

Contemporary Lacquer by
Yamazaki Mushū



Erik Thomsen LLC 美 Asian Art

Introduction

Two years have passed since we had the privilege of introducing the art of Yamazaki Mushū to the West at the 2006 International Asian Art Fair in New York. Since then, his fine aesthetic sense, technical skill, and attention to detail have found wide admiration internationally.

This year's selection, spanning 13 years of his work from 1995 to 2007, shows his early mastery and illustrates his continued dedication to making art objects of the highest quality by traditional methods using the finest materials. Coming from an area with a long heritage in lacquer art and inspired by earlier artists, Mushū builds on these traditions and adds surprising and innovative details.

It is with great pleasure that I present further works by Yamazaki Mushū in this third collection, to be introduced at the 2008 International Asian Art Fair.

Erik Thomsen

Yamazaki Mushū

山崎夢舟

Kaga Lacquer Master

Yamazaki Atsushi was born in 1966, the eldest son of lacquer master Yamazaki Geishū. He started an apprenticeship with Kaga lacquer master Nakamura Shōzō in 1985 and became, in 1990, an independent lacquer master using the artist name Mushū. His artist name is composed of two characters meaning »boat« and »dream«; together, they express the wish to transport dreams into reality.

Since then, he has worked in leading gold-lacquer studios and has exhibited regularly at numerous Japanese exhibitions, including the annual Modern Arts Exhibition; Japan Traditional Arts Exhibition; Japan Traditional Lacquer Arts Exhibition; Ishikawa Traditional Crafts Exhibition; Kenrokuen Tea Meeting Exhibition; Yamanaka Makie Lacquer Exhibition; and the Netsuke Carvers' New Creations Exhibition. He is member of the International Netsuke Carvers Association and has worked as the leading artist and artistic controller for Pelikan Pen's Lacquer Fountain Pen Project.

In 2006 he was showcased by Erik Thomsen Asian Art at the International Asian Art Fair, New York, marking his inaugural exhibition outside Japan. Since then, he has been featured in other exhibitions in New York, Palm Beach, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, as well as in Germany and Belgium. In 2007, his work was exhibited at the Museum of Arts and Design, New York, at the exhibition »Contemporary Netsuke: Masterful Miniatures.«

In March 2008, the collection in this catalogue will be on display in New York with Erik Thomsen LLC Asian Art at the International Asian Art Fair and thereafter in his gallery at 44 East 74th Street, New York.

1

Shells Tebako Box

Nagatebako »Kaiawase Makie«
長手箱「貝合わせ蒔絵」
平成19年製作

H 1 ¾" × L 8 ½" × W 3 ½"
(4.7 cm × 21.3 cm × 8.6 cm)
Date: 2007

Rectangular box with decoration of *Kaiawase*, the game where shell halves are matched together; the inside of the shells decorated with auspicious Japanese symbols in *takamakie*, *kirigane* and *togidashi* gold lacquer, the outside of the shells with gold and silver lacquer clouds surrounded by pine seedlings on a *nashiji* and gold powder *togidashi* ground; the bottom and the inside densely lacquered with *nashiji* gold flakes; the rims in solid silver. Signed on an inlaid mother-of-pearl plaque on the end: Mushū. With fitted *kiri*-wood *tomobako* box inscribed on the lid »Long Tebako: Gold Lacquer Kaiawase« and signed and sealed by Mushū.



2

Insects and Fall Grasses

Makie Jikirō »Akinone«
蒔絵食籠「秋音」
平成10年製作

H 3 ½" × D 10 ¼"
(9 cm × 26.3 cm)
Date: 1998

Round serving box entitled »Autumn Sounds«. Decorated on top with three insects in *takamakie* high-relief gold and silver lacquer with minute *kirigane* gold foil inlays in the wings on a ground of *togidashi* gold powder and inlaid mother-of-pearl. The border and sides are with *hagi* plants and flowers in *togidashi* gold lacquer bordered by dense clouds of *nashiji* gold flakes. Signed in red lacquer on the bottom: Mushū. With fitted *kiri*-wood *tomobako* box inscribed on the lid »Gold Lacquer Serving Box: Autumn Sounds« and signed and sealed on the inside of the lid by Mushū.



3

Fall Grasses Tea Caddy

Ōnatsume »Akikusa Makie«

大棗「秋草蒔絵」

平成7年製作

H 3" × D 3"

(7.7 cm × 7.4 cm)

Date: 1995

Natsume tea caddy for storing tea powder in the tea ceremony. Decoration in *takamakie* high-relief gold lacquer of chrysanthemum, *hagi* plants and fall grasses on a *kinpun* gold powder *togidashi* ground, with the gold powder graduating from solid gold along the bottom to faint gold sprinkles on the top. The inside is covered with *nashiji* gold flakes, the rim and the bottom with *nashiji* and inlaid pieces of *kirigane* gold foil. Signed in black lacquer on the bottom: Mushū. With fitted *kiri*-wood *tomobako* box inscribed on the side »Ōnatsume: Gold Lacquer Fall Grasses« and signed and sealed by Mushū.



4

Strawberry Tea Caddy

Ōnatsume »Fuyuichigo«

大棗「冬苺」

平成19年製作

H 3" × D 3"

(7.5 cm × 7.4 cm)

Date: 2007

Natsume tea caddy for storing tea powder in the tea ceremony. Decorated on the outside with wild strawberries in *takamakie* high-relief gold lacquer on a *kinpun* gold dust *togidashi* ground, the gold dust graduating from solid gold around the bottom to faint sprinkles on the top interspaced with gold flakes, the inside and the bottom densely covered with *nashiji* gold flakes. Signed in gold lacquer on the bottom: Mushū. With fitted *kiri*-wood *tomobako* box inscribed on the side »Winter Strawberries Tea Caddy« and signed and sealed by Mushū.



5

Wild Boar Incense Box

Kōgō »Shūgetsuya«
香合「秋月夜」
平成19年製作

H ¾" × D ¾"
(2.2 cm × 9.6 cm)
Date: 2007

Round incense box with decoration of a wild boar sleeping under the autumn crescent moon; the moon of inlaid mother-of-pearl, the boar and flowers in *takamakie* high-relief gold lacquer with *hiramakie* gold lacquer grasses and fur details; the ground in *togidashi* lacquer with *kinpun* gold dust which graduates from solid gold to faint gold sprinkles; the inside and the bottom densely covered with *nashiji* gold flakes. Signed in black lacquer on the bottom: Mushū. With fitted *kiri*-wood *tomobako* box inscribed on the lid »Incense Box: Autumn Moon Night« and signed and sealed by Mushū.



6

Shishi Incense Box

Jitai Kōgō »Karajishi«
磁胎香合「唐獅子」
平成19年製作

H 1½" × D ¾"
(3.6 cm × 9.5 cm)
Date: 2007

Celadon porcelain incense box with minute decor on the lid top in *takamakie* gold lacquer of a *shishi* lion with ribbons and three balls; the balls inlaid with mother-of-pearl and the ground lacquered with fine *nashiji*. Signed in red lacquer on the bottom: Mushū. With fitted *kiri*-wood *tomobako* box inscribed on the lid »Porcelain Incense Box: Chinese Lion« and signed and sealed by Mushū.



7

Ants Incense Box

Kōgō »Fuyujitaku«
香合「冬じたく」
平成19年製作

H 1" × L 3" × W 3"
(2.7 cm × 7.4 cm × 7.4 cm)
Date: 2007

Incense box in a rounded square form with decoration in *takamakie* high-relief lacquer of five ants crawling by beech leaves, the rims in solid silver and the inside and the bottom densely covered with *nashiji* gold flakes. Signed in black lacquer on the bottom: Mushū. With fitted *kiri*-wood *tomobako* box inscribed on the lid »Incense Box: Winter Preparations« and signed and sealed by Mushū.



8

Crescent Moon Incense Box

Mikkazuki Kōgō »Mimizuku«
三日月香合「木菟」
平成19年製作

H 1 ¼" × L 3 ¾"
(2.9 cm × 9.7 cm)
Date: 2007

Incense box in a crescent-moon shape with decoration in *takamakie* high-relief lacquer on a polished *kinji* gold- and silver-powder ground of an owl on an oak branch; the owl, branch and leaves with minute details; the rims in solid silver and the inside and bottom densely covered with *nashiji* gold flakes. Signed in gold lacquer on the side: Mushū. With fitted *kiri*-wood *tomobako* box inscribed on the lid »Crescent Moon Incense Box: Owl« and signed and sealed by Mushū.



9

Lobster Netsuke

Tōtai Netsuke »Ebi«
陶胎根付「海老」
平成 19 年製作

L 1 ¾"
(4.5 cm)
Date: 2007

Ceramic netsuke in the shape of a stone with decoration in *takamakie* high-relief lacquer of a red lobster with fine details in *hiramakie* red lacquer. Signed on a gold lacquer plaque: Mushū. With fitted *kiri*-wood *tomobako* box inscribed on the lid »Ceramic Netsuke: Lobster« and signed and sealed by Mushū.



10

Fish Netsuke

Tōtai Netsuke »Hitoyasumi«
陶胎根付「一休み」
平成 19 年製作

H 2"
(5.2 cm)
Date: 2007

Ceramic netsuke with a *kanshitsu* dry lacquer fish on top, the humorous fish with *togidashi* lacquer in various colors, the ceramic rock partially glazed, simulating water. Signed in gold lacquer on the side: Mushū. With fitted *kiri*-wood *tomobako* box inscribed on the side »Ceramic Netsuke: Short Break« and signed and sealed by Mushū.



Glossary

Techniques:

Makie The Japanese gold lacquer technique in which powders of gold, metals or minerals are sprinkled onto still-wet lacquer. The sprinkled surface is then polished until it becomes glossy.

Hiramakie *Makie* which has been raised above the surrounding area with several layers of lacquer.

Takamakie *Makie* which has been raised and modeled with a mixture of lacquer and clay or charcoal. This is the same mixture used to prime the wood surface before applying the many layers of lacquer.

Togidashi Technique in which *makie* is first applied on the lacquer ground and then completely covered with additional layers of black lacquer, hiding the *makie* decoration. The surface is subsequently polished with fine pumice and powders until the decoration reappears, now incorporated into the totally flat polished surface.

Kanshitsu A method of building a body using only lacquer and cloth. Layers of cloth and lacquer are let dry over a wood form. When the body has stiffened, it is removed from the wood form and receives further layers of lacquer reinforced with cloth until the desired thickness has been reached. Since no wood is inside the body, it is light and extremely durable.

Surfaces:

Hakeme Decoration of relief parallel lines created with a stiff brush on partially hardened lacquer.

Kinji Surface of fine gold dust which has been polished to a high gloss.

Kirigane Small pieces of thick gold foil cut into squares, rectangles, or triangles and inlaid into the surface, forming brilliant accents, often as a mosaic.

Nashiji Small irregular flakes of gold foil, suspended at varying angles in many layers of translucent brown lacquer. The resulting shimmering surface is often used for the insides and bottoms of boxes.

Roiro Black lacquer which has been polished to a mirror surface.

Objects:

Himotōshi The holes or channels through which the cord connecting a *netsuke* with an *inro* is passed. In *netsukes* the *himotōshi* is generally a pair of holes close to each other.

Hira-natsume A lower and wider form of the *natsume*.

Kōgō Incense box used in the tea ceremony.

Natsume A cylindrical tea caddy used in the tea ceremony.

Netsuke A toggle formed as a small sculptural object, which is used to suspend an *inro* medicine case or a tobacco pouch from the sash of a *kimono*.

Okimono A decorative object used as an alcove centerpiece.

Tomobako The original fitted wood box which an artist commissions for his art work. A *tomobako* usually bears the inscription, signature and seals of the artist.



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