

1989FY Craft Technique Documentary 35mm, color, 30 min.
Planned by Agency for Cultural Affairs
Produced by Mainichi Productions

WOODWORK

The Art of OHNO Showasai



OHNO Showasai is a Holder of an Important Intangible Cultural Property "Woodwork".

OHNO brings his own distinct character to traditional woodworking techniques, primarily in *sashimono*, or traditional joinery, creating pieces that bring the natural beauty of his materials to life.

This film is a record of OHNO' s craft, the story of a man fascinated by the wonders of wood who has devoted his life to woodworking.



OHNO Showasai

1912 Born in Soja City, Okayama Prefecture Original name: KATAOKA Sekio

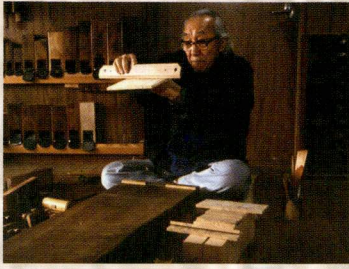
1926 Began studying woodworking under his father, a *sashimono* craftsman

1965 First piece ("Mulberry Tray with Inlaid Wood Linear Design")
accepted in the 12th Japan Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition

1968 Awarded the Chairman of Japan Art Crafts Association Prize
at the 15th Japan Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition
(for the piece "Wiped-lacquer Mulberry Ornamental Box")

1984 Recognized as a Holder of an Important Intangible Cultural Property "Woodwork"

1997 Passed away at age 84



Prologue

The woodworking art of OHNO Showasai. As he crafts each piece, he imagines where it will be used, what kind of tea implements it will be paired with, and how they will combine to create an appropriately splendid tableau.



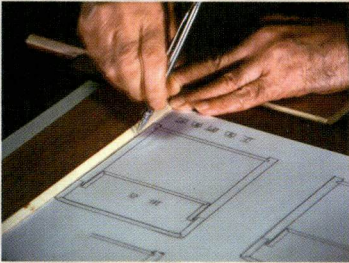
Japanese Forests

Quality wood is nurtured by Japan's temperate, rainy climate and its richly varied terrain. Japanese woodworking relies on these quality woods, and over the years has developed into a unique, highly sophisticated craft.



Mulberry Seal Box with Inlaid Linear Design

OHNO's works utilize the characteristics of his materials, bringing together techniques such as joinery and wood inlay to play off in harmony with the design. In this mulberry seal box with inlays, the beauty of the mulberry wood grain is set off, by sharp, straight lines of inlaid Japanese boxwood and black persimmon.



Design

OHNO begins by creating an image based on how the piece will be used and the materials he will employ. Once he begins drawing the plans, he already understands the structure of the work and the order in which it will be assembled.



Choosing the Wood

OHNO's studio is filled with precious woods he has collected since his youth, some of which have been put aside to dry for as long as 10 or 20 years.



Rough Cuts

Wood is cut according to the blueprint. As he works, OHNO considers how to best bring out the beauty of the wood grain, and where the grain of adjoining pieces will fit together most naturally.



“Famed Artist of the Showa Period”

While OHNO’ s first steps as a woodworker were taken under the tutelage of his father, a master joiner, it was a cultural master YUNOKI Gyokuson who first recognized his innate talent and conferred upon OHNO the name “Showasai,” in the hope that he would become a famed artist of the Showa Period.



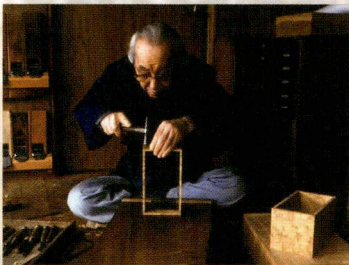
Shaping the Wood

The rough-cut pieces of wood are finished to their final dimensions. The more complex the grain, the greater the skill required to do this.



Carving the Tenons

Sashimono involves assembling numerous pieces of wood. For this piece, OHNO has chosen to do this using the most complex method of joinery. Working with a variety of chisels, he carefully carves out the tenons and mortises along the edges where the pieces will be joined.



Assembly

Once the individual pieces have been shaped, OHNO joins them and checks the fit. Sashimono is the product of another example of the precise craftsmanship of Ohno Showasai, master joiner.



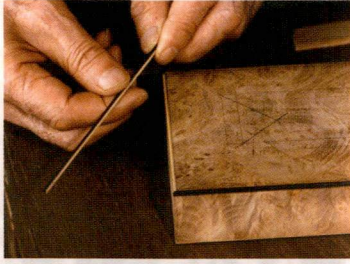
Final Joining

Once the inner surfaces are finished, OHNO quickly glues the pieces in place using an animal glue.



Adjusting the Fit

OHNO now makes sure the edges between the lid and the box itself are perfectly level. When finished, the lid and the body should present a perfect fit from every angle.



Inlaying

For the inlays, a combination of black persimmon and Japanese boxwood will be used.

The sharp lines of black and yellow will provide a counterpoint to the beauty of the mulberry wood's grain.

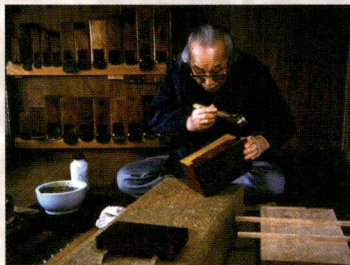


Shaping the Lid

Using a variety of large and small planes,

OHNO now works to finish the surface of the lid.

The slightly convex shape he gives the lid, when combined with the box, will further accentuate the beauty of the overall design.



Applying the Finish

Lime is dissolved in warm water, and is applied in layers, each thoroughly dried before the next is applied.

This brings out the beautiful coloration hidden within the mulberry wood.

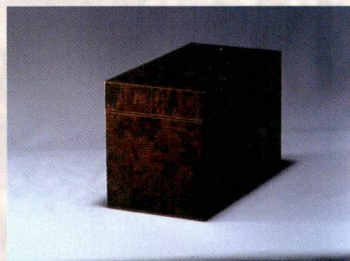


Wax Polishing

OHNO removes any traces of lime, and then polishes the piece

with leaves from the muku tree, followed by more polishing with wax.

The surface of the mulberry wood gradually takes on a beautiful shine, and begins to glow.



"Mulberry Box with Inlaid Linear Design"

The piece is finally ready to leave the hands of its creator.

**Planned by Agency for Cultural Affairs
Produced by Mainichi Productions
35mm, color, 30 min.**