

Kitsune -fox priest-
netsuke
19th century
Signed Wakyosai.

ARIE VOS

Arie Vos, founder of Kitsune, regularly organizes exhibitions and participates in international fairs. He is also founding member of Asian Art In Brussels now converted to "CIVILISATIONS - Art in Brussels". If you would like to be invited to these exhibitions, then we kindly ask you to join the mailing list.

Arie has been specializing in Japanese art for over 30 years and he introduced the "Kitsune" brand in 1998. Today you can visit his gallery, rue des Minimes 55, housed in an 18th century building and based in the fashionable Brussels Sablon area at the heart of Europe.

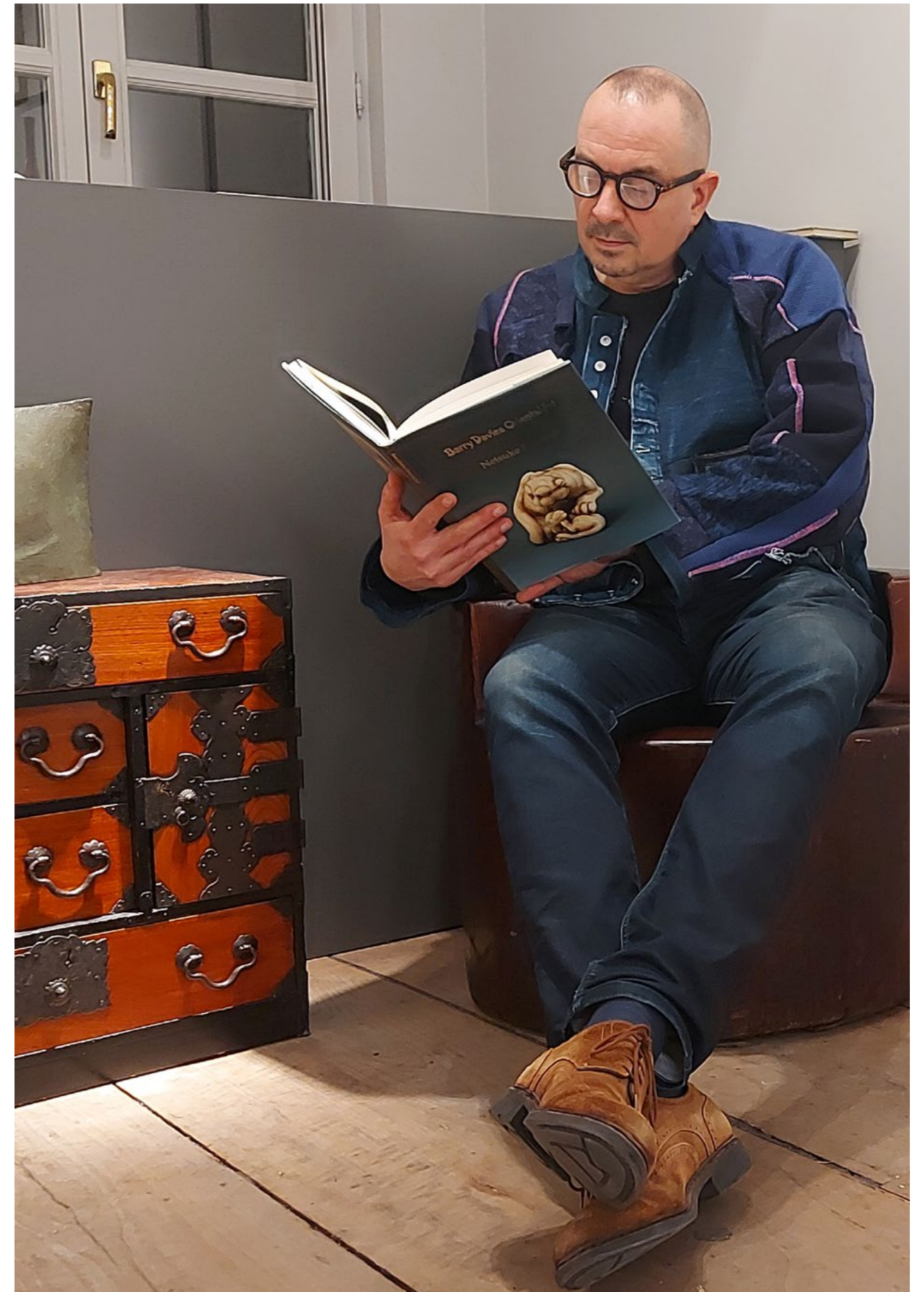
Note that Arie's passion for Japanese art started during his childhood and over the past 30 years he developed an extensive network of dealers, collectors and curators in this particular field. He can also assist clients with interior designs, evaluations and appraisals (Arie is board member of the Belgian chamber of art experts, providing fully documented expertises and guaranteeing discretion).

Contact:

+32 476 87 85 69

arie.vos@kitsune.be

www.kitsunegaroo.com



WHAT ROLE DID ART PLAY IN YOUR CHILDHOOD AND TEENAGE YEARS? WERE THERE ANY ARTISTS OR COLLECTORS IN YOUR FAMILY?

To start with, I would like to express my early fascination for drawing. I could spend hours in my room, just with a pencil and a piece of paper. Apparently, I was talented (that's what the school reported); making drawings in perspective at the age of three. Later on, I developed my skills in hyperrealism painting and admired the techniques used by the Flemish primitives. Although my parents were not into art, they somehow supported me in my investigations and they bought art books for me, they took me to museums and exhibitions.

WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO START COLLECTING? WHAT WAS THE FIRST ARTWORK YOU PURCHASED?

I think I met the right persons in my life (I call them my influencers). Everything starts with an old lady, being a neighbour at that time. She asked my parents if I could help her in the garden. I was about eight years old and upon entering her house for the first time I was nailed to the ground when discovering all the artworks she had collected. She noticed immediately my admiration for one of the paintings and started to tell me amazing stories about how she acquired the artworks. I loved visiting her because of her story telling. Finally, she was not able to stay in the house due to her age and moved into the house of her sister. Before leaving, she gave me a Japanese ivory netsuke, representing an old lady with a little boy... symbolising our relationship. This was the first artwork I "acquired". That netsuke changed my whole life, but I was never able to tell her. I still have it. After that, there is a time gap of roughly 5 years, to meet my second influencer. Again an older lady in the

neighbourhood. I helped her with carrying something heavy upon which she asked me where I lived. She invited my parents and me for a drink. Same story : the house full of art. The big difference with the previous influencer, is that she took me to museums, art markets and antique shops. I learned much on how to select artworks. However, the most important influencer came into my life when I was visiting my grandfather. After dinner I took my bicycle and made a tour in the neighbouring villages. My attention got caught by a little antique shop. I was 15 at the time. Looking through the shop window, I saw a pair of Chinese porcelain vases in "famille verte" made for the Persian market (extremely rare). So, I decided to visit the shop. The owner of the shop, a little bit suspicious about my appearance, asked me with a severe voice "what can I do for you?". As soon as I started my inquiry for these vases, he was perplexed. To make a long story short : he became my teacher in art and antiques and I owe him so much in terms of acquiring knowledge. He also encouraged me to purchase my first artwork : the money earned with my first student job during summer holidays was entirely spent on a Volkstedt Rudolstadt porcelain figurine that I exchanged for a pair of Japanese Imari vases from the 17th century.

KITSUNE MEANS « FOX » RIGHT ? WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THAT WORD FOR THE NAME OF YOUR GALLERY ? DOES IT HAVE ANY MEANING?

TKitsune is indeed the Japanese word for "fox". The answer to your question is very simple : my family name "Vos" is the Dutch translation for Kitsune. Foxes in Japanese art are quite common and they are represented in many ways. Japanese folklore is rich in mythology, and the fox is no exception : the animal has an important mythical status, oscillating between a symbol of cunning and a powerful possessor of great intelligence and good fortune having the ability to shapeshift into human form.

First netsuke received at the age of 8 years old.



A pair of bronze doves (pigeons)
on a wood base
Meiji/Taisho-period
(ca 1900-1920)



AS WITH MOST TRADITIONAL THINGS - YOUNG PEOPLE TEND TO THINK THAT ANTIQUES BELONG TO MUSEUMS AND CAN BE A LITTLE OLD FASHIONED. HOW DO YOU CAPTURE A NEW COLLECTOR'S EYE?

The most difficult thing, is to attract young people into the gallery. Times have changed : the “collector” as such is about to disappear. When I go to conventions (mostly focusing on a specific subject), I only see elder people. The new generation of art buyers is much more eclectic and will buy art as a part of their interior design. So I have oriented my gallery towards a “feeling at home” concept. I work with matching colours when displaying different artworks (eclectic). In the same way I try to exhibit the more “timeless” Japanese art. Whenever I exhibit traditional Japanese art (somewhat old fashioned for young people), I will try to integrate the artworks in a composition that will create a contemporary touch. Youngsters also grew up with internet (I grew up with books and the only access to acquire art was through the galleries, auctions and fairs). Thus, in order to attract young people, you have to be visible in their world. Internet and the social media are surely a solution to get this kind of visibility. But, I have a long way to go in this field.

DO YOU ENCOURAGE TO USE ANTIQUES I.E. VASES, BOWLS, CUPS IN EVERYDAY LIFE ? ARE THEY TOO PRECIOUS FOR DAILY USE?

Absolutely! Nothing as beautiful as a vase with an awesome ikebana flower arrangement. Most of my artworks are Japanese tea ceremony related. I remember my first exhibition where at closing time I served matcha tea to a client in a 17th century tea bowl. The sensation was just fantastic... he nota bene became my biggest collector of Japanese tea bowls.

WHAT MUST A WORK POSSESS IN ORDER FOR YOU TO EXHIBIT IT?

The question for me is rather “would I like to have this artwork in my own collection”. When the answer is “no”, I will not exhibit it, regardless of its quality, uniqueness or whatever. Of course, an artwork needs to meet a certain standard when it comes to authenticity, quality, design, craftsmanship, aesthetics or rarity.

HAS YOUR TASTE IN ART CHANGED MUCH SINCE YOU STARTED COLLECTING?

Yes my taste changed. Acquiring knowledge in the different fields of Japanese art takes time. So, it is normal that you buy and collect in fields you are trusted with. My taste was also adapted to my purse (certainly as a student, or even later on, when I bought a house and got kids). However, there has always been a kind of red thread through my collecting areas : the items I purchase are primarily of Japanese native taste. They reflect the inner soul of Japan.

DO YOU HAVE ANY WORKS IN YOUR COLLECTION FROM OUTSIDE OF JAPAN?

I'm not limited to Japanese art when it comes to my own collecting fields. I like for instance Oceanic art. The latest two items I acquired were not Japanese : a piece of Dutch furniture from the 17th century and a pipe from Soudan.

YOU ARE AT THE HEAD OF THE CIVILISATIONS ART FAIR. WHAT DOES THE CIVILISATIONS ART FAIR AIM TO ACHIEVE? WITH MANY OTHER ART FAIRS COMING BACK TO NORMALITY THIS YEAR, HOW DO YOU POSITION YOUR FAIR ?

With Civilisations we aim to bring different cultures from all over the world to the public. We focus on the ever evolving eclectic taste of our international clients and collectors. The fair also aims to seal the continuity of our important Sablon heritage, known worldwide as a district of art and antiques. Due to Covid, many fairs were cancelled and rescheduled to June 2022. Note that Civilisations is a fresh concept arising from a series of previous events that were originally organised in June, however with a different approach now. This approach covers another goal of Civilisations. We want, as a non-profit organisation, to create a fair for our members that is affordable (in comparison to other fairs), yet providing to the public a selection of artworks by renowned dealers. Rather than having three associations (in the past), we now operate as one association resulting in more effective decision making, less overhead costs whilst promoting our members throughout the year via newsletters, online catalogues and postings on the social media. I

would position the fair as "Driven by passion".

IF YOU COULD HAVE DINNER WITH ANY THREE ARTISTS, LIVING OR DEAD, WHO WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

I would choose Shibata Zeshin (1807-1891), a Japanese lacquer artist and painter.

Ogata Korin (1658-1716), also lacquerer and painter, as well as textile designer.

Kobori Enshu (1579-1647), tea ceremony master, painter, ikebana master, poet and garden designer.



Three case inro
Shibata Zeshin
Once in Arie Vos' collection
Now Sold