

NETSUKE KENKYUKAI



STUDY JOURNAL



ISSUE NO. 1 APRIL, 1980



**The Third London
Convention
Netsuke in Japanese Art**

**May 24-30, 1980
At Quaglino's Ballroom**

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS AND MAJOR EXHIBITIONS

For information, write to Elizabeth Garratt at
NETSUKE CONVENTION CENTRE
Embassy Travel, Limited 207 Great Portland St., London, W1N 6HD ENGLAND

SOTHEBY PARKE BERNET & CO., LONDON
*ANNOUNCE A SALE OF
FINE NETSUKE AND INRO*



Okatomo: Recumbent Stallion, ivory, 18th century

**Thursday, 29th May, 1980
at eleven o'clock**

The sale coincides with the Third London Netsuke Convention

NETSUKE KENKYUKAI



STUDY JOURNAL

FIRST EDITION

NETSUKE KENKYUKAI, P.O. BOX 825, LA MIRADA, CA 90637

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

You have to start someplace, and THIS IS IT!

What does it all mean? This is your Journal. Its function will be to increase our knowledge and exposure to Netsuke. Hopefully, we will hear from all the members. Write us about what's been happening in your part of the country; write if you have an article; send pictures of Netsuke with descriptive background information.

Use the Journal. Ask questions . . . we'll print them and, hopefully, one of the members will be able to answer.

Air your problems and gripes. Make suggestions. We'll print them in Letters from the Members.

Victor E. Israel

Letters from the Members

A letter from Bill and Cookie Wenneker stated that Bill is compiling information on Tokoku's work. He would appreciate any slides or photos or references. Also, anyone interested in selling a Tokoku Netsuke may contact Bill at:

2025 Lakeside Dr.
Lexington, Kentucky 40502

Justin Osie Cki wrote

A letter which I found very appropriate, asking about pronunciation of Japanese artists names and words.

For openers, I've pronounced Netsuke many ways and have just been corrected again by four of our esteemed and knowledgeable collectors.

This is it:

Nets (as in the plural of what you hit a tennis ball over) K - the "k" is pronounced like the letter in the alphabet except, you cut it short, or don't sound the "ay" as loud — that is Kay.

Now, all together, nets-kay almost sounds like Nets-ck.

The following is a spelling system which Richard Silverman states he "devised" for absolute correct pronunciation of the 5 Japanese vowels and the 2 diphthongs used in the language. There are **no** other vowel sounds!

VOWEL SOUNDS

Romanji*

- a as in father
- i as in machine
- u as in assume (u is most often silent)**
- e as in bet
- o as in only

DIPHTHONGS

- ei as in reign
- ai as in aisle

* the romanized spelling of Japanese vowel sounds

** it is actually spoken, but so softly that we don't hear it. Japanese do hear it!

THEREFORE: NETS(U)KE

§ § §

NEWS of MEETINGS

NEWS FROM THE L.A. GROUP:

Time: April 11th is the second anniversary of the Los Angeles Netsuke Collectors Society
Place: Tail O' The Cock Restaurant
Speaker: Sidney Ashkenazie of Ashkenazie & Co. who will enlighten the members with his experiences on the "Profiles of Collectors" and all its aspects.

CHICAGO NEWS:

March 20th members once again met at the Chase Gilmore Art Galleries. Members participated in a show and tell and slide projector was available for those who wished to share their slides.

HOUSTON NEWS:

Norman Sanfield spoke at the March meeting on the subject "Reading Signatures".

The following week Sharen Chappell showed the movie "World of Netsuke". It is an excellent documentary in sound and color and should be seen by all collectors.

§ § §



Kyoto school
dragon fish
18th century

for collectors of —

- NETSUKE
- CLOISONNE
- SNUFF BOTTLES
- PORCELAIN



ASIAN ANTIQUES BY ADAMS, INC.
P.O. BOX 7407
COLORADO SPRINGS
COLORADO 80933 USA
PHONE: 303 598-1374



House of Crispo

Specializing in Oriental Art

425 Cannery Row Tel. 408-373-8467
Monterey, Calif. 93940

*The Best of the Past
Enhances the Present . . . Enriches the Future*

Contemporary Netsuke News Notes

By Miriam Kinsey

It is exciting to be living in an era of netsuke history when a renaissance of netsuke carving is taking place. New designs and new techniques are coming upon the scene without the sacrifice of the essence of Japanese beauty or the traditional quality of workmanship. The ancient personality is there but with youthful vigor and innovative expressions from the minds, the hearts, and the hands of the creative geniuses who are leading the revival of netsuke carving today.

Many collectors have had the privilege of meeting some of these carvers either in Japan or at a netsuke convention. Personal contact with the artist adds a new dimension to collecting. It completes the spirit

and creative impulse that flows from the artist to his work, then to the beholder, and back to the artist. It evokes a warm interest in the human being who created the work as well as in the work itself. From time to time we will include items or stories of interest about the living carvers and their work in this column.

Undoubtedly a number of carvers will attend the Los Angeles convention of Netsuke Kenkyukai in 1981. The first Japanese netsuke-shi to announce that he is planning to attend is Ryushi, who will come with his dealer, Mr. S. Sunamoto. It will be Ryushi's first trip to the United States. Mr. Sunamoto, who is well known to netsuke and okimono collectors, attended the last Honolulu convention with his wife and has traveled in Europe but this will be his first trip to continental United States. Ryushi perhaps is best known for his beautiful women and already is working on netsuke which he will exhibit at the Los Angeles convention.

Mr. H. Nakayama, another Tokyo dealer who is well known to contemporary netsuke collectors, is planning to bring his wife to the United States in June of this year for their first trip outside of Japan.

Bushell Exhibit

During September of 1979, an exhibition of five hundred choice netsuke from the Raymond Bushell collection was held at Mikimoto Hall on the Ginza in Tokyo. It was the first exhibit of its kind to be held in Tokyo and created great interest among international visitors to Japan and the local Japanese alike. More than six thousand people saw the exhibit and over three thousand copies of the excellent catalog were sold. The Kenkyukai group of netsuke carvers in Tokyo all attended and quite a number of our own Kenkyukai members saw the exhibit during a fall trip to Tokyo.

A large number of 20th century netsuke were included in the exhibit. Among the artists represented were Masatoshi, Joso, Soko, Gyokuso, Sosui, Shoko, Kyokusai, Yasuaki, Ichiro and Ryo.

Japanese collectors who have begun to enter world markets for Japanese paintings, wood-block prints, swords and sword furniture, and various types of lacquer art, have been indifferent to collecting netsuke - antique or contemporary. The great surge of interest and appreciation of netsuke and the enormous escalation of prices the past two decades have come from foreigners. Tokyo dealers report that the Bushell netsuke exhibit has now begun to spark interest among Japanese collectors and it will be interesting to follow this new development in the current netsuke world.

News of Two English Carvers

Those who were impressed with the realistic, charming animals carved by the English artist, Michael Webb, which were exhibited during the last London

convention, will be pleased to know he is preparing another exhibit to be held in the Eskenazi Gallery during the May 1980 London convention. Michael Webb was formerly a Director at Sotheby's and learned to appreciate netsuke while working under Willie Winkler who wrote the netsuke catalogs for Sotheby's for many years. He works almost exclusively in English boxwood with subjects taken from the animal world. His netsuke today are very much sought after by British and European collectors - not necessarily netsuke collectors. Recently he has been commissioned to do a series of Canadian animals by a collector from Canada.

Michael Birch will be exhibiting at Quaglino's, the convention headquarters, during the coming London convention. This exhibit will feature netsuke that are insect oriented in their subject matter and will be carved from a wide range of materials. He has prepared a collection of photographs of the netsuke to be exhibited and will be happy to send a set upon request to any interested collector who is unable to attend the convention. Such a request can be sent to the convention coordinator:

Miss Elizabeth Garratt
London Netsuke Convention 1980
Embassy Travel Limited
207 Great Portland St.
London W1N 6HD England

Michael with his wife Margaret recently made a trip to the States where they spent a short time at Pismo Beach to "recharge his batteries" and to replenish his supply of manzanita burl, which he is currently using as netsuke material. They also houseguested with the Kinseys and enjoyed visits with Dave Swedlow, Virginia Atchley, and the Robert Nordskogs.

News Briefs of Japanese Carvers

Shodo, whose netsuke are included in many contemporary collections, had a serious operation in early 1979 and is just now starting to carve again.

The group of innovative carvers which have formed their own association within the J.I.S.A. (Japan Ivory Sculptors' Association) now numbers between sixteen and eighteen members. They meet every two months and Bishu is president. They study and discuss all phases of their profession from design to techniques, from marketing to pricing.

Kangyoku and his family are enjoying a new home which they built and completed early last year on the site of their former residence.

Shogetsu, who is one of the last of a group of carvers who kept the art of netsuke carving alive early in the 20th century, is still carving at ninety-two. He developed the revolving face technique and intricately etched clothing is a hall-mark of his legendary figures.

§ § §

HORSEING AROUND IN MINNEAPOLIS

The pictures are black and white reproductions of six of 159 color slides taken at the Minneapolis N.K. Convention.



Signed: Masanao (Kyoto)



Signed: Kaigyokusai



Signed: Okatomo



Signed: Harumitsu



Signed: Hidemasa



Signed: Bishu

FESTIVALS

By Betty Killam

Festivals of Japan as they are represented in netsuke.

Festivals of Japan sounds like such an exotic title, however if we stop to think we have many holidays too and they are very similar.

There are three kinds of festivals in Japan—popular, religious and national. We have the same in this country. If I said to you: "What is Christmas or Easter," you would reply—they are religious holidays, so too can we recognize their signs—Santa Claus and Christmas trees immediately tell you it means December 15th and of course the bunny and the painted egg symbolize Easter. A fire cracker refers to the national holiday of the Fourth of July, and the pumpkin of Halloween, our popular holiday founded on an early religious one.

There is not a bit of mystery nor is there in the Japanese festivals—all we need to know is the basic facts and the symbols of each.

January 1-7, Observation of New Years: one of the most important of all festivals. First of all in front of the house you will find pine branches; at the back will be three pieces of bamboo, across the gate will be gohei. Intertwined will be fern leaves, oranges and a small lobster—all wishes for a long, strong and prosperous life.

Pine-long life, bamboo-constancy and virtue. Fern indicates expanding good fortune because of its multitude of leaves, the orange-generation to generation, the lobster is a symbol of old age—the bent back of the lobster reminds one of the bent backs of many of the old Japanese people—that the "spirit in the worn body may remain young."

Food at New Years: Fresh water is brought to the house, if possible from a fresh running stream or from a well. They drink ozone which is a broth containing mochi and other things. They eat carp for energy, black peas for strength, chestnuts for mastery, daikon and seaweed for happiness and the lotus root as it is a sacred plant. They drink otosu which is a sweet sake and above all they eat mochi.

Mochi is a RICE paste made especially at New Years time. It is very stiff and heavy, and consequently it is a chore for the lady of the house to make. There are men who go around and make mochi in a big pot. That is why you will see in a folk art netsuke that I had a little old man seated with a big pot between his legs and he is obviously working hard to stir the mochi.

Some of the other symbols of New Years are the ever present pine needles—you will see them on inro or sword fittings, you will often see branches of bamboo, primarily you will find them on manju which are carved on both sides. The pine and bamboo which appear on so many objects can be reminiscent of New

Years but could also refer to the strength of the trees.

The next festival is Setsubun February 3rd. The lady of the house throw beans into every corner of the house, usually one for every year of their ages. "Welcome Good Luck—Out with the Deamons!" and that is why you often see the oni netsuke with beans on his back or he will be dodging them. There is one netsuke form which I have had several times in my business career—The oni is hiding in a charcoal box—all that is visible is his spine and his face will be peeking through a hole on one side with his arm extended out the other side. Beans will be inlaid of any kind of material on the top and along his back. Thus when ever you see the oni hiding you will know that it means Setsubun!



Unsigned: Child's Kite

March 3rd—Dolls Day or Girls Day. This is the day on which the little girls bring out the family dolls. The set of dolls numbers 15—including the emperor and empress, attended by ministers, court ladies and musicians. They will be placed on steps and miniature tables and serving pieces of lacquer and metal will be displayed. The musicians will have tiny instruments.

These are not dolls that the children play with, but the ones which are treasured and only shown on the special day. They are handed down from generation to generation and are greatly treasured. Friends will come to visit on that day and admire the display. There are various qualities of these dolls—some being dressed in gorgeous fabrics, other sets are not so elaborate. But they are loved and cared for and we do not find them on the market very often.

April 8th Buddha's Birthday—Birthday of Sakyamuni, founder of Buddhism. Shrines with a small figure of Buddha are placed in the courtyard of many temples with an open top and decorated with cherry blossoms. If the flowers are not in bloom artificial ones will be substituted. Tradition demands that the faithful pour tea over the head of the baby Buddha and then take some of it home—such as the occidental religions do with 'holy water'. This is also called Hana Matsuri which is the beginning of the Cherry Blossom. You will find a cluster of cherry blossoms or a single blossom depicted in netsuke.

May 5th is Boys Day—this is the time when the other sex has its day! The boys will have a display of their own swords and often samurai dolls. In the olden times boys of Samurai families were presented to their daimyo before the age of four and were attired in miniature suits of armor and carried boy's swords!



Signed Minkoku: Carp

Carp flags are flown outside the homes on long poles, one for each son. They are really kites not flags and look so gay blowing in the breezes. We see them in this country occasionally—shops dealing in oriental gifts have them hanging outside. The carp is a symbol of ambition, strength and the will to win. They have to swim upstream to spawn and consequently also signify manliness. The Boys Day is also the Iris Festival—because the leaves of the iris plant resemble sword blades. Thus a carp netsuke can refer to Boys Day or a painting of an iris can also have the same meaning.

July 7th—Star Festival—this is a universal story. The weaving princess met the herd-boy and they fell in love. Her father liked the boy so he approved of the union. However they soon abandoned their duties and spent all of their time love-making. Since the herds wandered and the gods had no weaver, the father banished them to opposite sides of the Milky Way. They were each guarded by two magpies and he decreed that every four years they were allowed to join as the magpies would make a bridge of their wings so they could cross over the barrier. In our western astronomy we have the same tale of Vega and Altair. And heaven forbid that it be a rainy night or they will have to wait another four years! The two constellations often decorate lacquer and sword fittings.

In observance of this festival, paper kimonos, cows and poems are hung in front of houses and in gardens on bamboo poles. The next day the bamboos are taken to a stream to float away.

July 13th, 14th, 15th—is Feast of O-Bon or Feast of the Dead, also called Festival of Lanterns, Festival of all Souls. This is to revere the dead and to stimulate ancestor worship. On the first day the living visit the graves of their ancestors and burn incense. At dark they hang white lanterns on the grave stones and invite the spirits to come forth to visit their old homes. People lead the spirits back to their homes and converse with them as though they were there in flesh. In the best room of the home in front of the family altar a

small mat is placed with the ancestral tablets and small dishes of food. Sometimes the Buddhist priest will visit and chant sutras for the departed soul. On the 15th rice ball lunches are offered and at darkness farewell fires are lighted outside to guide the spirits back to their graves. The sacred articles are placed at night in tiny straw boats with a candle at the bow and an incense burner at the rear and they are floated down the river or cast into the sea to comfort those who have drowned!



Ghost in Lantern: Masatoshi

Bon Odori which is also part of this festival is a country folk dance usually held on the last night of the Fete to celebrate for the souls liberated from Buddhist hell to a state of celestial bliss. This takes place in local shrines, in temple grounds, or villages. Dancing goes on far into the night. It is a religious rhythmic dance which is faster than Bugaku dances; done singly or in groups who sing and sway and sometimes the tempo increases to include foot stamping, drum beating and chanting.

Bon Odori dance is given every year at Nikko—the only time that all the shrines are lit—imagine seeing all those lanterns burning!!! Often the dancing netsuke are bon odori dancers, especially if it is a lady. And never again shudder at the sight of a skull or skeleton netsuke—it is not morbid!!!

September 5th-9th is the Feast of Chrysanthemums—it is the national flower of Japan and the 16 petal one is the official imperial emblem.



Signed: Kosei with Gold Seal Hideruki

November 15th is Shichi-go-san when all children at age of three, boys of five and girls of seven are taken to the temple. There the children receive talismans and relatives and friends give little presents. The shrine talismans are usually colorful printed bags holding sweetmeats and can be bought at the booths nearby. Some of the emblems might be a little figure of Kintaro the strong boy, inu—a toy dog, a seated daruma (to prevent the child from falling!), a piece of coral—prized treasure, Daikoku's mallet—which is the equivalent of our Aladdin's lamp, bamboo, pine, carp, toys of all kinds—each section of the country

having their own.

Last of all—December 31st—Omisoka or Great Last Day. Getting ready for New Years they clean the house from top to bottom, pay all their bills!!! and at midnight temple bells sound 108 strokes to welcome the New Year. This is derived from the 108 beads on a Buddhist rosary. So you see it is an international custom to welcome the New Year with bells.

Association of netsuke to festivals inspires appreciation of the artist's endeavor and insight into Japanese life.

§ § §

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

This is an excerpt from an article for "Antiques Across the World" written by Richard Silverman. It is the fifth and most recent in a series of articles in which Mr. Silverman evaluates the trends and carvers.

In the past few years the arguments against collecting modern pieces have disappeared and most collectors today do buy the finer quality new netsuke. There are still some traditional collectors who say the moderns are not meant to be used and do not always satisfy the criteria for true old netsuke, i.e. they do not always keep to the strict rules of compactness and durability, and they certainly have none of the natural beauty and patina that come with usage and age. One cannot argue against fine old netsuke, knowing they were worn and handled with loving care for many years. Tactually they are sensual and visually they glow with a soft warmth. But many of today's carvings show originality and freshness of design, combined with superb carving skills that make them equally appealing. That they could never be worn does not bother me; the carvings speak for themselves and so I collect both old and modern. After all, when the great masters of the 18th Century carved their pieces they, too, were new and pristine and had no patina.

Until two decades ago the serious collecting of netsuke was in the hands of probably a hundred non-Japanese for the most part. But in the past decade the number has grown into the thousands. Most of this is due to the ever-increasing number of books and articles published, public auctions, netsuke conventions and seminars, and the fine exhibitions and permanent displays mounted by leading art museums in the United States, Europe and as of late in Japan. The Japanese have paid scant attention to netsuke over the years and most of the finest netsuke are owned by non-Japanese. This may change in the near future as many Japanese are taking a great interest in what may be their only unique art form. It was created by the Japanese and reflects their characters, tastes and attitudes moreso than any other art form. There are a few similarities to the Chinese toggle, but it was never perfected or refined by the Chinese, nor did it serve

the same practical purpose.

In the early 20th Century truly fine netsuke sold for a few dollars and masterpieces cost no more than \$100. Not until the 1950's were there any substantial rises in price and then it was only a matter of a few hundred dollars. By the end of the 1960's the number of serious collectors had grown to the point that they were willing to pay a few thousand dollars for superb pieces. The rest is history; the 1970's has seen records broken every year in public auctions, dealers' showrooms and private sales. Although may fine netsuke can still be bought for \$1000-\$3000, the masterpieces today range from \$25,000 to \$50,000 in auction and at dealers, while there is talk of even higher prices being paid in private sales. This phenomenal rise in prices is due to the old principle of supply and demand, a certain amount of promotion and salesmanship, and a keenness of many affluent collectors wanting to own the best and willing to pay the price. The market for those wonderful miniatures has also been invaded by people who are buying for investment only, but the legions of serious dedicated and knowledgeable collectors continues to grow.

The most perplexing problem facing the new collector and many who have been at it for only a few years is what to buy, how much to spend and where to buy. The answers are deceptively easy, unless buying for pure investment. One should only buy what one likes. Personally, I am not interested in carving schools, famous signatures or certain subjects; age means little and materials, less. All that is important is that a piece is to my liking and interest. A 18th Century ivory animal signed by one of the great masters does not necessarily move me more than a late 19th Century unsigned stagantler netsuke of a vegetable. The former might sell for \$50,000 and the latter, \$1,000. I am not impressed by names or price tags. I am only impressed with carvings, ingenuity of design and beauty of material; greatness is a carving, not a name nor a price tag. Whereas most of the world's great paintings are signed, a large proportion of the great netsuke were never signed. A Rembrandt without his signature is just an old painting of little value unless it can be

authenticated that he did paint it, but a great netsuke will stand on its own merits whether it is signed or not. A Rembrandt will always fetch a great sum of money and if one were to be sold for \$10,000 no one would want to buy it as it surely would be a fake. But there are many great unsigned netsuke which will fetch \$10,000 while many can be bought for far less only because they are not signed, yet most knowledgeable collectors will acknowledge their greatness. A signature is only an added plus but it doesn't make the carving any better.

The price which one is willing to spend always enters the picture. Every art object has its price and it is up to the buyer to decide what he can afford and if the need arises can he resell the piece for what he paid. This is not a case of buying low and selling high; it is simply not paying more than the netsuke is worth on the open market. Following the fads which persist in all areas of art can cost much more. Figure netsuke were in greater demand in the early 20th Century; today it is animals and prices go accordingly. Five years ago everyone wanted Kyoto school pieces; today it is the Twami school, and so it goes.

Unless the collector is knowledgeable he must rely greatly on the expertise of the dealers. Certainly the two centers for buying netsuke are Tokyo and London. There are certainly many fine dealers in the United States and on the Continent, but there are also many whose expertise is questionable. Shopping around many places before buying is the best rule. The other major source of netsuke can be found in the great auction houses of London, New York and Los Angeles (lead by Sotheby's, its American counterpart Sotheby Parke Bernet, and Christie's) and to a lesser degree in Paris and Cologne.

The vast amount of information that is available on older netsuke is such that one can easily learn all there is to know from all the books, periodicals and museum publications that are in print. It is only in the field of the moderns that information is very limited and not always up-to-date. In the past three years so many new carvers of merit have appeared that it is truly difficult to keep up with who is who. Many of the better carvers of the early 1970's have not progressed in their skills, while others have stopped carving netsuke. It is only because I have been living in Japan for the past fifteen years that I am able to keep abreast of what is happening. I hope that the following list of living carvers may be of some help to you.

There are seven carvers the vast majority of whose works may be considered to be superb by most standards. They are Masatoshi Nakamura (born 1915), Shubi Aramaki (1916), Meikei Takayama (1932), Akihide Kawahara (1934), Hideyuki Sakurai (1941), Bishu Saito (1943) and Kangyoku Tachihara (1944). Their better pieces can cost from \$2,000 to \$5,000 and have gone as high as \$10,000.

The next group of seven carvers' netsuke are great and in some cases they have produced pieces of superb quality. The oldest is Meigyokusai Hiraga

(1896) and amazingly his greatest pieces have all been carved in the past five years, Keiun Omura (1912), Senpo Kobayashi (1919), Yasufusa Saito (1931), Ryushi Komada (1934), Reigen Geijo (1935), and Kenji Abe (1947) who shows the most promise of becoming a superb carver. Most of their netsuke sell between \$1,000 to \$2,000 although some have brought double these prices.

Kodo Okuda (1940) and Seiho Azuma (1936) are superb carvers, but neither do many netsuke. Kodo is more interested in lacquer and okimono (small and large sculptures to be placed on a stand for viewing) while Seiho has returned to carving only okimono.

Very good netsuke are being carved by Godo Abe (1914), Shodo Asoka (1923), Gyokusho Suzuki (1926), Hodo Sekizawa (1929), Hoshu Yamagata (1932), Mitsuyuki Aoki (1932), Koraku Yoshida (1946) and Tanetoshi Hiraga (1947). Few of their works sell for more than \$1000. Sumi Sata (1944) is a housewife and part-time carver and shows great affinity in her works to her teacher Bishu, as does Ikumi Saito (1944), Bishu's wife.

The last group of carvers do good netsuke for the most-part, rarely selling for more than \$750, but all of them have done pieces which surely rank higher. They are Osai Motomura (1908), Ryoshu Miyazawa (1912) and his son (1949) who signs with the same name, Yukimasa Ono (1914), Shofu Amano (1917), Seigyoku Kaneko (1933), Nanryu Kurata (1935) and Yosui Ishida (1948). Kazuo Mizutani (1932) has started to show great potential and his future could be bright.

Ichiro Inada (1891) died a few years ago but his netsuke still can be found. His superb pieces are mostly from his earlier years and there was little decline seen in his works until the mid-1960's. Rarely can any of his pieces be found for less than \$1000.

There are other carvers working today but I do not feel that they maintain consistently high standards to be discussed. There are also a great many netsuke being carved by unskilled hands and you need only a sight comparison to see why they have no merit whatsoever. Most of these pieces sell for less than \$200 and they really are not worth buying at any price.

It is never too late to start collecting, no matter what other people may say. Prices were surely cheaper a few years ago, but ten years from now today's prices may seem to be a bargain. There is no guarantee, but either way it is a most enjoyable and exciting collecting experience.

Richard R. Silverman

Tokyo, Japan November 1979

Should anyone wish any more information I would be happy to write to them either directly or through your trade paper. That is strictly up to you. Since I plan to spend more time in the USA for next month it would be best to use my Los Angeles address:

Richard R. Silverman

838 N. Doheny Drive #1102

Los Angeles, California 90069

U.S.A.

§ § §

WANT ADS

To sell Netsuke in the want ads, send photo plus information. To purchase Netsuke from the want ads, send letter with check. If Netsuke is available it will be sent immediately. Money refundable if Netsuke

returned in 10 days. There will be a minimum charge of \$25.00 and a maximum of \$50.00 to cover printing, mailing, and insurance.



No. 1: Bejin Sleeping,
Tsuitate Netsuke
Signed: Koji
Sold at S.P.B. in 1977
Price: \$275.00



No. 2: Student Sleeping
Signed: Seiha
Sold at S.P.B. in 1977
Price: \$225.00



No. 3: Contortionist, Ebony Buttons
on Coat and Cues
Unsigned
Sold at S.P.B. in 1977
Price: \$750.00

NETSUKE SEMINAR 1980

By Elaine Ehrenkranz

The Netsuke Seminar - 1980, held in Maimi Beach, Florida, was ushered in by a welcoming cocktail party, well attended by collectors from all over the United States. This created a warm atmosphere in which collectors and dealers met and exchanged ideas, and it set the stage for an exciting two day seminar.

During the first morning, two documentary films were shown, both very informative. THE WORLD OF NETSUKE was an introductory film touching on major aspects of Netsuke and illustrating these points with fine Netsuke, well photographed. The second film was TOMOTADA VS. OKATOMO which compared these two great Kyoto School artists as to style and technique. After the film, I think even a beginning netsuke collector could make a good stab at distinguishing between these two artists.

But the highlight of the morning was a thought-provoking lecture on NETSUKE AS AN INVESTMENT presented by Bernard Hurtig. Mr. Hurtig passed out a booklet of the same title in which he traces the economic history of the great netsuke-shi and their netsuke of varying qualities. Some pages of certain artists are left blank so that the collectors can do their own research on these artists. The lecture did not coddle the collector. It informed, stimulated, at times provoked and at all times dealt with the netsuke market in a realistic manner. The emphasis was never on netsuke as an investment at the expense of other important aspects of collecting and other forms of appreciation. Mr. Hurtig would not be pinned down as to an expected annual percentage of appreciation, which no dealer can do in good conscience, but gave certain guidelines to collecting for appreciation. The Seminar

was a stunner, creating an atmosphere of great excitement and re-evaluation by the collector.

Saturday morning was devoted to three extremely interesting workshops. Betty Killam's workshop, FESTIVALS AND NETSUKE REPRESENTATIONS, was presented with her usual flair and humor and reflected extensive research on her part. Major festivals, such as the New Year's Festival, Feast of Lanterns and Buddha's Birthday were described and illustrated by appropriate netsuke from Betty's demo kit. Sharen Chappell conducted a workshop on UPGRADING YOUR COLLECTION. An interesting array of netsuke was displayed and their qualities discussed comparatively. Valid aesthetic reasons were put forth for retaining certain netsuke in one's collection while disposing of others. John Poole presented a very interesting talk on 20th century carvers. He discussed artists of the So School and other great contemporary artists such as Tokoku, Meikei and Masatoshi illustrating his comments about the artists by projected slides of the artists' works. This type of presentation is the next best thing to seeing and examining the actual pieces.

In the afternoons, collectors were able to apply some of their newly acquired knowledge by seeing and holding hundreds of fine netsuke on display by three leading netsuke dealers: Oriental Treasures and Points West (Bernard Hurtig), Betty Killam, and Ehrenkranz & Epstein Inc. (Elaine Ehrenkranz and Joy Epstein). Almost every imaginable subject, style, technique and material were represented in the stocks of these three dealers. All in all, the Netsuke Seminar was a huge success. It was well presented the well received!

§ § §

BETTY KILLAM

122 Middlesex Pike, (Rte. 9A)
Chester, Conn. 06412
(203) 526-2967

Oriental Arts
netsuke, porcelain, pottery, scrolls,
prints, swords, ivory



Credit cards accepted
Master Charge, Visa, American Express