



Kokeshi, From Tohoku with Love

Manami Okazaki

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Kokeshi from Tohoku with Love is a book that looks at the craft and culture of kokeshi dolls. Kokeshi are the traditional dolls that are made of wood and are characterized by their lack of arms or legs. They are produced in the Tohoku region of Japan and were originally a children's toy, although it is more often used as a form of decoration nowadays and displayed in the home. Abroad, they are considered to be an icon of Japan, and reflect Japanese aesthetic sensibilities with their simple, elegant and minimalist designs.

Kokeshi have the appeal of imperfection and hand made exclusivity as no two dolls are the same, each kokeshi embodies the qualities of wood, something that is often referred to as "warmth." In fact, for collectors, more than the freshly made kokeshi, many covet the atmosphere of the vintage kokeshi-- rather than degrading, as with plastic or artificial materials, the wood picks up a dewy, subdued colour and the delicately painted features fade gracefully with time.

This book is the only English language book that looks at this culture in depth and is the only book with English language interviews with the masters of the craft. The author, Manami Okazaki, visits all 6 prefectures of Tohoku to profile 20 artisans in the remote hot spring villages where they are made. Included are the work and interviews with the masters to the up and coming artists, and highlights many aesthetic theories and sensibilities that are prevalent in contemporary design, even today.

The book also looks at Japanese hotspring culture, and Tohoku culture to paint a holistic picture of kokeshi culture.

This book will delight fans of wooden crafts, Japanese culture and travellers to Japan. The book gives an insight into the psychology of the craftsman, the process of production, the motifs and the various types, which will inform the collector. This book will also suit travelers to Japan who wish to explore the Northern region of Japan, and their charming hot spring villages. Included are hundreds of photographs. This book is intended for charity and all proceeds will go to schooling in Tohoku post March 11 tsunami.

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