

## Thoughts on Amulets

The amulet is a different kind object. One that can be infused with a feeling of empowerment. It can be at turns a healer (a piece of Aventurine crystal given to me by my mother) or a protector (an all-seeing eye ring I bought for myself). The object distracts from fear or soothes. It can be handled when far from home or in an alien environment, or while at home but feeling scared or sad. It is very often an object that fits inside the hand. It can be discreet, even secret. Worn tucked into a pocket close to the heart.

An amulet can be a found object. It can also be a stolen one. It is versatile in its origin story and mystery only adds to its value.

The souvenir says 'I was thinking of you'. The amulet can silently say many things. But most importantly, both amulet and souvenir can be a way to access something inside us.

# Full Exhibition Guide

## Treasure

By Stacey Hunter

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## Introduction

Treasure explores Japanese design culture and how the experience of travel can be captured, memorialised and celebrated.

For Treasure, design curator Stacey Hunter reinterprets traditional and contemporary design objects collected from temples, open-air markets and shrines during her two-month residency in Tokyo and Arita in early 2019.

## Exhibition Objects

Three silk twill scarves present photographic portraits of objects that hold significance. The first, in pale yellow, depicts tableware and food related items and illustrates the notion of Kawaii; the second, in pale blue, is an arrangement that celebrates Omamori from Tokyo, Dazaifu, Arita and Nara; the third composition, in peach, relates to the concept of Mingei and includes a small paper decoration by celebrated Japanese designer Yanagi Sōri.

The largest scarf in the exhibition is a sheer square of crêpe de chine, portraying items of blue and white porcelain – some found, some given and some hand-painted by Hunter using motifs from archives explored during her internship at Jyussha, a porcelain kiln in Arita. The impermanence of memory and the fragility of souvenirs is moderated by casting an omamori porcelain deer from Nara in red, white and yellow solid bronze. A trio of small deer demonstrate how design objects can manifest intangible experiences such as emotions and atmospheres.

## Terms

- Kawaii is the culture of cuteness in Japan, referring to items, humans and non-humans
- Omamori are Japanese amulets sold at Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples
- Mingei is a term first named by Soetsu Yanagi in 1925 to describe handicrafts made by anonymous craftspeople

## Background to Exhibition

“In early 2019 I spent one month in the megapolis of Tokyo and one month in a small, sleepy town called Arita on Kyushu island in the rural south of Japan. My emotions were very close to the surface in Japan. I was very affected by kindnesses and caring gestures.

A trifecta of three ongoing preoccupations of mine came together, and are shared in this exhibition within the context of my practice as a design curator.

For some time now, I have been drawn to investigating and exploring the idea of the souvenir, a design object with many rich associations and extremes. I am also attracted to the notion of amulets or tokens which are given through love, friendship or obsession. As a curator, I like order, classification, meaning, definitions and rituals.”

## Thoughts on Souvenirs

“A souvenir is something we buy when travelling far from home to act as a reminder. Or to acknowledge to a loved one that we thought of them despite the distance between us. Seeking out the perfect object gives us a purpose to occupy ourselves with – we who are normally so busy –when taking a holiday.

The perfect souvenir must have one, or all, of several important characteristics. Small enough to transport easily in a small bag or pocket; light enough not be burdensome; not too expensive and not too cheap. The material or style should be authentically local and of artisanal value or quality. If not, then it must be very, very cute (kawaii).

In the context of design culture, successful souvenirs are those which endure. The official souvenir was once a sign of quality: for example an enamel pin from the Olympic games; or a Senshukai Royal Pet (the little wooden dachshund pictured on the peach silk scarf).