KOKESHITRENDS Free Publication 2024

Special Issue 3

Emergent Beauty Visions of Sōsaku and all the we



ELCOME

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INTRODUCTION

Numerous distinctive styles and variations of Kokeshi dolls exist. As a collector, I find the most appealing aspect to be their individuality, with each doll being truly one-of-a-kind. Although designs may bear resemblance, the distinctiveness of the wood utilized sets them apart, characterized by their unique wood grain, texture, and wood knots. Furthermore, each piece of wood may even emit a different scent, adding to the charm of these traditional Japanese dolls.

In Japan, the term "Kokeshi" originally referred wto the "Dentō" or traditional limbless wooden dolls, originating during the Edo period (1804-1811) as a specialty of the Tōhoku region. Over time, the definition expanded to include "sōsaku" or creative freeform designs. The first exhibition showcasing sōsaku Kokeshi took place in the mid 1950s.

In art, beauty is emergent, arising out of vision and creativity. It is the fuel sparking ideas in the mind that need to be expressed as something tangible. It is this shared fueled fire that emboldened a group of artisans, some of whom had originally produced dentō Kokeshi, to want to bring unconventional change and innovation to a folkcraft initially intended as gifts for children. With this idea in mind, and the collaborative efforts of collector and author Noboru Yamanaka, they would alter the artistic landscape known as Kokeshi.

This special issue showcases the works of only a handful of artisans, with the potential for subsequent releases featuring more artisans and their works of art. The selections illustrate the innovation of sōsaku artisans from varying time periods.

Modelyn Molino Founding Editor

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WATANABE KUNIHIKO

渡辺 邦彦 (1973 -) Birth City: Shiroishi City, Miyagi Prefecture Master: Watanabe Yuji (father) Wood: Wood: Zelkova-Keyaki (Japanese Elm)



Title of Work: Warabe (Child) Year Created: 2023 Size: 23 cm

Kunihiko-san hails from a prestigious lineage of sōsaku Kokeshi artisans. A multi-award winning creator in his own right, his creations are characterized by their meticulousness, encompassing a sequence of steps from inception to completion. These include wood lathe turning, intricately carved hair details, wood burning to achieve elaborate design patterns and ultimately, painting and sealing to ensure the preservation of the artwork.

WATANABE YUJI

渡辺 雄二 (1951 -) Birth City: Shiroishi City, Miyagi Prefecture Master: Watanabe Masao (father) Wood: Zelkova-Keyaki (Japanese Elm)



Throughout his artistic journey, Watanabe Yuji has been the recipient of numerous esteemed accolades. His pieces are characterized by an exceptional level of intricacy, particularly evident in the finely detailed hair texture and the incorporation of renowned Japanese textile patterns in each kimono design. His unique style exudes a sense of beauty and warmth that is truly exceptional.





Description:

The outstanding feature of this artwork lies in the exquisite kimono, adorned with vibrant autumn hues. The kimono is skillfully crafted with multiple layers, creating a sense of depth and sophistication. The artist has meticulously arranged the layers to convey a sense of elegance and style. Additionally, the long, flowing hair, delicately carved from a thin layer of wood, cascades over the

face and shoulders, partially obscuring one eye. The artist intentionally designed this detail to add a touch of mystery and allure to the piece. The final outcome is a masterpiece of refined beauty. This artwork was recently showcased at the annual National Exhibition of Modern Kokeshi in Gunma prefecture.

ΚΟJIMA TAKASHI

小島隆 (1949 -) Birth City: Yokohama City, Kanagawa Prefecture Master: Undetermined Resides: Fujisawa City, Kanagawa Prefecture

Member of the Japan Kokeshi Art Association and has won several awards.

Title of Work: Shurei (Autumn Cold) Size: 20 cm



KATO TATSUO

加藤 龍雄 (1940 -) Birth City: Maebashi City, Gunma Prefecture Master: Sekiguchi Sansaku **Residence:** Shibukawa City, Gunma Prefecture Member of the Japan Kokeshi Art Association and has won several awards.



Title of Work: Satoyama no Musume The Village Girl **Size:** 28 cm

Kato Tatsuo is a highly esteemed and widely recognized Kokeshi artist. He has been honored with multiple awards for his exceptional creations, including the prestigious Medal of Honor with yellow ribbon, a significant accolade in Japan reserved for individuals who demonstrate exemplary skills and achievements that inspire others.

Additionally, he has been twice bestowed with the Prime Minister's Award. His masterpieces are distinguished by the delicate and alluring facial expressions, as well as the intricately carved and handpainted kimonos.





SAITO KIYOSHI

斎藤 きよし (1948~) Signs: きよし Kiyoshi Birth City: Isesaki, Gunma Prefecture Master: KOBAYASHI INOSUKE



Residence: Shinzato-machi, Kiryu City, Gunma Prefecture

Title of Work: Hatsune 初音 First warbling heard in a new year. **Size:** 14 cm

Major Awards

1988 Crafts Association Award at the National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition

- 1989 Minister of Education Encouragement Award for "Shiosai"
- 1989 Minister of Transport Award, Minister of International Trade and Industry Award, and others at the All Japan Kokeshi Competition
- 2009 Prime Minister Award at the All Gunma Modern Kokeshi Competition for "Mori no Hibiki"

Description:

In Japan, the Japanese Bush Warbler is seen as a symbol of spring's arrival. Known in Japanese as Hatsune, or alternatively as "harutsugedori," which translates to "the bird that announces spring," these birds are recognized for their distinctive breeding calls which resonate during the spring season. While the auditory signals of these creatures are detectable. they frequently conceal themselves among trees and shrubs. making them difficult to observe. Their green coloration provides effective camouflage,

allowing them to blend seamlessly into their surroundings.

The name "*Hatsune*" given to this charming Kokeshi embodies her serene anticipation for the initial melodies of spring heralded by the warbler.

She is perched gracefully on a beautifully adorned zabuton (sitting cushion) patiently awaiting the song of the warbler announcing the arrival of spring.



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YOSHIDA TAKASHI

吉田 多加志 (1948 - 2007) Birth City: Kiryu City, Gunma Prefecture Master: Kato Tatsuo

Title of Work: Koharubi (Early Spring) **Size:** 15 cm | 21 cm

The beautiful Keyaki wood grain pattern truly stands out, elevating the overall look of these pieces. The girls have adorable round cheeks and gracefully-shaped noses, showcasing the artisan's delicate and sophisticated artistry. Their uniquely textured hair design are remarkable and harmoniously complemented by the coordinating Obi, which adds to the visual and cultural richness of these Kokeshi.



Title of Work: Shō meaning to fly (soar) **Size:** 21 cm

The intricately crafted chestnut-brown hair gracefully cascades and complements her calm and radiant face. Shō has a lovely glow and a peaceful expression. Her warm wooden tone gives a sense of tranquility, and the golden cranes on her kimono are a stunning visual, symbolizing a wish for a long and happy life.



KATASE KAIHEI

片瀬 快平 (1922 - 2015) Birth City: Hakone-machi, Kanagawa Prefecture Master: Undetermined



Title of Work: Ei (Brilliant) Year Created: 1950s Size: 25 cm

This Kokeshi showcases a distinctive three-dimensional shape, entirely lathe-turned, featuring remarkable handcrafted intricacies and a polished finish. The focal point of this doll is the striking vermilion red wedding kimono, adorned with unique motifs in shades of yellow, turquoise, and black lacquer. Her posture features raised arms, as if extending a warm welcome to guests with respect and courtesy.

The doll's head appears relatively small in comparison to her body, complemented by long, unbound black hair flowing down the sides of her face in a *Heian* style. This hairstyle was believed to enhance spiritual energy and

Sources

Evans, M., & Wolf, R. (n.d.). Artisan: Woodworker: Katase, Kahei: 1922-2015. Mingei Arts. <u>https://mingeiarts.com/collections/artisan-woodworker-katase-kahei-1922-2015</u>

beauty, signifying a high social

status. Her neck is elegantly

covered by a white "Juban"

symbolizes the most formal

married women. Notably, her

type of kimono worn by

eyes are not painted but

intricately carved into the

wood, while a tiny red dot

This exceptional piece was

Minister" award and featured

in the inaugural Kokeshi Art

honored with the "Prime

represents her nose.

Exhibition catalog.

Furthermore, it was

highlighted in the 2022

Artists of the Creative

publication titled Sosaku

Kokeshi: Celebrating the Major

Movement. Previously under

Wolf and Michael Evans. this

the stewardship of Robert

Kokeshi now resides in the

Soulportals Collection.

collar, specifically the *Kurotomesode*, which

SHIDO SHŌZAN

志藤 尚山 (1932 - 1995) Birth City: Inukai-cho, Oita Prefecture Master: Undetermined







Title of Work: Little Girl (少女) Hiragana for the work can translate to Shōjo しょうじょ or Otome おとめ, referencing young girls between the ages of 4 to 18. Published: 1978 Size: 26 cm

Before Shido-san became a sōsaku artisan, he was a Yamagata dentō artisan. He, along with several others, would soon contribute to a new evolution of Kokeshi.

Shido Shozan's sōsaku Kokeshi are known for their unique designs and elegance. His Kokeshi feature hand-painted designs that reflect nature and rural life. His primary artistic focus revolved around portraying minimally-embellished Northern girls in the traditional "*Mino*" attire, also known as Snow Coat.

Other designs featured natural wood grain and beautifully carved details. His works are highly coveted by collectors past and present, making him one of the top collectible artists that emerged from the sōsaku movement of the 1960's. In his lifetime, Shido-san received numerous awards for his works, notably being honored with the Prime Minister's Award.

Sources:

 Yamanaka, N. (n.d.). In Creative Kokeshi Doll. pg 53, Satobun Co., Ltd.
Evans, M., & Wolf, R. (n.d.). Artisan: Woodworker: Shido, Shouzan: 1932-1995. Mingei Arts. (n.d.). <u>https://mingeiarts.com/collections/artisan-woodworker-shido-shozan-1932-1995</u>







Niponica No.11. Web Japan. (n.d.). https://web-japan.org/niponica/niponica11/en/feature/feature03-3.html

MAKINO HITOSHI

牧野均 (1956 -) **Birth City:** Akita City, Akita Prefecture **Master:** Undetermined

Title of Work: Sha & Nishiki

Sha (L): Size: 30 cm **Wood:** Enju & Kaede (Japanese pagoda and maple)

Sha draws inspiration from silk gauze, a sheer and airy fabric that is produced by an intricate interlacing of warp threads. In Japan, there exist three primary gauze weave styles: *ra*, *sha*, and *ro*. Referred to collectively as *usumono*, or "thin fabric," silk gauze is believed to have been initially utilized as summer attire by aristocrats, samurai, and other elite individuals during the early 8th century.

Nishiki (R): Size: 30 cm **Wood:** Keyaki (Japanese Zelkova)

Nishiki draws inspiration from contemporary Japanese brocades. Intricate application of a range of shimmering golden hues create subtle gradation and the illusion of embossing.

About the Artist:

Makino-san is a highly acclaimed artisan who has been honored with multiple awards for his exceptional craftsmanship. He received the prestigious Prime Minister's Award in both 2000 and 2012.

Renowned for his unique creations, he has consistently declined requests to replicate any of his works. Makino-san continuously pushes the boundaries of his skills by experimenting with intricate carving techniques, innovative coloring methods, and precise lathe turning, effortlessly creating complex pieces that showcase his unparalleled talent.

Sources:

USABURO KOKESHI

Founder: Okamoto Usaburo (岡本 卯三郎) Year of Birth: 1917 Birth City: Shintō Village, Gunma Prefecture Factory City: Kitagunma-gun, Gunma Prefecture



Title of Work: Camellia Village, Tsubaki No Sato (椿の里) **Size:** 15.5 cm | +5 cm base

Usaburo Kokeshi are easily identifiable by their bobbed hair style.

This Kokeshi is wearing a red kimono with a camellia flower design. She is set on top of a wind-up musical base. As the delicate melody fills the room, the Kokeshi gracefully spins, showcasing the intricate details of her green kimono. The camellia flower design seems to come to life as she rotates in harmony with the music. It's a mesmerizing sight, capturing the essence of traditional Japanese craftsmanship and artistry. The founder of Usaburo Kokeshi was born in Shintō Village, Gunma Prefecture in 1917. He started out working with artificial stone and metal crafts before transitioning to making Kokeshi dolls in 1950. Rather than adhering to the conventional brush painting techniques, he innovated a distinctive three-dimensional method that incorporated carving and pyrography. This novel approach laid the groundwork for the Usaburo Kokeshi dolls, which continue to enjoy popularity today.

His commitment to preventing wood from cracking was remarkable, and he successfully utilized wood types that had previously been deemed unsuitable for Kokeshi doll crafting. One of his most renowned creations, "Winter Camellia," showcased his cherished camellia flowers on zelkova wood, characterized by its exquisite grain. The piece garnered such acclaim that it was purchased by Emperor Showa himself.

In 1979, he established a production system that integrated handcrafting with machinery, enabling the mass production of Kokeshi dolls. This innovation propelled his workshop to become the leading Kokeshi production facility in Japan. He remained dedicated to his craft until his passing in July 2009 at the age of 91.



Hina Kokeshi



Title of Work: Hanako | Flower Child **Size:** 60 cm

Ishihara's grandfather was Onuma Iwatao, a well-known Narugo style artisan. So, naturally Hideo-san would learn to make Narugo Kokeshi before he would transition to sōsaku.

Ishihara-san studied painting while receiving medical care for the decade following his graduation from the university.

After his recovery from the illness that had confined him to his home, he started creating sōsaku Kokeshi.

Over the course of ten years (1959–1969), he would win over sixty awards and honors, including the Prime Minister's Award, one of the highest awards a Kokeshi artisan can receive.

Japanese media network NHK introduced his work to twenty-three nations in America and Europe. He was one of the *Nippon Kokeshi Artistic Handicraft Association's* founders, helping to pioneer the sōsaku movement.

Sources:

1. Evans, M., & Wolf, R. (n.d.). Artisan: Woodworker: Ishihara, Hideo: 1925-1999. Mingei Arts. <u>https://mingeiarts.com/collections/artisan-woodworker-</u> katase-kahei-<u>1922-2015</u>

2. Hashimoto. "Ishihara Hideo 石原日出男." Kokeshi Wiki, 22 Dec. 2019, <u>kokeshiwiki.com/?p=1005</u>.

ISHIHARA HIDEO

石原日出男 (1925 - 1999) Birth City: Ginza, Tokyo Master: Mitori 見取り Style: Dentō, Naruko and Sōsaku Title of Work: N/A Size: 18 cm

The Kokeshi is wearing a Kimono and a front-facing Chrysanthemum obi (manaita 俎板帯) indicative of an Oiran. Her mage styled hair is adorned with decorative Kougai hairsticks completing her simple but sophisticated overall appearance.





Narugo Style Size: 36 cm A dentō Kokeshi, one of his early works.

MIYASHITA HAJIME

宮下 はじめ (1940 -D) Retired: 2006 Birth City: Maebashi City, Gunma Prefecture

Master: Kobayashi Kichitaro (Yamagata) Title of Work: Shungetsu (春月) Spring Moon Size: 44 cm Published: 1977

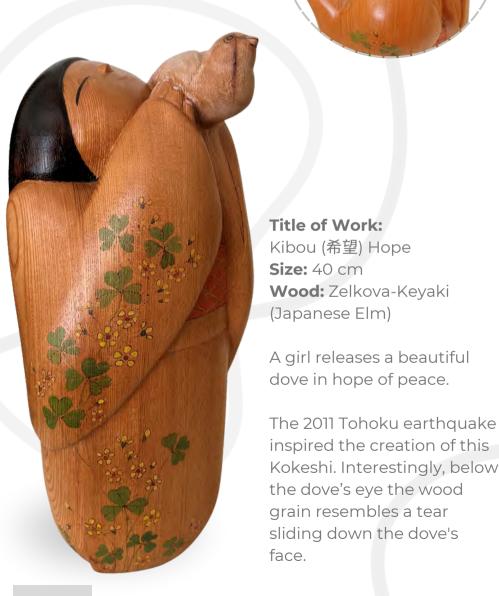
Like many of the sōsaku pioneers, Hajime-san initially learned Kokeshi making from a dentō, Yamagata, Master. It is unclear if he ever made any traditional Yamagata Kokeshi prior to his sōsaku creations. His works encompassed a wide range of subject matter.

Made in all shapes and sizes, many of his works featured seasonal themes, special occasions, grandparents, and Kabuki dances. Additionally, some of his works were of pigtailed girls or shy, innocent girls like the one pictured.



YAMAZAKI YUKO

山崎裕子 (1956 -) Birth City: Tokyo Master: Yoshida Takashi



Kibou (希望) Hope

(Japanese Elm)

Wood: Zelkova-Keyaki

dove in hope of peace.

grain resembles a tear sliding down the dove's

face.

Kokeshi. Interestingly, below

Size: 40 cm

Title of Work: Enrei (艶麗) Dazzling Beauty Size: 35 cm Wood: Zelkova-Keyaki (Japanese Elm)

> Taking full advantage of the beautiful wood grain texture and color, Yuko-san added simple design elements to complement the wood.

Enrei has long black hair, with a single strand over her shoulder. Her facial features are soft and gentle. She has a rounded nose. With closed eyes and a small smile, she appears to be lost in a moment of bliss.

The kimono layers are beautifully executed, with Chrysanthemum flowers adding minimal details to the already stunning natural wood grain.



と等裕子が

TOMIDOKORO FUMIO

富所ふみを (1948 -) Birth City: Gunma Prefecture Master(s): Self-Taught Awards: Multi-award winning



- 1982 Newcomer Award for "Warabe Uta"; National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition
- 1999 Prime Minister Award for "Spring Breeze" at the All-Gunma Modern Kokeshi Competition
- 2007 Prime Minister Award in for "Yokou" at the All- Gunma Modern Kokeshi Competition
- 2008 Prime Minister Award in for "Blue Wind" at the All-Gunma Modern Kokeshi Competition
- 2008 Prime Minister Award for "Minamikaze" at the All-Gunma Modern Kokeshi Competition
- 2013 Prime Minister Award at the All-Gunma Modern Kokeshi Competition

Artisan Details

Drawing upon the natural world for inspiration has long been a common practice among artisans seeking to create truly unique and impactful designs.

Combining this approach with elements of Japanese textiles and the profound philosophical insights of poets such as Santōka Taneda, Fumio-san crafts pieces that are not only visually stunning but also deeply meaningful.

Japanese textiles are known for their intricate patterns and rich symbolism. They offer a wealth of aesthetic possibilities, while the contemplative verses of Taneda provide a spiritual depth that elevates design concepts to new heights.

By incorporating these influences into his work, Fumiosan creates pieces that resonate with viewers on both an emotional and intellectual level, resulting in designs that stand out as truly exceptional in the competitive world of Kokeshi.



YAHAGI ICHIKO

矢作 一子 (1952 -) Birth City: Kaga City, Ishikawa Prefecture Master: Tanaka Nobue Title of Work:

(L) かのん Kanon (C) 梅花 Plum blossom (R) 鈴 Bell Size: (L) 9 cm (C) 10.5 cm (R) 8 cm **Description**:

Yahagi Ichiko is a female Kokeshi artisan presently residing in Hachioji City, Tokyo. She began training to produce Kokeshi while in her forties and since then, her exquisite masterpieces have earned her multiple awards. Her Kokeshi creations feature themes and sizes that capture the essence of traditional Japanese design. In addition, Yahagi-san dedicates time to her second passion, ink drawing, or suibokuga.

Origami Wagasa, a Japanese parasol folded from several cigarette packages and held together with a frame. Not an original part of the Kokeshi.

天作

SEKIGUCHI SANSAKU



It is believed that these *Haniwa* Figures were created in the likeness of the Master artisan and his wife.

Haniwa (埴輪) are terracotta figures crafted from clay, specifically designed for ritualistic purposes and interred alongside the deceased as funerary artifacts during Japan's Kofun period — (3rd to the 6th centuries A.D.)

関口 三作 (1925 - 2018) Birth City: Shibukawa, Gunma Prefecture Master: Undetermined

Title of Work: Haniwa Size: 34 cm





Group of women on the west wall (published in 1972, "Takamatsuzuka Mural Tomb"). <u>Public Domain</u> use; educational purposes.

Title of Work: Asuka Size: 40 cm

The design on this stunning Kokeshi is inspired by the *Asuka* period and is appropriately titled, "*Asuka*". She is a refined lady of high society.

"Asuka" is wearing a coat that has been masterfully painted with a phoenix motif. The overall design was inspired by the murals found inside the *Kitora burial chambers*, in particular one found at the *Takamatsuzuka Kofun*.

She is made out of Zelkova, a fine wood that is often used in cherished

heirloom furniture such as Tansu and in the making of Taiko drums.

The mastery of Sekiguchi Sansaku is evident; the design evokes a sense of elegance, refinement and mystery.



KOBAYASHI INOSUKE

小林 伊之介 (1931 - 2000) Birth City: Omama Town, Gunma Prefecture Master: Undetermined



Title of Work: After The Rain (雨あがり) Ameagari **Size:** 35 cm

Kobayashi-san's creations are truly awe-inspiring, with a significant number featured in Japanese Kokeshi event publications. As a highly acclaimed artist who has received numerous awards, including the prestigious Prime Minister's Award, his works are easily identifiable within collector communities. Despite this recognition, there is a lack of information available regarding his personal life.





TSUJITA RYŌZŌ

辻田 亮三 (1923 -D) Birth City: Odawara City, Kanagawa Prefecture **Master:** Undetermined

Title of Work: Size: 19 cm

Tsujita-san was drafted into the military during World War II and held captive in a Siberian labor camp in the Soviet Union until the late 1950s.

Upon his return, seeking to reclaim his lost youth, Tsujita-san began creating sōsaku dolls in 1961 in his hometown of Odawara, where he lived until his death.

He is a multi-award winner. His awards include the prestigious Prime Minister's Award.

This Kokeshi set represents *Sho-Chiku-Bai*, the three friends of winter: plum, bamboo, and pine. Due to their ability to thrive even in the harshness of winter, pine, bamboo, and plum together symbolize steadfastness, perseverance, and resilience. A beautiful black color with a matte finish was used as a base. The design elements, painted in gold tones, are subtle yet bold, and his signature *Taregami* or *Tsuberakashi* (a Japanese Heian era hair style) was used.

Sources:

Artisan | Woodworker: Tsujita, Ryozo | 1923-D. (n.d.). Mingei Arts. https://mingeiarts.com/collections/artisan-woodworker-tsujita-ryozo-1923-d







June 1

WATANABE MASAO

渡辺 正雄 (1917 - 2007) Birth City: Funahiki-cho, Fukushima Prefecture Master: Sato Tatsuo (Yajirō) Dentō : 1960s (small number of pieces) Sōsaku : 1952



Watanabe Masao originally trained as a Yajirō, dentō, artisan. Wanting to create something new, he opened up a shop and started making creative Kokeshi. He soon gained notoriety for his unique Kokeshi and won multiple awards throughout his artistic career. He spearheaded the sōsaku movement with Shido Shozan, Hideo Ishihara and many well-known artisans of the 1960's. His works reside in multiple museums in many countries.

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YAMAKAWA ISAMU

山川勇 | 山川いさむ Master: Yamakawa Isamu YOB: 1928 Material: Zelkova Awards: Multi-award winning

Title of Work:

(L) The Way Home, Kaeri-michi, 帰りみち (R) The Sorrow of Parting, Nagori, なごり Size: (L) 27 cm (R) 34 cm

The allure of *Kaeri-michi* and *Nagori* lies in their stunning wood grain, rich colors, and unique textures. Yamakawa-san skillfully harnessed the natural elegance of Zelkova wood, enhancing his designs to highlight its beauty. The delicately wood burned daisies and sakura blossoms have just a hint of color.

Yamakawa-san's design elements feature exquisite leaves, flowers and blossoms, with occasional appearances by Temari balls, umbrellas, birds and butterflies. He also creates charming Komori Kokeshi depicting a mother and child. Additionally, Yamakawa-san created a series of Kokeshi representing the four seasons.



FOLK ART: EMERGING BEAUTY

ご訪問いただき、心より感謝申し上げます。



Thank You For Stopping By.