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PORTFOLIO

Since the age of 10 I have been deeply attracted to Japanese culture.

One of my greatest dreams has become reality in 2002, when I have won the Monbusho Japanese state scholarship, so I got the opportunity to observe the Japanese art education for 2 years on Kobe University, and I could study statuary from sculptor Jun Tsukawaki. I have not separated from my experiences and the artistic inspiration I took in Japan, not even after coming home. In 2009 I published a bilingual picture book introducing the Japanese culture for Hungarian children through the story of a kokeshi doll. Encouraged by the success of the book, I have started making kokeshis in 2011, and even after the preparation of more than 5000 different pieces, I can still feel the inspiration endlessly. Since then, I had many opportunities to meet Japanese masters in person, study their work and learn from them. In the recent years I presented my work on many Japanese and Hungarian exhibitions and lectured on traditions and history of kokeshis.

In May 2015, on a kokeshi competition held in Japan for 57 years, I have got the honor to win the award of the governor of Mijagi province, as the first foreigner ever. This I consider as the greatest honor and recognition of my art.

In the autumn of 2016 I was invited to the 18th Sosaku Kokeshi exhibition in Shibukawa, and in the spring of 2017 my Kokeshi rattle was awarded by the Mayor of Ebina at the 59th National Kokeshi Competition.

I think perhaps the highlight of my work is that I could break into the closed cultural circle of Japanese Kokeshi masters, learn from them infinitely much, they let me take a closer look to their professional knowledge and workshop secrets, which according to Jennifer McDowell, an American anthropologist researching Kokeshi, is "a breakthrough of an anthropological wall". I think of the birth of the kokeshis as a wonderful process; wood gives soul for the kokeshi, while the kokeshi gives a new life for the wood which makes it extend beyond the concept of a simple „wooden doll". The kokeshi is a game of shapes with its infinite possibilities of variation, from a simple geometric form anything can be personalized with just a few brushstroke.

While making kokeshis, the Japanese part of my soul comes alive and I feel blessed for being able to show the magical Japan living inside of me in Hungary as well.

This is the way that led me:

from Japanese folk art to contemporary doll art,
from KOKESHI to KAKO.



CV

STUDIES

- 2008 Art University of Linz (Kunstuniversitat Linz), Visual education, PhD program, Linz, Austria
- 2007 Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design, art teacher and professional textile design MA, Budapest
- 2004 Atelier Interiour Designer School, Budapest
- 2002-2004 Japanese Monbukagakusho scholarship, University of Kobe, Human development major, Kobe, Japan
- 2001 Eszterházy Károly University of Applied Sciences, Art teacher training, Eger
- 2000 Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education, Budapest



MAIN INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 59th National Kokeshi Exhibition and Contest, Shiroishi-Zao, Japan
- 2015 Buddhist roads (Photo exhibition), Tara Temple, Tar
- 2015 Journey to the land of kokeshis, Sushi Sei Étterem, Budapest
- 2014 Kokeshi exhibition, Kyoto International Community House/kokoka, Kyoto, Japan
- 2012 Rhizomes (Photo exhibition), Corvin Cultural Center, Budapest
- 2008 Kobe is my home as well, Three Furniture Gallery, Budapest
- 2005 Huggings, ISIS Gallery, Szombathely
- 2005 Prints, Ceramic Park, Budapest
- 2005 Huggings, Fenomén Café, Budapest
- 2004 Farewell to Japan/Embrace, Satom Gallery Kobe;
- 2004 Huggings, Csók István Gallery, Budapest

MAJOR GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 59th National Kokeshi Exhibition and Contest, Shiroishi-Zao, Japan
- 2017 Nihon ningyo - Ritual and play, Déri Museum, Debrecen
- 2016 Advent exhibition, Nagytétény Castle Museum
- 2016 The Nagas, elephants and birds - costumes from the mainland of South-East Asia, Hopp Ferenc Museum of Asian Arts
- 2016 23th Japanese Sosaku kokeshi exhibition, Shibukawa, Japan
- 2016 Orient exhibition, Palmetta Gallery, Budapest
- 2016 Kokeshi and Bonsai, Kempinski Hotel, Budapest
- 2016 Sakura feast, Fűvészkert, Budapest
- 2016 58th Japanese National Kokeshi Exhibition and Contest, Shiroishi-Zao, Japan
- 2015 57th Japanese National Kokeshi Exhibition and Competition, Shiroishi-Zao, Japan
- 2014 Geishas and Samurais, Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs
- 2014 Japanese fashion, photo exhibition, Hotel Wellamarin, Balaton
- 2012 Collaborative book: systematic reflection about the living experience, INSEA exhibition, Ciprus
- 2012 The woman in Japan, Corvin Culture Center, Budapest
- 2012 „Giant kokeshi”, Advent exhibition, Castle Museum in Nagytétény
- 2010 Watercolour fairy tale, Supranatura Art Foundation, Budapest

- 2010 Savaria Days, „Japanese Stall”, Szombathely
- 2009 Simplicity and Transience/ The inspiration of wabi sabi, Porto, Portugália
- 2007 MOME diploma exhibition, Budapest
- 2003 Screen printing exhibition, Kobe University, Kobe, Japan
- 2002/2003 Calligraphy painting, AIEJ Center, Kobe, Japan

APPLICATION WORKS

- 2014 NESTEA new outfit, kokeshi design, Coca-Cola
- 2009 KofferArt, KLM Application
- 2007 World Offline, Fashion design competition
- 2004 10th Anniversary of Kobe Earthquake, Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art competition
- 2001 Ceramic tile design, Zalakerámia Rt.

PRIZES

- 2017 Award of the Mayor of Ebina City, 59th Japanese National Kokeshi Contest, Shiroishi-Zao, Japan
- 2016 Prize of the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, (2nd prize, 1st prize in its category), 58th Japanese National Kokeshi Contest, Shiroishi-Zao, Japan
- 2016/03 Nonprofit Ltd. for Hungarian Creative Arts (MANK) Highest level of classification of applied arts products for all my creations, which means, each one of my future works get a certification number
- 2015 Prize of the Governor of Miyagi - (as the first foreign awarded) 57th Japanese National Kokeshi Exhibition and Competition, Shiroishi-Zao, Japan
- 2001 Interior design competition, Special prize: Eszterházy Károly College, Patchwork Exhibition, ELTE, Budapest

PUBLICATIONS

- 2015/2014 DIY section and interior design expert - Lakáskultúra Magazine
- 2015 Do it yourself section - Fanny Magazine
- 08/2015 About the Asian culture for youth vol.2, in the book “Japan” - Virág Hársvölgyi, Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asiatic Arts
- 2012 RHIZOMES - Tóth-Vásárhelyi Réka, Napkút Publishing, Budapest
- 2010 Japanese fashion as a cultural assimilation, PRAE journal
- 2009 STORY OF THE WONDERFUL WOODEN DOLL - Children’s storybook, Tóth-Vásárhelyi Réka, Napkút Publishing, Budapest
- 2007 Life in Pre-school, vol.15/3.-16/1. Anniversary Conference for Art Teachers - New Podium journal
- 2007/2006 High school drawing lessons - Irány.hu magazine
- 2006 Tales of the World - Tasi Kata - Tóth-Vásárhelyi Réka, illustration of Children’s storybook, Magyar Napló, Budapest
- 2005 PEBBLES - Tandori Dezső - Tóth-Vásárhelyi Réka, Japanese Haiku’s collection and photo album, Print-X Publishing, Budapest
- 2005 Alternative Art Education in Japan -National Association of Hungarian Art Teachers, Methodological Publication
- 2004 Harakiri - Four Men Magazine
- 2004 Terebess website (www.terebess.hu) - Asia Lexicon, Japan, Japanese cultural articles



- 2003 Harmony of colours - Széplak Magazine
- 2001 Junken” and “Advises for MONBUSHO research students”- Andzin-san Magazine
- 2000 A tiny square - Széplak Magazine



ABOUT JAPANESE DOLLS

Throughout its history, Japan, as in many other areas, has created a significant doll making art. This branch of Japanese industry and folklore is still churning out a variety of dolls finding their owners in children, collectors and tourists.

Even at the beginning of Japanese history dolls have been prepared, obviously not from porcelain and they have not functioned as decoration. That time, they were attributed spiritual strength, so their task was the incarceration and expulsion of bad spirits and the attraction of good fortune and rich harvest.

According to Genji's novel, a variety of dolls have already existed around 1000. Mothers have made them with the purpose of protection for their kids, however they have used them as toys, of course. By protectional functions there have been dolls against smallpox, harmful spirits, infant death and other diseases, etc., but of course dolls have been made for the hope of good marriage as well.

In the Heian-era wooden dolls have been in majority, they were carved by parents for their children, dressed in any kind of a piece of rag could be found at home.

Edo-era has brought innovation in this subject as well, doll making and trading has been blossoming. People have had funds, so they have been able to sacrifice money for the most beautiful dolls to decorate their homes. The makers, as they could see the amount of money people have spent on dolls, have endeavoured to give more unique and more elaborate pieces out of their hands. The bases and traditions were laid down in this period, since then, more or less the customs remained from these times are still the living ones nowadays. Handmade dolls are invaluable these days, therefore only collectors are able to allow themselves to order them from the masters. However, there are more simple ones requiring less work as well, so any collector who finds themselves in Japan can purchase dolls raising the value of their collections.

KOKESHI

Kokeshi dolls are an integral part of Japanese folk art and nowadays of applied arts as well and they are famous all around the world. These beautiful, colourful works of art have an irresistible charm. Since they are handmade, there are no two identical ones, every doll has its own individuality. They provide us insight into hundreds of years of Japanese culture by combining a rich history with typical modern life force, represented in their bold colors and simplicity.



The dolls turned and carved from wood with their pure shape depict girls and women, embodying the Japanese idea of female beauty. Black, tidy hair, lovely, gentle, white face and closed, ornate kimono-clad body.

Their ornaments and painted patterns can often be associated to the seasons. In Japan, there is almost no household, where at least one kokeshi doll could not be found. According to their shapes, there are smaller and bigger ones with rounded or cylindrical girl figure, samurais, monks, all with much of the characteristic features of the region of their origins.

The science of history assumes, that the first dolls are originated from the region of Tohoku, made around the late Edo-era (18th century). The most accepted hypothesis about its function is that it was made by craftsmen, who were in charge of turning dishes and rice bowls in the middle of winter in the „onsens“ (hot baths), and to sell them as souvenirs for the guests. An other assumption is that the same craftsmen made the kokeshis for children as toys. In whichever house the children played with such a doll, there was a good harvest expected.

Since the first appearance of dolls hundreds of years have passed, and their popularity is still increasing every year. Today we have more clubs established for collectors and investigators worldwide. In six Tohoku-provinces there are 10 different types of kokeshis to be found. In some small villages, like Yahiro, people are half farmers and half craftsmen. From early spring until late autumn they are busy with agriculture, but from autumn to spring they carve dolls. Nowadays not only the traditional way of making dolls exists, the imagination of the artists surpassed the original forms, so from time to time creative kokeshis show up referring to the actual trends.

THE MEANING OF KOKESHI TO ME

A little sentimental, and of course biased I am in this issue, but please forgive me that!

With many years of experience in making kokeshis and thousands of dolls prepared, I consider them as the gift of nature, because „wood gives soul for the kokeshi, while the kokeshi gives a new life for the wood“, so it extends beyond the concept of a simple „wooden doll“.

The kokeshi is a game of shapes with its infinite possibilities of variation. From a simple geometric form anything can be personalized with just a few brushstroke.

As every wood is different, so are kokeshis different from each other. Each has a unique personality, purpose and message. The „master“, the owner is different, so the doll chooses its own life: some of them travel endlessly, others sit on a desk lifelong as an amulet, others are being carried in a bag or spending their lives in a glass case with their fellow pieces of a collection.

Of course, there are also some who apologize or make declarations of love, celebrating birthday, anniversary, wedding, birth, graduation. Some are offered as prizes or applied as a subject of ethics class. Some are gentle, beautiful, elegant, ingenu, cheeky, shy, boy, girl, geisha, samurai, Hungarian or Japanese. Nevertheless, the only thing they have in common, is the love I give them out of my hands with!



