

International Symposium

The Art of Kamishibai
The Word of the Image and the Image of the Word

10 to 12 May 2018, Ljubljana, Slovenia



ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHIES

10 MAY 2018

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE
and
SECTION I: THE ART OF KAMISHIBAI

Kyoko Sakai (cooperated with Hina Nagase)
***Kamishibai – its Key Features and Appeal* by**

Doshinsha was founded as a publishing company in 1957. We have published about 2400 kamishibai works as well as 600 children's books since its foundation. Doshinsha originates from a study group of kamishibai. Kamishibai performances had been used as a means of propaganda for lifting the fighting spirit during WWII and therefore left a negative legacy. When founding Doshinsha, Mr. Kinji Muramatsu declared: "We now say good-bye to kamishibai stories that whipped up the war spirit and hello to kamishibai stories that are peaceful, respect human life, and love children." I have edited kamishibai stories and picture books for Doshinsha for many years. Now I am a chairperson after being an editor-in-chief for fifteen years, and a president for ten years.

What are the key features and the appeal of kamishibai? A kamishibai story proceeds when you put a series of separate sheets into the *butai* (wooden stage) and slide the sheets in and out while reading the text. Since the illustration is on the front of each sheet and the text is on the back, you need a performer who faces the audience. Thus the format of kamishibai differs from picture books. Pages of picture books are bound, so a reader faces the pictures while reading the text and turning the pages. This difference in format causes the difference in key features between picture books and kamishibai stories.

A kamishibai work emerges out of the *butai* and spreads to where the audience is as a result of sliding the sheets out. The audience then concentrates on the new sheet that appears. The moment that the performer needs for sliding the sheet back is precious: it allows the audience to concentrate on the new illustration. We call this moment *ma* (pause) in Japanese. As a performer, you stand next to the *butai* with the story in it and you read the text on the back. You start performing wholeheartedly, empathizing with the characters and communicating with the audience. The audience's concentration and communication produce *kyokan* (shared feelings) with the story among the audience. This concept of *kyokan* is the basis of a good performance.

Because kamishibai performances create *kyokan*, their content is important: we need to consider the subject for which we would like to share our feelings. When we perform kamishibai works, we aim to materialize this wonderful world of *kyokan*, thereby creating happiness and peace for all.

Kyoko Sakai was born in 1946. She majored in economics at the Hosei University. After achieving the role of chief editor, she worked for ten years as the president and representative director of Doshinsha Publishing in Tokyo, which specializes in publishing children's books and kamishibai. She edited many popular works such as Kazuo Iwamura's picture book *The Family of Fourteen*. This work is translated in thirteen countries and more than ten million copies have been sold in the world. Among others, the work *Cat Who Likes to Paint*, written and illustrated by Kayako Nishimaki, received the Picture Books Award of Kodansha Publication Culture Award for Children's Books in 1987. She also edited *The Adventure in the Closet*, which achieved record sales. She edited a lot of marvellous kamishibai such as *The Tongue-Cut Sparrow* and the *Kamii the Robot* series, too. In 2001 she became one of the founders of the International Kamishibai Association of Japan (IKAJA). She organizes kamishibai seminars, giving lectures not only in Japan but also in the Netherlands, France, Germany, Switzerland, India, Malaysia, Singapore, and China. At the same time she has endeavoured to establish the theory of kamishibai in cooperation with Noriko Matsui. It is compiled in the "How to Perform Kamishibai Q&A" and the "Kamishibai Mini-encyclopaedia". She is an auditor of Iwasaki Chihiro Memory Cooperation Foundation, a

lecturer at the National Rehabilitation Centre, as well as the present chairperson of Doshinsha Publishing and a representative of IKAJA.

Hina Nagase was born in Tokyo in 1963. She was absorbed in reading children's books when she was in elementary school. She encountered kamishibai at that age and was quite enchanted by it. She lived in the states of Maryland and New Jersey when she was in high school. After returning to Japan, she went on to Sophia University majoring in English Language from the Foreign Languages Department and received her Bachelor's degree in 1986. After graduating from university, she worked for Japan Airlines as a flight attendant overseas. After resigning from the JAL, she started to study for translation, especially in the field of children's books. Her first book translation, *Escape from Shangri-La* written by Michael Morpurgo, was published in 2002. That was when she encountered the International Kamishibai Association of Japan (IKAJA) and started working as its secretary. Her main translation works are *Tiger Boy*, *Monsoon Summer*, *Rickshaw Girl* (by Mitali Perkins), *Love, Aubrey* (by Suzanne LaFleur), *Anna Hibiscus* (by Atinuke), etc. Among them, *Rickshaw Girl* was selected as one of the assigned books for the book report for fifth- and sixth-graders in 2010. *Love, Aubrey* was selected as one of the recommended books by the Japan School Library Association. As for kamishibai activities, she has done several lectures in Japan and has performed kamishibai in English in France, India, Malaysia, and Singapore. Translator of children's books and Secretary-general of IKAJA.

Jelena Sitar Cvetko

Beyond Borders in Confined Space: Dramaturgical Perspective on the Art of Kamishibai Theatre

The narrator paints events, spaces, and heroes with his story, evoking feelings and emotions. The power of a direct live performance, old as humanity itself, helps the spectators understand themselves and the world. The story takes time, but the painting/image allows for an immediate response. The suggestiveness of the image influences the senses, feelings, and emotions of the public. The power of the image, old as humanity itself, helps people become more aware. When we want to paint a story through pictures, when we want to show the story, as humans often have throughout our history, we need a series of images. A sequence of pictures tells a story. But the narration is no longer set in the past (*mukashi*, *mukashi* or "once upon a time"): it has acquired an image of its own, a true embodiment. We can see it. The words and images in kamishibai intertwine dynamically and are inseparably bound together, creating synergy, a new artistic being. The meeting of words and images in kamishibai happens in the *butai*, the empty rectangle, and the border that frames the story and limits the image. The limitation means an exclusion: what takes place inside the frame is excluded from our world, which is why anything is possible inside the frame. What happens behind the frame? Does the image continue? Is it free? It certainly extends beyond the frame. It creates a new space, an unknown world that we never would have discovered if the door of the stage-*butai* hadn't opened. If the frame of the *butai* enables the creation of a new space – the space of the story – then the door of the *butai* determines the time of the story. The door determines when the story begins and when it ends. Between the beginning and the ending, events play out in a certain rhythm. The rhythm is set by the narrator, who sets the time and manner of the image sequence and tells the story of what we can see, but mostly the story of what we cannot see, of what is hidden behind the frame. The narrator then shows us what is hidden by pulling the paper out of the frame. Behind it, another sheet of

paper appears...we sink into the story, deeper and deeper, with every new sheet, every new image, every new event. The kamishibai narrator reveals and tells the story. The story is created with his hands, his mouth, and his face. He knows the story, leads us into it, and finally becomes the story. He stands with us, becomes a part of us – and if he does, then his story becomes a part of us as well. The narrator is an animator, he gives a soul to each image, each word. The images relate to each other, meeting the story. They create an undulation that surpasses the rhythm of the sequence of the events, scenes, and images. When that happens, the audience is animated as well, feeling what it sees and hears, realising the wisdom that resides deep within each story. And it sees the author whose soul relates the story and is mirrored in each spectator's soul. *Kyokan*.

Jelena Sitar Cvetko is a dramaturge and a puppet artist who has been contributing to Slovenian puppetry for thirty years. She has mostly been researching chamber puppet theatre as a director, dramaturge, and performer.

She has signed over 40 performances in professional puppet theatres, among which *Dr. Faust* (Ljubljana Puppet Theatre) and *When Shlemil went to Warsaw* (Maribor Puppet Theatre) are best known internationally. Ten performances were created in her own puppet atelier Zapik, which is known for its minimalistic, interactive, and original approach to puppetry. In Zapik performances authors Jelena Sitar Cvetko and Igor Cvetko research the borders of theatre forms such as finger puppetry and kamishibai theatre.

In her professional biography we also find her as an editor of the magazine *Lutka (Puppet)*, a founder of the Artistic Children's Museum (Hiša otrok in umetnosti), and an artistic director of Ljubljana Puppet Theatre.

From 2010, she also works as a professor at The Faculty of Education of the University of Primorska, Koper, introducing the magic world of theatre, puppetry, and kamishibai to future generations of teachers.

Gerhard Jäger ***Kamishibai and its Spirit of Transformation***

5 Sub-headings:

- *Respect for Tradition*
- *Artistic Techniques and Themes*
- *Creative Storytelling Combinations*
- *Variety of Locations and Partnerships*
- *Visual Literacy*

Respect for Tradition

For centuries, kamishibai has been in a constant transformation process. It taught Buddhist philosophy, magic lantern performances, the birth of Manga heroes, and war propaganda until it changed to the instruction of good manners and moralistic values at schools. Since the breakthrough in the Western world, where this narrative technique was discovered and embraced in the 1980s, more and more children and adults have had the chance to experience and enjoy this magic form of storytelling. Besides having profound respect for the Japanese tradition, organisations around the world continued in a broad spirit of adaption and transformation. In this paper I would like to focus on the diversity of artistic techniques and themes to create stories, on ways of creative storytelling in combination with ateliers or workshops and on the variety of locations.

Artistic Techniques and Themes

Numerous artists and illustrators have been experimenting for years with different techniques and sizes to create new kamishibai stories. Apart from drawing and/or painting, other popular techniques are collage, shadow-theatre, photography of scene set-ups or different materials, adaptations of printed picture books, and embroidered pictures. Some examples are chosen to surprise the public on a visual level. Even experiments with white pages (expressing a snowstorm) or black pages (expressing a dark night) can lead to astounding results through audience participation. The choice of themes for the stories and their content has moved from the standard fairy tales, legends, and the educational context of the school curriculum to a more contemporary level, which is more closely related to the daily life of children and youngsters, families of divorcees, immigration and gender problematics, etc.

Creative Storytelling Combinations

Besides working with the cultural background of a specific story through arts and crafts activities in ateliers after storytelling sessions, there is a range of creative possibilities which can be used depending on the story's content and the capabilities of the storyteller. Combinations with sounds, songs, and musical instruments are quite common, but also cooking activities or educational lessons on science can be brought into relation. Even links with digital media are appreciated, so long as the stories do not lose their poetic power. Long term workshops in schools are certainly good opportunities to use the children's various talents and imagination and to make interdisciplinary combinations with various teaching subjects.

Variety of Locations and Partnerships

The flexibility of this unique instrument can be shown by using a kamishibai bike, a comfortable 'down to the floor' setup, or storytelling 'out of the hand' – these create a broad range of possibilities. Leaving aside the importance of working with schools, it is crucial to consider various locations and partnerships to develop and realise kamishibai projects: academies for aspiring teachers, in-service teaching courses, artistic-social organisations, prisons, homes for elderly and disabled people, tents, street festivals, beaches, culture centres, immigrant houses, family living rooms, shopping centres, museums, hospitals, libraries, etc.

Visual Literacy

It is three times more likely that immigrant children who had the opportunity to come in regular contact with art activities at school will successfully finish their term. Stimulating language skills through kamishibai is not only an indirect way of promoting the joy of reading and the love for books, but also a necessary political input to work on equal opportunities. In this way, the little paper-drama will be needed more than ever in our postmodern, presumably 'post-narrative' world.

Gerhard Jäger (born in 1956, Graz, Austria) worked for 15 years in the Serapions Theatre in Vienna. From 1990 to 1995 he was involved in cultural projects in the south of Austria near the Slovenian border.

20 years ago Jäger started the ABC. ART BASICS for CHILDREN is a non-profit organisation located in Brussels, Belgium, and operates on the border of the arts and

education as a laboratory for aesthetic experiences and awareness. He is currently the artistic coordinator of the organisation. He lives in Brussels and has two children. www.abc-web.be, gerhard@abc-web.be

Silva Karim

Fine Arts Formal Approaches and Techniques at Designing Kamishibai Illustrations

In kamishibai theatre, the visual part plays the most important role. It is completed by motion and words, sometimes even music. If we only focus on illustration, a vast field of possibility opens up: from realistic to abstract images, from caricature to expressivity, from colorist solutions to ascetic, shaded drawings, from planar illustrations to strong illusions of space, from line drawings to painting, engraving, photography... Each artistic solution carries its own message. Just as the spoken part of kamishibai deals with language, so does the illustrated part deal with artistic language, where the grammar is built through points, lines, colour, and the contrast between light and dark. Artistic variables and basic principles of composition building also play an important role. Through examples of kamishibai illustrations, we will analyse various artistic formal approaches, consider artistic techniques and their effects, as well as methods that are less useful for kamishibai illustrations.

Silva Karim is a professor of visual art with a scientific MA. She is employed part-time as a visual arts teacher at a primary school, and part-time as a self-employed cultural worker. She works as an illustrator, painter, and potter. In the past years, she has begun to focus more on kamishibai theatre, with several notable successes marking her work.