

Exhibition of

Netsuke

(Contemporary Wood-Carved Craft)



Entrance Free

Date: January 19th (Sat) - 31st (Thu), 2019

Time: 9:30 am - 4:30 pm

Venue: Embassy of Japan, Panipokhari, Kathmandu

CONTEMPORARY
WOOD-CARVED



Organized by:



Embassy of Japan

JAPAN FOUNDATION



Introduction



Netsuke, small sculpture objects, developed and flourished in the Edo period (1603 - 1868), initially served both functional and aesthetic purposes. The traditional Japanese dress, *kimono*, have no pockets. Therefore, in the past, women would tuck small personal items into their sleeves, men suspended their tobacco pouches, pipes, purses, writing implements, and other items of daily use on a silk cord passed behind their *obi* (sash). These hanging objects are called *sagemono*. Netsuke was attached to the other end of the cord to prevent the cord from slipping through the obi. The sliding beads (*ojime*) were strung on the cord between the netsuke and the *sagemono* to allow the opening and closing of the *sagemono*. Initially, netsuke were simply functional, undecorated items made of small gourds or round slices of ivory. In time, they evolved into elaborately worked miniature craft objects, and magnificent netsuke of great artistic value with a variety of subjects were created. Subjects portrayed in netsuke include nature-related objects, plants and animals; legends and legendary heroes; myths and mythical beasts; gods and religious symbols; daily activities, and a myriad of other themes.

Netsuke reached the peak of its popularity in the latter half of Edo period. With the Meiji Restoration (1868) and the age of *bunmeikaika* “civilization and enlightenment,” the period of aggressive modernization in early Meiji (1868 to about 1890), Japanese clothing was gradually replaced by Western clothing, which had pockets. A new way of smoking appeared; cigarettes replaced pipes, as did matches to light them. No longer a daily necessity, netsuke were reaching a major turning point. The worship of Western culture and disparagement of Japanese traditional culture in Japan resulted in the outflow of a large number of works of art, including netsuke, into the hands of foreign collectors from the Meiji period on.

The exhibition focuses on contemporary netsuke, consisting of 65 masterpieces of 46 artists. To communicate the essence of netsuke, this exhibition will help visitors explore the Japanese culture of art, skills and playfulness embodied in the small masterpiece of netsuke. It is hoped that the exhibition of netsuke will take on a new practical role as a “toggle”, connecting Japan and the world.