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Short version

The Doll's House Museum Basel presents:

## Children's kimonos

Special exhibition from 16.10.2010 until 03.04.2011

This unique special exhibition on children's kimonos exclusively features items from the remarkable Nakano Kazuko collection from Yamagata in northern Japan. This is the first time that these items are on public display, and this is the first exhibition in Europe to be exclusively devoted to the subject of children's kimonos. All of the more than 90 children's kimonos originate from the Edo period (1603–1867) up to the Shōwa period (1926–1989). A slideshow and videos on the subject of children's kimonos put the visitors in the right mood for the exhibition.

The word "kimono" literally means: **an object to wear**. In the cultural consciousness of Japan and other countries, the kimono was and still is a symbol of Japanese tradition. The style of the kimono has remained unchanged over the centuries, with only the surface of the fabric reflecting the general spirit of the times: European influences can also be seen. The Japanese view the kimono as a work of art, to be presented like a painting. This is what makes kimonos such valuable and coveted collectors' items. Today, wearing a kimono documents the close bonds with nine centuries of Japanese culture and tradition.

The simple, T-shaped kimono is made from one single bolt of fabric, which is cut into seven pieces. This makes it easy to undo and keep using anew. Consisting of two body pieces, two arm pieces and two front pieces as well as a collar, the kimono is knit together using a

minimal amount of tailoring and one straight seam. If an adult-sized kimono becomes worn or the owner no longer likes the colour or design or arm length, the kimono can be taken apart and easily altered into a children's garment.

In Japan, the culture of clothing has an important place and has reached a high level of sophistication. For more than a thousand years there has been a great predilection for children's clothing. At a time when the life of a child was often short, the family, and above all the mother, transferred all the love and care for their offspring into their clothing. That is why kimonos for newborns and toddlers are not uncommon at all.

The designs which are painted on, dyed or stitched onto children's kimonos are full of meaning. They express the parents' wishes for success, happiness and good health for their child. Designs are gender-specific: falcons, horses, carp, helmets and armaments for boys, while flowers in a cart or a basket and decorated balls are typical designs for girls.

Included in the Nakano Kazuko collection are luxurious, precious, dyed children's kimonos from rich households, but also some from less wealthy families who, in spite of many restrictions – prohibitions, bad harvests, hard times – made a great effort to give their children festive kimonos.

Kimonos for children handed down from those past times are mostly worn-out and often dirty so that collectible specimens are few and far between. The children's kimonos in the Nakano collection, however, are not only beautiful and colourful but also exceptionally well preserved. They are a wonderful testament to the great love of parents for their children.

The colours and patterns of children's kimonos are often very similar to those of adults' kimonos. This was to protect the children: It was believed that if children looked like adults in their kimonos the evil spirits would not recognise them as children.

The Doll's House Museum has some other activities in store: An attractive competition gives young and old the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in tailoring a doll's kimono and to win one of the exclusive Japanese prizes. And at special museum workshops, young visitors from 6 years of age can design their own doll's kimono or fold some famous origami paper objects.

**Opening hours**

Museum, shop and café: Daily from 10.00 – 18.00

**Admission**

CHF 7.00 / 5.00

Children up to 16 years of age are admitted free of charge and only in the company of adults.

No additional charge for the special exhibition.

The entire building is wheelchair-accessible.

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