

## About the Exhibition

### **HANDCRAFTED FORM: TRADITIONS AND TECHNIQUES**

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We are surrounded by utilitarian craft objects that have been brought into being and nurtured within our daily lives. By making the most of the raw materials of each craft—ceramics, textiles, metal work, lacquer ware, wood and bamboo work, paper, etc.—and contriving to use the techniques appropriate to each, goods have been created that combine ease of use with beauty.

Following the industrial revolution in the West, Japan also saw the modernization of production during the Meiji era (1868-1912). Through the introduction of machines, most of the craft objects that, until then, had been made by hand were replaced by mass-produced, industrially manufactured goods. Alongside the mechanized production that occurred from the beginning of the Meiji era, however, production of hand-made craft objects continued on a smaller scale in independent, regional workshops throughout Japan. While this workshop system fostered superior artisans, among those workshop artisans it also gave rise to individualistic, idiosyncratic craft artists.

Traditional materials and techniques, rooted in the climate and landscape of every region of Japan, produced both utilitarian craft objects made by the seasoned skills of artisans and art works richly imbued with the creativity of craft artists. Artisans and artists have influenced each other. This mutual influence has contributed to the depth and high quality of Japanese crafts as a whole.

This exhibition introduces hand crafted objects made from traditional materials with traditional techniques from all over Japan. Representative objects designated as “Traditional Craft Objects” under the Japanese government’s Traditional Manufactured Goods Law form the core of the exhibition, supplemented by works of craft artists.

## Section Panels

### **I. CERAMICS**

In Japan, dishes of various colors and shapes are used in making table arrangements. Earthenware production began there 13,000 years ago. Unsurprisingly, the number of people engaged in making ceramics is higher than that of artisans in any other Japanese craft.

### **II TEXTILES**

Textile decoration can be broadly divided into two types, yarn-dyed textiles, in which the yarns are first dyed and then woven into a pattern; and surface-dyed textiles, in which pre-woven, undyed cloth is dyed using various techniques. In Japan, both yarn-dyed textiles and, from the 8<sup>th</sup> century onward, surface-dyed textiles have attained a high level of technical and artistic excellence.

### **III LACQUERWARE**

As the English term “japanning” (a varnish applied in imitation of East Asian lacquer) indicates, lacquer symbolizes the crafts of Japan as a whole. In the 8th century, when the art of lacquer ware began in Japan, the bodies of most lacquer ware objects were made of leather coated with lacquer. But gradually the body of the object came to be made of wood, which was covered with transparent coats of lacquer. This evolved into the *makie* technique of decorating lacquer by sprinkling gold and silver dust on a surface, covering that with further coats of transparent lacquer, and then polishing the surface to bring out its luster.

### **IV METALWORK**

Agricultural tools of iron and bronze were introduced into Japan from continental Asia between the 4th century B.C. and 3rd century A.D., when the cultivation of crops began in the islands. Iron implements were used for agriculture and bronze mainly for religious ceremonial purposes.

### **V WOOD AND BAMBOO CRAFTS**

The history of both wood and bamboo crafts is ancient, and both have been excavated from sites dating to the 4th century B.C., in the Jōmon period.

### **VI GLASSWARE**

Glass beads have been produced in Japan since the 8th century, but it was not until the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when glass-making techniques were introduced from Europe, that glass vessels began to be manufactured in this country. Production began in Nagasaki, then spread to Osaka and Edo, and eventually throughout Japan.

### **VII PAPER, WRITING IMPLEMENTS ETC.**

Papermaking is said to have been introduced to Japan from the continent earlier than the 6th century, spreading throughout the country in the 8th century

## Explanatory Panels for Each Crafts

### **KASAMA WARE (stoneware)**

**Ibaraki prefecture, 18<sup>th</sup> — 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

The iron-rich clay of the Kasama area fires to a reddish black, resulting in a ware that is simple and relaxed in feeling. Ceramic artist Gô Satô (1951- ) is also a traditional Kasama artisan. Using the traditional black and reddish glazes of Kasama, he creates contemporary eating utensils that make the most of these contrasting colors. The saucer of the soy-sauce jugs can also be used as a small plate. The small bowls in the shape of abacus beads stack easily for convenience.

### **MINO WARE (stoneware)**

**Gifu prefecture, 7<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

The history of Mino ware goes back to the Asuka period (late 6th — early 7th century). But it flourished, in particular, along with the tea ceremony during the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the Momoyama (late 16th — early 17th century) and early Edo (early 17th — mid-19th century) periods, when it reflected the taste of tea masters. Shino, Yellow Seto, and Oribe glazes characterize Mino ware. The black and green tableware on display utilize the Oribe glaze used by potters in the Mino area and applied to vessels of various shapes. The deep individual serving cup and the eccentric plate bring variety to side dishes making a meal a visual as well as a gastronomic pleasure.

Of the three Mino glazes potter, Hiroshi Sakai (1960- ) has chosen Shino. He has deliberately constructed the bumpy surface called “sharkskin” (*kairagi*) exploiting its effect in the overall expression of his pieces here.

### **YOKKAICHI BANKO WARE (porcelain / stoneware )**

**Mie prefecture, 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

Banko ware is well known for its unglazed small teapots (*kyûsu*) and pictorial decoration in shallow relief. Suigetsu Shimizu’s (1944 — , Master of Traditional Craft) teapot is a typical example of the genre.

After graduating from college in Kyoto ceramic artist Mikiko Tomita (1972 — ) has created forms entirely covered with relief patterns based on the Yokkaichi relief technique. She usually focuses on non-functional, sculptural forms, but here she introduces utilitarian pieces including an incense burner, a lidded bowl, a small bowl, and a plate. The lid of the incense burner is removed to insert the incense then the lid is replaced. The fragrance of the burning incense can be enjoyed as the smoke rises through the pierced decoration of the lid.

**KYÔ WARE/KIYOMIZU WARE (porcelain / stoneware)****Kyoto prefecture, 8<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

Kyo ware traces its origins back to the Nara period (710-784), but the highly decorative, colorful wares familiar today began to flourish only in the Edo period—in the case of stoneware, the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and porcelain, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A delicate crackle often appears on the stoneware.

Since its founding in 1771, the Rokubei Pottery has continued to produce practical porcelain and stoneware of many kinds, under the supervision of generations of the head of the family, always named Rokubei Kiyomizu. A warmth that reveals traces of the forming hand characterizes the wares produced by the Rokubei Pottery, even of the porcelain. The original designs for individual serving cups with water pattern and bamboo leaf pattern plates,” by Sekka Kamisaka, were adapted to ceramics by the 5th Rokubei, and even today remain representative table wares of the Rokubei Pottery.

**BIZEN WARE (stoneware )****Okayama prefecture, late 12<sup>th</sup> century — early 13<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

Bizen ware is fired at high temperature for a long period of time, about two weeks, in a pine-burning kiln. It bears no glaze or painted decoration but incorporates the decorative effects of changes that occur during firing such as *hidasuki* (flame streaks).

Ceramic artist Shin Isezaki (1965 — ) works in a contemporary style controlling firing effects such as fire cords and discs. Yûho Kaneshige’s (1950 — ) specialty is simple tableware that exploits fire cords and other kiln markings on a thin light-colored body. Potter Jun Isezaki (1936 — ) was designated a Living National Treasure for Bizen ware in 2004. While he uses Bizen clay and a tunnel kiln to make his vases they are idiosyncratic in form. Some Bizen ware is painted with iron-rich slip, resulting in a blackish surface when fired. But in order to stabilize the appearance of black surfaces Isezaki mixes in a mineral pigment known as “true black.” This creates an effect of matter infused with a sense of being. In combination with tea bowls, water jars, and other utensils, Japanese vases are used in the world of the tea ceremony, as well as in other settings.

**HAGI WARE (stoneware )****Yamaguchi prefecture, early 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

Hagi ware is formed from a mixture of three types of clay: Daidô clay, Mitake clay, and Mishima clay, and it is glazed with wood ash or rice-straw ash glaze.

Ceramic artist Masanao Kaneta(1953 — ) forms his robust, powerful tea bowls by gouging out a lump of clay and covering it with white glaze. Kaneta continues Tenchôzan Pottery, inherited from his father, Sanzaemon Kaneta (1920—2004), a Master of Traditional Craft. In addition to his own work, Kaneta also supervises kiln production of wares such as paired “husband-and-wife” tea cups, one larger than the other, and blossom-shaped small bowls (a type called “Princess” Hagi). Warm apricot color and white surfaces result from Hagi ware clay, glazes, and the oxidation, reduction, and other processes that take place in the kiln.

**IMARI WARE / ARITA WARE (porcelain)**  
**Saga prefecture, early 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

Porcelain was first produced in Japan in what is now Saga prefecture. These wares join the smooth white surface of porcelain with overglaze enamels and cobalt underglaze. They are sturdy and easy to handle, with great variety in the painted decoration, and are widely used at mealtime in Japan, as rice bowls and other tableware.

**OJIYA RAMIE CREPE (yarn- or cloth-dyed)**  
**Niigata prefecture, 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

Using yarns made from ramie (a member of the nettle family) fiber, and applying a strong twist to the weft yarns before weaving creates the wrinkled effect of Ojiya ramie crepe. The crisp, bast-fiber material and the wrinkled crepe surface make garments of this cloth stand away from the body rather than clinging to it, a feature appropriate to Japan's hot, humid summers.

**YŪKI PONGEE (yarn-dyed silk)**  
**Ibaraki and Tochigi prefectures, 8<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

Spun by hand from floss silk and woven on a body-tension loom, Yûki pongee has a rustic simplicity in spite of the fact that it is silk.

**TOKYO HAND-DRAWN YŪZEN (cloth-dyed-silk)**  
**Tokyo, late 17<sup>th</sup> — early 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

In Tokyo Yûzen, thread-like lines are drawn on the silk with resist paste. When dye or pigment is applied to the cloth, the paste prevents the color from penetrating the silk, leaving fine white lines. This permits a freedom of design not found in textiles with yarn-dyed woven patterns. Compared with the vivid and colorful qualities of Kyô Yûzen, from Kyoto, or Kaga Yûzen, from Ishikawa prefecture, the patterns of Tokyo Yûzen tend to be restrained and chic.

Teruhiko Shiozawa (1939— ) is active as a Yûzen artist in Tokyo. His designs feature motifs based on simplified flowers, birds, and natural scenery, enlivening the kimono form with their movement. One of the pleasures of wearing kimono is choosing patterns appropriate to each season.

**SHURI HANAKURA WEAVING (yarn-dyed textiles)**  
**Okinawa prefecture, 15<sup>th</sup> century\* to the present**

\*Shuri Weaving is a recent — probably 20<sup>th</sup> century — term.

Hanakura weaving alternates squares of gauze weave and warp-float patterns. Originally, it was probably worn by women of the royal family of Ryukyu kingdom (present-day Okinawa prefecture) for summer clothing. Hanakura weaving is one type of what has come to be known as Shuri weaving, cloth with woven patterns made in the capitol of the Ryukyu kingdom, now part of the city of Naha.

**TAKAOKA LACQUER WARE****Toyama prefecture, early 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

Cassia, magnolia, horse-chestnut and other woods form the base of Takaoka lacquer ware. Lacquer thickly applied to the carved wooden body of the object, creating a built-up three-dimensional decoration, a technique called “sculpted lacquer,” which is characteristic of this craft. The maple-leaf and *daikon* radish motifs make the most of the round shape of the plates exhibited.

**WAJIMA LACQUER****Ishikawa prefecture, 11<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

Cypress, zelkova, cassia, magnolia, and other woods form the base for Wajima lacquer ware. A durable undercoat made of a special type of clay peculiar to Wajima is applied first to the wooden base, and after many coats of lacquer, the ware may be decorated with engraved gold, or gold and silver powder or leaf in the *makie* technique. Lacquered chopsticks feel pleasant when touched to the lips, and lidded lacquer bowls are used for soup and other foods.

**NANBU CAST-IRON WARE****Iwate prefecture, 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

The technology used in making these kettles is said to have been brought to Iwate from Kyoto. Molten iron is cast by pouring into a sand mold. Iwate iron kettles became particularly famous in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when they began to be adapted for the tea ceremony by casting them in smaller sizes. The knobby surface (the knobs are referred to as “hail” in Japanese) is attractive, and the kettles themselves are sturdy and made to last a long time. In order to prevent rusting, they are placed in a charcoal fire at 1652° F. (900° C.) for thirty minutes.

**TSUBAME HAMMERED COPPER WARE****Niigata prefecture, 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

A single sheet of copper is hammered into a three-dimensional form in this wrought metalwork technique. The container on display is made to keep leaf tea. The surface has been incised with a dragonfly design.

**TAKAOKA COPPER WARE****Toyama prefecture, end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

Molten copper alloy is poured into a sand mold to make this cast ware, which is then decorated by incising or applying colors to the surface. It was highly praised at international expositions during the Meiji period. Many kinds of objects can be made using this technique, including decorative objects, vases, and Buddhist implements. The object in this exhibition, however, is a paperweight. The fungus motif decoration is regarded as auspicious in China and Japan.

### **ÔDATE BENTWOOD**

**Akita prefecture, 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

Cedar is cut into thin slices, soaked in water to soften it, and then bent into shape. No nails are used to fasten the wood. Instead, dovetail joints are carved into the ends to hold the pieces together. Holes are punched into overlapping pieces, so that cherry bark can be threaded through them, as if sewing the two parts together. Bentwood boxes are lightweight and easy to carry. The straight grain of the cedar is beautiful, and imparts a refined quality to the object.

### **EDO JOINERY**

**Tokyo, from 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

During the mid-Edo period, the profession of joiner or cabinetmaker split off from the more broadly defined craft of carpentry, developing into a separate area of craft production. The joiner assembles parts without the use of nails, by cutting dovetail joints into the pieces to be held together. The cabinetmaker avoids extraneous decoration and takes advantage of the beauty of the grain, exploiting it to the fullest extent. Economical and solid construction characterizes Edo joinery. The exhibition includes a little chest of drawers for putting away small items.

### **HAKONE MARQUETRY**

**Kanagawa prefecture, 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

In marquetry, numerous fragments of wood are fitted together, then sliced through to form a slab. Thin layers are then planed off and used to decorate products of the cabinetmakers craft, dishes, etc. Marquetry features delicate patterns juxtaposing different colors and grains of natural wood. This craft developed in the Hakone area, home to many varieties of trees.

The “secret box” is constructed of pieces of wood decorated with geometrical marquetry patterns. These are joined to form a trick box that can be opened only by moving the parts in a certain way and in a given order.

### **SURUGA FINE BAMBOO BASKETRY**

**Shizuoka prefecture, 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

These fine, delicate containers and ornaments make the most of slender bamboo strips, first boiled and dried, then bent into shape and woven or fastened together. Enjoying the sounds of insects has been a custom in Japan since olden times. The insects on display, made entirely of bamboo, delight the eye.

### **EDO CUT-GLASS (Edo *kiriko*)**

**Tokyo, 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

Edo cut-glass is made by carving sharp patterns into the clear, colorless surface of glass. The shallowly applied surface layer of blue or red and the deep, sharply-cut transparent portions display a striking beauty of contrasts. The objects in the exhibition are intended for drinking wine or sake.

### **ETCHÛ HANDMADE PAPER**

**Toyama prefecture, 8<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

Tough paper-mulberry fiber is the main ingredient of hand-made Etchû paper. It has a wide range of uses, including *shôji* screens and paper for writing practice. The letter paper and envelopes on exhibit take well to an ink-laden brush. Even today, when computers and word-processors are so widespread, the act of sending a hand-written letter conveys the writer's depth of feeling towards the recipient.

### **EDO DECORATED HAND-MADE PAPER (Edo *karakami*)**

**Tokyo, 8<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

*Karakami* decorated papers are ornamented hand-made papers used for sliding screens, *shoji* paper doors and windows, folding screens, etc. They began to be made in the Heian period (784-1192) as imitations of decorated Chinese (*Kara*) papers. Natural motifs such as flowers and grasses are depicted in a range of techniques including dyeing with paper stencils, woodblock printing, and sprinkling with gold and silver dust. When used for covering lamps, light gleaming through the paper creates an illusory mood from the motifs.

### **MARUGAME FANS**

**Kagawa prefecture, 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

Chinese-style fans are said to have originated here as souvenirs sold to devotees on pilgrimage to Shikoku's Mount Konpira. Today, Marugame holds 90% of the market share of these non-folding fans. Shaft and ribs are cut from a single piece of bamboo, the ribs are covered with handmade paper, and those to be painted are coated with persimmon tannin or lacquer.

### **SUZUKA INK STICKS (Suzuka *sumi*)**

**Mie prefecture, 8<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

The original form of this ink is said to have been made from soot derived from burning pines cut from the hills of Suzuka; the resulting soot was gathered and mixed with animal glue. The soot and animal glue are well kneaded, and the paste is then formed into ink sticks that produce an especially dark ink.

### **NARA WRITING BRUSHES**

**Nara prefecture, 6<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

Writing brushes are said to have been transmitted from China, and Nara was the first place they were produced in Japan. The hair of more than ten animals, including goat, horse, deer, badger, weasel, and rabbit, is carefully selected and skillfully combined according to relative durability and length. Finely pointed brushes are used not only for writing but also for applying colored pigments to paintings.



## **AKAMA INKSTONES**

**Yamaguchi prefecture, 12<sup>th</sup> century to the present**

Mined from layers of stone suitable for ink stone use, the stone then undergoes more than ten steps from start to finish, including carving and polishing. Akama ink stones are hard and fine, the grain of the stone is beautiful, and ink grinds easily and smoothly on them. Ink stones, ink sticks, and hand-made paper have supported Japan's brush-writing culture over centuries.

## **Procedure of Making Hagi Ware and Dyeing Tokyo Yûzen**

### **MAKING HAGI WARE (10 photos and explanations)**

TOOLS: (Left) tools for cutting clay; (right) wooden shaping stick  
Firewood for firing kiln (not pictured)

1. Kneading a lump of clay in kneading machine.
2. Pounding the clay with the shaping stick to form the outer surface, and shaping the line of the rim
3. Determining the overall shape each time the clay is pounded, creating a new surface and a new edge
4. Evaluating the balance of the form
5. Gouging out the inside with a cutting tool
6. The shape of the partially hollowed-out form
7. Biscuit firing (1382° F., 750°C.)
8. Drying after applying the glaze  
Glazes made from rice-straw ash, wood ash, and feldspar, rather thickly applied, are characteristic of Hagi ware.
9. Final firing of 30 hours at 2282° F. (1250° C.) in a multichamber climbing kiln

### **YÛZEN DYEING PROCESS (9 works and explanations)**

1. Design: the artist prepares a sketch of plum blossoms from nature, and then creates a design from it by abstraction and imaginative distortion. The originality of a Yûzen work begins with the creativity expressed in the design.
2. Coloring: elegant patterns that make the most of the artist's color sense are typical of the work of Tokyo Yûzen artists. In addition to hand-drawn resist and hand-painting, other techniques are also incorporated, such as shading from one color to another or from a darker to a lighter tone of the same color,
3. Underdrawing: reproducing the artist's design, the underdrawing is applied to the cloth with a brush. Painted with the blue liquid extracted from spiderwort blossoms, the color can be washed out with cold water.
4. Application of resist-paste lines: A tube with a cone-shaped tip is filled with paste, which is then extruded in a fine line by pressing with the fingers, following the outlines of the underdrawing.
5. Background: sizing made from seaweed is applied to the entire surface with a brush.
6. Yûzen painting: dye is applied to pattern areas with a writing brush or flat paintbrush.
7. Covering with resist paste: all of the painted pattern areas are covered with paste.

8. Background dyeing: the dyer applies the dye of the background with a flat paintbrush, taking care to avoid creating uneven areas of color.
9. Final washing: after steaming the cloth at 212° F. for an hour to set the dye, it is soaked and rinsed in cold water to remove the resist paste.