



# HARD BODIES

Contemporary Japanese  
Lacquer Sculpture

TRAVELING EXHIBITION SERVICE

**IA&A** INTERNATIONAL  
ARTS AND ARTISTS

***Appreciation of lacquer is a taste which has to be acquired,  
but which, when acquired, grows upon one, and places the  
best lacquer in the category of almost sacred things.***

**— Basil Hall Chamberlain, *Things Japanese* (1890)**



**I**t's a tradition nearly as old as civilization itself. Since the Neolithic era, artisans in East Asia have coated bowls, cups, boxes, baskets, and other utilitarian objects with a natural polymer distilled from the sap of the *Rhus verniciflua*, known as the lacquer tree.

Lacquerware was—and still is—prized for its sheen: a lustrous beauty that artists learned to accentuate over the centuries with inlaid gold, silver, mother-of-pearl, and other precious materials.

However, since the late 1980s, this tradition has been challenged. A small but enterprising circle of lacquer artists have pushed the medium in entirely new and dynamic directions by creating large-scale sculptures, works that are both conceptually innovative and superbly exploitative of lacquer's natural virtues.

To create these new forms and shapes, artists bend tradition to their needs. Creating lacquer art continues to challenge contemporary artists, who must master the medium's demanding techniques and also choose whether to continue established traditions or pursue new forms of expression. In the latter category are a number of individuals who have successfully altered the age-old perception of lacquer by expanding boundaries and defying expectations. These 34 works by 16 artists constitute the first-ever comprehensive exhibition of contemporary Japanese lacquer sculpture, and range from the playful to the sublimely elegant to the fantastic. They have all been drawn from the Clark Collections at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the only collection in the world to feature this extraordinary new form.

Aoki Chie, *BODY 09-1 "Impact"*, 2009, lacquer and hemp cloth on polystyrene foam. 37 3/4 x 43 5/16 x 74 13/16 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Arts & Culture, 2013.29.1339. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.

## CHEMISTRY

Lacquer is distilled from the sap of the *Rhus verniciflua* tree, which grows throughout China, Japan, and Korea. In Japan, the sap is harvested by making diagonal or vertical cuts in the bark. The sap must be handled carefully before it hardens. It contains an oily resin—urushiol—also found in poison ivy, which provokes an allergic reaction (redness, swelling, and blisters) in most people.

High humidity, oxygen, and heat between 73 and 86 degrees Fahrenheit cause the sap to harden. Coloring agents can be added to change the appearance of the finished product; iron filings, for example, cause raw lacquer to foam and turn black.

The primary substrate, or base, for lacquered works is wood, but other materials, such as bamboo, paper, leather, and metals, are also used. Rarely is lacquer directly applied to an object; instead, the object is first coated with one or more layers of hemp and clay dust mixed with water and lacquer.

At least twelve coats of lacquer are applied before a work is considered finished. The first layers are polished with charcoal and water. Layers of cloth, fin ray, or sharkskin can be used to achieve a specific surface treatment. Numerous specialized carving and cutting knives and spatulas have been developed in Japan for the production of lacquered objects, as have brushes and tubes for applying metallic powders, mother-of-pearl fragments, and other decorative materials as embellishments.



Fujita Toshiaki, *Layered Form 1*, 2004, lacquer, earth powder, and gold leaf. 6 3/4 x 17 3/8 x 18 3/8 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Arts & Culture; formerly given to the center by the artist with the assistance of Keiko Gallery, 2013.29.1287. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



## HISTORY

Until fairly recently, debate has raged about exactly where lacquer originated. In 2000, archaeological finds unearthed at a burial site in Japan were successfully carbon-dated to 7040 BCE, confirming Japan as the founder of the process. Even today, lacquered objects are common household items throughout Japan. There is, however, a vast difference between the bowls, ladles, vases, and other objects manufactured for everyday use and the writing boxes, picnic sets, and tea caddies painstakingly produced by skilled artisans. During the Edo period (1603–1868), only members of the ruling samurai class and wealthy townspeople could afford to acquire precious lacquerware. The opening of Japan to the West and the modernization of the country during the second half of the nineteenth century led to increased production and export of lacquer—as well as cloisonné, ceramics, and other decorative objects—to capitalize on the Western fascination with all things Japanese.

Nevertheless, the Western definition of art in the nineteenth century still drew a sharp distinction between fine art and crafts, and many in Japan embraced this judgment. It was not until 1927 that the *Teikoku Bijutsu Tenrankai* (*Imperial Art Exhibition*, better known as the *Teiten*) added a craft (*kōgei*) section, thus elevating that discipline to the stature of painting and sculpture. This move officially restored lacquer to the status it had enjoyed during premodern times.

Debate about the future of lacquer art escalated in the early 1950s, when two camps began to form. On one side were the traditionalists, who favored preserving time-honored techniques; on the other was the avant-garde, who believed passionately in unfettered aesthetic expression.

In 1950 the Japanese government passed the Law for Protection of Cultural Properties, aimed at preserving traditional crafts. Four years later, as part of this agenda, it established the Living National Treasures program, honoring artists who attained high levels of skill that were seen as sustaining the country's intangible cultural values. The following year, the first lacquer artists were named Living National Treasures: Matsuda Gonroku (1896–1986), Takano Shōzan (1889–1976), Mae Taihō (1890–1977), and Otomaru Kōdō (1898–1997). The twenty-one lacquer artists who have since received this honor have excelled in one of five subcategories that represent established techniques. These are *maki-e* (sprinkled picture), *chinkin* (gold engraving), *kinma* (incised, color-filled), *kyūshitsu* (painted lacquer), and *raden* (mother-of-pearl inlay). The most recent honoree is Yamashita Yoshito (b. 1951), whose mastery of *kinma* was officially recognized in 2013.

Matsushima Sakurako, *Elements II*, 2012, lacquer, hemp cloth, gold powder, gold leaf, silver leaf, tin powder, and metal wire. 53 1/2 x 45 1/4 x 3 1/2 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Elizabeth and Willard Clark in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2015.36.3a,b. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.

***These sculptures are one-of-a-kind, the artists bold and brilliant, and it became our goal to assemble a compelling collection of these works and present them to the public, which has not been done before.***

**— Dr. Andreas Marks, Curator**



Muramoto Shingo, *Wing of Foliage #32*, 2010, lacquer, hemp cloth, wood, and metal. 5 3/8 x 11 1/8 x 2 1/4 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Arts & Culture; formerly given to the center by the artist with the assistance of Keiko Gallery, 2013.29.1293a,b. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.

## THE ORIGINS OF LACQUER SCULPTURE

Arguably the first lacquer sculpture was Takahashi Setsurō's *Moonlight (Mūnraito)*, which he submitted to the second exhibition of the Association for Creative Arts and Crafts, held at the Wako department store in Tokyo's Ginza district in September 1953. With this work, Takahashi intended to show that he was not restricted to technique—and that lacquer art was an inherently progressive medium that should move continually toward the modern.

In the early 1980s, several European museums exhibited contemporary Japanese lacquerware, but tended to neglect non-utilitarian works. In the late 1980s, several artists (featured in this exhibition) eschewed established traditions to create increasingly experimental forms, which gained them attention in the early 1990s when the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo began including some of their avant-garde lacquer works in exhibitions. In July 1994, *State of Lacquer Art Today (Urushi no genzaisei)*, an exhibition at the Kanagawa Prefectural Civic Hall in Yokohama, featured twelve artists, all but one of them under thirty-six years old. For the first time, a museum show excluded functional works and presented only sculptures and panels.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, nontraditional techniques, such as the use of polymer plastics as a substrate, have

become more widespread among artists studying at the university level. At many of these universities, the avant-garde sculptors of the 1980s and 1990s are now established professors who supervise emerging next-generation artists. Eleven of these younger artists, each of whom has developed a distinct style, are represented in the exhibition: Sasai Fumie creates organic sculptures; Muramoto Shingo, delicate leaf forms (as seen at left); Murata Yoshihiko, organically sculpted lines; Igawa Takeshi, sky- and sea-inspired floating forms; Aoki Chie, life-sized human bodies; Yokouchi Mie, round embellished forms; Ishizuka Genta, decorated panels; Aoki Kōdō (aka Aoki Yōsuke), animal-inspired boxes; Yoshino Takamasa, contemporary idols; Sano Akira, cute characters; and Someya Satoshi, figurative beasts.

Today's Japanese avant-garde lacquer artists tend to attribute their perceived lack of recognition to a national preference for functional lacquerware and to widespread skepticism about less conventional work. Beyond Japan, similar attitudes toward lacquer prevail, the result of unfamiliarity and misunderstanding. Currently, the future of lacquer art at large is tenuous, as unconventional art forms tend to lose some of their cachet over time. There is hope, however, that material developments in lacquer art will lead to the erasure of old boundaries and lay the groundwork for a promising future.

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES



**Kofushiwaki Tsukasa**  
古伏協司  
born 1961



**Fujita Toshiaki**  
藤田敏彰  
1959-2016

Kofushiwaki chose to study design instead of painting or sculpture, both of which he saw as being limited and constrained within a defined framework. His abstract figurations constitute a radical deviation from traditional lacquer art. He improvises and spontaneously builds dynamic sculptures of unique character while also honoring the venerable medium of lacquer.

Kofushiwaki discovered his creative approach in his first major work, which was 9 feet wide. He had intended to complete it by applying a glossy finish, but its large size made that technically impossible. Because the unfinished surface actually suited the sculpture, the young artist recognized that he had unintentionally created a work that went beyond his initial plan.

Fujita belongs to the first generation of artists who, in the mid-1980s, sought to distance themselves from the time-honored conventions of lacquer art in order to create vital new forms. After graduation, he decided he did not want to be bound by the constraints of functionalism and chose instead to make only abstract sculptures. "I wish to liberate people," he explained, "from the idea that lacquer is nothing more than a coating by creating lacquer work that can be understood in a direct sensual manner by anyone."



Matsushima Sakurako, *Spiraled IV*, 2011, lacquer on bamboo. 27 1/2 x 23 1/2 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Elizabeth and Willard Clark in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2015.36.2. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



Kofushiwaki Tsukasa, *A Leaf, so It Has a Back and Front*, 2000, lacquer, hemp cloth, and stone. 82 11/16 x 50 x 13 3/4 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Arts & Culture, 2013.29.1342a-d. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



Fujita Toshiaki, *Layered Form 5*, 2004, lacquer, earth powder, and gold leaf. 11 x 10 3/16 x 9 1/2 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Arts & Culture; formerly given to the center by the artist with the assistance of Keiko Gallery, 2013.29.1288. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



**Tanaka Nobuyuki**  
田中信行  
born 1959

Tanaka was drawn to lacquer because of its texture, its glossy smoothness. He finds inspiration in natural phenomena, such as the diversity of plants and the irregularity and unpredictability of water in waterfalls. Decorating works with mother-of-pearl or other embellishments does not appeal to him. Instead, he favors a simple surface conveying a kind of purity that recalls paintings by the American Abstract Expressionist Mark Rothko.

In 1994, Tanaka began exploring the use of Styrofoam to produce organic forms. Since 1999 he has trained next-generation artists such as Murata Yoshihiko, Aoki Chie, and Yokouchi Mie, all represented in this exhibition.



Tanaka Nobuyuki, *Form Remaining in Memory 2012*, 2012, lacquer, hemp cloth. 27 1/2 x 27 3/4 x 74 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, The John R. Van Derlip Fund; purchase from the collection of Elizabeth and Willard Clark, 2013.31.196. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



**Kurimoto Natsuki**  
栗本夏樹  
born 1961

Notably prolific and innovative, Kurimoto in the late 1980s focused on creating massive, intensely colored, three-dimensional mixed-media works. In 1987 he was baptized a Catholic, an event he believes greatly affected him both personally and artistically. To make a lacquer work, the artist must first purify the lacquer and then diligently labor to achieve the desired outcome. For Kurimoto, this exacting process was akin to tending to one's soul. As he became profoundly interested in the ritualistic, religious, and social sides of human life, the titles he gave some of his works in the early 1990s—e.g., *A Priest's Crown* and *Praying Hands III*—reflect his spiritual growth.

In 1993 Kurimoto became a full-time faculty member at the Kyoto City University of Arts. As an academic, he trained next-generation artists such as Sano Akira and Someya Satoshi, both of whom are represented in this exhibition.



Kurimoto Natsuki, *The Dual Sun II*, 2008, lacquer and mother-of-pearl on automobile hood. 29 1/2 x 49 1/2 x 2 1/4 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Arts & Culture, 2013.29.1291. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



**Sasai Fumie**  
笹井史恵  
born 1973

Sasai enrolled at the Kyoto City University of Arts to study ceramics. But she quickly abandoned that medium once she realized she would lack total control over her creations—due to the fact that clay shrinks during the firing process. Exploring other possibilities, she was attracted to lacquer. The step-by-step application of multiple layers suited her personality. Round shapes became her signature design motif, and after receiving a commission from the Ritz-Carlton hotel in Kyoto, she began embellishing them with raised lines.

Even in her functional pieces, Sasai aspires to produce sculptural forms she believes have universal appeal, such as flowers, fruits, and children. Her preference for matte surfaces reflects her hope that people will touch her work (outside a museum!) and enjoy the feel of the lacquer surface.



Sasai Fumie, *Substantial Fruit*, 2014, lacquer and hemp cloth on Styrofoam. 24 x 27 3/16 x 26 1/4 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Elizabeth and Willard Clark in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 2015.36.4. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



**Matsushima Sakurako**  
松島さくら子  
born 1965

As a young woman, Matsushima was fascinated with jewelry. After first creating traditional lacquerware, such as bowls and plates, she began applying lacquer to her jewelry designs. In 1991, with a university degree in lacquer art, she began a postgraduate study of metal carving, a pursuit she soon realized would limit her in creating larger “body jewelry.”

Matsushima believes nature is the driving force behind her art, and she considers the conception of a new work to be an instinctive, though time-consuming, process. It is vital to Matsushima that her works show a balance among the five elements identified in Japanese philosophy—earth, water, fire, wind, and void.



Matsushima Sakurako, *Undercurrents 2009-II*, 2009, lacquer, hemp cloth, bamboo, gold powder, gold leaf, silver leaf, and seashell (*Turbo marmoratus*). 31 1/2 x 23 1/4 x 2 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Elizabeth and Willard Clark in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 2015.36.1. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



**Muramoto Shingo**  
 村本真吾  
 born 1970

Muramoto experimented with various sculptural forms before adopting his signature style—small wing-like and leaf-like shapes, which he introduced in 2002. A group of objects collectively titled *Wing of Foliage* was made by stretching hemp cloth over bowed bamboo twigs, a technique Muramoto developed himself. His observations of nature and appreciation of the interrelationships of fauna and flora led him to this new form.

Muramoto's technical mastery and exceptional lacquer artistry are widely recognized, and he has been commissioned to work on culturally significant buildings. For example, he helped restore a part of Tokyo's Zōjōji temple (1632), which is registered as an Important Cultural Property, and he restored the gold leaf at Akasaka Palace, now Japan's State Guest House, where visiting foreign dignitaries stay.



Muramoto Shingo, *Wing of Foliage: Bending in the Wind*, 2015, lacquer, bamboo, hemp cloth. 14 x 41 1/8 x 18 1/4 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, The Curtis Dunnavan Fund for the Purchase of Asian Art, 2017.11. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



**Murata Yoshihiko**  
 村田佳彦  
 born 1977

As an art student, Murata had intended to learn woodworking in order to design furniture, but then he decided on lacquer instead. His approach at first was utilitarian but eventually shifted to the abstract. During his student days, he had considered how black luster lacquer might be used to suggest shadows, and he imagined how the lines of three-dimensional shapes would flow. Since 2006 he has translated these notions into freestanding works and wall pieces that he calls "silhouettes." The creatures Murata frequently encounters near his remote home in Nanto, Toyama Prefecture—snakes, feral cats, weasels, frogs—inspire him to create new objects. He uses maple wood as a substrate, or base. Although it is difficult to carve, he prefers maple because it is flexible and does not snap easily.



Murata Yoshihiko, *Divider: Sleeping Mountain*, 2013, lacquer on maple wood. 8 x 32 15/16 x 2 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Arts & Culture, 2015.35.2. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



**Igawa Takeshi**  
 井川健  
 born 1980

When Igawa entered the Kyoto City University of Arts, he was particularly interested in woodworking and knew little about lacquer. Eventually, however, his growing preference for lacquer prompted him to write his doctoral dissertation on expressions achievable with lacquer coating on various substrate materials. His signature forms resemble steel blades or shards of broken glass. The play of light and shadow over their highly polished surfaces enhances the deep luster of the lacquer finish. To fashion large, free-form lacquer objects, Igawa uses high-quality expanded polyurethane as a substrate instead of the traditional wood.



Igawa Takeshi, *Voyage of Time*, 2007, lacquer and hemp cloth on polyurethane. 10 x 36 x 110 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Arts & Culture, 2013.29.1312. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



**Aoki Chie**  
 青木千絵  
 born 1981

Aoki chose a career as a lacquer artist because of the medium's ability to create distinctive surfaces and a seemingly limitless variety of forms. She began studying lacquer art under Tanaka Nobuyuki, who is also represented in this exhibition. Aoki says she was greatly influenced by the Norwegian painter Edvard Munch, who addressed psychological themes in his art, and by the Swiss artist Alberto Giacometti, who sculpted attenuated bodies that express existential struggle. Aoki's practice of manipulating the natural form of the human body exposes, she believes, the essential darkness in human beings.



Aoki Chie, *BODY 07-2*, 2007, lacquer and hemp cloth on polystyrene foam. 111 11/16 x 16 x 14 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Arts & Culture, 2013.29.1338. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



**Yokouchi Mie**  
横内みえ  
born 1982

The mysterious texture of lacquer intrigued Yokouchi the first time she painted the medium on a wooden board. In the objects she has since created, she has sought to convey her belief that lacquer is almost animate. Trained at the Kanazawa College of Art under Tanaka Nobuyuki, she has made large abstract sculptures and, more recently, small tableware pieces.



Yokouchi Mie, *This One*, 2006, lacquer, hemp cloth, Japanese mulberry paper, seashell, eggshell, and gold powder on Styrofoam. 24 5/16 x 24 3/4 x 24 5/16 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Arts & Culture, 2013.29.1340. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



**Ishizuka Genta**  
石塚源太  
born 1982

As an elementary school student, Ishizuka showed an interest in experimenting with unlikely materials, a proclivity that eventually drew him to lacquer as an artistic medium. By integrating commonplace items into his works, he defies convention and expands the potential of lacquer art. The reaction of viewers to the unexpected in his sculptures intrigues and gratifies him.

The signature works of Ishizuka are black and red lacquer panels decorated with mundane metal objects—knife blades, needles, staples, paper clips, washers, fish hooks. He strives to make ordinary items from daily life appear unfamiliar. He wants viewers to rediscover them in surprising new guises as pieces of mother-of-pearl, shell, or precious metal powders—materials traditionally used to embellish lacquer art. He has even incorporated the worn blades from pencil sharpeners, which he collected as a child.



Ishizuka Genta, *Flatland #2*, 2009, lacquer and metal on plywood. 35 1/2 x 35 1/2 x 1 1/4 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Arts & Culture; formerly given to the center by the artist with the assistance of Keiko Gallery, 2013.29.1290. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



**Aoki Kōdō**  
青木宏懂  
born 1976

When he was 24, Aoki visited Kyoto and saw an ancient Chinese bronze at the museum of the Sumitomo Collection. The vessel's decoration resembled animals, especially insects, which had intrigued him since childhood. In 2004, inspired by that venerable object, he created his first "protection box" (*shubako*), standing a stately 31 1/2 inches. Protection is important in the life of animals, and Aoki is responsive to that need. He regards the lacquer containers he makes as time capsules meant to shelter their contents in perpetuity.



Aoki Kōdō (Yōsuke), *Protection Box "Snails"*, 2011, lacquer, hemp cloth, gold powder, and opal. 19 1/16 x 13 x 8 1/2 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, The John R. Van Derlip Fund; purchase from the collection of Elizabeth and Willard Clark, 2013.31.189a,b. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



**Yoshino Takamasa**  
吉野貴将  
born 1976

Bullied as a child, Yoshino found comfort in the beauty of dolls, especially those by one particular maker. Eventually he sought to craft dolls of his own, seeing them as an expressive medium, but soon diverted to lacquer.

Today, Yoshino creates fantastic figurative sculptures that he calls "idols" (*gūzō*). To him, this term alludes to the objects of longing and worship he feels bound to make. Lacquer, he believes, is the ideal medium. He regards it as the life of the trees from which it is extracted, drop by drop. Animals, plants, and humans inspire his idols, which symbolically exhale this essence of life. The anime and manga characters associated with the renowned Japanese filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki, director of *Princess Mononoke* (1997) and *Spirited Away* (2001), also inspire him.



Yoshino Takamasa, *Kai-sao—The Hen Who Conceived a Child*, 2009, lacquer, hemp cloth, gold powder, and glass. 24 1/2 x 8 3/4 x 6 1/2 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Arts & Culture; formerly given to the center by the artist with the assistance of Keiko Gallery, 2013.29.1297. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



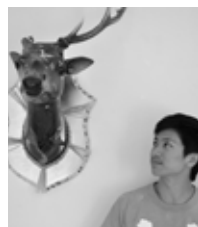


**Sano Akira**  
佐野暁  
born 1981

Sano began studying lacquer under Kurimoto Natsuki, who is also represented in this exhibition. During a half-year residency in Germany in 2007, he became aware of how Germans generally perceived Japan and its culture, and noticed their particular attention to manga and anime. This encouraged him to promote an interest in lacquer abroad, and he decided to make objects reflecting two distinct aspects of Japanese popular culture—*kawaii* (“cute”) and *kyarakutaa* (“character”). The popularity of clothing, appearance, and even behavior considered “cute” had emerged as a phenomenon in Japan in the 1970s and soon spread to all age groups and areas of life. Mascots in the form of anime characters are now ubiquitous in advertisements not only for products but also for nearly every Japanese institution, from museums to the military to prisons.



Sano Akira, *Bear: Glittering*, 2010, lacquer, hemp cloth, mother-of-pearl, gold on polyurethane foam. 13 5/8 x 5 1/8 x 5 1/8 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Arts & Culture; formerly given to the center by the artist with the assistance of Keiko Gallery, 2013.29.1296. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



**Someya Satoshi**  
染谷聡  
born 1983

Someya was born in Tokyo but soon moved with his parents to Indonesia, where he lived until he was seven years old. An early interest in traditional Buddhist statues—fashioned from wood, metal, clay, or stone, or from dry lacquer over a mold—fostered his love of lacquer. The decorative features of Edo- and Meiji-period lacquerware are discernible in Someya’s figurative sculptures, but his work most closely resembles Pop Art, which emerged in the 1960s, taking its imagery and subject matter from popular consumer culture.

Someya has been intrigued by the myriad ways lacquer art can be decorated, and his playfulness and penchant for innovation seem unlimited. In 2008 he began a series of fantasy beasts with heads that resemble traditional lacquered bowls, attached so the bowl’s foot serves as the creature’s face.



Someya Satoshi, *Mount Bull*, 2013, (Commissioned 2012), lacquer, wood, rattan, horn, metal, mother-of-pearl, seashell, leather, and pigment. 29 1/2 x 36 x 12 1/4 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Arts & Culture, 2013.29.1313a,b. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.

## ABOUT THE CURATOR

Dr. Andreas Marks is the Head of the Japanese and Korean Art Department at the Minneapolis Institute of Art. From 2008 to 2013, he was the Director and Chief Curator of the Clark Center for Japanese Art and Culture in California. He has a PhD from Leiden University in the Netherlands and a master’s degree in East Asian Art History from the University of Bonn. He is the author of 14 books, and has

curated exhibitions in a variety of media—from pre-modern to contemporary art and visual culture—at 25 museums, including the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Birmingham Museum of Art, Detroit Institute of Arts, Honolulu Museum of Art, and the San Antonio Museum of Art.

## ABOUT THE MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ART

Home to more than 89,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest, most wide-ranging art collections in the country—Rembrandt to van Gogh, Monet to Matisse, Asian to African—Mia links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration.



Muramoto Shingo, *Wing of Foliage #10-09*, 2012, lacquer, hemp cloth, bamboo, and gold. 14 x 23 3/16 x 6 1/4 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Arts & Culture, 2013.29.1345. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.



**FRONT** Sano Akira, *A Magician of the Forest*, 2008, lacquer, hemp cloth, silver, gold, mother-of-pearl, gourd, wood, nuts and other materials. 24 x 14 5/8 x 6 1/4 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Arts & Culture; formerly given to the center by the artist with the assistance of Keiko Gallery, 2013.29.1295a-c. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.

**BACK** Sasai Fumie, *Look*, 1994, lacquer, gold powder, silver powder, and seashell powder on Styrofoam. Two-part sculpture: 41 3/16 x 37 x 6 7/8 in.; 40 1/8 x 36 3/4 x 9 in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Arts & Culture, 2015.35.31,2. Photo: Minneapolis Institute of Art.

## EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS

---

### Number of Works

34 lacquer sculptures

### Organized by

Minneapolis Institute of Art

### Curator

Andreas Marks, PhD, the Mary Griggs  
Burke Curator of Japanese and Korean Art

### Requirements

High security; approximately 4,000  
square feet

### Participation Fee

Please inquire

### Shipping

IA&A makes all arrangements; exhibitors  
pay outgoing shipping costs within the  
contiguous US

### Booking Period

12 weeks

### Tour

Begins Fall 2020 (limited to 4 venues)

### Publication

*Hard Bodies: Contemporary Japanese  
Lacquer Sculpture* by Andreas Marks

### Educational Materials

In development

### Contact

Lindsay Goodwin  
lindsayg@artsandartists.org

9 Hillyer Court NW  
Washington, DC 20008  
202.338.0680  
www.artsandartists.org