

Kyoko Jewel - a Gem of an Artist

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January 12, 2023

Photos: Jennifer Yashiro

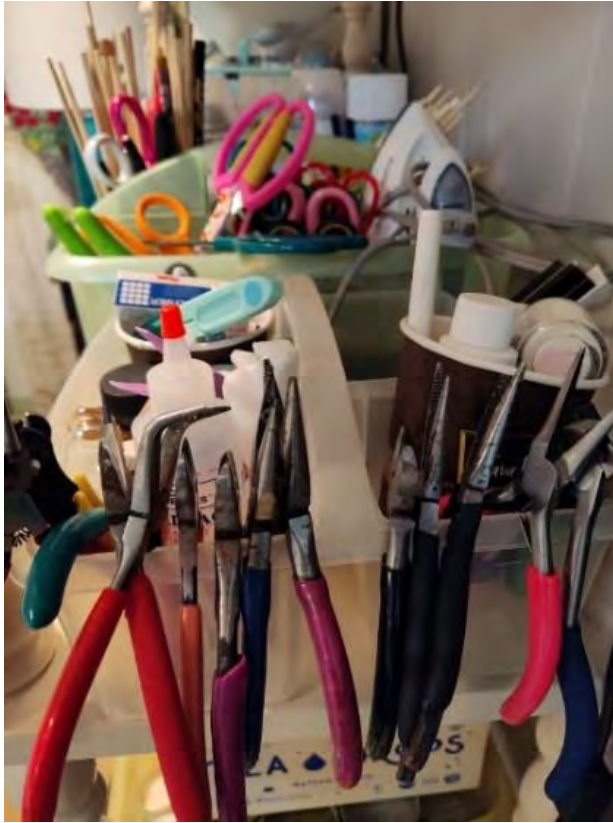


Upon entering the main public area of Kyoko's home, evidence of her elegant, artistic sense caught my eye - a small white bird cage connected to leafy strands of the Philodendron plant and suspended in one bright corner, sofa pillows featuring a curved fabric overlay and floral motif, a large window framed in white wood, arched at the top and gracefully adorned in a soft light green sash.

While we sipped tea and coffee, Kyoko shared about her life and art. She was born in Sendai, Japan, which is located north of Tokyo. Her father was skilled in traditional Sumi, black ink landscape art on watercolor paper, and was also a professional calligrapher. As a young girl, Kyoko liked to paint and draw. Her art teachers were her inspiration. As a high school student, she independently took a correspondence course from the Tokyo School of Design. At age 18, Kyoko went to college in Tokyo and later worked in a kindergarten in Tokyo where her artistic skills, including origami, were required.



Explaining that she doesn't consider herself a serious artist who goes in depth, she otherwise enjoys making things instead, and is curious to learn about all kinds of crafts. Let's skip ahead to when Kyoko came to the US and lived with her husband in Chicago. She soon became a mother who was not employed outside of the home, but thus had many things going on. A teacher would come to the family home, and from this person she learned flower arranging and jewelry making. She invited other mothers, many of whom were of Japanese descent, and their children to her home. While the children played together, the mothers enjoyed crafting. To earn money, she held for the children, rhythmic classes which taught music and movement based on the principles of Solfege and Dalcroze.



Kyoko also attended seminars on Egg Art, which had its origins in England and spread to Australia, the US and Canada. She explained that this is not the style of egg art originating in the Ukraine where eggs are painted.



In New Jersey, after earning Creative Craft Design certification in the aforementioned, Kyoko held official classes teaching Egg Art. She explained that ostrich eggs are the most popular medium because their thick shells are best suited for carving.

Holding these two classes daily left her no time to continue offering the rhythmic classes.

Now, being a grandmother of three, Kyoko holds two crafting classes each week in her workshop where people can creatively craft as they like, using her supply of tools and her plentiful inventory of assorted lace, beads, braided cord, and shadow box frames. From the shadow boxes displayed, we could appreciate the dimension of depth as well as a different technique creating less depth but employing the use of clay.

The workshop, its walls covered with large garden and harbor scenes was, again, a reflection of artistic taste.

Twice yearly, around Easter and Christmas, Kyoko holds flower arranging classes where about 40-50 delightful arrangements are produced.

Quite an active and social lady, Kyoko also invites small groups (five maximum) to enjoy Karaoke in the comfortable main public area of her home.