

KOKESHITRENDS

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Special Issue 4

こけし生活



FOLK ART: CELEBRATING WOMEN ARTISANS

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Want to learn more about Kokeshi? Visit us on Facebook @[KokeshiVillage](#) group and follow us on Instagram @[KokeshiTrends_kt](#)

INTRODUCTION

Women artisans have long played a vital role in preserving and advancing traditional crafts around the world. Their expertise and creativity are often passed down through generations, ensuring that cultural heritage remains vibrant and relevant.

From intricate textile designs to hand-carved or turned woodwork, women artisans bring a unique perspective to their craft, blending tradition with innovation. Their efforts not only bolster local economies but also uplift communities by fostering cultural identity and advancing gender equality.

Celebrating and acknowledging these artisans is essential in recognizing the invaluable role they play in the continuity and evolution of Kokeshi art forms. In this special issue we celebrate the “Kokeshi Life” of women artisans and the wooden treasures they create.

The women artisans featured in this issue are just a small sample of the many talented individuals who have made significant contributions to the art form. We are planning to showcase additional sōsaku and dentō female artisans in future issues. Stay tuned for more inspiring and beautiful creations!


Founding Editor

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YAHAGI ICHIKO



Maker	矢作 一子 YOB: 1952~
Birth City	Kaga City, Ishikawa Pref.
Master	Tanaka Nobue
Awards	Multi-award winning

Title: Elegance, 精雅, Seiya

Material: Mizuki Wood, Natural Dyes

Size: 34 CM

Year Made: Over 10 years ago

Artisan Details:

Yahagi-sensei was born in Kaga City, Ishikawa Prefecture and is currently residing in Hachioji City, Tokyo.

The Kokeshi crafted by Yahagi-sensei showcase elaborate designs achieved through wood burning techniques, and are enhanced with vibrant dyes. Colors are layered, representing the essence of Japanese textiles at their finest.

The facial details are elegantly rendered, featuring charming half-closed eyes, and occasionally, a delicately illustrated eyelid. The lips are painted a striking red, while rosy cheeks impart a delightful radiance.

The attire is often stylish, adorned with captivating patterns and harmonious color combinations. They are highly coveted by collectors worldwide.

Artisan Awards:

- 1997 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Newcomer Award
- 1998 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Crafts Association Award
- 1999 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Minister of Education Encouragement Award
- 2012 -2014 All Japan Kokeshi Competition; Director-General's Award; Commerce & Information Policy, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry Award





Title: Older Sister, 若芽, Wakame
Material: Material: Mizuki wood, natural dyes
Size: 14.5 cm
Year Made: About 10 years ago

These Kokeshi were inspired by the *Sailor Fuku* (セーラー服, *sērā fuku*), a distinctive Japanese school uniform that has become a timeless representation of both traditional and modern fashion in Japan. Emerging in the early 20th century, the uniform was inspired by European naval styles, highlighting Japan's cultural exchanges during the *Meiji period*.

Recognizable by its sailor collar, pleated skirt, and decorative ribbon or bow, the *Sailor Fuku* is primarily associated with junior high and high school students. It remains a source of inspiration in contemporary fashion, symbolizing a harmonious blend of tradition, youth, and cultural identity in Japanese life.

YAHAGI ICHIKO

Title: Young Sister, 若草, Wakakusa
Material: Mizuki wood, natural dyes
Size: 14.5 cm
Year Made: About 10 years ago.





Title of Work:

Flower Festival,
Hanashizume No Matsuri

Size: 34 cm

Tanaka-sensei taught a Master Class in the Hachioji classroom of the Japan Kokeshi Crafts Association.

This Kokeshi is attired for the annual spring festival observed by Japanese Buddhists on April 8th in honor of the birth of



Siddhartha Gautama, the revered Buddha Shakyamuni.

Major Awards

- 1981 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Newcomer Award and Crafts Association Award
- 1984 Chinka-sai Festival; Minister of Education Encouragement Award



Title of Work:

Snow Child, Yukinko

Size: 12 cm

The intricate hand-chiseled technique used to create the hair beautifully accentuates the wood grain texture, while the addition of an iridescent gold tone adds a captivating and striking design element.

The doll's charm is further enhanced by the multi-layered kimono sleeves and the serene expression on her face, creating a dreamy and captivating aesthetic.

Sources:

Artisan photo credit: "1994-1998 Kokeshi Art" by National Creative Kokeshi Art Exhibition in Shibukawa City 5th Anniversary is licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) Colorized Kokeshitrends

TANAKA NOBUE

Maker: 田中暢枝 **YOB:** 1934 - 2013

Birth City: Yamaguchi Prefecture

Master: Kato Tatsuo

Awards: Multi-award winning

Collection: Soulportals.com



YAMAZAKI YUKO

Maker	山崎 裕子 YOB: 1956~
Birth City	Tokyo
Master	Yoshida Takashi
Awards	Multi-award winning

山崎裕子作



Title: Always Together, ずっといっしょ, Zutto Issho
Material: Keyaki (Zelkova)
Size: 40 cm **Year Made:** 2024

Description:

This charming girl holds her beloved puppy, who is delighted to sleep in her arms. This amazing expressive Kokeshi evokes feelings of friendship, warmth, and love.



Yamazaki-sensei was born in Tokyo and is a graduate from Kyoritsu Women's University. In 1990, she met and witnessed the work of Yoshida Takashi. Impressed by his skill, she became his student.

Yamazaki-sensei is a Master artisan, winning numerous awards. Unafraid of tackling large Kokeshi projects and working with power tools, she excels in her skills as a painter and Kokeshi creator. She is also a Kokeshi instructor. Her works are highly coveted by collectors worldwide.

Title: Pure Heart, 清心, Seishin
Material: Keyaki (Zelkova)
Size: 41 cm **Year Made:** 2023

Description:

Seishin cradles a magnificent crane, emblematic of longevity, tranquility, and prosperity. Adorned in a meticulously-crafted kimono, she showcases a breathtaking and vivid assortment of floral patterns. The remarkable talent and proficiency of Yamazaki-sensei as a painter are strikingly apparent in this sizable Kokeshi.



Title: Morning Star, 明けの明星, Ake No Myojo

Material: Keyaki (Zelkova)

Size: 40 cm

Collection: [Soulportals.com](https://soulportals.com)

Description

The title "Morning Star" is a prominent reference to the night sky and alludes to the planet Venus, which is visible in the eastern sky shortly before dawn.

In one hand *Ake no Myojo* gracefully holds a veil above her head, seemingly protecting herself from a gentle breeze and the encroaching fog of the natural surroundings. The veil artistically

illustrates a scene of the sun ascending, enveloped in a reddish mist that blankets the treetop canopy. This imagery is further accentuated by the warm hues of the keyaki wood. Her posture is suggestive of walking against the wind.



YAMAZAKI YUKO

Major Awards

- 1999 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Tokyo Shimbun Prize
- 2004 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Encouragement Award
- 2010 All Japan Kokeshi Competition; Maebashi City Mayor's Award
- 2018 All Japan Kokeshi Competition; Gunma Prefecture Governor's Award
- 2019 All Japan Kokeshi Competition; National Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chairman's Award
- 2023 All Japan Kokeshi Competition; FM Amateur Radio Sendai Award



KAWAKAMI MIHARU

Maker	川上美晴 YOB: 1981~
Birth City	Saitama Pref.
Master	Yamazaki Yuko
Awards	Multi-Award Winning

Artisan Details:

Kawakami-sensei hails from Saitama Prefecture in Japan. Kawakami-sensei has received numerous accolades for her creations. Collectors highly desire her Kokeshi dolls, which they describe as charming and “Kawaii” (かわいい).

Kawakami-sensei has always had a passion for art, crafting her very first Kokeshi at the tender age of ten. This fascination with traditional Japanese toys inspired her to pursue a formal education in art, where she honed her skills in design and illustration.

As her artistic journey progressed, she envisioned a delightful fusion of her 2-D illustrations with 3-D Kokeshi. For the final project to earn her degree, she crafted a trio of unique Kokeshi, an experience that proved to be immensely fulfilling and ignited her lifelong passion for creating these charming figures.



Title: Girl in Yukata,
浴衣のお嬢さん, Yukata no Ojousan

Material: Hiba Wood

Size: 7.5 cm

Year Made: 2019

Description: (L)

Sweet girls dressed in blue and pink summer yukata hold *uchiwa* (団扇), traditional Japanese handheld fans.

Title: Kokeshi Cat,
子猫こけし, Ko-neko

Material: Birch **Size:** 5.5 cm

Year Made: 2023

Description: (R)

Cute cat with one black and one brown ear.



KAWAKAMI MIHARU



Title: Inori, 祈り, Prayer

Material: China Wood

Size: 35 cm

Year Made: 2022

Description:

In ancient Japan, prayer played a crucial role in religious customs, with individuals engaging in prayer for various purposes, including expressing gratitude, seeking guidance, and requesting blessings. Consequently, the term *Inori* emerged to refer to those who were involved in prayer and held a deep interest in spiritual matters.

KAWAKAMI MIHARU

Title: Hina Dolls, お雛様, Ohina-sama

Material: Bass Wood

Size: 10 cm

Year Made: 2024

Description:

Ohina-sama denotes a set of dolls featured in the *Hina-matsuri*, also known as the Doll Festival. This collection includes a prince and princess along with three *San-nin Kanjo* (三人官女), or "clever maidens," who are attending to the royal couple. Additionally, the set is adorned with two lanterns, trees, and even a pet cat!

Awards:

- 2017 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Honorable Mention Award
- 2018 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Newcomer Award
- 2018 60th All Japan Kokeshi Contest; Sennan Shinkin Bank Award
- 2018 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Special Jury Award





KURASAWA TOSHIE

Maker: 倉澤敏恵 **YOB:** 1935 - 2011
Birth City: Iida City, Nagano Pref.
Master: Ichise Kosuke
Awards: Multi-award winning

Title of Work: Unknown
Size: (L) 32 cm (C) 30 cm (R) 35 cm

Kurasawa Toshie had a distinguished painting career that spanned more than five decades, during which she played a significant role in shaping the sōsaku Kokeshi scene. Her artworks, known for their diverse subject matter, featured not only the famous Kokeshi dolls but also tea caddies and various household items. Using oil paints, she often portrayed intricate floral arrangements, robust oak trees, delicate wildlife, and the serene landscapes of rural Japan. A hallmark of her Kokeshi dolls is the meticulously rendered and finely detailed hair ornaments, called mizuhiki, demonstrating her unparalleled attention to detail and technical skill.



Sources:
Artisan photo credit: " 1994-1998 Kokeshi Art" by National Creative Kokeshi Art Exhibition in Shibukawa City 5th Anniversary is licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) Colorized KokeshiTrends.

All Japan Kokeshi Competition

- 1985, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1994 All Japan Kokeshi Competition; Japan External Trade Organization Chairman's Award, Competition Chairman's Award, Sendai Broadcasting Award, Kokeshi Competition Chairman's Award (twice), Shiroishi Tourism Association Chairman's Award, Shiroishi Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chairman's Award

National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition

- 1987, 1988 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Tokyo Shimbun Award,
- 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Japan Kokeshi Crafts-Association Encouragement Award
- 1992 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Japan Kokeshi Crafts Association Honorable Mention Award
- 1994 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Minister of Education Award
- 1998 Approximately 100 pieces were submitted to the Nagano Olympic Culture and Arts Festival



徳丸えつこ作



Artisan Details:

Born in Edogawa-ku, Tokyo, Tokumaru-sensei discovered her passion for Kokeshi-making at the age of 36.

She skillfully works with various types of wood, mainly Mizuki and Hiba, and occasionally Keyaki. Her Kokeshi feature beautifully carved designs that reflect traditional Kimono and clothing styles. Tokumaru-sensei adds playful elements, painting her Kokeshi with flowers, purses, and even hats!

While typical Kokeshi often have concealed hands, Tokumaru-sensei creatively incorporates them into her innovative designs.



TOKUMARU ETSUKO

Maker	徳丸えつこ YOB: 1956~
Birth City	Edogawa-ku, Tokyo
Master	Fumiko Igari
Awards	Multi-award winning

Most Recent Awards:

2013, 2014 and 2016 Japan Kokeshi Crafts Association; Award 2017 – All Japan Kokeshi Contest; Gunma Governor's Award

(L) Title: Smile
Material: Mizuki
Size: 35 cm
Year Made: 2023

Description: A lovely young girl with raven-black hair and rosy cheeks beams with joy as she cradles her face in her hands. Her attire is a delightful mix of warm, vibrant colors that enhance her cheerful demeanor.

(R) Title: Hana
Material: Mizuki
Size: 20 cm
Year Made: 2021

Description: This charming girl has a radiant smile and intricately-styled hair. She is wearing a stunning sakura kimono.



TOKUMARU ETSUKO



Title: Long Life, 寿, Kotobuki
Material: Hiba
Size: Groom 14 cm, Bride 12cm
Year Made: 2024

These Kokeshi dolls depict a Bride and Groom, each adorned in exquisite traditional ceremonial attire, meticulously engraved and hand-painted by the skilled artisan.



Juban Kimono

Date-eri

White Haori-himo

Red Obi

Koshi-himo (Fan)

Suehiro Fan

Montsuki Haori

Hakama



Tsunokakushi

The Groom is dressed in ceremonial pants called *Hakama*. They are paired with a formal jacket known as a *Montsuki Haori*, elegantly secured with a *haori-himo*. Meanwhile, the Bride showcases a stunning kimono, also intricately hand-engraved, complemented by the classic white silk headdress known as *Tsunokakushi*.

Photo Courtesy: Francesca Iachetta

HORIUCHI CHIYOMI

Maker	堀内千代美 YOB: 1956~
Birth City	Saitama City, Saitama Pref.
Master(s)	Yamazaki Yuko, Tokumaru Etsuko & Yahagi Ichiko
Awards	Multi-award winning



(R) Title: Tale of The Bamboo Cutter, 竹取物語, Taketori Monogatari
Material: Hiba wood
Size: 35 cm
Year Made: 2019

Artisan Details

Horiuchi Chiyomi, a Kokeshi artist born in 1956 in Saitama City, Saitama Prefecture, has been creating elegant and colorful dolls since 2006. Horiuchi-sensei's passion for Kokeshi dolls began at a young age, as she watched her mother intricately carve and paint these traditional Japanese Kokeshi.

Over the years, she has honed her craft and developed her own unique style, blending traditional techniques with modern influences. Her dedication to preserving this folk-art form is evident in the meticulous detail and vibrant colors of each Kokeshi she creates.

She studied under the guidance of her fellow classmate and Kokeshi artisan, Tokumaru Etsuko, and finds inspiration in Japanese folktales, culture, fabrics, and

ceramics. Horiuchi-sensei has won multiple-awards for her works.

- 2014 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Annual Grand Prize
- 2017 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Jury Special Award
- 2018 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Kokeshi Crafts Association Award
- 2019 All Japan Kokeshi Competition; Sennan Shinkin Bank Award
- 2019 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Annual Grand Prize

(L) Title: Dream, 夢, Yume
Material: Mizuki wood
Size: 35 cm
Year Made: 2014
Awarded: 2014 the Annual Grand Prize



HORIUCHI CHIYOMI

堀内千代美

Title: Urashima's Love,
浦島の恋, Urashima no Koi
Material: Mizuki
Size: 32 cm
Year Made: 2016



Title: Princess Otohime's Poem,
乙姫の詩, Otohime no Uta
Material: Hiba
Size: 32 cm
Year Made: 2017

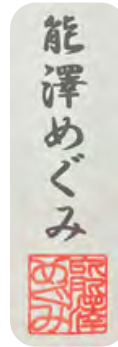


Title: Robe of Feathers,
羽衣, Hagoromo
Material: Hiba
Size: 35 cm
Year Made: 2023



NOZAWA MEGUMI

Maker	能澤めぐみ YOB: 1956~
Birth City	Sao Paulo, Brazil
Masters	Yamazaki Yuko, Tokumaru Etsuko & Yahagi Ichiko
Awards	Multi-award winning



Title: Spring in Full
春の玉手箱, Haruno Tamatebako
Material: Hinoki
Size: 15 cm
Year Made: 2017



Title: Shyness,
はじらい, Hajirai
Material: Keyaki
Size: 40 cm
Year Made: 2015



Title: Spring Sun, 春陽, Shunnyo
Material: Keyaki
Size: 27 cm
Year Made: 2014



Artisan Details:

Nozawa Megumi, a skilled , multi-award winning artisan, demonstrates her talent through art pieces which capture recollections from her youth and scenes from her daily surroundings.

Utilizing a range of techniques such as carving, painting and pyrography. and a variety of design styles to create her pieces, Nozawa-sensei's Kokeshi radiate happiness and contemplation.



NOZAWA MEGUMI



Title: Lullaby

Material: Zelkova-Keyaki (Japanese Elm)

Size: 46 cm **Year Made:** 2020

Collection: [Soulportals.com](https://soulportals.com)

This carefully-crafted artwork beautifully captures the gentle glow of motherhood. The Kokeshi holds her baby with warmth and love, evoking a sense of comfort. The child, peacefully resting on mother's shoulder, wears a tiny hat symbolizing the mother's attentive care.

A beautifully sculpted braid cascades gracefully over mother's right shoulder, artfully highlighting the contours of her face. Mother's kimono, representing elegance and beauty, drapes around her with an effortless sophistication. The intricately-designed kimono patterns tell the story of remarkable craftsmanship. One can almost hear the mother humming a lullaby to her sleepy baby.

Title: Beyond The Sky, 空の彼方に, Sorano Kanatani

Material: Yakusugi Wood

Size: 28 cm

Year Made: 2022

Awarded: 65th All Japan Kokeshi Competition sponsored by Shiroishi Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

This remarkable artwork by Megumi-sensei captures a vibrant sense of motion. The Kokeshi seems to be engaged in a joyful dance, arms lifted high towards the heavens, radiating pure bliss.



白
浜
久
美
子

SHIRAHAMA KUMIKO

Maker: 白浜久美子 YOB (1952~)

Birth City: Honbetsu (Tokachi), Hokkaido

Masters: Yamazaki Yuko, Tokumaru Etsuko & Yahagi Ichiko

Awards: Multi-award winning artisan stunning lakes, rivers, and forests. Shirahama-sensei infuses her works with picturesque outdoor scenes, capturing the essence of nature. In one of her award-winning and notable Kokeshi creations, titled "*Fragrance of the Wind*," serene green fields of flowers and a canopy of trees lead the eye to a distant home. The peaceful and joyful expression on the Kokeshi reflects the feeling of nature and tranquility.



Artisan Details

Shirahama-sensei is a renowned doll artist, known for her creations that evoke a sense of "*furusato*", warmth and nostalgia for one's hometown. Drawing inspiration from traditional doll-making techniques passed down through generations, she has developed her own unique style, based upon her life in Hokkaido, a region known for its breathtaking mountains, vast wetlands,

(L) Title: Fragrance of the Wind, 風香る, Kaze Kaoru

Material: Mizuki

Size : 23 cm

Year made: 2022

Awarded: Odawara Hakone Chamber of Commerce 2024

Collection: [Soulportals.com](https://soulportals.com)

(R) Title: Delicate Beauty, 優美, Yūmi

Material: Mizuki

Size: 40 cm

Year Made: 2022



Title: Festival Day, 縁日, En-nichi
Material: Mizuki
Size: 20 cm

En-nichi (縁日) is a traditional Japanese festival honoring the connections between deities in Shinto and Buddhism. The term translates to "related day." This holiday is observed on specific days that hold significance for a local shrine or temple, often marking the birth or departure of a deity.



Title: Cherry Blossom Greeting, 桜便り, Sakuradayori
Material: Mizuki
Size: 15 cm

Hanami (花見), translates to "flower viewing" in Japanese, is a cherished tradition in which people gather outdoors beneath the blooming cherry blossoms, usually sharing food and drink. This delightful practice is a significant part of Japanese culture and offers a wonderful opportunity for enjoyment!



SHIRAHAMA KUMIKO

Title: Destined Love, 恋のゆくえ, Koi-No-Yukue
Material: Mizuki
Size: Unavailable

Koi No Yukue or "*Koi No Yokan*," Destined Love" centers on the concepts of "Premonition of Love" and "It's Meant To Be." The narrative suggests that two individuals need not be in each other's presence, recognize their affection, or even be aware of their love for one another at the outset. If their destinies are intertwined for love, circumstances will ultimately unite them.

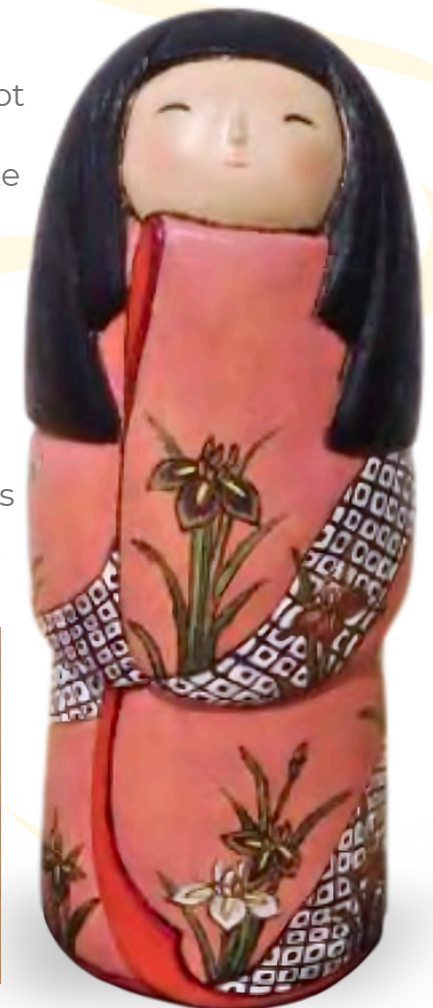
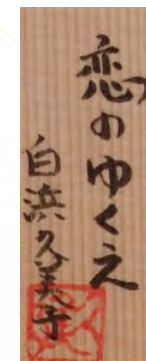


Photo Credit: Francesca Iachetta



Title: Samurai
Material: Mizuki
Size: 21 cm
 This Kokeshi features a samurai clad in a igeta-patterned haori paired with hakama.

Title: Serenity, Uraraka (Odango)

Material: Mizuki

Size: 6.5 cm

She wears a striking red-purple kimono adorned with lovely cherry blossoms, and her charming hairstyle features two playful pigtails



TAMURA CHIE

Maker	千栄作 ちえ (Hanko) YOB: 1952~
Business	Tamura Kogei
Birth City	Handa, Shibukawa Gunma
Master	Father, Watanabe Takashi
Awards	Multi-award winning



Description:

Tamura Chie-sensei hails from Handa in Shibukawa, Gunma Prefecture. She comes from a family of artisans, as her father, Watanabe Takashi-sensei, was a skilled Kokeshi maker. Together with her husband, Tamura Noboru-sensei, they manage a Kokeshi business known as Tamura Kogei.

Awards

- 1988, 2003, 2022 Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Prize
- 1990 Director General for Small and Medium Enterprise Agency Prize
- 1996 The Mayor of Shibukawa Prize
- 1997 Minister for International Trade and Industry Prize



Photos Source: Francesca Iachetta @Artigianato

Title: Gokigen, (ごきげん), Good Mood
Material: Mizuki
Size: 13 cm

Wearing a vibrant blue kimono suggestive of the night sky, this Kokeshi doll showcases a stunning display of Hanabi, fireworks that are like fire flowers in the night sky. A beautifully contrasting red obi wraps around her waist, holding the ensemble together with elegance and flair.



Title: Hideyoshi Toyotomi (豊臣 秀吉)
Material: Mizuki
Size: 15 cm

A Japanese samurai and *daimyō* from the late *Sengoku* and *Azuchi-Momoyama* eras, Toyotomi is recognized as the second "Great Unifier" of Japan.

TAMURA CHIE

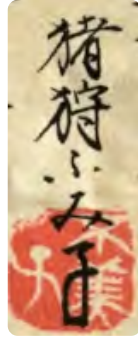
Title: Mujaki, Innocence
Material: Mizuki
Size: 13 cm

This Kokeshi wears a vivid red kimono, beautifully embellished with wood-burned plum blossoms. With her large, inquisitive eyes and turned-up nose, she exudes a youthful and innocent charm.



IKARI FUMIKO

Maker	(猪狩ふみ子) YOB: 1930~D
Birth City	Ōamishirasato, Chiba Pref.
Master	Unavailable
Awards	Multi-award winning
Collection:	Soulportals.com



Title: Mischievous Young Boy, わんぱく坊主, Wanpakubōzu
Size: 12.5 cm

Awards

- 1986 National Modern Kokeshi Exhibition; Newcomer Award, Crafts Association Encouragement Award, Tokyo Shimbun Award
- 1990 Prime Ministers Award
- 1993 All Japan Kokeshi Competition; Crafts Association Encouragement Award, Minister of Education Award



Title: Poem of Falling Leaves, 落葉の詩, Rakuyo No Uta
Size: 21 cm

Artisan Details

Ikari-sensei's work is distinguished by rich textures and by intricate facial expressions that effectively communicate a wide range of emotions. Her attention to detail and skillful use of color bring her characters to life, making them feel truly relatable. Each piece has depth and complexity, telling a story that draws in the viewer. Her work is a testament to her talent and the dedication she has given to her craft.

Sources:

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Kachou Fugetsu
花鳥風月
Beauties of Nature

