

人形
にんぎょう

NINGYŌ



Art and Beauty of Japanese Dolls

Japan Foundation Travelling Exhibition



Under the title *NINGYŌ*, which means “human shape” in Japanese, the exhibition features the doll culture that has been cultivated over the long history of Japan.

The exhibition presents a comprehensive introduction to Japanese doll culture, from the archetypes to local dolls that reflect the climate and anecdotes, to dress-up dolls, and scale figures that are highly regarded around the world.

6 -21 Dec. 2023 | 9:30 am - 4:30 pm
(7 Dec. 9:30 am - 2:00 pm)

Nepal Art Council
Babar Mahal, Kathmandu

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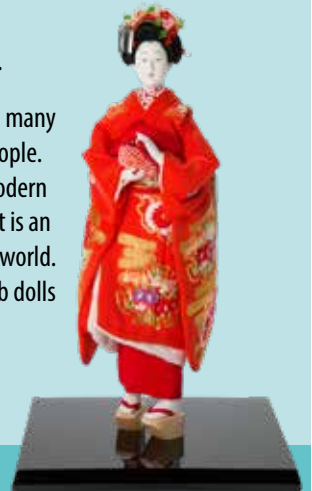
人形 にんぎょう NINGYŌ



One major aspect of Japanese culture is the depth of love for dolls (*Ningyō*; 人形).

Doll culture spread in Japan particularly in the 17th century, and dolls could be found in many facets of daily life, both life in the Japanese imperial court and that of the common people. Furthermore, those dolls were advanced achievements even from the standpoint of modern arts and craftsmanship. The fact that many examples indeed enter the realm of high art is an extremely rare occurrence when compared to the culture of dolls seen elsewhere in the world. Thus, it can be said that Japan is truly “a Nation of NINGYŌ”, deeply colored by the superb dolls created here and the long cultural history of valuing them.

This exhibition examines Japan’s diverse doll culture from 4 perspectives to introduce the principle types of Japanese dolls and the culture behind each.



Ningyō to pray for children’s growth

Doll culture in Japan developed out of rites to protect children against misfortune and to pray for their happiness. With the passing of time, the simple dolls used in those rites gradually became more ornate, giving rise to the today’s typical style of Japanese dolls as seen in Hina Ningyo of the Hina Matsuri festival.

Ningyō as fine art

As production techniques for doll making evolved, dolls began to be loved as objects of art for display from around the 17th century.

Members of the upper class and the Japanese imperial court in particular had a love for dolls of especially refined craftsmanship. These dolls, made with sculpting techniques, delicate colors, and finely produced clothing, broke from the realm of toys to enter the domain of fine art.



Ningyō as folk art

Dolls are the crystallization of a parent’s love for their child. Throughout Japan, doll culture rooted in local areas blossomed among the common people.

The folk dolls were primarily made from inexpensive materials such as clay, paper, and wood. Many were produced as a side occupation during breaks from farm work, and they provided sustenance for their simple lives. The many distinctive styles all share in common a theme of big-hearted smiles.

Spread of Ningyō Culture

The well honed skills and techniques of doll production were put to good use in the worlds of traditional performing arts and also toys. The reappraisal of dolls as art in modern times drove the emergence of many talented doll creators, and Japan’s doll culture further went on to give rise to the collector’s scale figures popular throughout the world today.



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