

Craft Technique
Documentary

色鉛鳥

Iro-nabeshima

Special Prize, Ministry of Education, Culture,
Sports, Science and Technology

Awarded Grand Prize at the National Arts
Festival

Awarded Minister of Education Grand Prize
at the Education Film Festival

Awarded Gold Prize at the Golden Mercury
International Film Festival, Italy

Winner of the Mainichi Film Competition
Education and Cultural Film category

Grand Prize, Tokyo Metropolitan
Government Education Film Festival

FY1972 35mm/Color 29'

Presented by The Agency for Cultural Affairs

Produced by Sakura Motion Picture Co., Ltd.



This video documents *Iro-nabeshima*, a porcelain making technique designated as an Important Intangible Cultural Property by the Japanese government. The extraordinarily elegant coloring and design of *Iro-nabeshima* were perfected during the Genroku and Kyoho eras, when most of the production processes were standardized using a highly developed division of labor. *Iro-nabeshima* reached its peak in the Edo period.

The video conveys the importance of preserving such exquisite traditional techniques, with the underlying message—'Handcraft techniques, once lost, can never be recovered.'

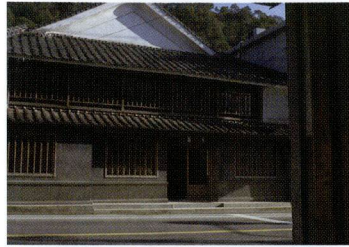
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Iro-nabeshima



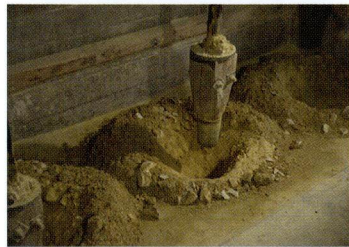
Prologue

The video begins by introducing a masterwork from the heyday of *Iro-nabeshima* production, the Genroku and Kyoho eras (1688-1736), followed by a visit to the ruins of the Nabeshima kiln in Kyushu where it was made.



The studio of IMAIZUMI Imaemon in Akae-machi, Arita

The techniques have been handed down through the IMAIZUMI Imaemon family.



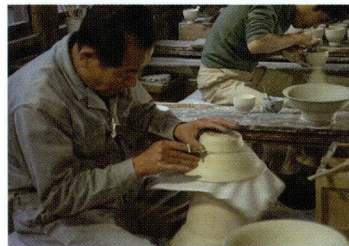
Preparing the clay

Pottery is made of clay, but porcelain is made of stone. *Iro-nabeshima* uses a mixture of crushed hard porcelain stone from Izumiyama and Amakusa.



Formation of a large plate

Large bowls or plates are typical of *Iro-nabeshima* pieces. A potter's wheel and a long shaping tool known as a 'cow's tongue spatula' is used to form the desired shape, which is then finished with a broader *oshibera* spatula.



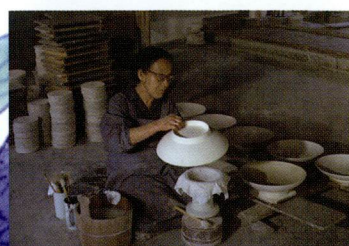
Formation of angular and irregular shaped dishes

Kata-uchi press-mold technique for angular dishes and *ito-giri* thread cutting technique for irregular shaped dishes.



Shaving

After forming, the piece is shaved once it is about 70% dry.



Smoothing with water

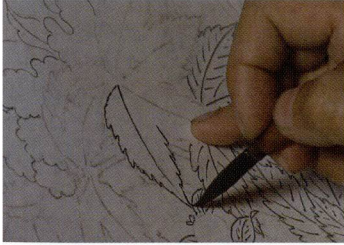
Once the shaving is completed, the surface is smoothed with a damp cotton cloth.





Nakadachi

A *nakadachi-gami* is placed on the large bisqued dish to rub off the pattern using a camellia leaf.



Underglazing: Outlining

Asbolite is used to outline the design. This is traditionally a man's job.



Underglazing: *Dami* coloring

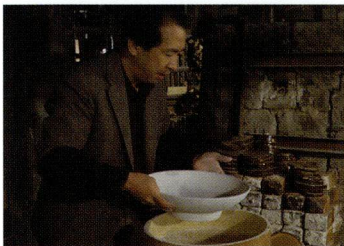
A thick *dami* or coloring brush is used to fill in the contours. This is a woman's job.

Each process is carried out meticulously by hand. It's as if the tools have become an extension of the artisan's hands.



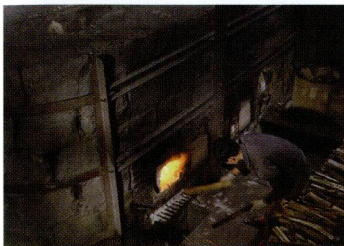
Preparing the glaze

The beautiful background color of *Iro-nabeshima* is produced with a glaze made from the ashes of a tree called *isu*, which grows in profusion on the Osumi Peninsula in Kagoshima Prefecture. The *isu* ash glaze is mixed with a glaze made from feldspar and other ingredients



Packing the kiln

Packing the kiln for the main firing is of utmost importance, and the master potter instructs his apprentices where to place each item.



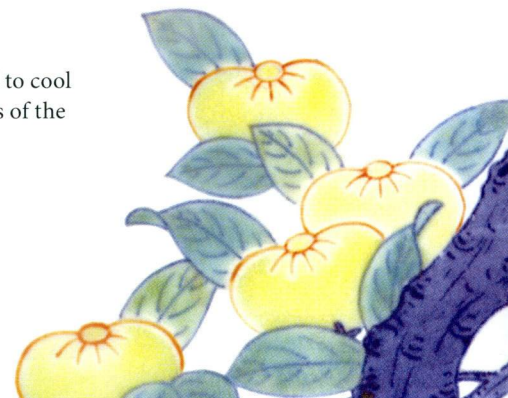
Main firing

The main firing is the most nerve-wracking step in the production process. The pieces are fired for nearly 40 hours. The temperature inside the kiln is over 1,300 degrees Celsius.



Opening the kiln

For three days after the firing is stopped, the kiln is allowed to cool naturally before the pieces are removed. The dazzling colors of the underglaze design are revealed.



色鉛島

Iro-nabeshima

Writer and Director MURAYAMA Eiji
Camera Operator KIZUKA Seiichi
Lighting YAMANE Shuichi
Editing HASEGAWA Yoshihito
Music NAGASAWA Katsutoshi
Narrator Jack MERLUZZI



Preparing the overglaze pigment

The pigment used for the overglazing is prepared using the technique called *tatewake* that has been handed down only through the IMAIZUMI family. In the old days, the techniques of *akae* overglaze painting were passed in carefully guarded secrecy from one generation to the next. Even today, the technique is handed down by a father to only one of his sons.



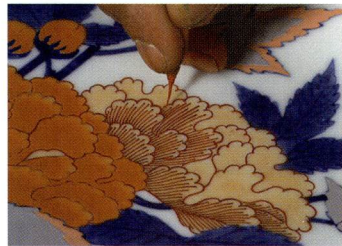
Kneading the pigment

The longer the pigment is kneaded, the better. This essential process is repeated throughout the day by the overglaze painters themselves.



Akae overglaze painting

As with the underglazing, the overglaze painting begins with the men drawing the pattern outlines, using a light and graceful touch. These outlines are then colored in by the women. In addition to exquisitely refined craftsmanship, this process demands perfect teamwork.



Kegaki

Drawing over the areas shaded in red.



Overglaze firing and finished pieces

An overglaze firing for 7-8 hours at about 800°C completes the pieces.

