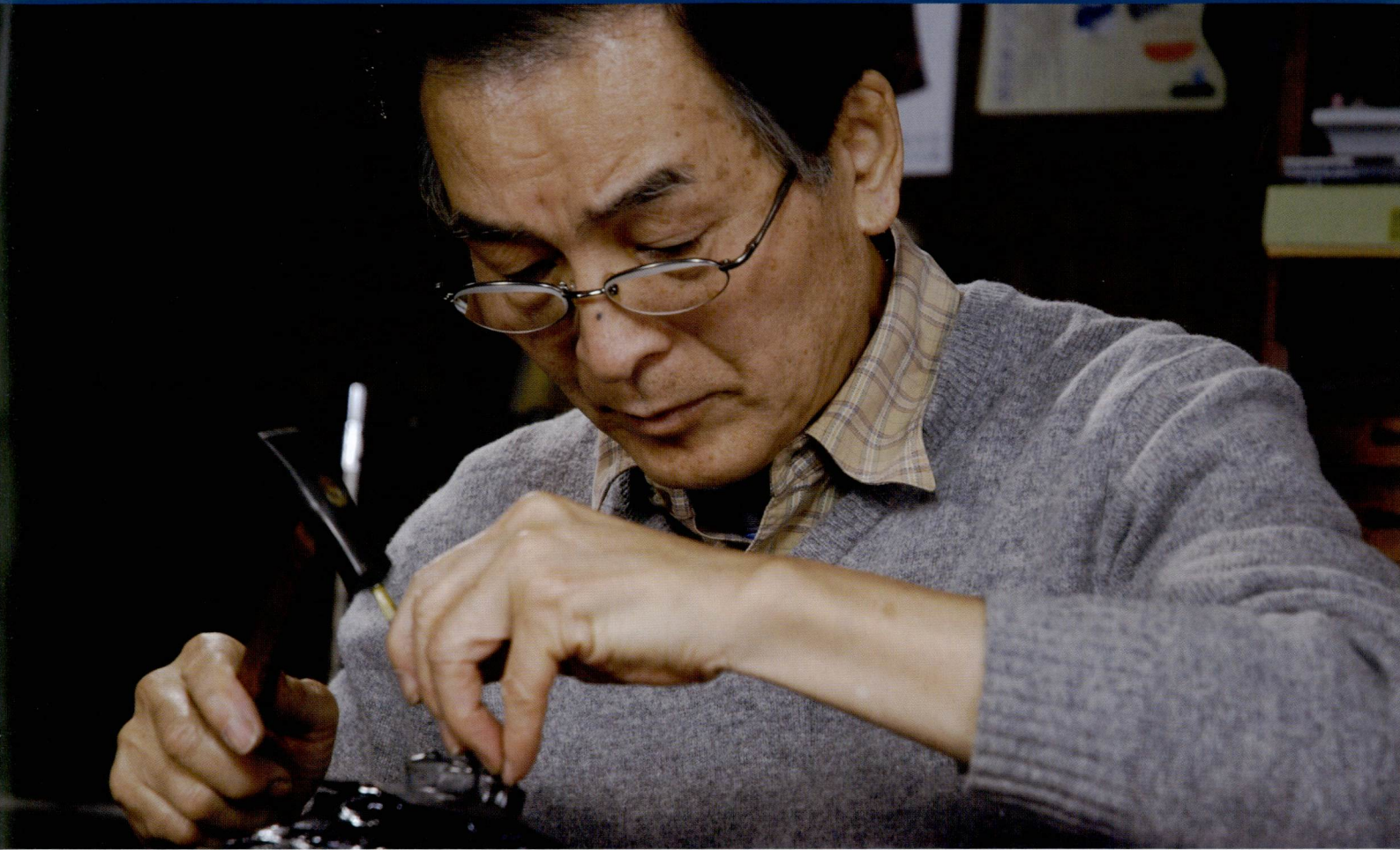


Metal Chasing – The Art of Katsura Morihito–



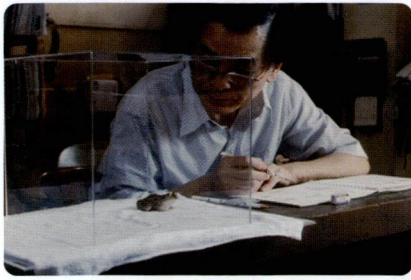
Chokin (metal chasing) is a metalworking craft technique where tools such as chisels and punches are used to engrave and chase a base metal in order to form and decorate it. The technique was brought over to Japan from mainland China during the Yayoi Period, and developed greatly as a formative technique used for sword fittings and Buddhist altar articles. Due to the Sword Abolishment Edict in the late 19th century, the techniques are now passed on through the creation of ornaments and small accessories.

Katsura Morihito was recognized by the Japanese government as a Holder of the Important Intangible Cultural Property technique of metal chasing in 2008. Using traditional metal chasing techniques, he excels at creating small ornaments. This film documents the creative processes behind the making of the obi ornament titled “Black-Spotted Pond Frog,” and captures on camera the initial sketching process and the demonstration of Repoussé techniques using various tools, along with different styles of inlaying and coloring metal.



Katsura Morihito

- 1944 Born in Bunkyo City, Tokyo
- 1960 Begins apprenticeship under father Katsura Moriyuki
- 1968 Graduates from the Musashino Junior College of Art and Design
- 1975 Becomes Official Member of the Japan Crafts Association
- 1995 Receives Commissioner’s Prize, the Agency for Cultural Affairs, 25th Traditional Art Crafts Japanese Metalwork Exhibition Work “Cherry Ornament”
- 1998 Receives Tokyo Governor’s Prize, 45th Japan Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition Work “Repoussé Incense Burner *Shin-kan* (Quiet Forest)”
- 2008 Designated Important Intangible Cultural Property Holder for Metal Chasing



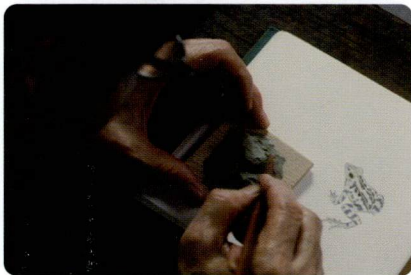
◆ Chokin Artist Katsura Morihito

Katsura Morihito was recognized as a Holder of the Important Intangible Cultural Property of chokin (metal chasing) in 2008, also known as a Living National Treasure.



◆ Representative Work “Repoussé Incense Burner *Shin-kan*(Quiet Forest)”

Katsura’s work “Quiet Forest.” Using various chasing techniques, depicted herein is a quiet forest scene. The lid handle is a horned owl, made from a single sheet of metal when turned over. It is formed using the Repoussé technique of Takaniku Uchidashi.



◆ Sketching and Clay Modeling

A clay model is made from a drawing. Katsura will create an obi ornament using the Takaniku Uchidashi technique. The final shape and size of the work is determined at this point.



◆ Material -Using a metal sheet of Shibuichi

The metal used is Shibuichi. Using 1/4th silver and 3/4th copper along with a touch of gold, Shibuichi is an alloy unique to Japan. Difficult to manipulate, it has been favored as a metal chasing material since the Edo Period because of its distinct color.



◆ Chasing (Uchidashi)

The early stages of chasing. A wooden punch is ideal for rough-punching, and will not change the metal’s thickness.



◆ Contour Punching (Nikudori)

Punching along the curves of the frog’s contour is called Nikudori. From bottom to top, the work is punched so as to push it to its center and thicken the sheet of metal.



◆ Chasing and Detailing (Koshiyose)

Chasing. This process is continued until the work reaches a certain height. The hips and eyes of the frogs are brought higher, while the legs are sunk. Katsura continues to add detail, frequently changing his chasing tool as needed.



◆ Introducing Chasing Tools

By using various chasing tools, Katsura is able to create intricate details upon the frog while fine-tuning its surface. There are various shapes and names to these tools, such as a deer antler punch, a groove-forming punch, and a form-making punch.



◆ History of Chokin Techniques

Chokin developed as a creative technique for samurai sword fittings.

In the early 16th century, Goto Yujo defined samurai aesthetics with his black shakudo and gold metalwork.



◆ Body Raising (Nikuzuke)

Using a special punch to form grooves, the boundaries between the frog and the metal's edges are squeezed. By raising its body, a further dimension is added to the work.



◆ Separation (Koshikiri)

After giving depth to the frog by creating raised and lowered parts and complex shapes to its body, the time has come to separate the work from its metal sheet.

The frog springs to life from a single sheet of metal. The half-way point in the creative process has finally arrived.



◆ Cleaning with File and Scraper

A rough file is applied to the body. By checking the thickness of the metal from its back, he makes sure not to cut too deeply.

The finish is done with a scraper, and the surface is smoothed. "Cleaning" refers to the process of removing the tool marks on the limbs and back of the work.



◆ Inlaying Process (1) Engraving Motifs in the Frog

Using a permanent marker, motifs are drawn on the frog. Indentations are made along the drawings with a chisel, and metal blanks are placed in these indentations. This is the flat inlay technique.



◆ Inlaying Process (2) Double Inlay

After flat-inlaying shakudo on its back, gold is further flat-inlaid on top. Inlaying on top of an existing layer of inlay is called the double-inlay technique.

Chiseling is performed while always being keenly aware of its thickness so as not to cut through to its shibuichi base.



◆ Charcoal Polishing

Using a type of polishing charcoal called magnolia charcoal, the file marks are removed.

Paulownia charcoal, softer and more refined than magnolia charcoal, is used to polish away the remnants of the magnolia charcoal.



◆ Color Finishing

The work's surface is washed using grated Japanese white radish juice, then using copper rust and copper sulfate with hot water, the surface is oxidized. By chemical reactions, the beautiful color of the metal is achieved.



◆ Completion of "Black-Spotted Pond Frog" Obi Ornament

Behold Katsura Morihito's "Black-Spotted Pond Frog" Obi Ornament, born from the traditional Japanese technique of metal chasing.

The allure of shibuichi: its austere, dignified and elegant color. The colors of the gold, silver and shakudo inlays are further heightened by its beauty.

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