Thread of Life: NARRATIVE TEXTILES
AT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, FSU, TALLAHASSEE

PLUS

Beyond REALITY: Hyperrealism & American Culture
AT THE VERO BEACH MUSEUM OF ART

AND

Mariko Kusumoto: UNFOLDING STORIES
AT THE MORIKAMI MUSEUM AND JAPANESE GARDENS, DELRAY BEACH
MORIKAMI MUSEUM AND JAPANESE GARDENS invites you to enter the enchanting world of Japanese metal sculptor, Mariko Kusumoto, to view her extraordinary and intricate metal sculptures and fantastical constructions. Using a wide range of metal-smithing techniques, Kusumoto creates worlds that delight and amaze all who are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to experience them. Her miniature universe is filled with doors that open, parts that move and make music, compartments and drawers, as well as characters and components that tempt visitors to open, move and play with the pieces.
In her artist’s statement, Kusumoto explains, “Most of my pieces are interactive, which is an essential aspect of my work. Because I like to surprise people, the viewer must keep opening things to see the secrets inside, or push, pull, or wind-up something to see movement or hear sounds. You never know what will happen until you get involved with the piece.” Each box is presented as a closed object, then opened and manipulated so that its story “unfolds.” Many of the pieces within each box were created in the form of brooches, necklaces and bracelets that can be worn, taking on a very different aspect in the narrative of each box.

Highlights from the exhibit include Kusumoto’s recreation of Bloomingdale’s department store, inspired by an 1886 illustrated catalog, in which the seven floors of the building open like pages of a book; Tokyo Souvenir, which replicates virtually anything a
Unfolding Stories

traveler to Japan would want to experience; the girl and boy dolls of *Kisekae Doll III* who reside in a three-part antique Japanese wooden sewing box which houses a delightful array of interchangeable wardrobes and parts; and *Kaitenzushi*, an interactive rotating sushi stand, complete with dining implements, food and lots of hidden surprises. Each of Kusumoto’s works is created with astounding detail and artistry, taking anywhere from three to six months to complete. “It is a tedious job, so you have to enjoy it, to have a sense of humor,” says the artist.

Kusumoto’s Japanese identity and heritage play important roles in her art, but the most pronounced element that strongly inspired the artist was the 400-year old Buddhist temple where Kusumoto’s father served as a priest, and where she grew up. “I was always surrounded by the beauty of nature and ancient things…I was also fascinated by the elaborate metal and wood ornaments...throughout the temple,” she explains. The allure of the gold-colored ornaments that gleamed in the darkened temple played an early role in her inspiration to use metal in her work. “Her applications of finishes, use of color, and blend of textures, produce a surface that emits a glow reminiscent of these gleaming ornaments of her

Opposite and right: *Kisekae Doll III* (front and interior detail), copper, bronze, brass, sterling silver, nickel, silver, wood, rice paper, coral, 3-1/4 x 16-3/4 x 9-1/4”, 1998, Photo: M. Lee Fatheree
childhood,” wrote art historian, Don Davidson, in the exhibit’s accompanying catalogue.

Kusumoto studied oil painting and printmaking in Tokyo and received an MFA in printmaking from the Academy of Art College in San Francisco in 1995. It was while living in San Francisco that she took courses in metal work and became completely hooked. “I really liked it,” she says. “I completely changed direction.” Working in a studio that is part science lab, part flea market and part curio cabinet, where insect exoskeletons and seedpods share space in wall cases with anatomy models, antique watch cases and dissected bisque baby dolls, Kusumoto is surrounded by objects of inspiration.

Kusumoto will host a workshop on Sunday, February 12, 2012, where participants will learn about her art, creative process and personal cultural influences and in turn, reflect on their own life and heritage. Using Japanese paper arts, students will make an origami container, emulating Kusumoto’s work, and fill them with clay works of art, representing a personal memory or cultural association. Students will also participate in a tour led by Kusumoto of her Unfolding Stories exhibit. For details visit www.morikami.org.

Above and opposite: Kaiten Zushi (and interior detail), copper, brass, sterling silver, nickel silver, bronze, found objects, acrylic paint, enamel, 24K gold leaf, 13 x 12 x 12”, 2004, photo: M. Lee Fatheree

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