: There are many beautiful designs on Kokeshi dolls. The dolls often are full of symbolism, Japanese culture and traditions. Can you help us to understand how tradition, culture and symbolism influence your work?

Yamazaki-san: As Kokeshi is an art form that plays a role in the transmission of traditional Japanese culture, we as artists have a duty to pass it on. There must be no imbalance between costumes, hairstyles, customs and the form or the painting, and it must have a strong historical background. If any imbalance is detected the work will be unconvincing; by creating with this in mind, I believe my work will help to convey traditional Japanese culture to the world.

KT: Did you ever imagine that you would win awards for your artwork? How does it feel to be an award-winning artist?

Yamazaki-san: About ten years after I started creating, Master Yoshida thought, "This is a work that I can present to the world..." and he encouraged me to enter a competition. That was the first time I won the *Tokyo Newspaper Award* for **Yumeharuka**. I was happy because I hadn't even thought about a prize at all, but I really wanted a once-in-a-lifetime Rookie of the Year Award (just kidding)! I don't have much in the way of awards, but I try to live up to my name, including my highest honor award, the *Minister of Education's Award* for **Harunoro** (春の炉). That honor is a beacon of light in my life that continues to encourage me to this day.

KT: What advice would you give to an aspiring Kokeshi artist?

Yamazaki-san: Just keep going. There is a Japanese proverb (*kotowaza*) that says, "Perseverance is power."

There is a time in everyone's life when you have to step back. It happened to me. At such times you should not quit, even if the pace slows

down a little. Create as many Kokeshi works as possible. Don't forget, that creative impulse is always with you.

KT: Do you personally collect other makers' Kokeshi dolls? If yes, who are some of your favorite artists?

Yamazaki-san: Mostly the works of Mr. Yoshida. Also, I have one piece each by friends who make Kokeshi. I like the works of Mr. Sekiguchi Sansaku and Mr. Takashi Yoshida.

KT: What memorable responses have you had to your artwork from Kokeshi collectors?

Yamazaki-san: I received a nice comment from Master Yoshida's wife this year:

"Thank you for being my husband's only disciple and continuing to carry on his style and his memory, so faithfully."

I am happy if my work has firmly inherited the style of the master. I am also proud of it.

I also have a classmate who is a dentist who has been displaying my work in the reception area in the hope that it will increase in value.

KT: Is there something more you would like to share with KT readers?

Yamazaki-san: Compared to dentō Kokeshi, sōsaku Kokeshi are still not as well known. Sōsaku Kokeshi require a lot of time and effort and the number of pieces that can be produced is limited. The price is high, but we want the buyer to understand the value of the work. The artists put in uncanny amounts of time and passion into their works, which are unique. Please find your favorite artist.



明子
山崎裕子

山崎 裕子 YUKO YAMAZAKI

1956.6.10 東京都 生まれ

日本こけし工芸会同人 講師

主な受賞歴 Yuko's History Awards

In 2004, Received the Minister of Education Award
for her work Kokeshi Art 「Harunoro」



- 1999 年 全国近代こけし展
東京新聞賞 「夢遙か」
- 2003 年 全国近代こけし展
こけし工芸会賞 「実り」
- 2004 年 全国近代こけし展
文部科学大臣推薦賞 「春の炉」
- 2010 年 全日本こけしコンクール
前橋市長賞 「いい日」
- 2012 年 全日本こけしコンクール
仙南信用金庫賞 「楽」
- 2018 年 全日本こけしコンクール
群馬県知事賞 「薬」
- 2019 年 全日本こけしコンクール
全国商工会議所会頭賞 「何処へ」

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〒247-0035

神奈川県横浜市栄区桂台西2-14-9

TEL 045-875-6675

携帯 090-4360-4400

MAIL : atelieryuko.noah@gmail.com

instagram : atelier_yuko



1999 The 1999 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition, Tokyo Shimbun Award

2003 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition Kokeshi Crafts Association Award

2004 The Minister of Education's Encouragement Award in the National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition, [Harunoro].

2010 The Mayor of Maebashi Prize, All Japan Kokeshi Contest 2010

2012 All Japan Kokeshi Kojishi Competition, Sennan Shinkin Bank Prize

2018 The Governor of Gunma Prefecture Award, All Japan Kokeshi Contest 2018

2019 All Japan Kokeshi Contest National Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Award.

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Yokohama City, Kanagawa







Yamazaki Yuko
山崎 裕子



Collector's Nook

November 2020

Interview by: Madelyn Molina

Featured Collector: Hoangmy Phan

Hoangmy (Hoang) Phan is a fellow Kokeshi Village Facebook group member. She hails from Vancouver, Canada and like many of us shares a passion for Kokeshi. While she may not be related to Japan or Japanese people in any way, she really loves Japanese culture and art forms.

KT: When and how did you first become interested in Kokeshi?

Phan: My very first Kokeshi was given to me by my then boyfriend (husband now). It was he that started my passion about Kokeshi and I have collected them ever since.

KT: Can you tell us about your first Kokeshi?

Phan: The picture (black kimono Kokeshi) was my first one.

KT: Do you have a favorite Kokeshi that you would never part with?

Phan: The Kokeshi that I would never part with is that very first Kokeshi.

KT: Do you collect both sōsaku and dentō Kokeshi, and do you have a preference between the two styles and why?

Phan: Yes, I do collect both creative and traditional Kokeshi. However, I think I like sōsaku more as I find they are more creative, expressive, and colorful. There is more room for the artist to use their creativity.

KT: Do you like both vintage and newly made Kokeshi? Do you have a preference for new or vintage?

Phan: I like both vintage and newly made Kokeshi, but I feel that I treasure more the vintage ones.

KT: About how many Kokeshi would you say you have in your collection, where do you keep them and how do you care for them?

Phan: I have around 110 Kokeshi. I just display them in my living room. I dust them once in a while but haven't done anything much in term of caring for them. Canada is cold in the winter so we have heat on around 68 F.

KT: How do you decide what Kokeshi to add to your collection?



Phan: At this point I am still very new to the game and have no knowledge about artists. I just collect them if I like the look, and if the price is right for me.

KT: Why do you collect Kokeshi?

Phan: Kokeshi makes me happy. Since I joined the group I am fascinated about admins' and other villagers' knowledge and I am very grateful that they share their valuable knowledge. I am learning little by little every day.

KT: I would like to believe that Kokeshi are growing in popularity. If you could influence the future of Kokeshi, what would you want to do to ensure that the craft continues on for future generations?

Phan: I think that if there are more clubs



around, there will be more opportunities for the young people to learn. Classes of how to make Kokeshi would be a great help.

KT: Are you familiar with the term “destashing?” Is this something you practice when growing your collection? If yes, how do you go about selecting which ones to part with?



Phan: No, I am not familiar with the term “destashing” yet. I do not know enough about Kokeshi to step into that field.

KT: Has collecting Kokeshi created additional interest in Japanese arts, culture, etc.?

Phan: Beside Kokeshi, I also love Ikebana. I love arranging flowers and I also collect ikebana bowls and vases.

KT: Is there anything more you would like to share with your fellow collectors; tips, experiences, etc.?

Phan: I just wanted to thank everyone for their kindness that shows in the Kokeshi Village Facebook group.



December 2020

Interview by Jill Holmgren

Authors: Robert Wolf and Michael Evans

Website: MingeiArts.com

Books:

- Kokeshi: Wooden Treasures of Japan
- Sosaku Kokeshi: A New Look at an Old Tradition
- A Collectors Guide: Traditional and Creative Kokeshi and Toys



Michael Evans retired from Arizona State University where he served as Director of Student Services within the College of Architecture and Environmental Design. Michael's extensive knowledge and love for all things Japanese fostered his desire to research and collect unusual folk art from Japan.

Robert Wolf, FIIDA, is Emeritus Professor/Director of the Design School within the College of Architecture and Environmental Design where he directed the professional programs of Interior Architecture, Industrial Design and Graphic Design, all based on Human-Factor concepts.

Evans and Wolf, after their retirement, have continued their involvement with the Japanese culture, its crafts, interior environments, and product design.

KT: Please tell us a little about yourselves. We're interested in your Kokeshi story.

Robert: Michael and I are retired emeritus of Architecture, Art and Design from Arizona State University. We both have always been interested in cultural artifacts, particularly Japanese. After retirement, we opened a design gallery in Carmel, California, specializing in reimagining Asian architectural elements into pieces of contemporary furniture, and merchandising Japanese arts and crafts to a wide audience. That business was in operation until 2008 when we converted from a brick and mortar operation to an internet site, (mingeiarts.com). We have a love of Japanese Culture in general and our website focuses on the history, artist profiles, and sales of

traditional and sōsaku Kokeshi, as well as all categories of Japanese Traditional Folk Art.

KT: When did you first become aware of and begin to appreciate Kokeshi?

Robert: We discovered Japanese traditional and sōsaku Kokeshi in the early 1980s after being introduced to a wonderful gentleman named Robert Brokop, who was a retired art teacher and avid Kokeshi collector in San Francisco. He generously devoted a great deal of time introducing us to the Kokeshi craftsmen in both central and northern Japan where he had made purchases for over 30 years. This was our “aha” moment, and from that point on, our education on Kokeshi and our meager collection began to greatly expand to where we now have 500+ dolls, with a focus on sōsaku Kokeshi. The publication of our first book was gratifying and was completed just prior to Robert passing.

KT: What is it about Kokeshi that appeals to you?

Robert: The most appealing aspect of Kokeshi is their representation of Japanese cultural tradition and the use of everyday motif. The artwork (motif) associated with each piece as seen in painted heads, faces, and ornately patterned bodies, as well as the beautiful forms and carving, show such expressive personalities, unequivocal poise, open projected human emotions, and gestures despite the absence of limbs.

KT: Please tell us about a Kokeshi (or more) that's special to you, and why.

Watanabe Masao
Maiko Machi Musume
(Town Girl)





Katase Kahei

Robert: After collecting for over 40 years or so, our love of the craft has focused on the carved dolls more than the painted figures, mainly because the manipulation of the material and wood becomes prominent in the expression of this art form. **Katase Kahei; Shido Shozan; Murakami Ken-ichi; Sekiguchi Sansaku; Sekiguchi Toa; and Watanabe Masao** are our favorite carvers. We also appreciate a diversity of artists who create beautiful

painted dolls, such as **Aoki Ryoka; Ikari Fumio; Nozawa Megumi; Okamoto Yoshie; Yamazaki Yuko** and, most of all, **Sato Kouson**, who has produced some exceptional, artistically painted pieces.

KT: What makes a Kokeshi worthy of joining your personal collection?

Robert: Unique figural qualities and quality of craft are the basis for what we incorporate into our collection. We love to collect three examples of each artist to show the diversity of the work, and also focus on one-offs, if at all possible, as one of the few types of dolls that are individually signed/sealed.

KT: Where do you think Kokeshi fit in the world of art and design?

Robert: It is always believed that an artist would never allow the medium to dictate the art. In Japan, the term “*Kogei*” means art that couples form and function, bringing beauty to every creation no matter what its purpose. The Japanese believe that craft is an “applied art”, wherein artisans at the highest levels are recognized by the government as “Living National Treasures”.

So, our question to the Kokeshi collector: “Is Kokeshi art, or is it craft?” What is the difference when a creative individual chooses to use a medium such as a canvas, fabric, clay, metal, plastic, or wood that is not only meant to be functional, but expressive, as a method of sharing their vision? That

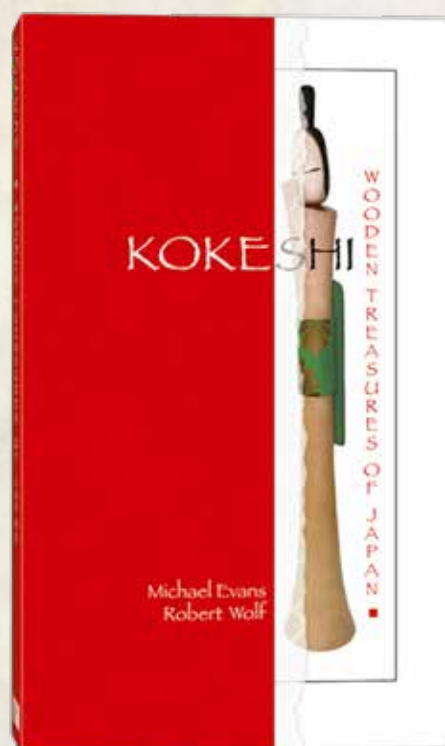
is why we have always referred to Kokeshi-making as “High Craft”.

KT: Your thoughts on the present production and sale of new Kokeshi?

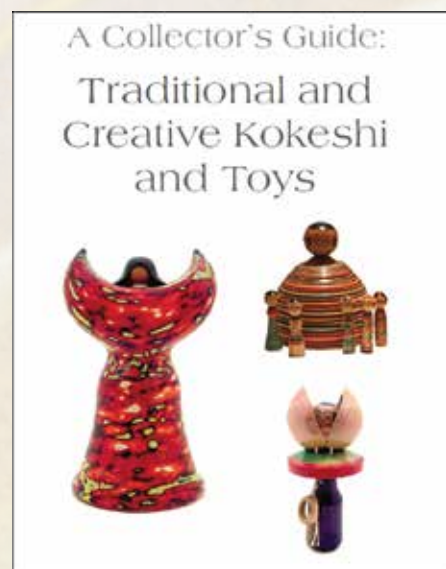
Robert: “The Ability to See” is the basis of producing exceptional examples of Kokeshi. The most beautiful objects in the world aren’t just seen, but felt in the heart. In our opinion, there are some fabulous pieces produced by contemporary artists, creating pieces with great care, brimming with individuality, exceptional form, carving and painting. Unfortunately, since Kokeshi have become popular, several non-Japanese countries have been marketing mass-produced pieces that we feel have no character, nor do they represent any aspect of the Japanese culture and life which is the basis of the Japanese Kokeshi doll.

KT: What prompted you to write and publish the two art books: Kokeshi: Wooden Treasures of Japan and Sōsaku Kokeshi: A New Look at an Old Tradition and the new e-Book, A Collector’s Guide: Traditional and Creative Kokeshi and Toys?

Robert: We decided in 2004 that the West needed to learn and experience this wonderful “high craft” so we published our book (in English) entitled: Kokeshi: Wooden



Treasures of Japan, which was the first book. This publication was an illustrative book with folk tales explaining the origins and diversity of Kokeshi and meant to only be an introduction to the craft. Since the first publication and as of this writing, we have sold close to 5,000 copies around the world. This encouraged us to write a second book entitled: Sōsaku Kokeshi: A New Look at an Old Tradition, solely focused on Sōsaku (Creative) Kokeshi, which sold out immediately. It was extremely expensive to publish, so a second printing did not occur. This endeavor, however, finally culminated



with the release of our eBook entitled: A Collector's Guide: Traditional and Creative Kokeshi and Toys surveying the entire subject of Traditional, sōsaku, and Kokeshi-related toys. Our final publication effort was the establishment of this new

eBook, which allows us to both refine artist information when it becomes available, and to expand it as more craftsmen become known.

The eBook was specifically focused on spreading knowledge of the subject internationally, since printed books with numerous colored illustrations are not only expensive to publish but to ship across the globe. One must understand that it has been very difficult, particularly early on, to obtain this information because in the early 1960's Japanese Craftsmen did not want to be known outside Japan. They protected their backgrounds and information. So that is why the first book did not have as much information as the current publication.

Two final notes: We copyrighted the words "Kokeshi: Wooden Treasures of Japan" in 2005 with our first book. This helped expand the popularity of Kokeshi on eBay,

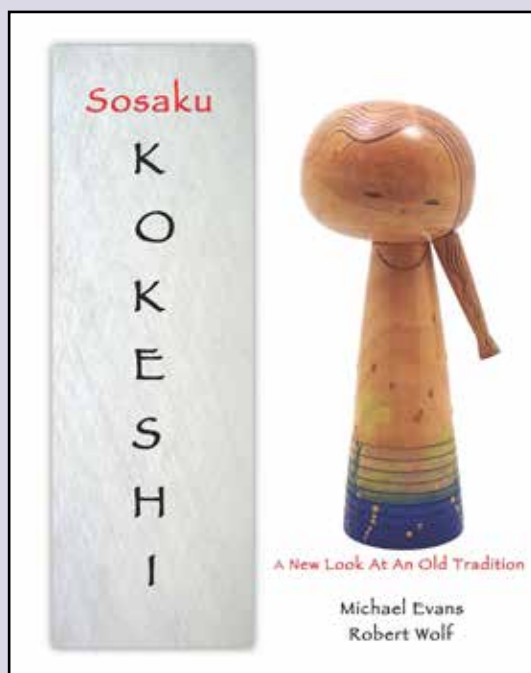
which continues to grow more than any other category. This has caused many sellers to now use the term "Wooden Treasures", because it has become so popular on search engines and they now apply it to any object to get visibility, even to the point that they copy Kokeshi images that have no relationship to what they are selling.

KT: Do you do appraisals?

Robert: We do not do appraisals, but recommend that collectors keep abreast of the market via the internet or yearly Japanese competitions such as in the Tōhoku region, Shibukawa, and at the 'All Gunma Kindai' Kokeshi Contest, all of which showcase the warmth of wood and sophistication of the art. The Kokeshi enthusiast must be aware that there are a lot of people who have no idea what they are selling and only go by what is popular, asking totally unrealistic prices. We are not aware of any Kokeshi appraisers, and there are few, if any, curators around the world. This is one reason one rarely sees Kokeshi in museums in the United States, nor are there any professional publications, magazines or on-line websites like Kokeshi Trends, as there are in certain regions of Japan who know and value the craft.

KT: What factors do you consider in evaluating Kokeshi?

Robert: Cultural representation, artistic interpretation and carving, condition of the piece (no cracking or discoloration), and aesthetic beauty. Kokeshi were typically finished with a type of natural or colored candle wax, (Rōsoku no rō), and/or lacquer. Any styling or hand painted artwork is executed by using a water-based paint. If the image on the doll is smeared, it is because water soluble inks were used and most people do not know that you cannot wipe these dolls off with water for it will destroy the image. Also, we see numerous dolls that are faded. That is because they are placed where sun shines on the piece and fades the surface. Dolls with dark spots on the surface were typically left in damp environments and this is mold, which cannot be removed without destroying the doll.



KT: What would you like the general public to know about Kokeshi?

Robert: In more recent times, an artist's signature has become the standard, if you will, and nowhere is this

more prevalent than it is on Kokeshi dolls, one of the very few, if not the only, folk-art doll creations bearing signatures. Kokeshi artists have been signing their works since collectors and foreigners insisted to have the signature. The signatures of the artists on the dolls are ALWAYS unique, and artistically rendered. They are, in many instances, different than the Katakana. When the signature is shown, it shows the artist's signature, maybe the apprentice name, studio, and possibly the Onsen, for clarification and identification.

With all the publications that are out on the subject we still see many merchants who have no idea what they are selling, so they either identify them incorrectly, or identify Japanese signatures (Kanji) incorrectly. It is very difficult to translate Japanese Kanji, particularly old Kanji that has changed over the years, which can only be translated by a person (grandma) who can read an outdated writing or graphic. Even younger Japanese cannot translate Kanji that was not used in schools when they were educated.

KT: What advice would you give a collector?

Robert: Collect what you love and what "speaks" to you. Buy only a doll that is in excellent original condition with no cracking or fading, no repairs, and that has been beautifully preserved with at most some gentle wear from aging. Collect maybe theme dolls, such as unique hairstyles like pigtailed; Kabuki; Mother and Child; Snow Children Wearing the Traditional "Kakumaki" Blanket; or some form that you relate to and want to surround yourself with everyday. Each artist will have unique features to their dolls, in a sense like a signature, and you should get to know those features when identifying original Kokeshi.

KT: What else would you like us to know?

Robert: In the 30 years we were in academia, we worked with a number of undergraduate and graduate students who helped us make connections throughout Japan, even though they did not understand why we were interested in "grandma stuff". Most of the Japanese population, other than through festivals, has moved on to contemporary life and objects, but it appears that other populations throughout the world are extremely interested in Kokeshi and its evolution, and have contributed to numerous articles on the subject. We became acquainted with one such person when we opened our gallery. A lovely and supportive individual came into the shop while visiting Carmel, California. She was surprised to see the Kokeshi we had on exhibit and said that her daughter was beginning a doctoral dissertation on Kokeshi. She bought two sōsaku Kokeshi to support that long endeavor. This became our introduction to a wonderful young lady, **Dr. Jennifer McDowell**, whose research produced the only English language publication on the history of Kokeshi, entitled: Kokeshi: Continued and Created Traditions (Motivations for a Japanese Folk Art Doll) in 2011. All these folks continue to inspire and support us throughout our own evolution in collecting these wonderful abstract forms.

Sato
Kouson

佐藤香村



TOKUMARU ETSUKO

徳丸 えつこ

December 2020

Interview by Madelyn Molina

Tokumaru Etsuko was born in 1956 in Tokyo, Japan where she currently resides. Some of her hobbies include marquetry, kimono, and piano. Recently, she has been watching YouTube and, of course, making Kokeshi dolls. Kokeshi Trends is honored to introduce her work to our readers.

KT: How old were you when you became interested in making Kokeshi? How old were you when you made your first Kokeshi?

Tokumaru-san: When I was in my late thirties, I came into contact with Fumiko Ikari's original Kokeshi works and was very impressed. I later became her student and created my first Kokeshi doll under her guidance.

KT: The majority of Kokeshi makers are men. There are few female makers. As a female maker, are there any challenges or difficulties being a Kokeshi maker in a male-dominated industry?

Tokumaru-san: None in particular

KT: Please tell us about some of the inspiration behind your designs.

Tokumaru-san: We live and think about ideas all the time. I incorporate those ideas into my Kokeshi dolls. In the process of making a Kokeshi, I carve what I imagine in my mind without making a drawing first. When the Kokeshi is formed to a certain extent, I make a drawing and determine the color and pattern of the Kokeshi.



KT: Tell us more about your tools; for example, the wood and type of paints that you use. What do you prefer to work with?

Tokumaru-san: The wood is mostly dogwood (mizuki), cypress and zelkova, and the dyes used are either pigments or acrylic paints. The tools used are lathes, electric wood carvers, pyrography pens etc.

KT: You are an amazing artist. What would you say is the most important part of making a Kokeshi?

Tokumaru-san: Using the warmth of the wood, turned on the lathe, I think about the design and color and about expressing my own personality and style.

KT: Do you have a favorite design or motif that you like to use on your Kokeshi?

Artist Name:

Tokumaru Etsuko

徳丸 えつこ

Email: kou39tokumaru@gmail.com

Payment Methods: Bank Transfer

**AWARDS**

- 1999 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition Encouragement Award
- 2001 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition Crafts Association Award
- 2003 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition Tokyo Shimbun Award
- 2005 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition
Minister of Education Encouragement Award
- 2017 All Japan Kokeshi Concours Gunma Prefecture Governor's Award
Japan Kokeshi Crafts Association.

Creative Kokeshi Class Lecturer, Lives in Sumida-ku, Tokyo



Tokumaru-san: I use classic kimono motifs sometimes, but I also base them on western clothing, not just kimono.

KT: Is there a message you want your art to convey to the viewer?

Tokumaru-san: I would be grateful if my Kokeshi dolls bring a warm feeling and a smile to people who see them.

KT: Can you help us to understand how tradition, culture and symbolism influence your work?

Tokumaru-san: I am influenced by traditional Japanese scenery such as cherry blossoms and also by classic kimono patterns.

KT: Did you ever imagine that you would win awards for your artwork? How does it feel to be an award-winning artist?

Tokumaru-san: I am very happy to have received awards. I will work hard every day to live up to the awards I have received.

KT: What advice would you give to an aspiring Kokeshi artist?

Tokumaru-san: I would be happy if you can express your own style and enjoy your creative Kokeshi.

KT: Do you personally collect other makers' Kokeshi dolls? If yes, do you have a favorite artist?

Tokumaru-san: Yes, I do, I have Kokeshi by Fumiko Ikari-sensei

KT: Is there something more you would like to share with KT readers?

Tokumaru-san: I am very committed to each of my works. I hope you will take a look at my work and enjoy it as much as possible.

"I would be grateful if my Kokeshi dolls bring a warm feeling and a smile to people who see them."





TOKUMARU ETSUKO

徳丸 えつこ



Kokeshi Museums in Tōhoku, Japan

(Aomori, Miyagi, Fukushima. There are none in Akita/Iwate.)

Updated December 15, 2020
Justin Velgus / Jill Holmgren

AOMORI PREFECTURE:

Museum Name:

Tsugaru Kokeshi-kan (津軽こけし館)

Highlights: Collection of 4,000 Kokeshi, corner to view Kokeshi being made by craftsman, Japan's largest Kokeshi (4.21m, 755 kg)! Gift shop sells over 1,000 Kokeshi representing all 11 types from around Japan.

Website: <http://tsugarukokeshi.com/>

Hours: Open year-round 9:00-17:00
(closed Dec 29~Jan 3)

English Address: 72-1 Tomiyama,
Fukuro, Kuroishi, Aomori 036-0412
Japan

Japanese Address: 〒036-0412青森県黒
石市大字袋字富山72-1

MIYAGI PREFECTURE:

Museum Name: Japan Kokeshi
Museum(日本こけし館)

Highlights: One of the largest Kokeshi museums in Japan, display of past winning Kokeshi from the famous Naruko Kokeshi Festival, paint-your-own Kokeshi experience.

Website: <http://www.kokesikan.com/>
Dedicated English website: <https://k-k-s.tokyo/>

Hours: 10:00-16:00

English Address: 74-2 Naruko Onsen
Shitomae, Osaki, Miyagi 989-6827

Japanese Address: 〒989-6827宮城県大
崎市鳴子温泉字尿前74-2

Museum Name: Iwashita Kokeshi
Museum (岩下こけし資料館)

Highlights: Half Kokeshi shop with many original creations, half museum with free admission. Located between central Naruko Onsen area and the Japan Kokeshi Museum, largest collection of Kokeshi-related literature in Tōhoku, Kokeshi painting experience.

Website: <https://www.iwashita.info/>

Hours: Open year-round 8:00-17:30

English Address: 74-2 Naruko Onsen
Furutomae, Osaki, Miyagi 989-6827
Japan

Japanese Address: 〒989-6826宮城県大
崎市鳴子温泉字古戸前80

Museum Name: Museum of Kamei
Collection (カメイ美術館)

Highlights: The museum houses three main collections: butterfly specimens, paintings, and Kokeshi. Located a 10-minute walk from Sendai Station, collection focuses on older Kokeshi with regular special exhibits about more unique types/themes.

Website: <http://www.kameimuseum.or.jp/>

Hours: Open year-round 10:00-17:00
(closed Mondays, and Dec 28~Jan 4)

English Address: 1-1-23 Itsutsubashi,
Aoba-Ku, Sendai, Miyagi 980-0022
Japan

Japanese Address: 〒980-0022 仙台市青葉区五橋1-1-23

Museum Name: Zaō Kokeshi Museum (みやぎ蔵王こけし館)

Highlights: Collection of 5,500 Kokeshi from around Tōhoku makes this the largest collection in Japan, Kokeshi painting experience, occasional chance to see artisan making Kokeshi.

Website: <http://www.Kokeshizao.com/>

Hours: Open year-round 9:00-17:00 (closed Dec 29~Jan 3)

English Address:
Shinchinishiurayama-36-135
Togattaonsen, Zao-machi, Katta-gun,
Miyagi 989-0916 Japan

Japanese Address: 〒989-0916宮城県刈田郡蔵王町遠刈田温泉字新地西裏山36番地135

Area Name: Yajiro Kokeshi Village, Shiroishi City

Website: <https://www.city.shiroishi.miyagi.jp/site/kanko/1481.html>

<https://shiroishi-navi.jp/en/detail/yajiro-kokeshi-doll-village/>

Hours: April-October 9:00-5:00
November-March 9:00-4:00

English Address: 72-1 Yajirokita, Fukuokayatsumiya, Shiroishi 989-0733 Miyagi Prefecture

Japanese Address: 福岡八宮字弥治郎北72-1

FUKUSHIMA PREFECTURE:

Museum Name: Nishida Memorial Museum (原郷のこけし群西田記念館)

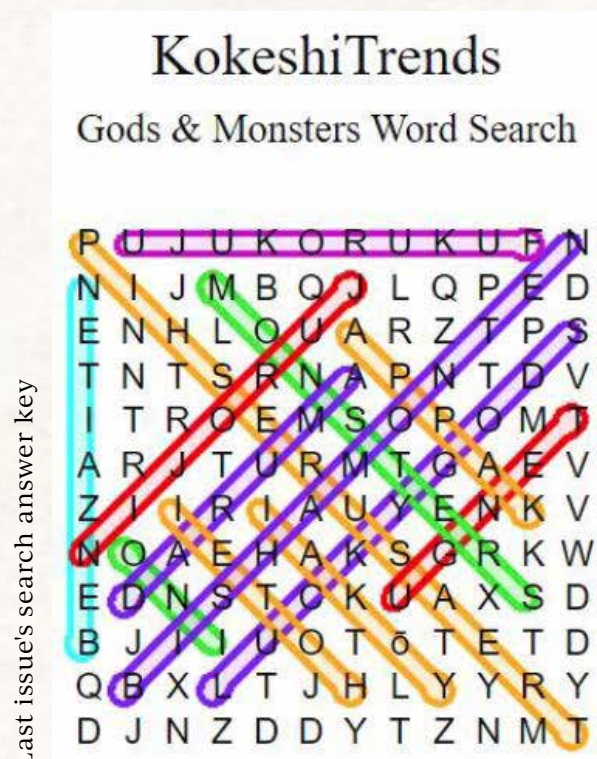
Highlights: About 1,000 Kokeshi on display, including important prewar Kokeshi, located between central Fukushima City and Tsuchiyu Onsen inside tourist attraction Anna's Garden.

Website: <http://nishidakinenkan.or.jp/>

Hours: Open year-round 10:00-17:00 (16:30 in winter) (closed Dec 29~Jan 3)

English Address: 3-183 Arai-Yokozuka, Fukuro, Fukushima, Fukushima 960-2156 Japan

Japanese Address: 〒960-2156 福島県福島市荒井横塚3-183



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Kokeshi Books Authors:

English

- [Sunny Seki](#)
- [From Tohoku With Love by Manami Okazaki](#)
- [A Collector's Guide: Traditional and Creative Kokeshi and Toys Michael Evans & Robert Wolf](#)
- [The World of Japanese Kokeshi Dolls by Réka Tóth-Vásárhelyi](#)
- [Japan's Dento Kokeshi by Robertta A Uhl](#)

Japanese (some English)

- [Kokeshi Jidai](#)

French

- [Kokeshi, the art of Japanese dolls by Laetitia Hébert](#)

Artists websites

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Editor on Call
Jill Holmgren



KOKESHI TRENDS

Thank you for stopping by
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Merri Kurisumasu – This 3 ft. Christmas tree was designed and crafted by the Peoria (Illinois) Festival of Trees decorating committee in 2019.

Kristin McHugh-Johnston, a Kokeshi collector and Kokeshi Village member, chairs the design committee and served as lead decorator for this tree.

Decorators create upwards of 50 trees of various sizes between July and November. The fundraiser benefits the local Crittenton Centers crisis nursery (crittentoncenters.org).

“The Festival organizers asked for several global-inspired trees,” said McHugh-Johnston. “I couldn’t pass up putting Kokeshi in a tree! In addition to the Kokeshi and origami ornaments and Japanese fans, the team used starch to layer 4 different ribbons to resemble obi.”



PHOTO: KRISTIN MCHUGH-JOHNSTON