

Section 4



Children and Animals

It has been pointed out that human beings instinctively develop feelings of affection and attraction toward defenceless human and animal babies that need our help. In addition, physical characteristics such as a large head, thick limbs, roundness, and softness, have been defined as "baby schema," a set of round, small, immature features that are among the elements that humans sense as "cute."

Ukiyo-e caricatures and *omocha-e* (toy prints) aimed at children often feature small, familiar animals engaged in human activities. Although their gestures and expressions are the same, our tendency to find them cuter than their human counterparts could be an indication of a similar psychology of simplification and deformation at work in the representation of such animals. It is also possible to find many cute regional toys made in various parts of Japan that have a certain distinctive expression of warmth and roundness in their simplicity that makes you smile in spite of yourself.



No.118
Ichimon-ningyō Doll made in Fushimi, Kyoto prefecture
Taishō-Shōwa period, 20th c.
<Private Collection>

No.118-132
Folk Toys of Rural Japan: The Yoshichika Collection <Private Collection>

Throughout Japan, toys made from local materials and produced using traditional techniques have been enjoyed by the common people since early times. These materials and techniques were extremely diverse, ranging from bisque fired clay and carved wood to *hariko* papier-mâché and more.

Although these are commonly called "toys" (*gangu*), most of them do not typify the kind of playthings that immediately come to mind with the use of that word. Rather, the majority are dolls and figurines. In particular, various types of dolls that were displayed for seasonal festivals, such as the Jōshi Festival on March 3rd, were produced throughout Japan and range from paper and bamboo figurines and unglazed ceramic dolls to the unusual *ginnan-bina*, whose heads are made from ginkgo nuts. These charming, unsophisticated handmade dolls enriched the seasonal festivals for countless people.

Tokugawa Yoshichika (1886–1976), the 19th-generation head of the Owari Tokugawa family and founder of the Tokugawa Art Museum, was also well known as a collector of folk toys and he amassed a collection of approximately one thousand pieces. In fact, it was Yoshichika who helped to establish the local craft of carved wooden bear figurines in Yakumo, Hokkaido, and it is said that he collected folk toys as examples for reference when developing that craft.



No.112
Shinban Neko no Tawamure
Toy Picture, many cats playing
Ukiyo-e woodblock print
By Utagawa Kunitoshi
Meiji period, 1884
<The Tokugawa Art Museum>



© The Tokugawa Art Museum
1017 Tokugawa-cho, Higashi-ku, Nagoya, 461-0023
TEL: 052-935-6262 / FAX: 052-935-6261
E-mail: info@tokugawa.or.jp

*English text is translated by Maiko Behr and the curatorial staff of the Tokugawa Art Museum.

Thematic Exhibition



The Timeless Appeal of "Kawaii" / "Cute" Culture

From February 8 (Sat.) to April 5 (Sun.), 2020
Hōsa Library Exhibition Rooms 1 & 2



As is exemplified by the "doll play" involving miniature doll figures and accessories engaged in by the ladies of the Heian court, small size and charming features have been crucial factors in attracting the hearts of young girls in Japan from ancient Heian times all the way to the present day. When compared to objects used by young boys, the various items surrounding young girls in their daily lives were charmingly cute and at times sumptuously made. In particular, charming objects that appealed to young girls were chosen for celebrating various important junctures, such as praying for their health and happiness on auspicious occasions and for events like the Doll Festival.

In connection with the Doll Festival, this exhibition presents various objects that appealed to the hearts of young girls, beginning with *hina* dolls, as well as dress-up dolls, huggable dolls, handicrafts, narrative tales, and other charming objects.

Image (center): No.72
Small Bisque Dolls, porcelain
France, 20th c.
Donated by the Yoshida Family
<The Tokugawa Art Museum>

Image (right upside): No.67
Kezukuri Ningyō doll, made of silk thread
Edo-Meiji period, 19-20th c.
Donated by the Saikōan Temple
<The Tokugawa Art Museum>

Section 1

Small is Beautiful

It seems to be a common sentiment that is shared across time and cultures that small things are cute. As epitomized by the phrase "indeed all small things are most adorable," from *The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon* (ca. 1,000 AD, tr. Morris), people have turned their gaze upon small, charming objects and showered them with love since ancient times.

At the same time, it has been pointed out that in Japan, production of small items is not limited only to inherently small objects, but that there is also a particular proclivity for shrinking large objects into smaller and more exquisite miniatures, thereby increasing their appeal even further. While the tendency to find beauty in small, delicate, and precisely formed objects extends to various aspects of traditional lifestyle, among the objects used in the *daimyō* households, we often find things such as stationery items, incense utensils, and sword and armor accessories, which are fashioned in the form of various lovely small items shaped like animals or bearing charming flowers designs.

No.20

Ikkanjin Hiire

Cup for Kindling Charcoal to make a fire with a *ikkanjin* figurine
Landscape design, blue and white
China, Ming dynasty, 17th c.
<The Tokugawa Art Museum>



This traditional design, known as "Ikkanjin", literary meaning "a person of leisure", is figuring a child peeking into a well. With this "kawaii" figure, utensils of this sort were cherished ever in the tea ceremony gatherings.



No.38

Mitokoromono Sword Fittings

Chick and egg design, gold, silver and copper alloy
Attributed to Gotō 9th Teijō and 6th Eijō
Edo period, 17th c.
<The Tokugawa Art Museum>

Mitokoromono refers to a set of three sword fittings attached to the mounting. The pieces include a small knife handle (*kozuka*), a hair pick (*kōgai*) to tidy loose hair, and hilt ornaments (*menuki*), which originally secured the blade to the hilt but later became mostly decorative. It was a basic principle that these three parts had to be of a single design, by a single maker. Moreover, only warriors of specific status were permitted to attach *kozuka* and *kōgai* to their sword mounting.

Section 2

The World of Dolls

In ancient times, the word for doll (*hiina*) was written "*hihina*" and referred to dolls made of paper, but later it came to refer specifically to the dolls representing the emperor and empress and their attendants that are displayed for the annual Doll Festival. Since the Heian period, girls and women of the nobility amused themselves with dressing, arranging, and displaying these dolls. *The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon* mentions the accessories that accompanied these *hiina* dolls in the sections titled "Things That Arouse a Fond Memory of the Past" and "Adorable Things." Throughout history, the miniature accessories used in doll play were considered charming and probably served as reminders of childhood.

The *Zakkō kukōki* (1769 [Meiwa 6]) of the Edo period states, "Dolls and such are girls' playthings, so they should be made small and cute under any circumstance," indicating that the notion of small and cute thing for girls was well-established by this time.

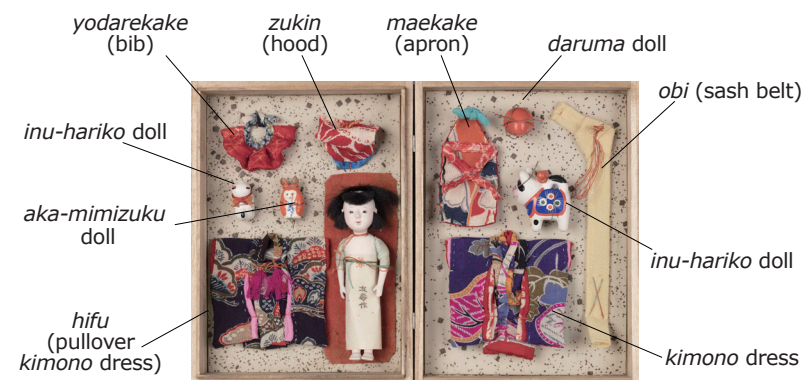
No.57

Jirōzaemon-bina Doll Set

Edo-Meiji period, 19th c.
Private Collection



Attributed to the Kyoto dollmaker Hinaya Jirōzaemon and believed to date to around the mid-Edo period, these sets feature dolls with round faces, small mouths and slits for eyes (*hikime*) and hooks for noses (*kagihana*) that look like they could have come right out of an illustration from a traditional narrative tale. Such classically elegant features seem to have been particularly beloved among the upper classes and many such sets are known to have been passed down in aristocratic and *daimyō* families as well as at *monzeki* temples and convents housing sons and daughters of the nobility or the imperial family.



No.76
Dress-up doll
Taishō-Shōwa period, 20th c.
Donated by the Yoshida Family
<The Tokugawa Art Museum>

Section 3

Girlish "Cuteness"

The gifts given to girls to celebrate their first Girls' Day Festival (*hatsuzekku*) and successive Doll Festivals on March 3rd, have been customized not only to reflect prayers for their health and happiness, but also with consideration for the cute colors and shapes that are believed to appeal to girls.

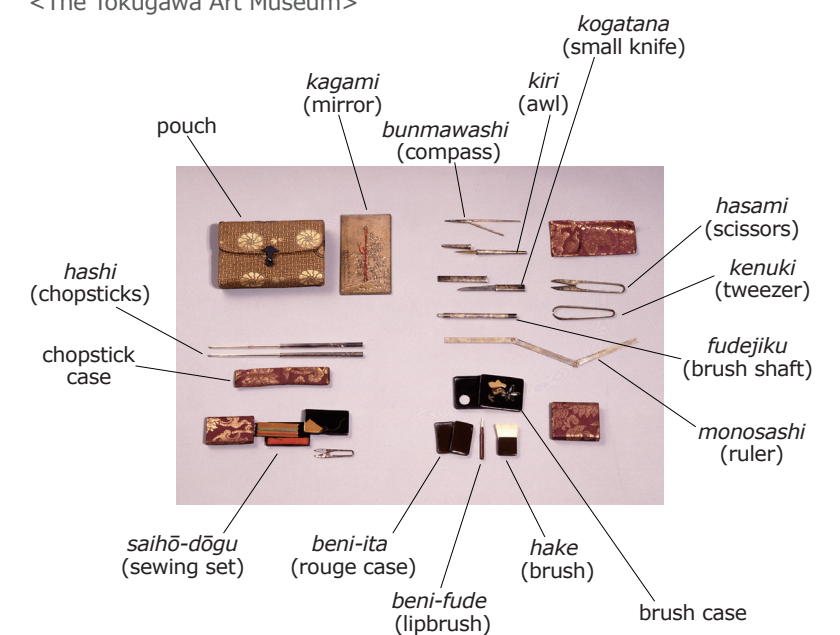
Nowadays, the word "cute" is everywhere in our daily lives, to the point that it even appears in compound expressions, such as "gross cute" (*kimo-kawaii*), "lame cute" (*dasa-kawaii*), or "casual cute" (*yuru-kawaii*), that have been coined to describe objects with which people feel some kind of close personal connection. Originally, the word "cute" was used to refer almost exclusively to young children and girls. Girls, who are not only described as cute themselves, but are also consumers of cute things, are at the same time creators of *kawaii* products with their own hands and discover cuteness in new things with their fresh sense of the aesthetic.

This section introduces the feminine taste for cuteness through a selection of objects that were owned, collected, and handmade by girls and women from the end of the Edo period to the beginning of the Shōwa period.

No.94

Cosmetic Pouch

Chrysanthemum medallion and snow wheel design, brown silk
Edo-Meiji period, 19th c.
<The Tokugawa Art Museum>



*Display placement may differ from the above image for these items.