

Kyushitsu —The Art and Artistry of Mashiki Masumura

Traditional Crafts Documentary Film (1982)

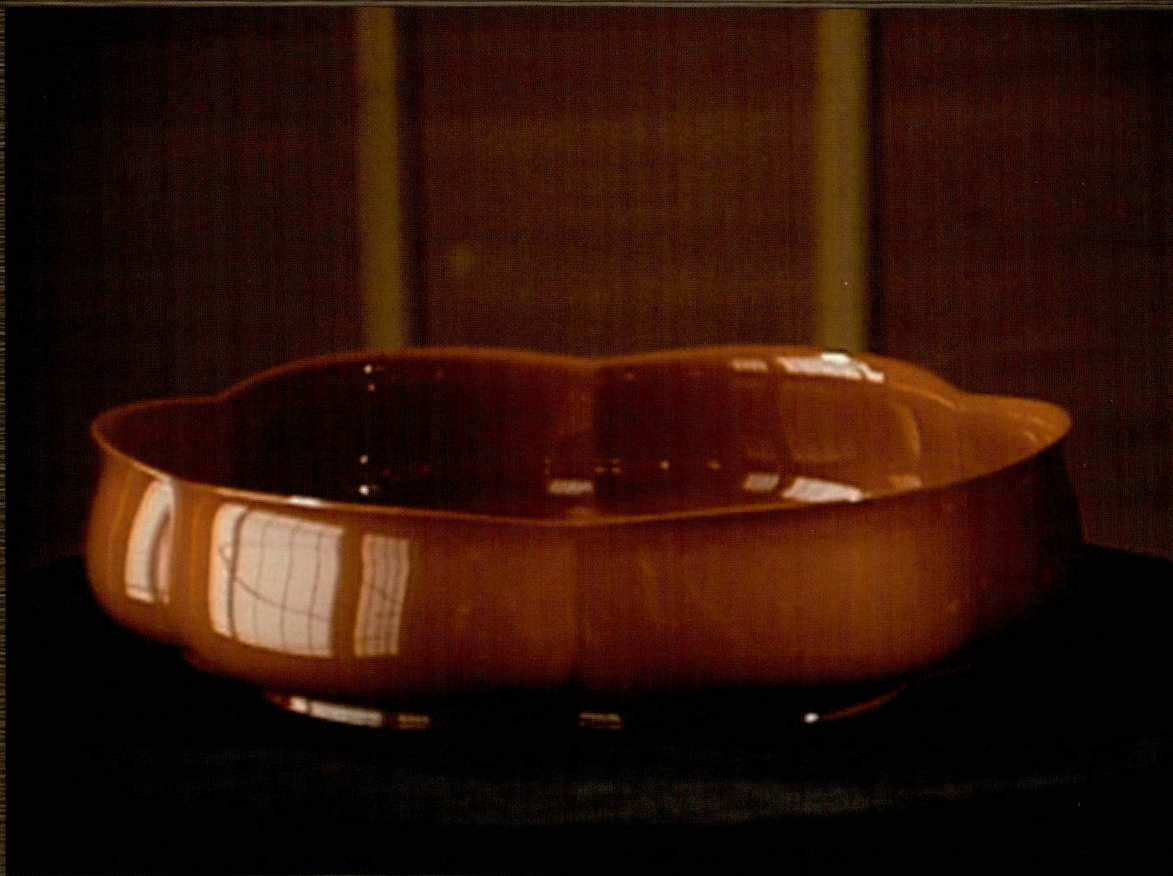
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Planning by the Agency for Cultural Affairs

Production by Nikkei Visual Images, Inc.

The traditional Japanese lacquer called 'urushi' is used to coat items made from wood, fabric or 'washi' paper to create strong, durable dishes and decorative items. The technique for 'urushinuri,' or lacquer-coating, is known as 'kyushitsu'

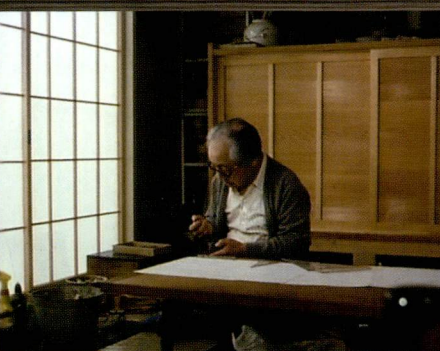
Mr. Mashiki Masumura is a distinguished 'kyushitsu' artisan. Renowned for the grace and beauty of his forms, he is recognized as a preserver of Japan's important intangible cultural heritage—a distinction often referred to as a Living National Treasure. This film follows Mr. Masumura through the many stages of planning and crafting a work entitled 'Kanshitsu-Shu-Rinkaban,' or "Cinnabar Dry-Lacquer Flower-Shaped Bowl." It reveals a creative process spanning approximately six months, and offers lacquer art professionals and others valuable insight into traditional techniques, along with a sense of the accumulated history, expertise and spirit of those who came before.





Prologue

'Urushi' is traditional Japanese lacquer. It is used in combination with materials such as wood, fabric and paper to create lightweight items of exceptional strength and beauty.



Mr. Mashiki Masumura.

This outstanding artisan is a Living National Treasure in the 'kyushitsu' style of lacquerware making, respected and recognized for his true mastery of the form.



Creating a Prototype

The first stage in crafting a dry lacquer piece is to form a prototype for the dish out of clay. This process allows Mr. Masumura to fully perfect the shape and lines of the piece that he envisions.



Making a Mold

He sprinkles plaster mixed with water onto the clay to form a mold. Once it has hardened, he uses a piece of metal to smooth and finish shaping the mold. At this stage, he can begin to see what the inside of the 'moriki,' or decorative dish, will look like when it's finally completed.



Casting a Positive Die

From this mold, he then casts a plaster die, upon which he will begin to create the actual dish.

Pasting on 'Washi'

Working with the utmost care, Mr. Masumura uses torn strips of 'washi' to form the walls and rim of the 'moriki,' and layers ten sheets to form the base, meticulously aligning and smoothing each piece, then adhering them with lacquer.

Completing the Basic Form

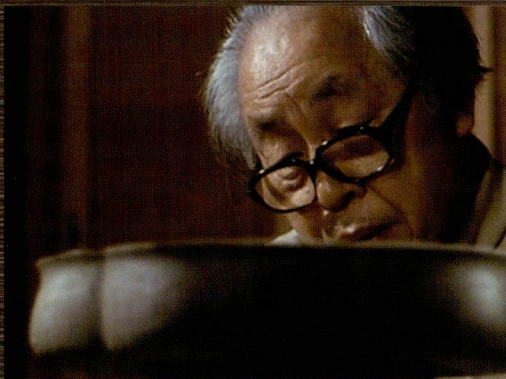
He then applies layers of hemp fabric and additional coats of 'urushi,' letting each dry and using grindstone and finally charcoal to smooth and polish the surface. His mastery of these skills, passed down from ancient times, is evident in the exquisite beauty of his finished pieces.

Applying the 'Shu-Urushi' Finish Coat

Lastly, he applies a final, brightly colored coat of 'shu-urushi,' lacquer mixed with reddish cinnabar. A special 'Rinpa' brushing technique, named for an ancient artists' group, helps to bring out every elegant line of the dish.

Completion

Six months after he first began working on it, Mr. Masumura completes the piece he calls 'Kanshitsu-Shu-Rinkaban,' or "Cinnabar Dry-Lacquer Flower-Shaped Bowl"—clearly the work of a true master in the art of 'kyushitsu.'



Biography of Mashiki Masumura

- July 1, 1910 Born to a farm family at Tsumori-mura (now Mashiki-cho), Kamimashiki-gun, Kumamoto Prefecture
- January 1930 Trained in 'shitsugei,' or lacquer work, under 'urushi' craftsman Tomitaro Tsuji
- September 1932 Trained in 'kyushitsu' skills with 'urushi' craftsman Tomoya Akaike
- May 1939 Won second place award in the Nihon Shitsugei Inten Exhibition
- October 1940 Won a prize in the 2600th Celebration, and would go on to win prizes nine times in Bunten/Nitten, The Japan Fine Arts Exhibition
- June 1955 Won the Education Minister's prize at the first Nihon Shitsugei Exhibition, and continued to win prizes for 'Kanshitsu-moriki,' 'Negoroban' and 'Kyushoku-moriki' at the Japanese Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition
- November 1974 Received the Shijuhosho, the Purple Ribbon Medal
- 1974 - 1975 Honored for outstanding artistry in form at the Japanese Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition held in European countries
- April 1978 Designated as an important intangible cultural property for 'kyushitsu'
- November 1980 Received the Kuyontou-Kyokujitushojusho, The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette
- May 1981 Honored at 70 years of age with a Mashiki Masumura 'Kyushitu' Exhibition at Nihonbashi Mitsukoshi Department Store
- September 1982 Created 'Kanshitsu-Shu-Rinkaban' for the production of a Traditional Crafts Documentary Film
- February 1983 planned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs

Producer: Shouzo Tajima
 Cinematographer: Miyakichi Asaoka (Tsuchi-ni-kuchi)
 Editor: Shouji Inoue
 Effect: Hideo Satoh
 Printing: Tokyo Laboratory Ltd.

Screenplay/Direction: Wataru Koyata
 Gaffer: Tomio Mizumura
 Music: Yutaka Makino
 Narrator: Souichi Itoh