

## COFFRET À IMAGES (BOX OF IMAGES)

### MOTIFS AND PROCESSES

#### a) Evolution of my artistic experience

##### 1 First contact with paper and other familiar materials of art

During a certain period of my childhood I was captivated by, among a lot of trifle objects precious only to children's eyes, the number of colourful papers that existed, especially those that wrapped candies.

At the same time I was absorbed in making small dolls or other figures with paper, cotton, cloth, bamboo bark, corn beard, etc., and enjoyed making them live in the little houses which I built with text books, pencil boxes and any other materials found around the house, all of which I then dismantled afterwards.

It is necessary to underline that this was just after the war and there were few toys in the shops and almost nothing at home. So it was natural for us children to invent our own toys. We were more or less little artists and enthusiastic collectors of artistic materials from everyday life.

##### 2 First orientation towards artistic work

After finishing high school in a remote country area of Japan, I moved to the capital dreaming of pursuing some kind of artistic apprenticeship. I had very vague and confused ideas about art and life. For a couple of years I struggled to find my place in the world, which was quite overpowering for a newly arrived teenage country girl.

So much happened at the same time: my first experience of making a living; studying elemental techniques of fine art at evening school; adapting to urban life; intensive reflections about philosophical, intellectual, practical and emotional problems of life. All these conspired to bring me far beyond my original aims.

I then made what I believed was a clean break.

##### 3 Rediscovery of traditional Japanese art known as Origami (folding paper) and Japanese paper, "Washi"

In 1977, aged 33, I moved to Paris. In a foreign country and a new cultural environment, I was interested in the cultural merits of my own country and I gradually rediscovered the traditional Origami that I used to practise in my childhood.

Spontaneously, I began to fold papers again, recollecting my younger pastimes. Through the research of original forms and different effects of paper I also rediscovered the excellent quality and rich variety of the Japanese paper known as Washi. As in my childhood, I started to collect beautiful papers.

##### 4 Creative inspiration following the birth of my first child

In 1981, aged 37, I had my first and only child. This event reopened in me several new levels of creation.

First of all, the birth of the child and his everyday growth signified for me the revival of joyful days of my own childhood. It also meant a new link with my adoptive country, which I felt was growing increasingly fragile. It was hard not to express in some way the emotions that came from observing this small, fresh and innocent existence which was entirely open to any marvel of life that he encountered.

Penetrating the child's universe I discovered many subjects of creation which were completely independent of the dominant themes of art.

In this way I started a new creative activity. Seeking forms and techniques of expression with paper I also hoped that my new activity would become a means of communication with my child and other children, as well as people sensitive to the universe that we adults tend to miss in our preoccupation with everyday life.

#### b) Towards the „Coffret à Images”

##### 1 Mounting my first exhibition and the problem of packaging

In 1982, I held my first exhibition of paper work, titled „Miniature World”. It was mainly Origami compositions and figures of women and children. On that occasion I also used Origami to package the sold pieces. Thus the packaging, originally designed to protect the object, became the object to be enjoyed as a piece of art itself. After many attempts at obtaining original models by folding a sheet of square paper, I reached the idea of folding a cube instead of a square.

That is the origin of the special boxes named „Coffret à Images”.

##### 2 Conception of „Coffret à Images”

These are boxes of different sizes and structures, beginning with a simple cube and leading to a complex combination of several cubes, all made with hard cardboard and other papers. Each box contains an unexpected scene, story or other paper work. We can open each box in a special way and then discover a particular miniature universe.

### CONCLUSION

Up to now I have had several occasions to present parts of my work, mainly the experiments in different steps and directions. I usually noticed that because they were without any prejudice, the youngest public penetrated most easily into the miniature universe and stayed inside for a long time identifying themselves with some of the figures in the box. They are very receptive and can easily transfer a new object to their own world and subtly become its master in their imagination.

Encouraged by this, I continue to fold cubes, filling the interiors with sketches, dreams, memories, stories, etc. I hope to enrich the universe of „Coffret à Images”, which in turn could deepen the emotional exchange with children as well as those adults who are determined defenders of the child's world in their own mind.

### DEVELOPMENT OF „COFFRET À IMAGES”

Through 12 years of experimentation I developed this theme and elaborated different types of box. At present it is possible to classify each type of box according to structure, contents or other subjective elements.

#### a) Shapes

The basic form is a simple cube but some are oblong. Several cubes can be combined to compose a complex box.

#### b) Different ways of opening are elaborated.

#### c) Dimensions:

The dimensions of closed boxes vary between 5x5x5 cm and 35x35x20 cm; obviously, open boxes occupy more space than the original closed form.

#### d) Contents:

Various subjects are treated freely in each of the boxes: abstract or symbolical motives; sketches of everyday life; successive moments of a particular scene; text and illustration for a personal story.