Hard Bodies
Contemporary Japanese Lacquer Sculpture
“These sculptures are one-of-a-kind, the artists bold and brilliant, and it became our goal to assemble a compelling collection...and present them to the public, which has not been done before.”

Dr. Andreas Marks, Curator

It’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 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 33 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.

EXHIBITION SPECIFICATIONS
Number of Works
33 lacquer sculptures
Organized by
Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, MN
Curator
Andreas Marks, PhD, the Mary Griggs Burke Curator of Japanese and Korean Art
Requirements
High security; approximately 2,500 square feet
Shipping
IA&A makes all arrangements; exhibitors pay outgoing shipping costs within the contiguous US
Booking Period
12 weeks
Tour
Begins Fall 2020
Publication
Hard Bodies: Contemporary Japanese Lacquer Sculpture by Andreas Marks

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