

Familiar Artefacts | Corinna Howell

There are many important events, rites, and ceremonies that a Japanese person will experience growing up in the culture. Although my time there was staggered, some exciting moments were those that I got to experience wearing a kimono, and a yukata. Wearing a red baby kimono for my Hatsuzekku ceremony, a yellow and red kimono for my Shichi-Go-San ceremony as a young child, a white, pink and yellow yukata for summer festivals with friends, and the decadent silver-rainbow family kimono that had been passed down through generations for my Seijinshiki (coming-of-age ceremony at 21 years of age). I still have these symbolic and significant items of clothing in my possession.

One fond memory of my time with my family in Japan is the many moments I would sit at the kotatsu with my grandmother, making crafts of various sorts (A kotatsu is a piece of Japanese furniture, a table with a built-in blanket and heater). My grandmother is very good at hand-stitching and sewing - she loves to make handbags, masks and other accessories out of mixed fabrics she finds. I love the patterns of the fabrics - tiny flower motifs, repetitive wave patterns, native plants, flying cranes, and wagashi (Japanese confectionery). I carry these items with me daily, one as my everyday carry-bag. Having spent years away from my other home, it is a bitter-sweet reminder of the culture I miss.

These paintings are of these objects and their fabrics that carry emotional, cultural and familiar significance. It strikes me how particular patterns can remind us of a culture, that these fabrics feel characteristically Japanese to me. For each time I wear them I for once, and at once, feel authentically Japanese.