

SECRETS on SILK CANVASES.....

Uncovering the symbolic meaning of vintage Japanese kimono

Presented by Maggie Healy

A Message from Maggie to the Interpreter Guides of the Cultural Exchange Group:

□ Fifteen years ago, my mother attended a family wedding in Tokyo and brought back a silk kimono. This wonderful gift was to change my life. It turned out to be the catalyst that launched me on a voyage of discovery, deep into Japanese art and textile culture.

□ As my kimono collection grew, I researched and studied the beautiful designs. Gradually, my understanding of the meanings of their symbolic motifs deepened. I developed the **IKIMONO** concept based on knowledge I gained in collaboration with my personal contacts in Japan. I am now one of just a few non-Japanese people able to “read” the messages women chose to convey by their choice of kimono imagery.

□ Last year, I made my first visit to Japan so I could discover the traditional skills of kimono craftsmen. I have watched in wonder as Japanese artisans such as yuzen dyers and embroiderers in Kanazawa, Nishijin weavers in Kyoto, Kasuri cotton weavers in Karume, and shibori artists in Arimatsu carry out their professional work. Related to the issue of kimono survival, an important question to ask is:



Shibori Haori featuring a Tale of a Romantic River Scene

Are we losing the skills of these traditional textile artisans, and if so, what will happen to the kimono?

□ You already know, through your own work, that European visitors really enjoy finding out about your culture. I believe the kimono, such a strong Japanese icon, is a wonderful way to help people to understand more, which may help to keep these traditional skills alive. I participate in exhibitions and give talks and presentations for audiences in France and the UK. It will be my pleasure to share a western viewpoint with you all, and to receive your thoughts on the subject of the future of kimono.

Using traditional auspicious kimono motifs as a key theme, **Secrets on Silk Canvases** will take you on a journey into a landscape of unique beauty. I will show you gorgeous rare vintage and antique kimono, and try to provide glimpses into the lives of the iconic, kimono-wrapped Japanese women of yesteryear. The talk will cover special highlights in the history and evolution of kimono, with comment on the role of women in Japanese society, as perceived by an outsider.

□ It is my hope that this visual voyage will be a two-way trip. As well as highlighting some key points about kimono, I would be very happy for attendees to bring their own kimono with them, for discussion. The best way to understand kimono, I believe, is to try to “read” them, and using your own examples would be great fun. I also have lots of questions I would like to ask participants, especially about their own feelings about the future of kimono.

I am honoured to be invited to share this presentation with you, and I look forward to meeting attendees in November.

Maggie Healy,

Ikimono, France and the UK

Cover Photo: Maggie wearing a yukata at a recent expo in her village, in Rivel, France. It was fun for her explaining kimono to visitors - who were mostly French!