

THE DOLLS OF JAPAN

Shapes of Prayer, Embodiments of Love





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Preface

The Japan Foundation engages in international cultural exchange activities in cooperation with over 130 countries around the world, focusing on three major program areas—the Arts and Cultural Exchange, Japanese-Language Education Overseas, and Japanese Studies and Intellectual Exchange. In order to enhance the understanding of Japanese arts and culture through the visual arts, the Foundation collaborates with overseas museums on a wide range of exhibitions from traditional to contemporary arts. The Foundation also organizes traveling exhibits of paintings, ceramics, crafts, prints, and photographs that make their way around the world.

"The Dolls of Japan" introduces Japan's representative dolls. In Japan, dolls have been a part of everyday life since ancient times. Japanese dolls reflect the customs of Japan and the aspirations of its people, possess distinctive regional attributes, and over the centuries have developed in many diverse forms. Dolls also provide a showcase for traditional Japanese craft products, such as textiles. We hope that the dolls in this exhibition will help visitors to appreciate these various aspects of Japanese culture.

We greatly appreciate the efforts of all those who helped make this exhibition possible.



The Japan Foundation



HINA NINGYO

Dolls for the Doll Festival

In Japan on March 3 of each year, families with daughters celebrate the *Hina Matsuri*, or Doll Festival. This beautiful festival is a traditional custom dating back some thousand years. On this day, each family sets out a number of dolls for display, placing a male-female pair of *hina* dolls at the top of the display, as a sign of their prayer for the happiness of their young daughters.

Above: *Ishōgi, Shinnō-Kazari*: Imperial Dolls. The dolls' costumes are based on what the Imperial family wore in the Heian period (794-1185). **Right:** *Kimekomi, Tachibina*: Standing Dolls. This is a modern presentation of *tachibina*, the oldest form of *hina* dolls, using the *kimekomi* technique.





GOGATSU NINGYO

Dolls for the Boys' Festival

The festival for boys that corresponds to the Dolls' Festival is called *Tango no Sekku* ("Flag Festival"), or simply Boys' Festival, and is held on May 5. Families with sons display splendid sets of miniature armor and figures of costumed warriors, and offer prayers that their sons will grow up strong and healthy.

Above: *Uijin, Toko-kazari*: Warrior's First Battle. One example of a display of the *Gogatsu Ningyo*: the central gallant figure is a young warrior going to his first battle.



NOH NINGYO

Noh Dolls

Noh theatre, which had its beginnings in the Muromachi period (1338-1573), is one of Japan's great traditional art forms. In Noh, actors wear masks and elaborate costumes as they dance.

This Page: Hanagatami: Flower Basket. From the Noh drama of the same title, this figure of a young lady holding a flower basket is pursuing her lover.



BUNRAKU NINGYO

Bunraku Dolls

Together with Noh, Bunraku (classical puppet theatre) is known as one of the great traditional arts of Japan. Themes for these dolls are taken from especially famous scenes in *Bunraku*.

Above: *Ninin-dachi, Osome Hisamatsu*: Two Figures. *Osome Hisamatsu* is a tragic love story of the beautiful merchant's daughter, *Osome*, and one of her father's apprentices, *Hisamatsu*.



OSHIE HAGOITA

Battledores with Raised Pictures

Designs are cut from thick paper and wrapped in silk containing cotton, or in pieces of another fabric. Different features and colors are then added and the various elements of the picture (*oshie*) combined and affixed to the *hagoita*.

Above from Left to Right: *Shiokumi*: Drawing water by the seaside, *Megumi no Tatsugoro*: Fire Chief *Tatsugoro*, *Shibaraku*: "Wait a Moment!"

KYO NINGYO

Kyoto Dolls

Dolls made in Kyoto, the ancient capital and city of traditions. Especially intricate embroidery has been lavished upon the costumes.

This Page: Miyabi: Elegance





OYAMA NINGYO

Kabuki Dolls

These dolls depict the styles and fashions of Japanese women, particularly their hair-styles and brilliant costumes, as portrayed in the world of Kabuki.

This Page: *Oiran*: Courtesan. Clad in a gorgeous *kimono*, this courtesan, of the highest class, makes her way thorough Yoshiwara, the leading pleasure quarter in Edo.



KIMEKOMI NINGYO

Wooden Dolls Dressed in Kimono

Kimekomi refers to the technique of attiring a doll by pasting on colored cloth.

Left: *Shirabe*: Melody. This is a lovely figure of a young girl in ancient costume who is about to play the *biwa*, a four-stringed Japanese lute.

HAKATA NINGYO

Hakata Dolls

Hakata dolls, which are made in the Hakata area of Kyushu and are representative of clay dolls in Japan, are known particularly for their beautiful colors.

Right: *Dohyō-iri*: A *yokozuna*, grand champion sumo wrestler, enacts a spectacular ritual before a match.





GOSHO NINGYO

Imperial Palace Dolls

Dolls made with large heads and fair skin to convey the sweet appearance of small children.

Above: *Shunki*: Child in Spring. This depicts a small child who is absorbed in playing under the spring sunshine. **Under:** *Haihai*: Crawling. This newborn has started crawling.



ICHIMATSU NINGYO

Ichimatsu Dolls

Ichimatsu dolls, which realistically depict Japanese children, were originally made in the image of Kabuki actor Sanogawa Ichi-matsu, who specialized in portraying young girls.

This Page: *Tōrei Ningyo Utsushi Ichi-matsu Ningyo*: In 1927, Japan and the U.S.A. exchanged dolls as a sign of friendship between the two countries. This is a copy of the *Ichimatsu* doll that was given to the U.S. by Japan.



Dolls Depicting the Customs of Japan

Dolls show Japanese children in various activities.

Above: *Izukura Ningyo*: A pair of Imperial Palace dolls in formal dress.

Under: *Buriburi*: During the Edo period (1603-1868), children played a game on New Year's Day using a wooden hammer (*buriburi*) to hit a ball. This depicts a child pulling the hammer.



Dolls Created by Modern Craftsmen

In Japan, dolls are a highly rated form of artistic craft. Doll exhibitions are a form of competition where craftsmen show off their finest techniques.

Above: *Hatsu Sekku* : "First Doll Festival," by Yoshiko Hara. This heartwarming scene shows a mother and her daughter arranging a doll with great care as the girl prepares to celebrate her first *Hina Matsuri* (Dolls' Festival) on March 3. **Below, Left:** *Tokuwaza*: "A Special Skill," by Sachiko Ikeda. This boy is beaming with triumph as he catches the spinning top on his palm. **Below, Right:** *Mukashi-Mukashi*: "Once Upon a Time," by Kuni Omori. This adorable sleeping baby is Momotaro, the Peach Boy, the hero of a popular Japanese fairy-tale.





KOKESHI NINGYO

Traditional Kokeshi Dolls

Kokeshi dolls, which are known for their simplicity and brilliant colors are made using Japanese woodturning techniques. They are divided into two general types, "Traditional *Kokeshi*" and "Creative *Kokeshi*." "Traditional *Kokeshi*" dolls, which are produced in the northeast regions, began to appear in the latter part of the Edo period. Traditional *Kokeshi* dolls are further classified according to the location of the workshop in which they are made, such as the *Naruko*-series of dolls, the *Tsuchiyu*-series, and so on. The dolls of such series have their own special features and designs. The techniques used in the making of these dolls have been handed down from master to pupil to the present day.



Creative Kokeshi Dolls

"Creative *Kokeshi*" dolls are handicrafts that display the free and unrestrained imagination of an individual artist. After World War II, these dolls have been crafted using original techniques of engraving and baking, and are appreciated as unique works of art.

Above, from left to right: *Sakunami Kokeshi*, *Sakunami Kokeshi*, *Naruko Kokeshi*, *Yajiro Kokeshi*, *Yajiro Kokeshi*. **Middle, Left:** *Tamayura*: "A Fleeting Moment." **Middle, Right:** *Ten made Todoke*: "Reaching to Heaven." **Below, Left:** *Tsubaki*: "Camellia." **Below, Right:** *Dōjō*: "Little Girl."



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