



根付研究会



NETSUKE  
KENKYUKAI

Study Journal  
Volume 3, Number 2, 1983

Recumbent horse signed KAIGYOKUSAI. Osaka School,  
19th century. Ivory. L. 1½".



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# NETSUKE KENKYUKAI

Study Journal

Volume 3, Number 2 June 1983



**Cover:**  
An amusing and sinister  
Oni of staghorn & ivory,  
appears on page 23.  
Photo: Michael B. Glass

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Netsuke Kenkyukai Society is a non-profit organization. The purpose of the Society, as stated in its By-Laws, is to promote the study of netsuke and their related appurtenances, the artists who created them and the society from which they evolved. Such study is accomplished through conventions, exhibits, lectures, workshops and the dissemination of written materials, photographs and its Study Journal, published four times a year.

Submission of articles and materials for consideration for publication in the Study Journal are solicited at the submitter's risk. Send to: Netsuke Kenkyukai Study Journal, c/o Robert L. McGowen, 2500 First National Tower, Tulsa, OK 74103, U.S.A.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



**James  
Hume**

**T**HE response to the Washington Convention has been exceptional. At the time I wrote this, which was the first week of May, there were 147 early confirmations of attendance, with deposits! This could well become the best attended convention in the history of netsuke collecting.

Important information on all aspects of the Convention is contained in this issue.

Thanks to many of you who took the trouble to write us and

give your favorable comments on the changes incorporated in our March issue. Yes, there were a few typos - sorry for that!

While no one has come out directly and said it to me, a number of individuals have told me that others have commented that "Portrait of a Collector" is insufficiently academic for our publication. On the other hand, I have received direct comments from several members that they like the regular profiles. *What do you think?*

With so many members it will be hard to please everyone, but we want to try, so please let us know your opinions — after all you are paying for it! I'm sure that Joy Epstein doesn't need the practice, and would gladly contribute in other areas if asked. By the way, this is a good oppor-

tunity to thank Joy and the others who have contributed articles and other information — THANKS!

I'd like to give a word of encouragement to those of you who haven't gotten around to sharing with us that article you intend to write. Let's get that material in! Our editor, Bob McGowen, claims he is growing older faster as a result of worrying about future materials. Perhaps you know of someone with special knowledge of interest to our members? Why not encourage them to write about it?

Best wishes and happy collecting. See you at the Washington Convention!

James Hume

**W**ITH the Washington Convention just around the corner, I am looking forward to seeing old friends and greeting new members. What a great opportunity to tell a prospective new member about the Netsuke Kenkyukai Convention and invite he/she to be part of our organization.

James Hume and Bob McGowen, although busy in their professions, devote a great deal of time and energy to Netsuke Kenkyukai. Your contributions, financial or otherwise, are needed to keep the organization running smoothly.

I would like to thank those members who have been so diligent about paying their dues. For those who have to be sent 3-4 reminders, please make an extra effort to respond within a reasonable length of time. Thank you for your cooperation.

Betty Doré, President of the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter, wrote to me regarding all the exciting lectures and pres-

## MEMBERSHIP CORNER



**Adele  
Murphy**

entations that have taken place this past year.

"About two weeks ago while talking to James, he suggested that I send you news of our San Francisco Bay Area chapter. Since then I have received your letter.

"I have been attempting to find a willing volunteer to become 'Editor' of a newsheet to be sent to members of our local group who have missed meetings, and to be included with the announcements for subsequent meetings to guests and others with the hope that it will gener-

ate interest to join our group.

"I assured James that I would briefly advise you of happenings of our previous meetings and endeavor to keep you informed in the future.

For the record:

- Our first meeting was held on Sunday, June 13, 1982 at the Miyako Hotel in San Francisco. Luncheon was attended by 33 members and guests. Edie Kurstin, who entitled her talk, 'Japan and the Netsuke Connection,' told us of her experiences of finding and obtaining netsuke in Japan. Sharen Chappell followed with slides from the Netsuke Kenkyukai library, grouped to cover 'Carvers of Merit and Influence,' exact or similar pieces displayed for all to see.
- Program #2 was held at Yoshi's, a Japanese restaurant, in Berkeley, Ca. on September 12th. 31 eager members and guests attended. Marsha Vargas spoke on

# FROM YOUR EDITOR



**Robert L. McGowen**

**O**N May 14th, there was a theft of 171 netsuke from the Pacific Asia Museum in Pasadena, California. A reward is offered for information leading to recovery of the netsuke, which were part of a loan exhibition

from the Peabody Museum, Salem, Massachusetts. Many of you have the Peabody Museum catalog illustrating these pieces.

Three observations are in order.

First, it should be noted that any purchaser of these stolen netsuke will not acquire valid title regardless of such purchaser's honesty and good faith. See *Collector Beware* by James Hume in Vol. 2, No. 3, September 1982 of our Study Journal and Ed Flower's letter in Vol. 2, No. 4, December 1982. Be on the lookout for bargain offerings.

Second, as always, know your dealer.

Third, netsuke are works of art to be shared and displayed. The culprit or any purchaser having knowledge that these netsuke are stolen can only view the pieces in solitude. How unfortunate!

Just as the admiration and study of netsuke should be shared experiences, so too is it important that our knowledge, observations and comments be shared.

We renew our plea for contributions for the Study Journal.

## MEMBERSHIP CORNER *from page 4*

'Unusual Netsuke of Various Materials.' The program concluded with a portion of the slides from the N.K. library of pieces shown at the Los Angeles Convention. Slides of contemporary pieces were shown in conjunction with those to show the similarities and differences of the works of great artists of both times.

- Meeting #3 was a highlight for our group. Luncheon was held at the Holiday Inn, Gateway Center in San Francisco on October 24th. Robert Kinsey came from Los Angeles and treated us to a slide presentation of *Kodo Okuda's* works, along with views of *Kodo* at work in his home, etc. In addition he brought about 40 pieces of *Kodo's* works for exhibit. His talk was entitled 'The Arts of *Kodo Okuda*.' 40 members and guests attended. (Many of us were re-introduced to *Kodo* and his works from having met him at the N.K. convention in Minneapolis in 1979.)
- December 5th meeting was a change of pace - a Christmas party at the home of one of our members in Oakland. Buffet luncheon for 36 members and guests was served. Two audio-video tapes were lent to us by Oriental Treas-

ures & Points West and shown in the den converted to a theatre for the occasion running consecutively during the afternoon. A show-and-tell kept the party animated and interesting.

- February 4, 1983 brought forth 33 members and guests to Cathedral Hill Hotel in San Francisco to see and hear Paul Moss give us his slide presentation entitled 'Kokusai and Friends' that he had given in Honolulu one week earlier. Paul very graciously let the group handle pieces shown in the presentation and question him regarding them.
- April 10th had a unique program, the financial aspect of collecting. The program was entitled 'Investing in Art and Collectibles.' A panel discussion with Henry Toledano, our V.P. and Program Chairman speaking of collecting and investing in art and collectibles in general. Dessa Paulson-Buchsbaum of Butterfield's (auction house) speaking from the auction house aspect and Bernard Hertig from the dealer's side. A question and answer session followed.

"Our next meeting, planned for June 10th will have Robert

Haines, the noted authority on metal, particularly *tsuba*, as our speaker. He will discuss metals in general and metal netsuke. Location has not yet been set. There will be a meeting in August but so far nothing definite as yet."

Please contact Betty at P.O. Box 2004, Walnut Creek, Ca. 94595 if you are planning to be in the San Francisco area. Betty is another hard working member of Netsuke Kenkyukai and fortunate to have a good staff to assist her.

The Washington Chapter still amazes us with its activity and newsletter. The last issue was 9 pages. Their next meeting is planned for July 16. For information please contact James Rose at (301) 983-8585 or James Newton at (703) 938-3584.

## ● STOLEN ●

On May 14th, a theft of 171 netsuke, part of an exhibition on loan from the Peabody Museum, Salem, MA, occurred at the Pacific Asia Museum in Pasadena, California. The museum is offering a reward for any information which will lead to the recovery of the netsuke. Contact - Mr. David L. Kamansky at the Pacific Asia Museum, 46 North Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101, or telephone 213-449-2742.

## ● REWARD ●

## A NEST-EGG FOR YOUR YOUNG ONES?



### MASANAO of KYOTO

A lovely wood study of a hen nursing an egg between her scaly legs and preening a chick, while two other chicks playfully chase each other around her tail. Mid-eighteenth century.

*Masano's* work is more commonly found in ivory, and for the majority of his zodiacal animal subjects is more successful in that material, be they powerfully or gracefully exaggerated. His wood rats and tigers, for example, although identical in detail and feature to the ivory versions of the same animals, are not as successful; this is probably the reason he did most of them in ivory.

*Masano's* bird subjects are perhaps the only area in which he preferred wood as his medium. Compare this hen and chicks, shown above, with the almost identical model illustrated in the London 1980 Netsuke Convention publication "*Contrasting Styles*," no. 17. That piece was the mirror image to this one,

with the same chicks chasing around the tail, but in this case there is an additional chick, being cleaned up by the mother hen. Compare also the similar cockerel and chicks in the Baur Collection, no. C995. Possibly the most beautiful of all *Masano's* wood birds is the mandarin duck, illustrated in Hurlig's "*Masterpieces of Netsuke Art*," which accompanied the Cologne Netsuke Symposium exhibition at the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, as no. C6, on page 82, from the Martin Newstead collection.

Ivory birds by *Masano*, other than the dubious and ubiquitous tongue-cut sparrows, are very rare. For an example of one in almost manju form see our "*Eccentrics in Netsuke*," 1982, no. 44.

We will be exhibiting some special netsuke, Inro and associated art works at the Kenkyukai Convention in Washington, D.C., in September 1983. Please do make a point of visiting to see the pieces, which will be primarily from European private collections.

# Sydney L. Moss Ltd.

## Oriental Art

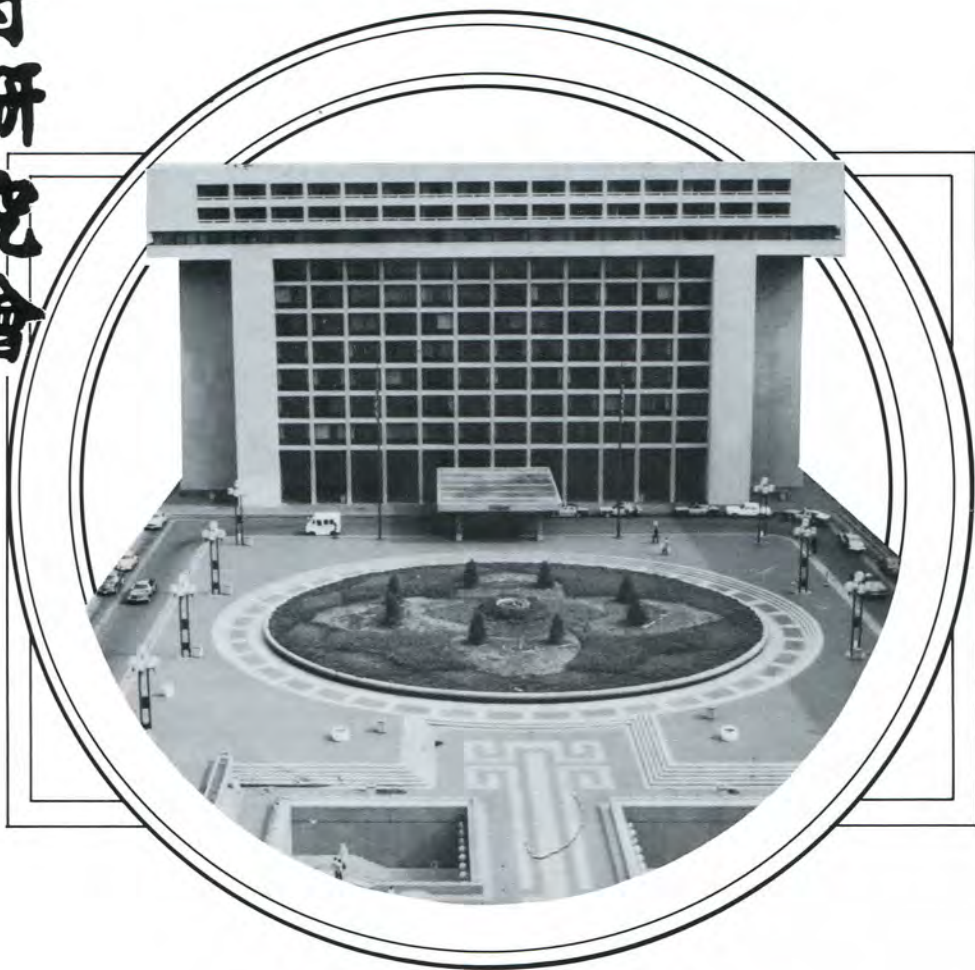
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根付研究會

# NETSUKE in the CAPITAL



## • IMPORTANT CONVENTION INFORMATION •

Netsuke Kenkyukai, the world-wide association of collectors and scholars of Netsuke and related Japanese arts, will host the greatest Netsuke event in history! An exciting Convention on the study of Netsuke and other related Japanese art. Meet world renown art experts in this field. See, handle and study more Netsuke in one week than most people see in a lifetime. Study the relationship of other forms of Japanese art such as prints, lacquer, ojime, and porcelains.

## • WHERE AND WHEN •

At the magnificent L'Enfant Plaza Hotel, 480 L'Enfant Plaza S.W., Washington D.C. 20024 Tel. (202) 484-1000. From September 19 through 23. Registration starts on Sunday September 18, 1983.

# Workshops

- **The Treatment of Symbolism in Netsuke and other Japanese Art Workshop Leader - Sharen Chappell**

Symbolism in Japanese art often eludes the Western collector. These are subtle meanings in certain subjects, in the treatment of them, or in the materials used to portray them. Examine both the familiar and less familiar for greater appreciation of intention on the part of the Japanese artist. Your puzzling netsuke or inro are welcome as we search for symbolic messages.

- **Appreciation of Lacquer Art Workshop Leaders - Elaine Ehrenkranz & Joy Epstein**

A study of the lacquer art form covering various aspects of lacquer collecting. See this magnificent art form as executed in netsuke, inro, and boxes. Study will include styles, techniques and artists. Fine examples of art will be available for all to enjoy. Collectors are encouraged to bring small examples from their collection for discussion with the group.

- **Exhibition of The Evergreen Collection of Netsuke and Inro**

On loan especially for this convention will be a substantial portion of the netsuke and inro collection of the Evergreen House of Johns Hopkins University. This little known collection was formed at the turn of the century and was subsequently donated to John Hopkins University. Owing to the recent efforts of Susan Tripp, the curator of the University's art collection, and Neil K. Davey of Sotheby Parke Bernet, the various pieces in the collection have now been accurately catalogued for the first time.

- **Erotic Aspects of Netsuke and Japanese Art Lecturer - Lawrence Gichner**

A subject often misunderstood and misinterpreted by Western Civilization. See this subject from the eyes of the Japanese and gain an insight into this important aspect of Japanese culture. Full of surprises, extremely informative and at times - most amusing!

- **A Study of Early Elephant Ivory Netsuke Workshop Leader - Jay Hopkins**

Study netsuke carved in the 17th and 18th centuries. Learn how to distinguish pieces of these periods from those of other periods. Learn how to identify from which section of the tusk a netsuke was carved. Learn about himotoshi style and placement, patina, and age cracks. Become more knowledgeable on this extremely interesting and still very affordable segment of netsuke collecting.

- **"The Works of Kodo" - Exhibition Lecturer - Robert Kinsey**

An outstanding display of the works of art of the artist Kodo Okuda. This exhibition will include paintings, screens, furoshiki, incense boxes, suzuri bako, sculptured utensils and numerous okimono, netsuke and ojime, representing over two thirds of Kodo's lifetime production. The most important feature of his exhibit will be the presence of Kodo and his wife. In the planning is a lecture on this outstanding artist and his works.

- **The Origins of Netsuke found in Chinese Art Workshop Leader - Paul Moss**

Do Japanese netsuke trace their origins to China? Did the Chinese use netsuke? Find the answers to these and many other questions in this stimulating workshop dealing with the art ties between the cultures of China and Japan. Study netsuke and other carvings which demonstrate these ties. Japanese netsuke or Chinese toggle? — find out which. Collectors are encouraged to bring examples from their own collection for discussion in the group.

- **A workshop on Japanese Prints of the 19th century Workshop Leader - Jane Oliver**

For those who are interested in broadening their appreciation of Japanese Art, this workshop will deal with a study of 19th century prints. Examples will include fine pieces of authentic work as well as reproductions. Do you have a question about one of your own pieces? Participants are encouraged to bring examples from their own collections for discussion in the group.

- **The Unique, The Extraordinary and The Unusual Workshop Leader - Cornelius Van S. Roosevelt**

Join this fun workshop and explore a world of netsuke seldom seen by most collectors. Handle and discuss some of the most unusual netsuke ever made. The material from which certain of these netsuke were made has not been conclusively identified and your help is requested. Handle a wide variety of types as well as a wide variety of materials.

## THE PROGRAM

- **Workshops**

Participants will be able to attend many of the scheduled workshops and seminars.

- **Lectures**

There will be an open lecture on each of three of the days.

- **Auction**

Sotheby's will conduct an auction on Wednesday afternoon.

- **Dealers**

Dealer displays will be in the open display rooms or in private rooms or suites.

- **Exhibits**

At least two special Japanese Art exhibits are scheduled on the Convention site.

- **Evenings**

Cocktail parties and a Thursday night banquet are planned.

Possible other events are currently under consideration, such as a bus excursion to a major exhibition of Japanese Art.

## THE FEE STRUCTURE FOR DEALERS

Dealer registration fee \$ 300.00 for one person.

Dealer spouse, partner etc. \$ 150.00 per additional person

Security will be provided in open display areas. Cost will be shared on a pro rata basis. An estimated security service charge will be billed in advance.

Open display areas will be available at a modest fee depending on amount of space desired.

Approximately 7' x 8' = 56 square feet . . . . . \$ 100.00/week

Approximately 9' x 10' = 90 square feet . . . . . \$ 150.00/week

Approximately 9' x 17' = 153 square feet . . . . . \$ 250.00/week

Wall display cabinets will be rented for dealers as requested.

These cabinets are 7 feet high by 6 feet wide with five shelves. Rental cost is approximately \$ 150.00 ea.

Dealer Suites are available for those of you who wish to display in a suite. The hotel has made available a limited number of suites which may be reserved on a first come first served basis.

Per Diem rates for Suites

	Small	Medium	Large
One bedroom	\$240	300	425
Two bedroom	355	415	540



# Lectures

# Seminars

- **Netsuke Basics for the New and "Used" Collector**  
Workshop Leader - James Rose

A "must" workshop for the novice collector. Learn how to get the most out of collecting. Learn the "ins and outs" of buying at auction. Find out why reliable dealers are important and how to use their vast knowledge to your advantage. The subject matter will range from the basics which every collector must know to material of interest even to the "seasoned" collector. Netsuke for study will range from "Hong Kong" to masterpieces.

- **Netsuke Materials — How Knowledgeable Are You?**  
Workshop Leader - Norman Sandfield

You will be challenged to identify dozens of raw materials from which netsuke were sometimes carved. You will have the opportunity to handle many netsuke and test your knowledge as to the materials from which they were carved. Collectors are invited to try to stump the expert with unusual examples from their collection.

- **Signature reading workshop**  
Workshop Panel - to be announced

The workshop will deal mainly with the technical aspects of how to read netsuke signatures. While it is unlikely that you will become an instant expert, you should leave with the basic understanding of how to break down the majority of signatures. Want to know what the signature on one of your netsuke reads? Bring it along and the panel of experts will try to uncover the mystery.

- **Contemporary Netsuke and Their Place in the World of Antiques**  
Workshop Leader - Richard Silverman

An interesting and thought provoking workshop on modern carvers and their netsuke. Learn where these modern works of art fit into what is predominantly a world of antiques. Get answers to questions such as: What is the relative value of moderns versus antiques?, Which artists produce the finest work?, How should one approach starting a collection of modern pieces, and which is the best source for such works? Examples of the finest works of the modern carvers will be available to handle.

- **Japanese Porcelains as seen in Netsuke Art**  
Workshop Leader - Denis Szeszler

Learn more about another exciting aspect of Japanese art - porcelain. Study will include an appreciation of the art forms, styles, techniques, and production of: Japanese pottery and porcelains such as tea ceremony wares, Satsuma and Kutani wares, and their development through the late Tokugawa and Meiji eras. Many examples of fine porcelain netsuke, inro, and other works of art will be on hand for you to handle. Participants are encouraged to bring examples from their own collection to share with the group.

- **The Creativity and Technical Mastery of Japan's Most Miniature Art Form - The Ojime**  
Workshop Leader - Cynthia Wagner

A program with slide illustrations of two major categories of Ojime: Ivory, carved both in the round and sculptural or Katabori — executed by artists schooled in Netsuke and Okimono - and - "Married Metalwork," executed predominantly by metal workers schooled in sword furniture but whose talents were the exclusive source for the execution of Kagamibuta, Kanamone, pipes, and metal inlay for Inro.

- **Japanese Lacquering Techniques**  
Workshop Leader - Sadae Walters

This presentation by an accomplished lacquer artist, who studied under Japanese Masters will offer something of interest for everyone on the beginner to the advanced collector. You will have the opportunity to see not only how lacquer art is produced but also the materials and tools which were employed.

- **Painting Styles and Netsuke and Inro of the Edo Period**  
Workshop Leader - Howard Zar

Many collectors are not aware of the broad correlation between the styles of netsuke and inro and other forms of Japanese arts. The styles of netsuke and inro rely heavily on the development of style in paintings and prints. This workshop will chart the stylistic development of painting through the Edo period, giving the participant an understanding of the development of inro and netsuke styles between the years 1600 and 1900.

## REGISTRATION FEES

	Registration Fee per person*	Fee for Spouse*	Reg. Fee on a Daily Basis (Banquet not included)
MEMBERS	\$250	200	70 per day
NON-MEMBERS	300	250	85 per day

\* REMEMBER: For those regular members who register and pay their convention fees before August 1, there will be a reduction in registration fees of \$50.00 per person.

## HOTEL ACCOMODATION RATES

The hotel has reserved a number of rooms for our event specially priced at their lowest rate:

Single rooms at \$ 90.00 per day

Double rooms at 105.00 per day

## CONVENTION RECEPTION OFFICE

There will be a convention reception office at the entrance to the convention area for receiving visitors. As a special service for the registered dealers we will be distributing promotional materials and giving information on their location in the hotel. This area will serve as a convenient meeting place for members. New members will be able to get information they require on all aspects of Netsuke Kenkyukai. The Convention, or collecting in general at this location. There will also be a message center maintained at the convention office.

★ **PROGRAM SCHEDULE OUTLINE** ★

Time	Sunday September 18	Monday 19	Tuesday 20	Wednesday 21	Thursday 22	Friday 23
9:00 to 10:15		Workshop	Workshop	Workshop	Workshop	Workshop
10:15 to 10:45		Coffee	Coffee	Coffee	Coffee	Coffee
10:45 to 12:00		Workshop	Workshop	Workshop	Workshop	Workshop
12:00 to 1:30		Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break	Lunch Break
1:30 to 2:30	Registration	Lecture	Lecture	Auction	Lecture	Open
2:30 to 6:00	↓ Dealer Exhibits	Dealer Exhibits	Dealer Exhibits	Auction	Dealer Exhibits	Optional Field Trip
6:30 to 7:30	↓	Cocktails	Cocktails	Open	Cocktails	Open
after 7:30		Open	Open	Open	Banquet and General Meeting	Open
★	★	★	★	★	★	★

PHOTO COPY THIS FORM AND MAIL

**Netsuke Kenkyukai • P.O.Box 845 • Shelton, Connecticut 06484 • U.S.A.**

**REGISTRATION FORM**  
(NON-DEALERS ONLY)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse's Name (only if accompanying) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Member Registration Fee \$ 250.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Fees for Non-Members are  
 Member Registration Fee for spouse 200.00 \_\_\_\_\_ an additional \$50.00 per  
 person  
 Because I am paying my Registration  
 Fee prior to August 1, I am entitled to  
 a discount of \$50.00 per person. \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is a check payable to:  
 Netsuke Kenkyukai TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please send a Room Reservation form — We require the following Accomodations:  
 Single  Double  
 Special Requirement \_\_\_\_\_

\*NOTE: Those persons who already sent in an early confirmation with \$20.00 will receive separate registration information and need not use this form to register.

# CONVENTION CORNER

## No-Sin Sex at Convention



Jim  
Newton

All convention programmers try to come up with something unique that will entice people to attend. The Netsuke Kenkyukai Convention is no different in that respect. We know that the 1983 conclave is going to accomplish this ideal.

Many workshops and lectures on a variety of subjects have been scheduled for this Convention week. Subject matter will run a long gamut of general and special interest, with something for everyone — even sex!

I know that although this is a day and age of expanding permissiveness, for many sex remains a topic tainted with shadows of our American puritanism. It can be found everywhere, but, despite its pervasiveness, is not a subject for “polite” society. Most of the time, that is.

Perhaps that’s why few netsuke publications do more than touch on erotic netsuke in passing. The less said, the less guilt one needs to feel in either writing or reading about it. “Erotic” equates with “naughty” for most Americans.

Yet eroticism forms a measurable part of art the world over. The same is true for the art of netsuke, our favorite part of the Japanese artistic milieu. Netsuke with outrightly visible erotic treatment are not too hard to find, and the more subtle connotations of eroticism abound. The chances are that you may actually have at least one with an erotic connection. Oh, no? How about that charming Okame mask? Not erotic, you say? We’ll have more

to say about that later.

The man who perhaps knows more about this subject than any other is Lawrence E. Gichner of Washington, D.C. An art collector, antiquarian consultant, and photographer, he also is the author of three privately published books on the subject: *Erotic Aspects of Hindu Sculpture* (1945), *Erotic Aspects of Japanese Culture* (1953), and *Erotic Aspects of Chinese Culture* (1957). His serious study of this frequently ignored (or hidden) artistic facet provides an unique backdrop for both the serious and hobby collector of netsuke, as well as other Japanese art forms. He owns about 230 erotic netsuke, a few of which are shown here. (No copulative examples, however; this is still a “family” magazine in the good old puritanical tradition.



Mushrooms often take on erotic overtones because of some species’ obvious phallic shape and because some mushrooms are credited with aphrodisiacal qualities.

Even these innocuous illustrations would have been a no-no not too many years ago.)

In September 1982, Lawrence Gichner was prevailed upon to discuss this subject with members of the Washington Chapter of Netsuke Kenkyukai, of which he is a charter member. For better than two hours he led some 35 members on an illustrated journey through slides and lecture into a new appreciation for the place of erotic symbolism in Japanese art. It was a fascinating journey, and he has agreed to be tour leader again for attendees to the 1983 Netsuke Kenkyukai Convention.

The key to seeing eroticism in netsuke clearly and objectively is understanding that for the Japanese there is *NO SIN IN SEX*.



**Chinese Lady, holding taboret on which sits a small dog, seems less ladylike but undeniably of the female gender when her skirt slips down.**



**This Lantern seems ready to dispel the gloom in normal fashion, but shines with different light when "candle" is unmistakably phallic in shape and demeanor.**



**Woman and Friend display decorous affection on the surface, but underneath an errant toe finds its way to the wrong — or it it right? — place. This kind of wry humor delighted the Japanese netsuke owner, particularly the "secret" knowledge of what is putting the bemused expression on the lady's face.**

CONVENTION CORNER *continued*

They are masters of the double entendre, and possess, behind their strict formal social etiquette, a highly developed sense of humor. And much of Japanese erotic art is humorous — as is most all erotic expression worldwide. Viewed in the "sinless" context, erotic netsuke shine forth as the most "fun" pieces to be found in our collecting searches.

Under Lawrence's guidance, convention-goers will see how almost any elongated object — like the Tengu's Pinnocchio-like nose — can have a phallic connotation without being offensive. Lawrence takes the viewer on a visit to a phallic shrine, still prayed to by couples wanting felicitous marital relations, explaining how phallic concepts reflect part of the Japanese people's close association with life's natural activities.

Allusions to myth and legend abound in erotic netsuke. Okame, who performed a "lewd and lascivious" dance to entice Amaterasu from her world-darkening retreat into a cave, always has an erotic connotation of the Japanese. Tenuki, the artful badger, with his sake bottle and enlarged scrotum, really is a moral lesson (drink may stimulate the imagination, but diminishes performance).

No one of the Washington Chapter who heard Lawrence on that September evening last year failed to understand a little better the wide-ranging fascination we have in these miniature sculptures. They also came away with a greater appreciation for the culture which produced the reasons we meet and study.

Now, a year later, in September 1983, you all will have a chance to experience the same illuminating conditions when Lawrence E. Gichner conducts this workshop on "The Erotic Aspect of Japanese Art."

You all come!

James Newton  
Convention Chairman  
(Photos courtesy Lawrence E. Gichner)



# PORTRAIT OF A COLLECTOR

by Joy Epstein

## Robert & Miriam Kinsey

**H**istory records that each era produces a few special individuals whose creative talents bring new dimensions to mankind, leaving legacies for future generations. And, sometimes, destiny works its magic and two strangers meet, marry, and then together achieve that new idea, discovery, or happening in the arts, political arenas, scientific community, or philosophic fields. To this peer group belong the names of Robert and Miriam Kinsey. In a little over a decade, they have made a major contribution to the field of netsuke, the results of twenty-five years of education, research, lecturing, writing, and collecting. And, their contributions are ongoing. They are more than a husband and wife team, interested in the same artistic areas. They are pioneers in collecting contemporary netsuke and in introducing the artists of this era to the Japanese people (strangely enough), and to netsuke collectors in all parts of the world. The "how" of how this has been accomplished is truly an exciting, romantic adventure, spanning three decades of mutual interests, respect for each other's opinions, encouragement, and love. The results for the netsuke world have been glorious, including a

book by Miriam, *Contemporary Netsuke*, the first ever written on modern netsuke.

The Kinsey story really began in Alaska in 1947. Bob, while an officer of the United States Air Force during World War II, had the misfortune to contract malaria, a malady of reoccurring episodes. After the war ended, he returned to Washington, D.C., where he became an official of the Civil Aeronautics Board, and probably would have remained if his malaria had improved. Instead of getting better, his condition deteriorated, and so extensively that his doctor told him he might be facing a life expectancy of maybe six months! The good medical man did hold out a ray of hope. He suggested that Bob's one chance might be to move to a very cold climate. The medical data in the 1940's indicated that sometimes malaria sufferers improved in the frigid climates, the malaria bacteria not tolerating well the icy regions. Bob promptly took the advice, bought a car and trailer, and drove from Washington to Anchorage, Alaska. The trailer, a must with housing almost non-existent there at that time, became home for the new head of the Civil Aeronautics Board in Alaska. And, strangely enough,

the malaria attacks ceased and have never returned. The young man from Chicago embarked on a new chapter of his life in Alaska. It was to be a most fortunate beginning for more than medical reasons, for it was there he met Miriam.

Miriam, originally from Montana, had been living in Alaska since 1931. She had come to love this land and its art. Her first collecting was started there with Alaskan paintings, eventually expanding to include other art forms with emphasis on Alaskan sculpture. When she met Bob Kinsey, she was to find that their tastes were amazingly similar. (Subsequently they built together a beautiful collection of Alaskan art and artifacts.) Miriam was not residing in the same town as Bob, but they would meet when Miriam's work, as secretary to a prominent industrialist, took her to Anchorage or Bob would visit her in Fairbanks. But, Alaska was not in their future. Bob left government work in 1952 and became associated with Pacific Northern Airlines, based in Anchorage. When the PNA routes were extended to Seattle and Portland, Bob moved to Seattle. A year later, Miriam changed her residence to Seattle after her employer

was killed in a mine accident. Bob Kinsey, a most persuasive man, succeeded in getting Miriam to say, "Yes," and they were married there in 1953. Seattle became home until 1968. At that time PNA merged with Western Airlines, which was headquartered in Los Angeles, and Bob and Miriam moved to California.

The first ivory carving Bob ever purchased was in Tokyo, in 1945, where he was stationed for a short period after World War II. Knowing nothing about carvings at the time, Bob was simply drawn to a beautiful work. He later learned that this type of sculpture was called an "okimono," and had been carved by Joso (1855-1910, the first of the So school artists). This piece has a very special meaning to the Kinseys as it was the first present Bob ever gave to Miriam before their marriage. But it wasn't until 1958, on a trip to Japan, that Bob and Miriam bought their first netsuke from Mr. H. Nakayama, a Tokyo dealer. It was a work by Yoko, a living artist. (So — there it was — their first purchase, based completely on appeal and uninfluenced by knowledge of any sort, was a contemporary piece). As Miriam wrote in her book, *Contemporary Netsuke*, "the name of the carver meant nothing to us. Nor did the question of whether it was old or new ever occur to us. We only know that we had an enchanting, beautifully carved, typically Japanese piece of miniature sculpture." This has been the underlying

philosophy of the Kinseys toward collecting. Bob expressed a similar thought fourteen years later when he wrote in *Masterpieces Of Netsuke Art*, "Our collecting instincts now are probably motivated first and foremost by the aesthetic qualities of a netsuke and the skill of its execution. The appeal of subject matter follows closely as a secondary consideration. The name of the artist is perhaps of lesser importance..." That first purchase in 1958 was to grow into the foremost contemporary netsuke collection of our time. It should also be stated that the Kinseys did not consciously decide to become collectors of contemporary netsuke. They have always purchased antique pieces when they found one they thought "exceptional." But, as Bob recently summarized it, "Our study, focus, and interest, from the beginning, was contemporary." Today their collection is probably comprised of ninety percent modern pieces. This is only a guess as they have never counted their collection, and with possibly an exception or two, have never sold any of their purchases, and don't intend to do either of the two in the future.

The Kinseys approach to collecting became a unique experience. They found they were never satisfied with merely owning a netsuke. Their intellectual curiosity required a more thorough investigation. Even studying the history of the carver was not enough, so it was inevitable that

in time they would develop the desire to actually meet the artists. As Miriam stated in an interview, "Today, Bob and I are as interested in who does something as in what they do." This thirst for complete knowledge has led them actively to seek out almost all the living carvers. It has taken them many years, and numerous trips to Japan, and the research goes on. But they have been able to meet many, including the following: Akihide, Michael Birch (Fig. 3), Bishu (Fig. 2), Gaho, Hakuraku, Hideyuki, Hodi, Hozan, Ichio, Ichiro, Kangyoku (Fig. 4,6), Keiun, Kodo (Fig. 1), Masatoshi, Meigyokusai, Meikei, Mitsuyuki, Ryoshu, Ryushi (Fig. 5), Seigyoku, Senpo, Shimryo, Seiho, Shinzan Masanao, Shodo, Shogetsu, Shoko, Sosui, Yoko, Yoshiyuki, Yukimasa, and Yuko. They visit with the artists and their families in their studios and homes (often the same place). And some of these friendships have become extremely close, a result they never anticipated but which they deeply cherish. When they first became acquainted with the Japanese carvers, they found that these artists were virtually unrecognized for their talents, living frugal existences, and terribly underpaid for their work. The Kinseys have made a great contribution towards changing their status. And believe it or not, it was these two Americans who introduced the Japanese people to "The Art of Netsuke," via a television show in Tokyo in 1971. It was a first for Japanese

cont'd page 16



Fig. 1. Sashi-like netsuke by Kodo, double spider-web and spider of ivory on lacquered piece of bamboo driftwood

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**Unusual fan netsuke** decorated with the sun and moon and characters, translated "Great Peace in the Empire." Colored lacquers and *aogai*. 19th century

**Manju netsuke** of a Lion Dancer, colored lacquers and *aogai* inlay on a rich *kinji* ground. Signed: *Shibayama Saku* and *Shozan*. 19th century



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**Fig. 2. "Alighting Swan", ivory netsuke by Bishu**



**Fig. 3. Grazing Horse, narwhal tusk netsuke by Michael Birch**



**Fig. 4. Squirrel, sashi-like ivory netsuke by Kangyoku**

T.V. and featured an interview with Miriam and Bob discussing all phases of netsuke art.

Shortly thereafter, forty-five Japanese artists held a joint exhibition at the "Netsuke Carvers Temple" in Tokyo. Sincerely grateful to Bob and Miriam for their work in their behalf, they made them the guests of honor for this special occasion, also a first of its kind. It was truly an unforgettable experience, one of their proudest memories. In the twelve years since that eventful evening, the Kinseys have continued to add to their collection of works by contemporary artists. They have not only purchased numerous pieces, but discovered that they liked to acquire many netsuke by the same carver. The end result has been a remarkable historical happening; their collection today reflects the artistic development of many of the world's leading contemporary netsuke carvers — a priceless historical legacy for future generations. And their collection is still growing and adding new artists as they emerge.

By the early 1970's, given the Kinsey's background in contemporary netsuke, it was logical that the idea for a book on the subject should emerge. After all, there was nothing in book form to which collectors could refer. With Bob's enthusiastic encouragement, Miriam began the undertaking. The result - *Contemporary Netsuke* - a scholarly and exciting work that appeared in 1977. This book contained much more than documentary evidence of the twenty-seven leading carvers, to that date, with their biographies, signatures, and photographs. It also contained interesting chapters on netsuke history in general, thoughts on the "why" or motivations of collecting, and techniques of carving. Miriam's first book is soon to be joined by a second. Tentatively entitled, *Living Masters of Ancient*





Fig. 5. "Breeze",  
ivory netsuke by  
Ryushi

Netsuke, it will be a book of profiles of the twelve top contemporary artists, how they live, work, and think, along with photographs of their artistry and pictures of their homes and families. The appendix will be of special interest as it will deal with "yesterday's carvers" and "some projections on up-and-coming artists, plus a chapter on how carvers develop an idea," says Miriam.

While the Kinseys were deep into contemporary netsuke, they were simultaneously collecting a related cousin — *ojime*. "Ann Meselson (whom readers met in *Netsuke Kenkyukai Study Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2, is directly responsible," said Bob. "We visited with Ann in 1970, and that evening she was wearing a wonderful necklace made of *ojime*." Bob, who had really not paid any attention to *ojime* prior to that evening, became inspired, and shortly thereafter purchased twelve pieces as a anniversary

gift for Miriam. But, Miriam puts it this way, "Bob became hooked on *ojime* and I lost my anniversary present!" Regardless, the Kinsey *ojime* collection was underway. After that, Bob began combing the major cities of the world in his quest for fine pieces. Today, their collection is in the many hundreds, although, like the netsuke, they have never made a count. It is about ninety percent antique (the reverse of their netsuke collection) probably because formerly it was impossible to find contemporary *ojime*. "The modern carvers never did them," Miriam said, "but Bob was instrumental in persuading them to experiment." That took a lot of doing, for Bob tells how "the artists all said it was harder to carve an *ojime* than a netsuke," and certainly netsuke prices were better for the same amount of effort. And, once again, the lack of research material will lead to another book. This one is Bob's project

and should be an encyclopedic work, the most complete documentation of *ojime* ever undertaken, a definitive work for collectors and scholars. He is very ambitious about his source material, hoping to view and photograph every major *ojime* collection, whether in museums or privately owned, all over the world! It will also contain new material never before seen. For example, Bob has commissioned Akihide to carve *ojime* of the twelve zodiac animals.

The Kinseys are true devotees to the world of netsuke. They have approached contemporary collecting as a preference in taste, and certainly never from an investment angle. When Miriam was recently asked what she thought of netsuke as investments, she promptly replied with stern conviction (most unusual for this soft spoken lady), "Investments are the worst incentive any beginning collector could look for. However, if a person is interested in collecting contemporary netsuke, I would advise him to look at work by the twelve top artists. If the prices are out of his particular range, he could investigate works by the twelve or thirteen up-and-coming carvers. Many pieces being produced by those twenty-five will be future greats, superlative contemporary pieces that now can be purchased for \$1000.00 to \$3500.00." For example, Miriam and Bob recently acquired a wonderful work by Sumi, a female carver and pupil of Bishu, of a pair of foxes, for under \$1000.00

The Kinseys' delight in collecting spills over into their gift giving. Every occasion is a reason for them to surprise one another with a special purchase. This author spent several fascinating hours with Bob and Miriam in January of 1983. The time really flew, and it was getting late, but I could see that Bob was anxious to say something, not for Miriam's



**"NIO AT THE SOUTHERN GREAT GATE OF THE TODAJI"**

This magnificent *itto-ori bamboo, obi hasami*, easily ranks among the rarest examples of netsuke art. An exact replica of the Nio at Todaiji, the inspiration of *Morikawa Toen*: poet, calligrapher, Noh performer, musician and netsuke shi.

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## "YOUNG MERMAID & TAMA"

The grace of her form and the refinement of her features led a noble countenance to this comely young enchantress. Signed: *Masatsugu*, however considered the even rarer work of his grandson a protégé, *Masateru*.

## "BAKA NEKO — THE GHOST CAT"

A powerful portrayal of the frightening "*Baka Neko*," sinewy spirited creature of the night, by the contemporary master *Masatoshi*.

## "SNOW MONKEY & PERSIMON"

A most exquisite example of the absolute charm and perfection of the art of the master carver. *Kaigyokusai Masatsugu*.



Fig. 6. Tiger, ivory netsuke by *Kangyoku*

PORTRAIT from page 17

ears. Finally, the opportunity arose when she left the room for a few moments, and Bob made a beeline for a cabinet where he had carefully hidden his Valentine present for Miriam; a beautifully carved netsuke of a bean pod, which he had commissioned Michael Birch to do for the occasion. He was so thrilled with the softly gleaming ivory of a most delicate hue, but I suspect he was even more delighted for the pleasure he knew this gift would bring to his wife.

The spirit of giving is a way of life for Bob and Miriam, and not confined only to each other. Far from it. They have collected many of the arts beside netsuke and *ojime* (Sumi paintings, Alaskan sculpture, wood-block prints, sculpture in several media, ceramic art, roof-tiles from temples and castles, to mention a few), and have already made major donations to schools, colleges, and museums. When *Shimaoka*, Japan's leading ceramic artist, had a recent exhibit at a museum in La Jolla, California, the Kinseys not only loaned an exquisite bowl of theirs by the artist, but then presented it as a gift to the museum. And to the Marymount School for Girls in Los Angeles has gone some of their Japanese art collection. Miriam and Bob

feel that so much can be done educationally if young persons have the opportunity to view wonderful art during their formative years at the high school level. They plan future gifts to high schools for this purpose. And, their Alaskan art and artifacts collection, begun during their courtship days, has all been donated to the Anchorage Fine Arts Museum, making it possible for Alaskans to enjoy works by their native artists. Seattle University, located in what was the Kinseys' hometown for fifteen years, has been the recipient of many of their Oriental art treasures and a treasure of a different sort — the Kinseys' former week-end mountain home (with Japanese architecture and landscaping). Today, it is used by the President of the University for official entertaining, regents' meetings, and special events.

A most beautiful story, which probably typifies this gracious and generous couple best, concerns their friendship with *Kangyoku*. He arrived at their hotel in Tokyo one day in 1972, a shy young man in his early twenties, bringing a gift. A symbol of his appreciation for Bob's and Miriam's work on behalf of the Japanese carvers, it was a netsuke of a tiger — the very first

piece he had ever carved and which he had intended to keep for his children. However, it was important to him that this gift should be something of personal value which he prized highly — thus the tiger. Of course the Kinseys were reluctant to accept such an invaluable possession, but the artist insisted. Today it is a most honored member of their collection, but they only guard it for now as they have stipulated in their wills that the tiger shall one day be returned to the *Kangyoku* children.

Robert and Miriam Kinsey are extraordinary collectors. They love and delight in their works of art, but their collecting is oriented in the direction of future donations. They see themselves as temporary owners until the day when everything in their possession will be given to educational institutions or museums. Their ultimate wish is for others to have public access to view, study, or simply enjoy these treasures. They are the complete collectors; guardians of antiquities — pioneers of today — looking towards new horizons. ■

EDITOR'S NOTE: Bob & Miriam Kinsey have just been advised that Seattle University will confer on each of them an honorary degree for their efforts in furthering in the West the understanding and appreciation of art and culture of Japan.



Fine four case Inro, Signed: *Hosensai*, \$2800.00

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**Group of Karako.** Ivory and coral, 19th C. Length 3"  
This group of boys tumbling over one another as they fight to grab for a scepter which one of them holds, is a tour-de-force of the sculptor's art, regardless of size. The feeling of life and movement captured in the ivory is a quality this piece has in common with the finest art of any medium. Accentuating the highest point of the piece, the summit of the group as it were, by the use of the brightly colored coral hat, is a stroke of genius.

## The Forest and the Trees

by Jerome Spiller  
Photographs by Michael B. Glass

A personal view,  
illustrated with unsigned netsuke

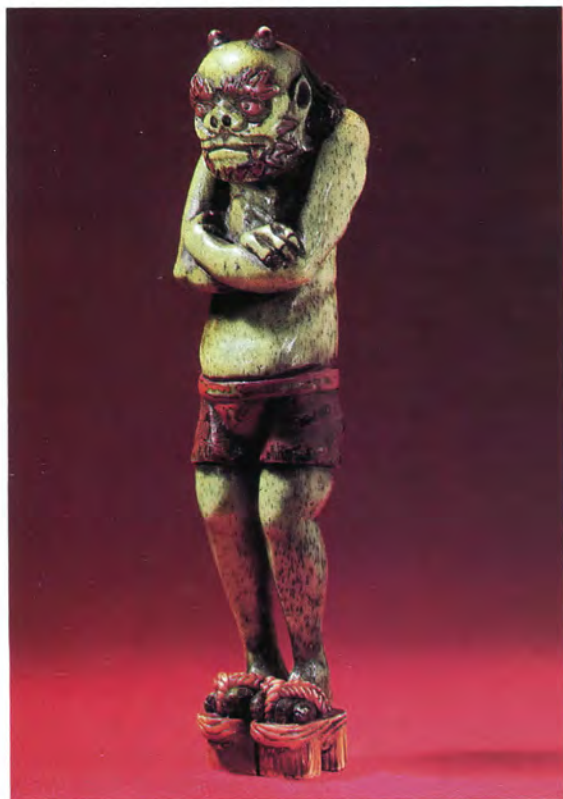
What is it that makes a netsuke "good?"

Netsuke have been referred to as "miniature sculpture," "a miniature art form," "indigenous folk art," etc. Many other phrases are used in the attempt to place netsuke in the context of art history. One has seen these terms in the titles of books and articles, and one also uses them when trying to describe to the uninitiated in words, without the aid of an example at hand, what it is that we collectors become so enthusiastic, indeed at times obsessed, about. There are, of course, many criteria which go into the determination that here is a piece which we find intriguing enough to want to add to our collection: subject matter,

materials, tactile quality; technique and style; a particular artist, signature, school and/or provenance; price; condition; all these considerations and more are relevant to us when we examine a piece and decide whether or not to make it part of our own personal environment.

I am not for one moment denigrating the process by which we come to the difficult decision of what we think about a particular netsuke, whether it belongs (or is about to belong) to us, or is part of another collection. The determinations of the relative significance and merit of the parts which go to make up the whole of the netsuke, or of any other work of art under consideration, are important. They have a lot to do with the price we are

willing to pay. Fortunately or unfortunately, this is a very important criterion: when a student in a course on Japanese arts interrupted me to point to a stag-antler scepter carved by *Kokusai*, about which I was rhapsodizing, and asked in a very puzzled voice, "But why is it worth so much money?" I had to stop and consider. Since I had just spent several minutes extolling its artistic and historic virtues and those of its maker, I was at a loss. After groping unsuccessfully for the perfect phrase, I sighed and said, "It's worth that much money because that's what someone is willing to pay for it." "Terrific," I thought. "After all these



**Oni.** Staghorn & Ivory, 19th C. Height 4½"

This Imp, at once amusing and sinister, gains much of its pleasing qualities from the material used, as the natural texture and grain of the staghorn is used to depict the skin and body hair of the subject. The imaginative staining is absorbed well by this porous material, the *geta* (sandals) are a later addition.



**Cock and Hen.** Ivory, with double inlaid eyes (amber, and a black material for the pupils) 18th - 19th C. Height 1½"  
Many interesting conjectures may be made as to the source (school, artist, etc.) of this unsigned piece, but its relevance to the accompanying article lies in the marvelous delineation of this pair. The affection of the artist for the subject illuminates this piece like a beacon.



**Lotus.** Wood, stained 19th C. Height 1¾"

This deceptively simple study of a lotus has wonderfully flowing lines, and is like satin to the touch.



**Pouch.** Ebony wood, with silver mounts, 19th C. Length 2"

A rather pedestrian choice of subject, however, the use of ebony as a material, together with the fine modeling of the ornamentation, give the piece the solid heft and look of a full pouch.



A group of six rats and soy beans.  
Signed: *Ichiyusai to*

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years, that's the best you can come up with?" But as I mulled it over later, I decided that it wasn't such a bad ultimate response to the consideration of price: a dealer may point out to me the particular feature of a piece which makes him feel that it's worth \$3000 more than the piece sitting next to it. In the final analysis, however, it's only worth \$3000 more if *I* (or another buyer) feel it is. The price is validated only when someone is willing to pay it. Rarity of subject, unusual material, age, even condition, are all relative criteria, I feel, rather than absolute. I feel this regardless of the knowledge that I can get just as fixated as (probably more than) the next person on any one of these considerations when I'm examining every millimeter of a netsuke through my magnifying glass.

Now, to step out on the limb a little further before I saw it off: None of this makes any difference at all if the piece cannot stand on its own artistic merit, out of any particular context. I believe that a good netsuke is also a fine work of art, an opinion which art historians and critics have slowly, ever so tentatively, begun to espouse. I own pieces which I love because they feel so good in my hand, or because they are made from an exotic material, or depict animals in a pose I've not seen elsewhere, or show a mythological being whose story no one seems to know. All of these

facets add to the interest and, by extension, the value, of a piece. Without the underlying support, however, of the high quality of the artistic conception and the execution of the piece, it all fails. That is why I must reluctantly take exception when someone says something like, "Well, I suppose it's not really carved very well, but I love cats, so it's worth the price." If it's good art, it's good art. It doesn't make one iota of difference whether it's a sculpture by Michaelangelo, a prehistoric cave painting, or an unsigned netsuke. (Did you hear the sound of my body hitting the ground after I finished sawing through the limb?)<sup>1</sup>

Now, I am not talking about the degree of sophistication of technical prowess exhibited in a piece, certainly not as an end in itself. The question is: did the artist succeed well in what he tried to do? So-called folk art is every bit as valid as any other art form, when the piece succeeds. The artificial distinctions between folk and ethnic art,

<sup>1</sup> I must reluctantly disagree also with Bob McGowen when he writes in the last issue of the NK Journal that "... design is far more important than craftsmanship. ..." In fine work the two qualities are so interdependent as to be inseparable.





A rare artist and an unusual subject combined in one netsuke.  
A good rendition of an iron pot with lid, inscribed and with  
handles over which a crab is crawling. Carved entirely in  
wood and having three distinct finishes.

Crab's eyes are inlaid in dark horn.  
Signed: *IKYU*, middle 19th century, diameter 4 cms. - height 3 cms.

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**Oni or Demon.** Wood, stained 18th - 19th C. Height 3½"

The wood of this forceful study has acquired a wonderful patina over the many years since it was made. The strength of this sculpture is such that, with no indication to the contrary, one could believe the piece to be much larger than it is.



**Warrior & Captive.** Ivory, stained for effect 19th C. Ht. 2½"

Here, too, the power and quality of the artist's work, and the brilliant conception and design of this piece, belie its diminutive size. Notice how the warrior's grip on the neck of his victim holds him off the ground.



**Dragon Sennin (?)** Wood, stained: The eyes of both the Sennin and the dragon (in bowl) inlaid in amber 18th - 19th C. Ht. 4"

In the flesh, this study is so provocative as to make one aware of the strange, eerie quality one sometimes senses when encountering the artifacts (especially those with any religious or mystic significance) of a culture very different from one's own.

FOREST AND THE TREES *cont'd from page 24*

applied or decorative or fine art, etc., may be useful in cataloging or describing, but really obscure this more important question.

None of the pieces used to illustrate this essay are signed, and no provenance is noted, even if known. My hope is that they illustrate my point of view, which is: These pieces are objects of use called netsuke. More than that, however, they purport to be "art" (without any modifying adjectives). Let's take this larger view and evaluate

them on that basis. Forget, for the moment, who made them, who owned them, what they were used for. Could you explain to a reasonably intelligent person who knows and cares nothing about netsuke, for example, why a given piece is (or is not) good? I think it's important to be able to do that. Then, if they succeed as objects of art, go on to some of the next consideration: signature, provenance, etc. I love these pieces as netsuke. They also succeed admirably as fine works of art. ■



Insect by *Mitsuhiro*



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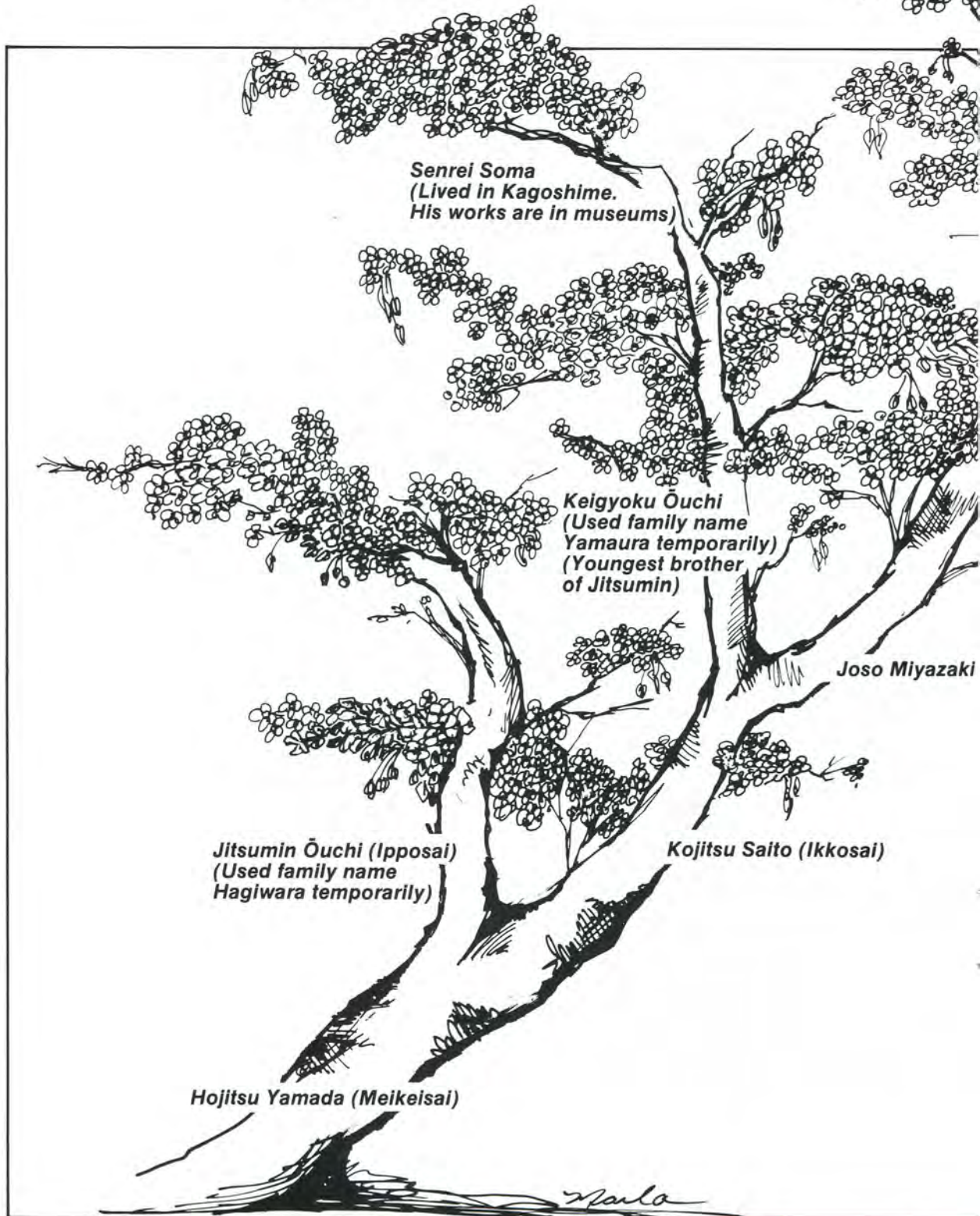
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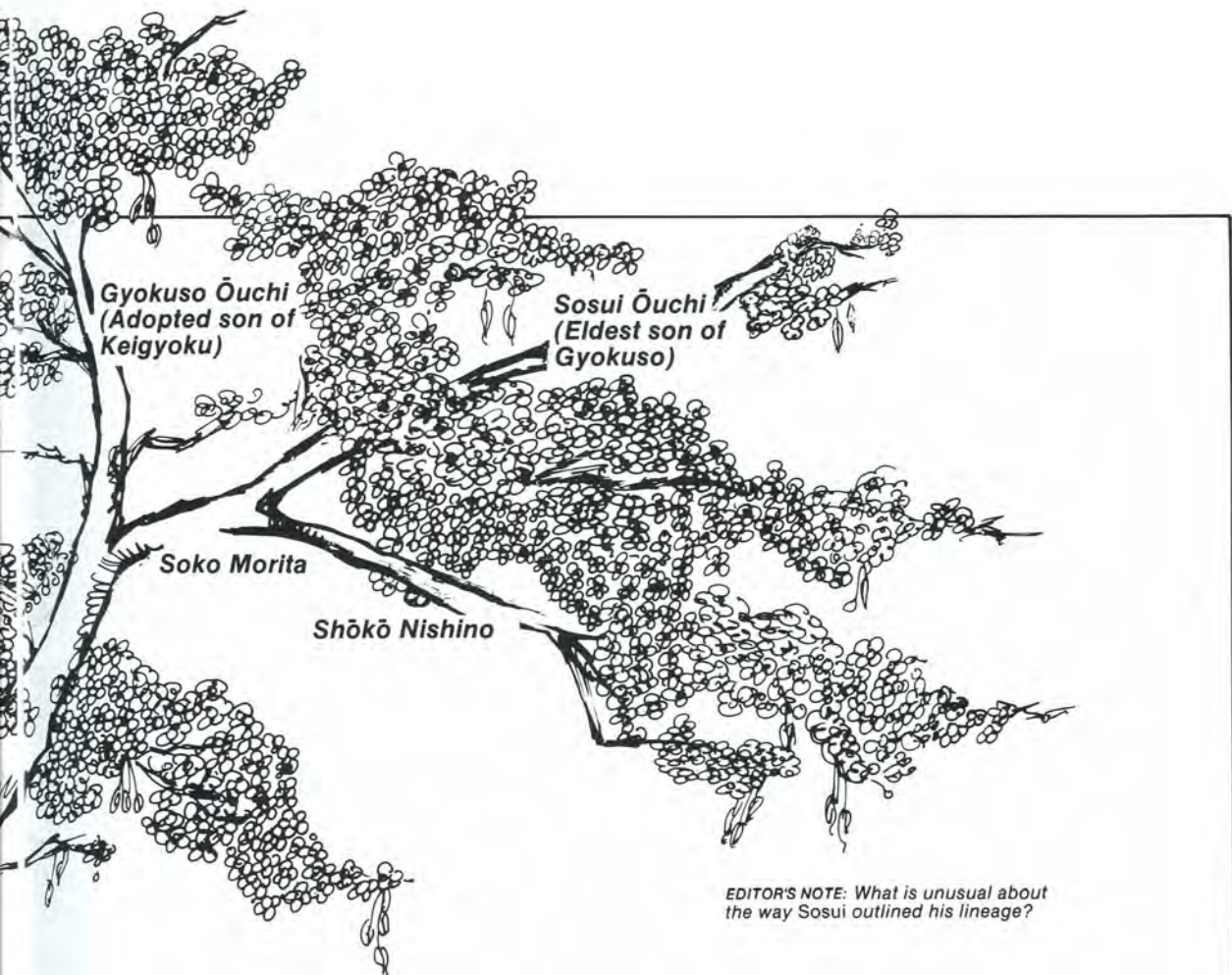
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# Sosui's Family Tree

Raymond Bushell





EDITOR'S NOTE: What is unusual about the way Sosui outlined his lineage?

**F**ROM time to time I take a respite from daily routine to go through an old file or two. I am constantly surprised — and a little chagrined — to discover how much I had forgotten of correspondence I feel I should remember.

One such letter — a letter from Sosui — may be of interest to collectors as it includes a statement of his "Family Tree." I believe he wrote it early in 1953 just after our first meeting and that it was in fact his first letter to me as it is very brief and entirely introductory. He writes:

*"My hope and desire, to carve only good netsuke in accordance with the instructions given me by my deceased teacher Sokō and by my father (Gyokuso). The following is my family tree:*

*[Here Sosui outlined the relationships as portrayed by our artist]*

*I will tell you details some other time when I see you personally.*

*Yours sincerely,  
Sosui Ōuchi."*



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# AN HISTORICAL INRO

by Raymond Bushell

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**G**enerally, we are attracted to *inro* and collect them for their technical perfection and aesthetic appeal. Occasionally, however, their jewel-like surfaces furnish something in addition to their artistry. These *inro* are often records of festivals, ceremonies, customs and costumes, as they existed or were practiced in the periods when and the regions where *inro* were made. Like *netuske* with secondary functions these "historical" *inro* offer the collector a sort of bonus, something of social significance to supplement their sterling craftsmanship.

A most unusual example of the historical *inro* is the one illustrated front and back. It is signed *Kanshosai*, the *go* of *Iisuka Tōyō*, who flourished in the second half of the 18th C. It is a representation of 73 principal places of interest in the environs of Kyoto. It is the only such example I know. The composition and design are brought out in precise gold and red thread-like *togidashi*, suggestive of architectural drawings. The technique is flawless, but it is its historical content which give this *inro* its uniqueness.

The following is a list of the 73 sites so graphically represented and named by *Kanshosai*. I arranged them alphabetically for convenience in consulting numerous travel guides in order to determine which ones continue to be famous two centuries after *Kanshosai* had pictured them.

Only about 28 of the 71 sites pictorially represented by *Kanshosai* are found in the most voluminous and detailed of the travel guides. Brief descriptions of these points are integrated within the list.

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# KANSHOSAI'S SITES IN

## 1. *Alganyama* (Mountain)

## 2. *Akino-yama* (Mountain)

## 3. *Arashiyama* (Mountain)

An area of great natural beauty washed by the Oi River. Large pine trees are interspersed with exquisite maple and cherry trees. The cherry trees were transplanted from Yoshino in the 13th C.

## 4. *Awata-guchi* (Gate)

## 5. *Azuma-dera* (Temple)

## 6. *Chlon-in* (Monastery)

Located in Maruyama Park in the heart of Kyoto. It is the headquarters of the Jodo Sect of Buddhism. The ultimate aspiration of its members is to be reborn in the Pure Land (Jodo), where by reason of their faith in Buddha, they will enjoy eternal happiness after death.

## 7. *Chokoku-ji* (Temple)

## 8. *Choraku-ji* (Temple)

## 9. *Dalbutsu-do* (Hall)

## 10. *Daitoku-ji* (Temple)

One of the chief temples of the Rinzaï Sect founded in the 14th C. The gates of *Daitokuji* are famous. The *Chokushinmon* was originally the South Gate of the Kyoto Imperial Palace; the *Karamon* (Chinese Gate) is a National Treasure boasting remarkable carvings brought from *Hideyoshi's* Fushimi Castle; the *Sammon* Gate was erected in the 16th C. by *Sen-no-Rikyu*, a famous tea master.

## 11. *Daitsu-ji* (Temple)

A Branch of the Higashi Honganji Temple of Kyoto. It is an impressive edifice built in the *Momoyama* style. Part of the temple was built by *Hideyoshi* for the Fushimi Castle Compound.

## 12. *Fudo-do* (Hall)

## 13. *Fuji-no-mori* (Forest or Grove)

## 14. *Fukakusa*

## 15. *Fukko-ji* (Temple)

## 16. *Ginkaku-ji* (Silver Pavilion)

Originally built in the 15th C. by *Yoshimasa Ashikaga* as a villa, but, at his death, converted into a temple. It was never actually covered in silver as was originally intended, so the name is a misnomer.

## 17. *Glon-no-mori* (Forest)

## 18. *Gojo no hashi* (Gojo Bridge)

The semi-historical site where huge burly Benkei challenged swordsmen to duels and bested them all, depriving them of their swords. Yoshitsune was to have been his thousandth victim but his agility and swordsmanship proved more than a match for Benkei's strength. Benkei, exhausted, surrendered and became Yoshitsune's retainer.

## 19. *Gyoho-do* or *Gyoho-ji* (Temple)

## 20. *Higashi Honganji* (Temple)

The school headquarters of the Jodo-Shinshu Sect. The temple structures built in 1602 have been repeatedly destroyed by fire. The present buildings were completed in 1895 by contributions from members of the sect from all parts of the country. The women of Kyoto contributed their hair which was woven into hawsers, the only material of sufficient strength to raise the enormous wooden pillars that support the temple

## 21. *Hira no mori* (Forest or Grove)

It consists of four shrines rebuilt in the 17th C. Architectural students study the remarkable method of joining the timbers without the use of nails or ropes. The grounds are famous for containing more than 80 varieties of cherry blossoms.

## 22. *Honkokuji* (Temple)

One of the four main temples of the Nichiren Sect. One of *Hideyoshi's* generals always carried into battle the sect's prayer: The Save Me Sutra of the Lotus of the True Law.

## 23. *Hyakumanpen-do* (Hall)

## 24. *Iwashimizu* (Shrine)

Founded in the 9th C. as one of the oldest shrines in Japan. Almost all the buildings are "Important Cultural Properties." It has a monument to Thomas Alva Edison commemorating his successful use in 1880 of bamboo selected from the Iwashimizu groves as filaments for his first electric bulb.

## 25. *Jinushi-gongen* (Incarnation)

## 26. *Joonrei*

## 27. *Kamikamo* (Kamigamo) (Shrine)

A shinto shrine equally as famous as the *Shimokamo*, both having been founded long before the capital of Kyoto. Commemorative horse races are held at the

Shrine every year on May fifth and fifteenth.

## 28. *Kamo-Gawa* (River)

The historic river that runs through the center of Kyoto. It was on the banks of this river the O-Kuni staged the exciting dance-song-plays that developed into *Kabuki*.

## 29. *Karl-no-miya* (Shrine)

## 30. *Kenninji* (Temple)

The cradle of the Rinzaï Sect founded in the twelfth century by Priest *Eisai* after returning from his second visit to Sung China.

## 31. *Kifune*

## 32. *Kihada-sato* (Village)

## 33. *Kinkakuji* (The Golden Pavilion)

Originally a villa of a court noble in the Muromachi Period, it was turned into a Buddhist temple. The temple covered in gold foil has been destroyed by fire repeatedly, the last time in 1950 through the deliberate arson of an abnormal priest. The incident is the theme of a novel by *Mishima*. The temple was rebuilt as a precise replica of the original.

## 34. *Kitano-no-mori* (Forest or Grove)

It is dedicated to *Michizane Sugawara* deified under the title *Tenjin* (Heavenly God), a great statesman and calligraphist.

## 35. *Kiyomizu-dera* (Temple)

Dedicated to the Eleven Headed *Kannon*. The Main Hall stands on a cliff from which there is a panoramic view of Kyoto. To *Jump from the Balcony of Kiyomizu* is a saying used when one is challenged to do something daring.

## 36. *Koun-ji* (Temple)

## 37. *Kurama-yama* (Mountain)

The site is a little distance north of Kyoto. It is the legendary place where the *tengu* taught Yoshitsune superlative swordsmanship. A famous annual ceremony is associated with *Kurama-yama*: *Daimonji*, the burning of the character *Dai* meaning great. The fire covering the side of a mountain is visible throughout the entire Kyoto area.

## 38. *Kurotani*

## 39. *Matsugasaki* (Shrine)

A shrine dedicated to *Michizane Sugawara*



# KYOTO

(845—903) a scholar-statesman of the Heian Period. The shrine preserves a scroll painting based on the life of *Michizane*.

#### 40. *Myoka-ji* (Temple)

#### 41. *Myoken-ji* (Temple)

#### 42. *Nanzen-ji* (Temple)

The headquarters of the *Nanzenji* School of the Rinzai Sect. Some of the structures were erected by *Ieyasu Tokugawa*. One of the gates is known for its connection with the notorious robber, *Goemon Ishikawa*. It has many paintings by famous Kano School artists.

#### 43. *Nijo no Shiro* (Castle)

Once belonged to the Imperial House. Originally *Ieyasu Tokugawa* intended it to serve as his residence when he visited Kyoto. It was the temporary seat of government at the Meiji Restoration, 1868. It was from here that Emperor Meiji issued the edict abolishing the shogunate.

#### 44. *Nikuma-no-mori* (Forest)

#### 45. *Nishi Honganji* (Temple)

It was here that the Jodo Shinshu Sect of Buddhism originated. The temple is considered by art critics to be one of the finest examples of Buddhist architecture anywhere in the world.

#### 46. *Ogura-yama* (Mountain)

#### 47. *Osawa-ike* (Pond)

#### 48. *Otowa-no-taki* (Waterfall)

#### 49. *Rokkakudo* (Hall)

It is said to have been founded in the 6th C. by Prince *Shotoku*. It enshrines the golden image of *Nyoirin-Kannon*.

#### 50. *Rokuhara*

Priest *Kuya* founded the temple in the 10th C. and he himself carved a figure of the Eleven-Headed *Kannon* to end a pestilence then raging in Kyoto. The temple is famous for its statues of the Four Heavenly Guardians carved by *Unkei*.

#### 51. *Saga*

#### 52. *Sanjo-kobashi* (Small Bridge)

#### 53. *Sanjo-ohashi* (Large Bridge)

The point from which, in feudal times, all

distances from Kyoto were measured. The bridge was built by the Shogun *Hiddeyoshi* in 1590 but the only original portions remaining are the bronze tops (*Giboshi*) like cupolas, on the posts of the bridge railings.

#### 54. *Sanjusangen-do* (Hall)

It is named Thirty Three (*sanjusan*) because that is the number of spaces between the pillars of this elongated structure. It contains a Thousand and One images of *Kannon* carved by *Unkei*, *Tankei* and their assistants.

#### 55. *Sannen-zaka* (Precipice)

#### 56. *Seiei-do* (Hall)

#### 57. *Selgan-ji* (Temple)

#### 58. *Sento-ji* (Temple)

#### 59. *Shikagatani*

#### 60. *Shimogamo*

#### 61. *Shimogawara*

#### 62. *Shinsen-en* (Garden)

The garden is all that remains of the Heiankyo Palace grounds enjoyed by the courtiers of a thousand years ago. The garden reflects the Chinese influence of the original.

#### 63. *Shirakawa-bashi* (Bridge)

#### 64. *Takao-zan* (Mountain)

A mountain near Kyoto, the classic place for viewing the maples which in autumn set the hillsides and valleys aflame in a blaze of color.

#### 65. *Takase-gawa* (River)

#### 66. *Takeda-mura* (Village)

#### 67. *Tatsusawa-ike* (Pond)

#### 68. *Tobuchi-taki* (Waterfall)

#### 69. *Tsuten-kyo* (Bridge)

#### 70. *Yamato-bashi* (Bridge)

#### 71. *Yasaka-no-mori* (Pagoda)

A five-tiered pagoda erected in the fifteenth century by Shogun *Yoshinori Ashikaga*.

#### 72. *Yoshida-no-mori* (Forest)

#### 73. *Zenho-no-mori* (Forest)

It is, however, the *Kanshosai* sites that are not mentioned in the travel guides that may hold the greater interest. Were these lost to the fires that constantly menaced Japan's wooden structures? Were they victims of city planning, or changing neighborhoods? Did they die of disrepair and neglect, a failure of civic and popular support? Were they demolished in sectarian warfare or uprisings? Were they sacrificed to "progress?" Whatever may be the reasons for their demise they have passed into history. The accounts of their reasons for being and their reasons for dying are the province of researchers and historians. Many a scholar, art historian, or museum curator began his career with a simple admiration for an art object, or as a casual collector.

It may be of some interest to know that the *inro* was in the possession of an ambassador to Japan who received it as a gift from a group of Japanese admirers. ■

# Reminiscences of a Collector

Barbara J. Norbert

ONE summer day in 1932 while in my teens I went to tea at the house of a friend living just on the outskirts of London. There I saw on the mantelpiece a clock and sitting on top of the clock a little ivory rabbit with two peculiar holes in odd places. Asking my host what it was, he replied: "Oh, I think it is Japanese and called a toggle."

From that moment on my life was to be invaded by toggles of all kinds of shapes and forms, made of ivory, wood, amber, black coral, lacquer, etc. I soon discovered that a toggle translated into a netsuke (be sure I was told to drop the "u") and learned of its function and came to realize the vast area covered by its subjects, relating to legends, history, flora, fauna, etc. And I began to hear the names of well known collectors; this netsuke was ex-Behrens, that ex-Gilbertson, and so on.

Living in London at the time, I was very fortunate to have several wonderful Aladdin's dens in the shape of Christie's, Sotheby's, and, especially at that time, Glendinning's near Oxford Circus.

They had regular sales, where bundles, yes "bundles," of 6 or 8 good netsuke tied together with string were sold most weeks. Being young and of very limited means, it usually was a choice between lunches for the month or netsuke and guess which won every time. At least I kept slim.

I was eager to meet a man I held in great awe, Frederick Meinertzhagen. It happened one day at a big sale at Glens. I wanted, with a big want, a certain wooden shrunken head of Yoshitada with a fine orange peel finish, with dead looking amber eyes and maggots in ivory where the neck was cut — a strange choice, I suppose, for a 17 year old. But, oh how I wanted it, and with great daring I risked my all, five pounds I believe it was, and had it knocked down to me. On my way out an elderly gentleman raised his hat to me and said: "Madam, may I congratulate you in choosing the finest netsuke in the sale," to which I replied exceedingly cockily in the arrogance of my youth: "I know I have." Then he introduced himself: Frederick Meinertzhagen!

He continued that choosing this particular netsuke out of the many on sale had qualified me in his view for the distinction of an invitation to a select group of collectors, a group which at that time included the Duke of Gloucester, W. W. Winkworth, Mark Hindson, G. G. Davies, and others.

How fortunate I was, my first get-together being at the home of Mr. Davies, a very dear and very aesthetic bachelor. Off came our shoes as we entered, after which a fairly rigid and impressive tea ceremony had to be gone through before proceeding

any further. I digress to mention my *faux-pas* on this occasion, picking up an *inro* and "fondling" it as one would a netsuke. Chiding me severely our host took up a silk cloth and like a cat with her precious kitten wiped the *inro* most carefully to rid it of those shocking fingerprints.

I never made that mistake again, but made up my mind *inro* were not really for me, as the tactile pleasure from handling a netsuke was more in my line. Later of course, I came to appreciate the truly wonderful and beautiful work in the *inro*.

As the only female in this group I was spoilt, and any odd *ojime* that came anyone's way and was not part of a set or combination was given to me, with the result that I have had many years of pleasure wearing necklaces of lovely and unusual *ojime*. They are whittled down now to about a couple of dozen favourites, quite a few in fine gold and quite a few signed.

At our get-togethers we developed a method of assessing our new acquisitions. A new netsuke would be put into your hand, while your eyes were closed, you were not allowed to look at it until, by feel alone, you had decided the material, the subject matter, the age and, if possible, the school of carvers, or as much as you could manage. In judging the netsuke, a comfortable fit into one's hand, no sharp pro-

Barry Davies  
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*Ivory Netsuke of a seated puppy, paw on large ball, mouth open. Signed: Dosho.*

This amusing rendition alludes to the puppy's desire to be a Shi Shi, where he obviously wants to have a ball in his mouth.

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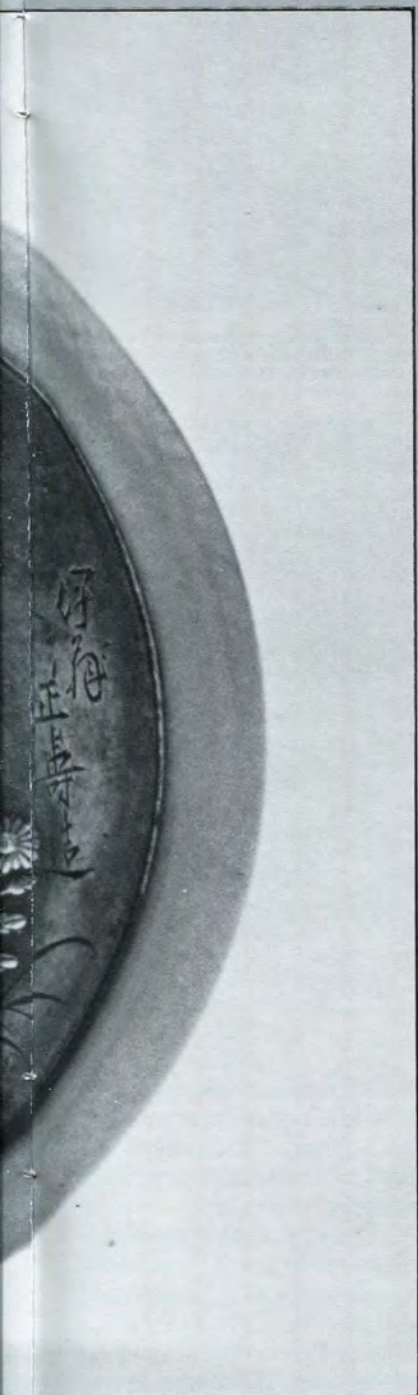
# TREASURES IN MINI



# MINIATURE METAL WORK:

## In Defense Of Kagamibuta

Ralph Maercks



**M**Y favorite netsuke is the *kagamibuta*. It was introduced in the first third of the 19th C. By the middle of the 19th C. dramatic changes were taking place in Japan. Trade with the outside world was flourishing, the shogunate was losing its power and the merchant class, having been the lowest class for centuries, was on the rise and able to accumulate wealth.

With the Meiji Restoration came a reduction of the manufacture of swords and hence of sword furnishings. While some of the masters of sword furnishings changed at that time to the creation of other metal objects there were also many outstanding artists in *kagamibuta* and *kanemono* who started off as

such and became known primarily for their excellence in producing these non-martial objects. New heights in the creation of *kagamibuta* were reached during the Meiji period.

I became interested in *kagamibuta* during my first visit to a netsuke dealer. Somehow, more than any other netsuke, *kagamibuta* immediately appealed to me and generated in me an enduring interest in Japanese legend, customs, ways of seeing nature and their unerring sense of beauty and dimension in a limited space.

My search for *kagamibuta* has taken me to many places, introduced me to fascinating people, and has resulted in a highly satisfying collection.

Let me share some of my pieces with you.

Fig. 1 - Kuzunoha, the fox wife of Abe Noyasuna  
Silver disc with gold, *shakudo* and *akagane* in high relief. Signed Ito Masayoshi. The master has succeeded in creating an effect of touching tenderness in this scent of maternal bliss.



Fig. 2. Domed Repousse' disc in *shibuichi*, *shakudo*, gold, silver and *akagane*. Unsigned. Here the Minamoto hero offers his sword to the ocean diety to plead for calming the turbulence. This work has a powerful intensity.



Fig. 3. Solid gold disc in *takabori*. Signed *Shuraku* with "Shu" in *kanji* and "Raku" as a seal. There is a gracefulness and a quiet authority about this work that is immensely pleasing.



Fig. 6. Iron disc with gold *takazogan* and *hirazogan*. Joined back to back to a *shibuichi* disc with silver *hirazogan* and *takazogan* showing mountains, with seedling plants under the moon.



Fig. 7. Repousse' *shakudo* disc in *katabori* with gold, *shibuichi*, silver, and touches of *kebori*. Unsigned. A dramatic powerful work.

Some of the most exciting and beautiful *kagamibuta* are the ones made by the method of *katakiribori* engraving. The burr is applied in varying depth and thickness to a flat disk creating an amazingly rich effect of a *sumi* painting. Unfortunately, this type does not photograph well, hence I have not included some fascinating pieces.

One of my remaining ambitions is to find *kagamibuta* created by the collaboration of an ivory carver, a lacquer artist for the bowl (*buta*) and a metal artist for the disc (*kagami*). In most cases the bowl is incidental and not a work of art. It is to be considered as a light-weight seat that enables the disk to be used as a *netsuke*.

This brings me to the subject of the shrunken bowl. Ivory and wood will shrink in time while metal will not. A jeweler or dentist can ream out a tiny amount from the inner rim with his diamond burr so that the disk fits smoothly again. Follow this up by an overnight immersion of the bowl in fine mineral oil and you will have a nice snug fit for many years to come. This, of course, also prevents later cracking of the bowl.

*Kagamibuta* having everything: beauty, refinement, power, and the mark of great art — the ability



Fig. 4. Solid gold disc carved *takabori* with further detailing in *kebori*. Unsigned. An excellent composition of a lively, joyous event. The *oni* beats a Buddhist drum. Note the bent horn, indicating his repentance.



Fig. 5. *Shibuichi* disc in *takabori* with *hirazogan* and *takazogan* in gold, silver, *shakudo* and *akagane*. Touches of *katakiribori* in background. Signed *Temmin*, with *kakihan*.

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Fig. 2 - *Nitta Yoshisada* preparing for the siege of *Kamakura*.

Fig. 3 - *Butterfly dancer*.

Fig. 4 - *Procession with courtesan, Oni Nembutsu and samurai*.

Fig. 5 - *Fujihime and Oni Nembutsu*.

Fig. 6 - *Buddha by a waterfall*.

Fig. 7 - *Emma-o. King of Hell*.

Fig. 8 - *Shoki examining his blade*.

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Fig. 8. *Shibuichi* disk with *shakudo*, gold and silver *takazogan* and a touch of *akagane*. Signed in back in gold *hirazogan* *Tomohisa*.



to appeal to our emotions. They are to *bas relief* what *netsuke* of the *katabori* type are to sculpture. They were created during a brief span of some seventy-five years, during a burst of creative genius that was like a bright comet against the cobalt skies of time, a comet never to be seen again.

*Kagamibuta* of high quality are relatively rare, yet until recently they have been reasonably priced, thus affording the collector an opportunity to build a good collection at a modest expenditure. The difficulty I have experienced in the past year is not the price but the lack of availability of fine quality *kagamibuta*. Mr. Hurtig mentions in the June 1982 issue of our Study Journal that *kagamibuta*, among certain other of his non-*katabori* *netsuke*, have no ready market. This amazes me. I know of no dealer who has any "fine" *kagamibuta* in his stock or available for sale at any price. Some dealers claim no one wants them yet those who do want them cannot obtain them. *Kagamibuta, kagamibuta, where are you hiding?*

Would anyone having a clue to this mystery of the *kagamibuta* please contact me through our association or share their information through our Study Journal. ■

trusions, and smoothness were of course of great importance. Marks would be given on a scale of ten. It was great fun and most helpful.

Over the years I developed a great friendship with Mark Hindson, spending many happy hours going through his fine collection while he was busy cataloguing. Sometimes I would be doing swaps with him, and he would write letters to me with netsuke names and signatures cleverly concealed in the writing. This was a game he also played with children of his friends.

It is now a part of netsuke history that once Mark Hindson knew himself to be a ill man, he decided to sell his collection before he went so he could have the satisfaction of seeing his beloved netsuke going to new homes and joining other happy collections. There were seven full sales at Sotheby's and he lived to see most of them.

After the war I went to live in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) where I continued to cherish my possessions without however much opportunity to acquire new ones or to meet collectors with whom to share my interest. I have been in the Antique business since I came of age in London, specializing mainly in antique jewelry and other small items. It was not until 1964, when my husband and I came to live in Victoria, British Columbia, and I opened another shop, that I began trading in netsuke, selling some of mine and discovering sources to buy for sale, particularly in San Francisco. Thus, I started many a new collector among my customers.

Now I am retired and my love of netsuke is quite undiminished. I have a small collection of old, true favorites: a couple of lovely ivory grazing horses, a fine 18th C. *kirin*, a *Tomochika* group, a simple *Masahide* mushroom with snail and frog, an unusual cypress

figure, the type made famous by *Yoshimura Shuzan*, an old wooden *sennin*, an amber mermaid, etc., a necklace length of *ojime* and a few *inro*, including two complete sets of matching *inro*, *netsuke* and *ojime* of the *Shibayama* School in inlaid ivory.

Though I would love to go to netsuke conventions, I stay away. I cannot afford to buy new ones of the quality I would like, nor would I wish to swap or sell my long time favorites. I enjoy, however, to read in magazines about activities amongst netsuke collectors and to see pictures of pieces new to me. And I am glad to know that there will be new collectors who will experience as much pleasure and satisfaction as I have myself, from the day I saw one small ivory rabbit sitting on a clock on a mantle piece with those funny holes in its body.

And I wish good hunting and untold pleasures to all netsuke collectors. ■

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Macabre subjects, such as skulls and skeletons, were often worn by the Japanese who were involved in entertainment to remind them of the shortness of life and the need to enjoy it as fully as possible.

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*Michael Birch*

Michael Birch, 1979

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Ivory rabbit.  
Signed: *Okatomo*. Kyoto School, 18th century.  
Provenance: Anne Hull Grundy collection



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