



STEVE SLY
JAPANESE WORKS OF ART

2020 VISION OF AN
ENLIGHTENED RULER





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t. 01202 026254 m. 07774 635918
e. steve@steveslyjapaneseart.com
www.steveslyjapaneseart.com

AN INTRODUCTION TO JAPANESE WORKS OF ART FROM THE MEIJI PERIOD 1868-1912

The artists and artisan craftsmen of Japan, a beautiful and mystical chain of rugged islands in the Pacific Ocean, have been responsible for the creation of Works of Art of such breath taking technical quality and with such a refined aesthetic taste that they rank amongst the very finest ever produced by human hand. Quite some statement – but undeniably true.

For many centuries Japan had followed an isolationist policy leaving it largely untouched by and unknown to the Western world. It therefore comes as no surprise that, when their artistic output finally emerged onto the global stage from the mid 19th Century onwards at the various Trade Fairs across Europe and the USA, it stunned and enchanted an avid and eager audience.

You may find a brief introduction to the background of how this all came about to be interesting:

Prior to the Meiji Restoration, which commenced in 1868, Japan was a feudal society with a rigid class system with the military Samurai class being the effective controlling elite. The position of the Emperor was largely that of a divine but remote symbolic head of society. The country was divided into many provinces, which were in turn governed and administered by the local dominant Samurai family headed by a Daimyo (Lord) and backed by a great many loyal armed retainers.

This governing structure meant that wealth and to a large degree patronage of the artistic communities were concentrated around the Imperial households in Kyoto and the numerous provincial capitals. For centuries skilled metalworkers, potters, carvers and lacquer artists produced beautiful and refined works for their Samurai patrons and also for the very many and varied religious temples and shrines. Generally speaking the Samurai

possessed highly refined artistic and aesthetic tastes reflected in the beautiful architecture and interiors of their castles and residences and in the artworks that they enjoyed and treasured.

This rigid feudal system survived both periods of peace and of internal upheaval and civil war but it was not until the arrival of the Americans in their heavily armed steamships commanded by Commodore Matthew Perry in 1853 and 1854 that the Japanese were finally forced to face a “modern” Western world bringing with it far superior weaponry and industrial capability. The motives of America were quite simple – to force Japan to sign trade deals and to generally open their ports to American ships and trading delegations.

This situation and how to respond to it created great confusion and disagreement within the Samurai ranks but ultimately lead to the transfer of power from the Samurai Shogunate government back to the Emperor. This restoration of power to the Emperor is known as the Meiji Restoration and heralded the start of the Meiji period. He took the name “Meiji” as his reign name which translates as “enlightened rule” and his restoration to power officially commenced on 3rd January, 1868. Consequently, the Samurai class ceased to exist and were replaced by a new Imperial Army, trained and equipped by Western military advisors.

The newly empowered youthful and visionary Emperor could clearly see that Japan needed to take its place on the global stage and to accomplish that he went on to form a Government more akin to those found in the West and eventually signed various trade agreements, not just with the Americans but with many European powers as well.

Thankfully he was also a great patron of the Arts and his new Governments’ efforts were immediately directed towards encouraging craftsmen from all disciplines to utilise their skills and knowledge in the production of high quality, new and more “fashionable” works of art. The sheer quality of Japanese Art in all its existing forms appealed greatly to many of the early foreign diplomats, travellers and military advisors who were in Japan during the early years of the Meiji Restoration. It was a natural inevitability that demand would rapidly increase for these fabulous things never before seen by the Western World. It therefore followed that the artists who created them would now start to make new and innovative works that were even more desirable to their new customers.

Also, Japan began exhibiting at the various world Trade and Art Expositions, Fairs and Exhibitions. This resulted in a truly remarkable explosion of demand from Europe and the United States who were enthralled and entranced by these superb and previously unseen exhibits. Artists now moved from the brink of poverty (caused by the loss of their Samurai patrons) to a position of having to satisfy an insatiable demand for their wonderful creations. This demand was to continue certainly for the rest of their lives and often for one or two generations of their skilled pupils. Major artists became extremely wealthy individuals and enjoyed an enviable position within this new Japan.

Many workshops and studios were established across all artistic disciplines in order to satisfy this massive demand. Some comprised highly skilled masters with just a few pupils through to far larger operations. However, it is worth noting that a large workforce did not necessarily mean a lower quality although it is

fair to say that demand had to be met across a whole spectrum of price ranges.

I hope this briefest of backgrounds conveys some of the astonishing achievements of these artists during a period of radical change and modernisation now that Japan was no longer just a mystical and fascinating country somewhere in the “Orient”.

I have been dealing in and collecting Japanese Meiji Period Works of Art for the last 40 years and I promise you that handling even a modest work can bring immense pleasure, a masterpiece will leave you speechless!

Thank you for visiting this exhibition whether in person, online or through this publication.

Steve Sly



PRICE GUIDE

- Up to £15,000
- £15,000 - £30,000
- £30,000 - £50,000
- In excess of £50,000



JAPANESE METALWORK

Without doubt, the exceptional metalwork produced by Japanese master craftsmen during the Meiji period is my absolute passion. I find the gorgeous artistry, attention to meticulous detail, use of precious metals and unique alloys and the sheer unbelievable quality to be truly breath-taking.

The history of fine metalwork in Japan goes back many hundreds of years and whilst it is impossible to recount the full story in these few words, a brief summary is useful in seeing how this art form evolved.

Prior to the Meiji Restoration in 1868 Japan was a feudal society with a rigid class system, the military Samurai class being the effective controlling elite. The position of the Emperor was largely that of a divine but remote symbolic ruler. The country was divided into many provinces, which were in turn governed by the local dominant Samurai family headed by a Daimyo (Lord) and backed by a great many loyal retainers.

This governing structure meant that wealth and to a large degree the artistic communities were concentrated around the Imperial household in Kyoto and the numerous provincial capitals. Going back a thousand years, fine metalwork was required by the Samurai in the adornment of their revered swords and in the manufacture of lavish armour. It was also required

by numerous temples and shrines for the production of religious sculpture, incense burners and similar. Generally speaking, the Samurai possessed great artistic refinement and taste reflected in the beautiful architecture and interiors of their castles and residences and the artworks therein.

From this brief background we can see that highly advanced metalworking skills developed and evolved over a long period and to a level not seen elsewhere in the world.

It is not possible to detail all the techniques and unique features of the craft but the main ones that set them apart from anything encountered elsewhere are worth highlighting.

Bronze casters had the ability to make items in meticulous detail and of a staggeringly large scale, from small incense burners to massive religious images and temple bells.

Iron and steel workers were masters of producing the revered Samurai weaponry together with elaborate armours.

Numerous local "schools of metalwork" developed in and around these major centres whose sole function was to produce the elaborate fittings that adorn Samurai swords. These fittings were miniature works of art in their own right, often exhibiting meticulous detail and superb artistry. Many different alloys

unique to Japan were used which could be patinated to a variety of colours. These included a glossy blue/black called Shakudo which incorporated pure gold, another called Shibuichi which included silver and could exhibit a range of colours from olive green through to pale grey. To fully understand this art form it is necessary to actually look at the fabulous items as words alone cannot possibly convey the skills involved.

When the Meiji Restoration came about, the vast majority of these skilled artisans suddenly found themselves without their main source of income – the ruling Samurai class. This resulted both from the edict banning the wearing of swords in 1876 and then the subsequent de-structuring of the feudal/class systems as Japan adopted a more “modern” system of government. Both Samurai and their artists found themselves virtually redundant.

Thankfully, the Meiji Emperor was a great patron of the Arts and his Governments’ effort was directed towards encouraging metalwork masters to utilise their skills and knowledge in the production of new and more “fashionable” works of art! The sheer quality of Japanese metalwork in all its existing forms appealed greatly to many of the early foreign diplomats, travellers and military advisors who were in Japan during the early years of the Meiji Restoration. It was a natural inevitability

that demand would rapidly increase for these fabulous old things never seen by the Western World. It therefore followed that the artists who created them would now start to make different works that were even more desirable to their new customers. Instead of sword guards and other sword fittings they now turned their attention to lavish boxes, vases, koro, sculptures, spectacular chargers and similar.

Also at this time Japan started to exhibit at the various world Trade and Art Expositions, Fairs and Exhibitions. This resulted in a truly remarkable explosion of demand from Europe and the United States who were enthralled and entranced by these superb and previously unseen exhibits.

Many workshops and studios were subsequently established in order to satisfy this massive demand. Some comprised highly skilled masters with just a few pupils through to far larger operations. However, it is worth noting that a large workforce did not necessarily mean a lower quality although it is fair to say that demand had to be met across a whole spectrum of price ranges.

Further innovations involved metalworkers and enamellers combining their skills to produce elaborate works employing the full range of metal alloys together with vivid enamels often on an item crafted from pure silver. The effect could be truly stunning.

Among the major acknowledged artists were Kano Natsuo, Unno Shomin, Hagiya Katsuhira, Suzuki Chokichi, Unno Moritoshi, Yamada Motonobu and, of course, Shoami Katsuyoshi who together with their pupils, were instrumental in driving quality and progress. These talented artists were frequently commissioned by the Imperial Household, the Government, and exclusive privately owned outlets such as the Ozeki Company. Their work is both very rare and of commensurate value.

Again, space does not permit a full listing of all makers, schools, or larger manufacturers but some of the more frequently encountered ones are as follows:

The Komai Company specialised in the production of iron works of art richly inlaid and damascened with pure gold and other various alloys all in meticulous detail. Designs frequently featured famous beauty spots, shrines and palaces together with tranquil scenes from nature.

The Nogawa Company specialised in a wide range of works of art using precious metals and alloys. Vases, boxes, dishes and similar are all encountered usually employing precise mixed metal inlay on a patinated bronze body. Designs again feature beautiful vignettes from nature or landscape. Some exceptionally fine artist signed work emanated from this manufacturer.

The Miyao Company specialised in producing patinated and gilded bronze sculptures, mostly figures, especially Samurai. These spectacular works on their elaborate gilded wooden stands came in sizes that ranged from few inches to true life-size!

Two other makers – Yoshimitsu and Gyoko also produced works similar to the Miyao company. Gyoko was a well recorded artist specialising in Samurai as well as native Bird Okimono, artists such as Sano Takachika, Masatsune, Hidenao and indeed Hasegawa Issei also tended to excel at creating spectacular renditions of birds of prey and other native species.

Genryusai Seiya was a bronze caster producing very high quality Okimono including figural sculptures but also of all sorts of animals, both domestic and highly exotic thanks in part to the opening of a Zoo in Tokyo!

In truth it would take a large book to fully discuss all the various techniques and makers but I hope this briefest of backgrounds conveys some of the astonishing achievements of these artists, some of which are represented and available to you in this publication.

*Handling even a modest work can bring immense pleasure,
a masterpiece will leave you speechless!*

1

MINIATURE SILVER CHRYSANTHEMUM KORO

Attr - Setsuho Hidetomo

Exceptional quality solid cast silver and gold patinated miniature Chrysanthemum Koro firmly attributed to Setsuho Hidetomo, the delightful lidded Koro or incense burner stands upon three feet simply resembling the cut stalks of flowers, the artist has painstakingly carved a bunch of silver and mixed metal chrysanthemum from a solid silver casting, the further use of mixed gold alloys has brought the floral display to life in exacting detail, the flower heads and stamen are incredibly well chiselled with painstaking symmetry, the Koro is further decorated with sprigs of chrysanthemums as handles and topped off with a pierced and lined lid housing a mixed metal silver and shakudo cockerel finial, the inner body reveals a pull out silver gilt liner.

Literature:

For similar examples of this type of Koro see the Khalili collection metalwork volume 1 - plate II, it is thought that the artist Hidetomo may have been responsible for the chrysanthemum chiselling on the lids of Koro's of more famous artists works, notably Sato Kazuhide and possibly even Shoami Katsuyoshi. It would not be uncommon for an artist to be so specialized and at the top of his game in one particular skill that he was commissioned by master craftsman to supply his talents to their particular masterpiece, all too often without any recognition.

Height: 2 1/2" 6.5 cm

Width: 2 1/4" 5.5 cm

Depth: 1 3/4" 4.5 cm



JAPANESE HARDWOOD AND MIXED METAL VASES

Artist - Tsukahara Katao

These unusual vases are supported on scrolling bracket feet and lavishly decorated in mixed metals including silver, gold, shibuichi and shakudo, the sunken relief panel on the first depicts the poetess "Ono no Komachi" washing a book with water to prove that the verses have been fraudulently added to the text, vase two depicts Otomo no Kuronushi, a high ranking courtier and poet, accusing Ono no Komachi of plagiarism. Each vase further decorated to the sides with native flora within fan shaped cartouches, the dense hardwood bodies are each signed with a carved signature that reads Katao above sumptuous gold seals also translating as Katao.

Literature:

The artist Tsukahara Katao is recorded as a Shoami school artist (Shoami Katsuyoshi) living and working in Tokyo in the late 19th century.

See Wakayama Takeshi Kinko Jiten (a dictionary of metalworkers) Tokyo, Token Shunju Shinbunsha, 1999, page 309.

Height: 5 5/8" 14.5 cm

Width: 2 1/8" 5.5 cm

Depth: 2" 5 cm



JAPANESE MIXED METAL VASE

Artist - Suzuki Chokichi - Kako

A bronze and mixed metal onlaid vase by the highly regarded Imperial artist Suzuki Chokichi (his art name Kako), the heavily cast deep black shakudo vase is finely contrasted with a delightful rendition of a silver and mixed metal crested bird upon a tree, possibly the male Eurasian Hoopoe Bird, the remainder of the vase decorated with exquisite mixed metal foliage, the autumnal patination of the leaves in particular are indicative of Kako's work, the artistic skill leaves you in no doubt as to who the vase was made by, Chokichi excelled at the multi metal techniques used to portray decaying winter and autumnal foliage, the delightful bird cast and hand chiselled before application to the body of the vase, each leaf similarly cast and laid into the metal body prior to patination, the neck of the vase detailed in a fine stylised silver wire technique. The vase fully signed with the art name Kako and the double mountain mark thus dating it to pre 1891.

Literature:

Suzuki Chokichi his art name Kako was director, designer and lead artist of the government sponsored Kiryu Kosho Kaisha company until its closure in 1891, his adventurous artistic ideas were reputedly not always well received by the government funded factory who undoubtedly had one eye on commercial quantity and more repetitive works than Kako would have liked.

Kako went on to produce many other individual high quality and now famous works housed around the world's great collections and leading museums, including a monumental 2.8m Koro surmounted by an eagle which resides in the Victoria and Albert museum and arguably his most famous known work being a set of twelve mixed metal birds of prey, now rightfully resting in the Tokyo national museum. Suzuki Chokichi's work was eventually rewarded in 1896 when he was granted the rare accolade of becoming an Imperial artist (Teishitsu Gigeiin).

Height: 10 3/4" 27.5 cm

Diameter: 5 3/4" 14.5 cm



SOLD

MIXED METAL VASES

Artist - Suzuki Chokichi

A high quality pair of bronze and mixed metal onlaid vases by the highly coveted artist Suzuki Chokichi 1848-1919, his art name Kako, the unusual baluster shaped vases cleverly designed to give the appearance of free standing upon elaborate silver mounted bases, although the bases are an integral part of the vases main body, each vase onlaid in mixed metal autumnal foliage an absolute trait of Kako who excelled in depicting leaves and foliage in glorious autumn colours and various stages of decay, the vases further decorated with large red berries to one and smaller silver coloured berries to the other, Chokichi has added his own unique contemporary twist to the necks and bases of each vase with bands of geometric gold and silver.

The vases nicely signed to the underside carrying the double mountain mark unique to the Kiryu Kosho Kaisha company (the government sponsored first manufacturing and trading company).

**Literature:**

Suzuki Chokichi (Kako) was director, designer and lead artist of the government sponsored Kiryu Kosho Kaisha company until its closure in 1891, his adventurous artistic ideas were reputedly not always well received by the government funded factory, they probably had one eye on commercial quantity and more repetitive works than Kako would have liked, following its closure he went on to produce many other individual high quality and now famous works housed within the world's great collections and leading museums, including a monumental 2.8m Koro surmounted by an eagle which resides in the Victoria and Albert museum, and arguably his most famous known work being a set of twelve mixed metal birds of prey, now rightfully resting in the Tokyo national museum.

Suzuki Chokichi's work was eventually rewarded in 1896 when he was granted the rare accolade of becoming an Imperial artist (Teishitsu Gigein).

Height: 11 1/2" 29 cm

Diameter: 6" 15.3 cm



SOLD

SOLD



5

LARGE JAPANESE MIXED METAL VASE

Artist - Yukiaki for Nogawa company

The main body of this exquisite baluster shaped vase is formed from a caramel coloured bronze onlaid in a multitude of mixed metals including gold, silver, shakudo and shibuichi, the alloys worked to create sprays of Iris amidst reeds, the pierced and shaped base further decorated with stylised mixed metal butterflies upon scrolling gold wires, the gilt bands around the neck are highlighted with mixed metal bats amidst scrolls whilst the rim of the vase is finished as a geometric shakudo chain between gold bands.

Literature:

I consider that the sheer scale of this vase and other recorded examples by Yukiaki to be extraordinary in size and decorative quality and that that they were most likely to have been commissioned for one of the later Meiji period expositions.

Artist signed Yukiaki to the underside and accompanied by a gilt Nogawa company seal.

Height: 22 1/2" 57 cm

Diameter: 10" 25 cm





6

MIXED METAL KODANSU

Artist - Nogawa Company

Mixed metal Kodansu cabinet by the Nogawa company of Kyoto, the caramel bronze body has been inlaid with a multitude of mixed metals capturing tranquil garden scenes with birds and butterflies in flight amidst native flora, the domed top decorated with various scholars implements amidst stylized clouds and surmounted by an opulent gilt carrying handle resembling opposing beasts. The cabinet stands upon silver mounted and finely decorated shakudo feet, the door hinges and hardware detailed with gilt wirework, the interior houses a set of three graduated hardwood drawers each decorated with mixed metal work, the individual button handles in the form of silver and gilt chrysanthemum.

The cabinet bears the Nogawa company seal to the underside.

Height: 7 1/2" 19 cm

Length: 6 1/4" 16 cm

Width: 4 3/4" 12 cm



7

DAMASCENED IRON BOX

Artist - Komai company

Damascened iron box by the highly regarded Komai company of Kyoto, the lidded box stands upon a pierced and shaped base decorated with carp leaping amongst waves with the use of nunomezogan techniques, the sides of the box are further decorated with a multitude of ferns, grasses and native flora, the lid depicts a mixed metal Bijin leaning against a fence and worked in takazogan, a ponderous expression upon her face, the Bijin is dressed in traditional silk Kimono with her hair tied impeccably, the gilded interior further decorated with pavilions amidst a mountainous backdrop.

The underside of the box is decorated with phoenix amid flora and carries the gilt Komai of Kyoto dragonfly seal of circa 1900 period.

Height: 2 7/8" 7.3 cm

Length: 5 3/4" 14.3 cm

Depth: 4 3/8" 11.2 cm



SOLD



8

JAPANESE DAMASCENED IRON VASE

Artist - Komai Company

Damascened Iron vase by the highly regarded Komai company, the vase circa 1880 and carrying the full Komai signature is a fine example of the company's earlier nunomezogan work. The main body of the vase depicts multiple roundels of Japanese scenes, flora, fishes, birds and butterflies amidst chrysanthemum & stylized mons, the more traditional grape and vine decoration worked to the base and lower shoulders, the neck has been finely decorated with a display of gilt butterflies between geometric bands, the top rim of the neck finely executed with a geometric band.

Fully signed to the underside "Nihon koku Kyoto ju Komai sei".

Height: 8 1/2" 21.5 cm

Diameter: 4 1/2" 11.5 cm



DAMASCENED IRON CIGAR BOX

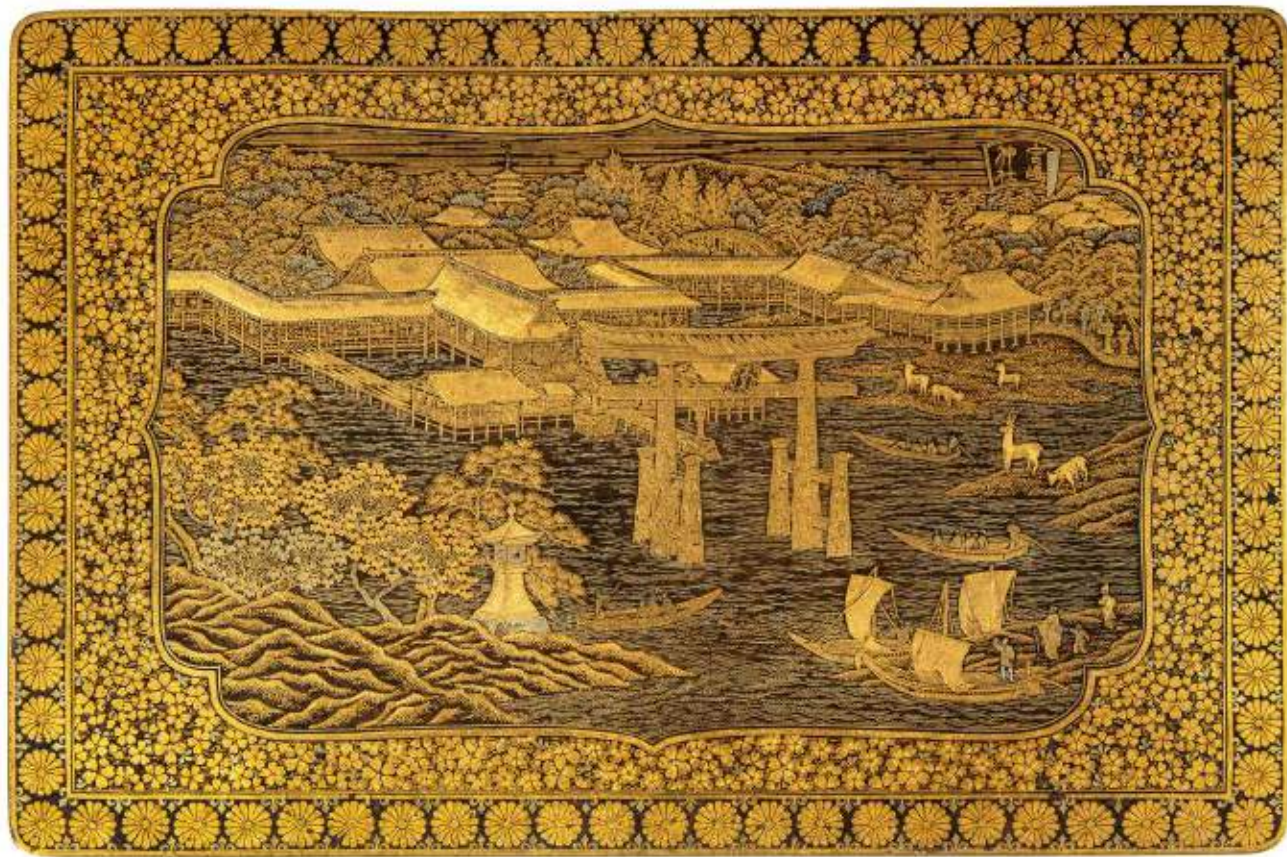
Artist - Komai Seibei

Damascened Iron cigar box resting upon its fitted silver base, the cedar lined box is smothered in gilt decoration with the lid depicting the Itsukushima shrine on the island of Miyajima, a Shinto shrine best known for its "floating" torii gate which is located in the city of Hatsukaichi in Hiroshima Prefecture. The outer body of the box finely damascened with chrysanthemum and Imperial mon dispersed against a backdrop of autumnal maple leaves between formal borders, the iron box rests upon its original silver base standing on bracket feet and decorated beneath, by removing this base you reveal the artists signature that translates to Komai Seibei, a contemporary working in the same style as that of the more famous Komai company of Kyoto.

Length: 7 1/4" 18.5 cm

Depth: 4 3/4" 12 cm

Height: 2 1/2" 6.5 cm



10
PAIR OF JAPANESE
SILVER VASES

Artist - Yoshida Shinzo

Solid silver and mixed metal vases by the highly regarded artist and Imperial household purveyor, Yoshida Shinzo 1834-1904, his art name Shiei, the unusually flattened oval shaped vases are formed from silver and depict Manchurian Cranes in flight and at rest beside a lakeside setting. The carved detail is exquisite with the use of cast silver layered to resemble the waves, the necks decorated as stylized clouds with the neck and foot rims highlighted with shakudo and gilt, the birds themselves formed from a mixture of alloys unusually including copper.



Literature:

Signed: "Osaka ja, Shiei Yoshida Shinzo sei kore"

[Made by Yoshida Shinzo, art name Shiei, a resident of Osaka]

Artist: Yoshida Shinzo (1834-1904)

The artist was born on the 25th February 1834 with his given name Eijiro, he studied metal crafting under Sato Toho and Hashimoto Isshi and worked for the Imperial family as a Kinri-goyonin (an Imperial household purveyor). His other known names are Shinzo, Chikushusho, Ryusui and Ippo.

He exhibited three items at the 5th Naikoku Kangyo Hakurankai exhibition 1903 in Osaka.

As Yoshida Shiei he exhibited three items at the 1900 Paris Exposition as well as two further items in the award winning section of the same 1900 Paris Expo as Yoshida Shinzo.

He previously exhibited two items at the 1878 Paris Expo, one of which was in the award winning section, furthermore he exhibited four items at the 1893 Chicago Expo, one of which was in the award winning section, the exhibited items were recorded as sweet containers and smoking utensils.

In 1878 he was employed by the Osaka mint bureau (Osaka Zoheikuoku), a governmental agency responsible for supplying coins and medals, Yoshida was employed there designing coins. He died on the 22nd of November 1904, aged 71.

Height: 10" 25.5 cm

Width: 6" 15 cm

Depth: 3" 7.5 cm

SOLD

SOLD

11

MIXED METAL LIDDED BOX

Artist - Murata Morihisa

A fine quality shakudo lidded box by the highly regarded artist Murata Morihisa, his art name Kiryusai. The heavy silver lined box is formed from shakudo, an alloy containing a percentage of gold and perfected by Japanese swordsmiths in the 16th century, the lid depicts the charming subject of a bird perched upon a Japanese floral display carefully watching an insect feeding within the central gold flower, further decorated with finely onlaid gold, silver and mixed metal flora, the sides of the box exquisitely detailed with gold ferns highlighted with tiny silver roundels depicting early morning dew drops.

Literature:

Murata Morihisa was active in Tokyo during the Meiji and Taisho periods, he was a student of Unno Moritoshi (1834-1896)

Length: 5 1/4" 13.5 cm

Depth: 4" 10 cm

Height: 2" 5 cm





12

KAGA SCHOOL MONKEY VASE

Artist - Hokugaku I

This magnificent quality piece of Kaga metalwork reigns from the very early years of the Meiji period circa 1875. The vase is a tour de force of inlaid mixed metal work typical of the Kaga school artists displaying various techniques of geometric mixed metal banding to the shoulders, base and neck. Undoubtedly the highlight being the carved monkey preening himself as the central character, the artist has literally used his chisel as a paint brush (Katakiribori) and to stunning effect, a spray of peaches finely carved to the rear, the shaped base supported by three mythical beasts.

Artist signed to the underside with a transcription that loosely reads: 'Made by an old man Hokugaku, Yokoyama Yazaemon Takashige, resident of Etchu' (modern day Toyama prefecture).

Suggested date between 1870 -1879 after he moved from Kaga province.

Literature:

The suggested artist Hokugaku I (Yokoyama Yazaemon, Takashige) is recorded as having a large pair of vases in the Tokyo National museum and made in 1873. Ref - E 13012

Hokugaku I also has a pair of vases housed in the Austria art museum, these particular vases won a prize in the 1873 Vienna exposition.

There is a further vase by this artist documented in the Kaga Kinko Taikan plate 307.

Height: 15" 38 cm

Width: 9" 23 cm

Depth: 9" 23 cm



13
IRON FISH PANEL

Artist - Kochiku

A large highly decorative mixed metal wall panel, the artist captures the moment a giant carp leaps from the water in an attempt to catch a flying insect. The carp rendered as a life size bronze okimono with gilt and shakudo eyes, the iron panel further decorated with mixed metal reeds, flora and decaying tree stumps around a lakeside setting, the heavy Iron panel housed in its original hardwood frame.

Height: 48" 122 cm

Width: 32 1/2" 82.5 cm

Depth: 2" 5 cm



FASCINATING MIXED METAL VASES

Artist - Nakagawa Yoshizane

Incredibly rare pair of mixed metal vases manufactured by the son of the highly acclaimed Japanese metalworker Shoami Katsuyoshi 1831-1908, his son Nakagawa Yoshizane 1859-1915 has individually signed these unusual form vases, the hexagonal bodies hand beaten predominately from shakudo and copper, the shakudo section finely onlaid with native flora whilst the copper sections have been inlaid to an exceptional standard, a tour de force of inlaid detailing using mixed metals including flattened silver wire to form geometric patterns interspersed with birds in flight. The most striking feature being the huge chrysanthemum form mons appearing as handles to each side of the vases, each painstakingly and individually hand formed to perfection, the petals chiselled from silver with the central gold stamen punched out in a nanako technique and in remarkable symmetrical detail, the underside of each vase unusually finished with solid silver bases within heavy gilt rims.

Literature:

A silver and mixed metal elephant resembling the Shoami Katsuyoshi Elephant in the Nasser D Khalili collection, metalwork I - plate 8, resides at my home town museum the Russell Cotes in Bournemouth, it forms part of a collection of Japanese metalwork collected by Sir Merton and Lady Russell Cotes during a trip to the far East in 1884. It is evident that Yoshizane was taking inspiration from his father when manufacturing this piece. Following his father's death in 1908 Yoshizane is recorded as having finished an Iron and mixed metal vase on behalf of his father, the item jointly signed by father and son.

Having learnt his skills and followed in the footsteps of his father, arguably the greatest ever metalworker of the Meiji period, you have to wonder if Yoshizane was expressing a new found freedom when he designed and manufactured these unusual vases, perhaps they were made for exhibition or maybe they were a special commission from a senior military official, as is evident they may have taken their unusual form from the lines of a Samurai matchlock or cannon.

Height: 8 1/2" 21.5 cm**Depth:** 3 1/2" 9 cm**Width:** 4 1/2" 11.5 cm

SOLD



15

SILVER & SHIBUICHI EGRET VASE

Artist - Hisayuki/Toshiyuki Koku

A tall slender shibuichi and silver mixed metal vase depicting a pair of egrets wading in a lakeside setting. The artist has captured the setting as a winter snow scene, the melting snow picked out in silver upon the gold and shakudo onlaid reeds and flora, the silver neck blending seamlessly with the shibuichi body as it gives the further impression of melting ice, artist signed to the rear.

Literature:

The vase is signed by an artist known as Hisayuki Koku which also reads Toshiyuki Koku, an artist with this name is recorded as having made a Shibuichi Koro for the Ozeki company, see Bonhams auction 21786 - lot 2181.

Height: 12 1/8" 31 cm

Diameter: 5 1/8" 13 cm



16

PAIR OF SILVER FRUIT BOWLS

Artist - Eigyoku

A heavy gauge pair of solid silver fruit bowls by the well recorded Meiji period silversmith Eigyoku, these substantial heavy and stylish lozenge shaped dishes stand upon four scrolling feet, the exterior finely detailed with chrysanthemums carved in low relief with the bowl ends further shaped and reeded, the underside carries a Jungin pure silver mark as well as the artist signature.



Literature:

These fabulous bowls weigh an incredible 4,600gms (almost 148 troy ounces), by repute have been in the same UK family since arriving here in the early 20th century as a presentation gift upon retirement, and since stored in a suitcase for much of their life.

Length: 12" 30.5 cm

Height: 4 1/2" 11.5 cm

Depth: 8 1/2" 21.5 cm



17

SHIBUICHI & SILVER VASE

Artist - Hasegawa Issei

A charming Meiji period vase by the well recorded artist Hasegawa Issei his art name Gyokutosai, the main body of the vase formed from shibuichi and contrasted with silver neck and foot rims, the artist has captured a pair of birds at rest in the branches of a blossom tree, the tree itself carved from the shibuichi body of the vase, the birds individually formed from silver and shakudo, each with gilt highlights to the eyes, the trailing flora finely decorated in mixed metals, artist signed to the underside.

Literature:

Hasegawa Issei (art name Gyokutosai) worked in Asakusa Tokyo during the Meiji and Taisho era where his carving and chiselling skills were commissioned by other leading artists, in his own right he was a leading artist who exhibited at the Chicago Columbus exposition in 1893, at the Liège exposition 1905 he exhibited a crystal ball on a metal base, and at the Paris exposition in 1900 Issei exhibited a silver vase, incense burner and bird subject okimono.

Kyoto Sannenzaka Museum has several works by the artist, the Khalili collection has two works by the artist reproduced in the Meiji no Takara, Metalwork part I – plate 66, and part II - plate 130.

Height: 11" 28 cm

Diameter: 5" 13 cm



MIXED METAL IRON PANEL

Artist - Hagiya Katsuhira

Mixed metal Iron panel by Hagiya Katsuhira 1804-1886, his art name Seiroken, the ironwork panel housed within its original hardwood frame depicts the often seen but nonetheless charming subject of Birds upon a branch of native flora, this particular early Meiji period panel demonstrates all the skills of a leading Mito school metalworker more akin to making tsuba and sword fittings for the shogunate and now adapting his unique skills to satisfy the emerging western market. The inspiration for this naive yet charming study is probably from an earlier Japanese or even Chinese painting. Artists with such breath-taking metalworking skills as Katsuhira could simply replace a paintbrush with a chisel and produce staggering quality works of art. Katsuhira would have been very adept working with bronze and other such soft alloys as gold, silver and shakudo, as this panel clearly demonstrates.

Signed within a gilt signature seal and housed in its original period frame, a beautiful work of art from a leading Edo / Meiji period metalworker.

Literature:

Hagiya Katsuhira was born in 1804 as Terakado Yasuke, he took his name from a combination of the Mito masters who taught him and subsequently went on to become one of the most eminent Mito school artists and tutors, with many of his works now residing in the worlds most recognized museums and collections, in 1844 Katsuhira began working directly for the Mito clan where he took on the role of Goyo or official artisan for the Mito Tokugawa Daimyo, this role would have likely given Katsuhira special privileges including the ability to wear Swords in public places, a privilege usually reserved for the Samurai classes, he went on to teach such famous artists as Unno Shomin and Kano Natsuo amongst others, with one of his two sons Suzuki Katsuhira achieving the status of head craftsman to the Suzuki family and thus adopting their name, Hagiya and died at the age of 83 in 1886.

Length: 25 1/2" 65 cm

Height: 18 1/2" 47 cm

Depth: 3/4" 2 cm





JAPANESE OKIMONO

Okimono can be loosely translated as “object for display” or “standing object” but is more easily understood if described as a “decorative sculpture”. The subject matter can be absolutely anything, figural, animal, mythical, floral, avian....and that is one of the immense pleasures that Okimono gives us!

Mention the word Okimono and we immediately imagine an ivory object, but the word also encompasses wonderful works of art that are commonly carved from many native Japanese woods, various metals, alloys, marine ivory and lacquer. In addition, Okimono are also frequently fashioned from more than one material, a commonly encountered example is ivory in conjunction with boxwood.

Prior to the Meiji Restoration the art of carving anything substantial was largely restricted to sculptures of a religious nature. These were produced by highly skilled artists whose family tradition often went back countless generations. Their work was mostly destined for the many Shrines and Temples throughout the land although doubtless special commissions were received from both the Imperial Household and governing Samurai families.

Historically any carvings of a “non-religious” nature tended to be Netsuke – the miniature works of art designed to hold an intro securely in the Obi of traditional Japanese clothing. These small but beautiful works of art are generally too small to be classified as Okimono and in any event were primarily functional.

And so, we arrive at the Meiji Restoration with Japan having a well-established history of superb carvers going back hundreds of years. Many carvers were active all over Japan but with a higher concentration naturally around the major towns and cities.

The Meiji period ushered in some dramatic changes that had an equally dramatic effect on artist carvers. Japan was fast becoming “Westernised” in nearly every way. This not only affected the structures of government and society but everyday life as well. Western styles of dress became highly fashionable for both men and women. Many temples and shrines were closed as religious beliefs and customs changed. These were exciting vibrant times for many especially in the new capital Tokyo, but conversely unsettling and worrying times for others.

The decline in traditional dress had the effect of drastically reducing the demand for Netsuke which had no place on the new Western clothing. Likewise, the closing of temples had a marked effect on the religious carvers as demand plummeted. These artists found themselves in a similar position to the metalworkers of the age – becoming somewhat redundant.

However, at the same time Japans’ participation in numerous worldwide art Expositions, Fairs and Exhibitions was showcasing the remarkable talents of Japanese craftsmen. The western world was amazed at the incredible quality and refinement on show within the glittering halls and pavilions of these spectacular

events. Interest and demand skyrocketed both in Japan and abroad for nearly all the Japanese arts including carvings.

Those interested in Netsuke could enjoy a ready supply of high-quality old treasures now surplus to requirements and many fine collections were formed during the Meiji period. However, such was the demand for carvings generally that a new market opened up at just the right time for the many carvers who had concerns for their future. Netsuke production moved swiftly and seamlessly into Okimono carving. In reality the only real differences between the two are that generally Okimono are larger and don't need the himotoshi or holes to hold the intro cords.

As demand for these “new” carvings grew so did the number of artists producing them. New “schools” of carving emerged where talented pupils were taught by experienced masters, the most notable of these was the Tokyo School of Art that opened in 1889. The most famous and talented carver that ever lived, Ishikawa Komei, became a professor at this school teaching a new generation of carvers in a somewhat different style. The output from this school were often large one-piece figural ivory okimono of staggering realism and detail.

Other schools and studios concentrated on smaller intricate pieces, often more akin to the style of netsuke. Sometimes it can be difficult to say definitively whether a piece is a large late netsuke or a small okimono!

Demand continued to increase dramatically and to fill it more and more carvers emerged. The Government continued to encourage and support the industry as the flow of foreign currency into Japan was helping the modernisation programme.

A major drawback, however, was that the finest of these works of art could literally take years to complete so it was inevitable that in order to meet the demand, quality eventually began to deteriorate in favour of rapid production. Thankfully, masterpieces did continue to be made by the truly dedicated artists who in turn became famous and often wealthy as a result.

MATERIALS

In my experience excluding bronze and other metal sculptures (which are cast rather than carved) I would say that roughly 75% of Okimono are carved from elephant ivory. This is viewed as a contentious issue in some countries nowadays. In my view it is important to remember that these fabulous works of art (not just Japanese but Chinese, European, Indian etc) were produced over a hundred years or more ago in an age when little regard was paid to conservation and conscience. Standards and beliefs were vastly different to our modern enlightened attitudes. I believe we should enjoy these superb works of art for what they are – treasures from a long-lost time and a long lost place – Meiji era Japan.

Of the remaining 25% I would say 15% are fashioned from various woods and the remaining 10% comprising marine ivory, lacquer and more seldom used materials. These figures are not to be treated as 100% accurate but merely as a guide to what the collector can expect to encounter.

As mentioned, bronze and other metals are used to produce Okimono but here the production method is totally different. The most employed process for metal is the “lost wax” method whereby the subject is carved in wax and then cast from a mould taken from the wax model.

As with all works of art, Japanese Okimono come in a wide range of subjects, sizes and qualities.

They vary from the very finest pieces destined for the wealthy connoisseur (and these are truly breath-taking) through to superb middle range pieces and on to a lower quality product destined for more of a mass export market.

A few tips to look out for are the details and expression that are conveyed in faces – the presence of teeth in an open mouth, obvious humour or suffering or anger or old age. Also, the realism of feet, toenails, tendons etc. Hands are notoriously difficult to carve so look for fingernails, power in a man's' grip or delicacy in a ladies. Hidden musculature beneath clothing or the delicacy of decoration on Kimono.

As with any work of art It is almost a certainty that any signed piece will be far more desirable than the same piece unsigned but thankfully the vast majority of Okimono of all types, styles and subjects are reliably signed. This is a refreshing and reassuring feature of collecting Okimono. Reference books on the subject are available but none could ever hope to cover the many hundreds, possibly thousands, of artists of all schools and qualities who plied their trade during this remarkable explosion of carving.

Certainly pieces by artists such as Ishikawa Komei, Hokyudo Itsumin, Masanao of Yamada, Masakazu of Nagoya and similar, together with their star pupils were rare and very expensive when they were made! These masterpieces represent the pinnacle of this art form and are sought by wealthy collectors world-wide. They therefore justifiably command higher prices.

However, in my opinion there are many high quality works that sit just below the finest pieces and represent staggering value for money. Thankfully, it is still possible to form a collection of superb work by these numerous artists for an outlay that looks very modest bearing in mind the time it took to produce them and the sheer quality and artistry.

SOLD



19

JAPANESE MIXED METAL OKIMONO GAMMA SENNIN

Artist - Oshima Joun

Mixed metal okimono sculpted in the form of Gamma Sennin (Kosensei) striding over rocks with a three legged frog in his raised left-hand and another frog in a bag in his right hand, the Sennin himself formed of a solid shibuichi alloy, a gold gourd and smoking set hang attached to his waist by his Obi, the three legged frogs and bag are formed of cast silver.

Artist signed on the rear of the rock with a chiselled signature by Oshima Joun 1858-1940, his art name of Oshima Yasutaro.

Literature:

Oshima Joun was a professor at the Tokyo school of fine arts from 1887 until 1932 where he was famed for his great skill in bronze casting. Born into a family of metalworkers Joun joined the family business in 1877 and adopted the art name Joun that year, by 1879 he had built up the business to the point that he had 11 craftsmen working in his Tokyo studio, many of the wares being sold at high quality retail outlets or by commissioning agents.

He exhibited at the second national industrial exposition in 1881, as well as the Paris exposition in 1900 and the London Japan-British exposition in 1910.

Approximate sizes:

Height: 11" 28 cm

Width: 11 1/2" 29 cm

Depth: 7" 18 cm



SOLD



20

PURE SILVER DRAGON OKIMONO

Artist - Gyokuryuken Sanmi/Kazumi

Pure silver and mixed metal decorated dragon okimono circa 1900, this heavy cast silver dragon group is formed in extraordinary detail and depicts two entwined dragons supporting a glass ball, one of the dragons contrasted with a shakudo body as well as gilt detailing to the extremities, the other dragon remains a tarnished silver with gilt decorated detailing throughout, the contrast giving each beast a perfect definition, the group fit snugly to the finely carved hardwood and lacquer decorated rockwork base with the use of the original silver locating pin, the underside of the dragon is finely signed within an oblong cartouche by an artist known as Gyokuryuken Sanmi, this signature can also be read as Kazumi, the okimono also bears multiple silver import punch marks (probably French) almost certainly from being tested for purity when it was exported to Europe in the late 19th Century.

Height: 7 1/2" 19 cm

Depth: 10" 25.5 cm

Length: 10" 25.5 cm



21

SILVER MANCHURIAN CRANE OKIMONO

Artist - Hasegawa Issei

Cast silver and mixed metal Okimono of a pair of Manchurian Cranes in a powerful yet appealing pose, the male watches over the female bird that stoops before him upon a naturalistic base, the long slender legs are formed from shibuichi, a bronze alloy that is mixed with a percentage of silver, the tail feathers are carved from shakudo, an alloy containing a percentage of gold and perfected by Japanese swordsmiths in the 16th century, the necks are also decorated in shakudo, the birds eyes are unusually formed from enamel as are the red crests upon their heads, artist signed to the underside of each bird.

Literature:

Hasegawa Issei (art name Gyokutosai) worked in Asakusa Tokyo during the Meiji and Taisho Eras where his carving and chiselling skills were known to have been commissioned by other high ranking artists, in his own right he was a leading artist who exhibited at the Chicago Columbus exposition in 1893, at the Liège exposition 1905 he exhibited a crystal ball on a metal base, and at the Paris exposition in 1900, Issei exhibited a silver vase, incense burner and bird subject okimono.

Kyoto Sannenzaka museum has several works by the artist, the Khalili collection has two works by the artist reproduced in the Meiji no Takara, Metalwork part I – plate 66, and part II - plate 130.

Height: 10 1/2" 26.5 cm

Width: 12" 30 cm

Depth: 6" 15 cm



22

SILVERED BRONZE OWL

Artist - Yasumasa

Charming silvered bronze okimono of a snowy owl resting upon a naturalistic root wood base, the majestic bird of prey sits wings closed pondering its next move, the razor sharp talons and beak are each highlighted in shakudo with the birds big eyes detailed in gilt and shakudo.

Artist signed in a seal to the underside, a rare subject okimono.

Length: 13 1/2" 34 cm

Height: 11 1/4" 28.5 cm

Depth: 10 1/4" 26 cm



23

MONUMENTAL ELEPHANT/TIGER GROUP

Artist - Morimitsu for Seiya company

A large and imposing bronze study of an elephant being attacked by two Tigers, this okimono is certainly exhibition size and quality and has been signed by one of the leading artists at the highly regarded Seiya foundry, an exceptionally large elephant rears up to protect himself from a pair of marauding tigers. Artist signed in a seal to the underside of the belly that translates to read made by Morimitsu, displayed on a contemporary polished wood base.

Literature:

The Seiya company under the guidance of Genryusai Seiya were probably the most prolific manufacturers of large scale good quality bronze okimono, specialising in elephants, tigers, lions, monkeys and many other exotic animals, at that time mostly unseen in the far east, they were undoubtedly further inspired by the opening of the Tokyo zoo in 1882, they also cast many figural Japanese subjects of Bijin and farmers in everyday pursuits.

Height: 29" 73.6 cm

Width: 36" 91.5 cm

Depth: 19" 48.3 cm



24

SILVER & SHIBUICHI CRAB GROUP

Artist - Yamada Motonobu

A fascinating mixed metal okimono by one of the leading Meiji period metalworkers Yamada Motonobu 1847-1897, his art name Inshi.

The artist has portrayed the realistic scene of a pair of crabs scrapping over shells upon a craggy rock, the crabs rendered to an exceptional standard out of solid silver and shibuichi and each removable as individual okimono, the rock work formed from copper and bronze with the shells and seaweed formed from shibuichi, gold and other soft alloys.

A very rare opportunity to own a large and remarkable okimono from such a highly regarded artist as Motonobu, artist signed to the underside.



Literature:

Yamada Motonobu (1847-97) his art name Inshi, was one of the finest of the Meiji period metalwork artists coming from a family which had served as retainers to the Mito branch of the Tokugawa family,

Motonobu apparently started learning his incredible metalwork skills aged only 13 although sadly he also died at a very young age. He is well recorded as an artist commissioned by the notable metalwork retailers the Ozeki company and is also recorded as having served the Imperial Household in 1877.

For further examples by the artist, see the Nasser D Khalili collection, Treasures of Imperial Japan, Metalwork I, plates 51, 55, 56 and 60.

Width: 11" 28 cm

Height: 4 3/4" 12 cm

Depth: 9 1/2" 24 cm



SOLD

25

SILVER INCENSE BURNER

Artist - Gyokuruken Sanmi / Kazumi

A cast solid silver and mixed metal Koro (incense burner) in the form of a Shi Shi Dog or "Komainu" the Japanese counterpart, also generically known as a Lion Dog or Foo Dog.

The skilful artist Sanmi (also known as Kazumi) has captured great movement in this mythical beast, its front paws rest upon the solid shakudo and gold ball which also forms the receptacle for incense, the creatures tongue articulates to open and close off the incense escape route, artist signed to the underside.

Literature:

A strikingly similar, though smaller, version of this Koro can be found on Page 109 of "Splendours of Imperial Japan", that example commissioned by the Ozeki company.

The Komainu or Shi Shi Dog are most often seen in pairs as guardians of Buddhist Temples and Shrines in Japan, usually one with its mouth closed and the other open, apparently chanting in unity Bhuddistic words with symbolic meanings of beginning and end.

Height: 6 3/4" 17.5 cm

Length: 6 3/8" 16 cm



26

GILT BRONZE OKIMONO

Artist - Miyao Eisuke

A large exceptional quality pair of bronze and parcel gilt okimono by the highly acclaimed Yokohama based foundry of Miyao Eisuke, this comical pair of figures represent Japanese theatre characters. The artist has chiselled the bronze figures in exquisite detail throughout with the use of dragons, phoenix and mons, these features then highlighted in gold, the characters bodies and faces are contrasted in a softer coloured bronze, the hair chiselled to an exceptional standard and tied impeccably beneath their hats, these substantial heavyweight bronze figures slot into their original gold lacquer decorated hardwood stands.

Each figure signed within a gilt tablet for Miyao Eisuke, a wonderful and humorous pair of okimono from the foundry of this highly revered craftsman.

Total Heights: 22" and 20 1/2" (56 cm and 52 cm)

Bases: 14" x 10" x 4 1/4" (35.5 cm x 25.5 cm x 11 cm)





JAPANESE ENAMELS

It would be difficult to argue the facts that Japanese cloisonné of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was certainly the last, if not the greatest, of the Japanese arts.

Originating in Europe sometime in the 11th century B.C, cloisonné had undergone numerous transitions and name changes, prior to arriving in Japan in the 17th century as a decorative, but poorer quality representation, of finer Chinese works.

It was not until 1838 that an artist known as Kaji Tsunekichi literally re-invented the art of making cloisonné, and produced the first free standing items. Such were his skills that soon the Japanese were copying Ming period Chinese wares to an incredible standard, many of which had and would continue to fool experts in the oriental market, but it wasn't until almost 30 years later that better known artists like Hayashi Kodenji the first (one of four) started to produce wares for export, firstly out of the port of Yokohama, there was a sudden explosion of interest

in this new found product and it was shown at the world's first exposition in Paris in 1867, the first cloisonné factory opened in Nagoya in 1870 followed by factories in Kyoto and Yokohama, some of the better products went on to win medals at the many worldwide expositions, the government quickly embraced the opportunities these wares could produce for the economy and its standing in the world markets, the village of Toshima literally turned into a micro City overnight, it had numerous artisans working in tiny workshops and newly built factories, so much so it became known as cloisonné City, with around 125 kilns and literally hundreds of workers feeding the west's insatiable appetite for Japanese enamel wares.

It was in 1871 that a certain Namikawa Yasayuki left his position as Samurai to begin to learn and perfect cloisonné production, without doubt Yasayuki went on to become the absolute master cloisonné maker, his works have rightly been recognised as such,

with surviving examples becoming the cloisonné connoisseur's most wanted pieces of Japanese enamel, rarely were his items produced in a large scale (usually under 30 cm) and never in the mass produced manner of other artisans working in that period. He developed new coloured enamels including black and translucent, and firing techniques that completely transformed Japanese cloisonné enamel, the previous early and middle period, muddy looking and often Chinese influenced wares were now redundant. Along with Yasayuki's new enamels came his drawings, designs and decoration, now with an eye for the Japanese taste. Finished with highly polished enamels that had never been seen before, Yasayuki worked in a small workshop in Kyoto employing about a dozen or so artisans, he apparently oversaw everything that left his workshop, including giving each piece its final polish before placing it in its Tomobako for its onward journey to the lucky recipient, often the Imperial household, it was noted that a worker could sit with a bowl of

his favourite pebbles and painstakingly polish one single piece for many months, it is therefore not difficult to understand why a perfect piece of Namikawa's cloisonné work is so highly desirable over a century later.

Another huge step forward in what was fast becoming the "Golden age" of Japanese cloisonné was the ability to produce Musen or Wireless cloisonne, this was first invented in 1889 by an artist working in Tokyo called Namikawa Sosuke (no relation to Yasayuki), Sosuke had dreamed of painting tranquil scenes using enamel but without wires, he eventually came up with a technique of removing the wires (cloisons) after decorating but before final firing, this resulted in him fulfilling his dream of producing exquisite shaped plaques or trays, usually decorated with native birds and flora or landscape scenes of lake Biwa or Mount Fuji, once again these are very highly desirable to the world's many cloisonné collectors.

During this Golden Era the two most famous and long standing factories were founded, firstly the Ando factory of Nagoya founded by Ando Jubei in around 1881 followed by the Inaba Company of Kyoto in 1887, the opening of the Inaba factory sadly coincided with the closure of the Nagoya cloisonné company.

Many other techniques were re-invented and perfected by the numerous household names that we know of today, including importantly the Moriage technique, introduced by Kawade Shibataro in conjunction with Ando Jubei, this involved the stacking of enamels to form a raised kind of "in relief" finish, and Plique -à-Jour (a glass like translucent finish first used in France in the 15th Century) another technique practised and further perfected by the two previously mentioned artists.

In summary the number of cloisonné artists and factories are too numerous to fully list, with many still unknown in what transpired to be a magical period, "The Golden Age" defined

as the thirty years (1880-1910) in which artists of varying skill levels, transformed a product that had been made for around three thousand years into one of the finest arts Japan has ever produced.

As with most works of art, cloisonné is available in different qualities and at varied price levels, some of the cheaper and higher production pieces in the lower hundreds of £ budget would rarely be signed but should be enjoyed as quality decorative objects in their own right, together with the mid-range pieces in the higher hundreds to lower thousands bracket, once again mostly unsigned but should continue to give much pleasure and yield sound returns if purchased from reliable sources at the outset, in our opinion, perfect pieces of Japanese cloisonné are still grossly undervalued, when you consider the dozens of man hours each piece took to manufacture.

It is therefore probably very apt that the Japanese name for cloisonné is "Shippo "Which literally means "Seven treasures "and no better words could be used to describe pieces made during that Golden Age.



27

CLOISSONNE VASE

Artist - Ando Jubei

Cloisonné enamel vase depicting narcissus flowers amidst Japanese red berry plants, the exquisite floral detail picked out in fine silver wire upon a jade background, the interior and underside heavily counter enamelled with the silver base rim stamped with the Jungin pure silver mark, the underside bears a full artist signature in silver script that translates to read "made by Ando Jubei", the vase comes complete in its original silk lined signed Tomobako.

Literature:

Ando Jubei 1876–1956 was a Japanese cloisonné artist who dominated Nagoya's enamelling industry from the late Meiji period until the mid 20th century, as an innovator working alongside such renowned artists as Kawade Shibataro, his works were favoured by the Imperial family as presentation gifts, Jubei exhibited at the Japan – British exposition in 1910 during a period that is now considered "the Golden Age of Cloisonné".

His works are housed in some of the world's finest museums and collections, indeed this vase, having been housed in a U.S.A. collection for 20-30 years, was by repute formerly part of the Osaka museum collection.

Height: 12 1/4" 31 cm

Diameter: 7 1/2" 19 cm



CLOISONNE BUTTERFLY VASES

Attr - Hayashi Kodenji II

A pair of "Golden Age" circa 1910 Cloisonné enamel vases, the emerald green silver wired vases unsigned but undoubtedly the work of the Hayashi workshops and likely, Hayashi Kodenji II (1859-1922) the highly skilled artist, has captured butterflies and moths in flight in a style and with a quality that is instantly recognisable as his work.

Literature:

Hayashi Kodenji II was one of four artists by this name based in Nagoya, as with Ando Jubei, they were leading exponents in the manufacture of Cloisonné throughout the golden age of enamel manufacture. A Hayashi Kodenji vase typically of a flower meadow with a cobalt blue ground could be spotted from the other side of a room by an experienced eye, such was the staggering detail and workmanship.

Height: 7 1/4" 18.3 cm

Diameter: 4. 3/4" 12 cm





29

MORIAGE CLOISONNE ENAMEL BOX

Attr - Ando company

A charming Meiji period 1868-1912 Cloisonné enamel lidded box certainly made by the Ando company in the golden period of Cloisonné making circa 1910, the lid of the pale box is cleverly shaded to give the impression of an underwater scene of a pair of crabs amongst reeds, the reeds rendered in traditional Cloisonné with the use of silver wire, undoubtedly the stand out features of the box are the pair of crabs finely detailed in moriage, the delightful box is silk lined and carries the Jungin pure silver mark to the inner rim.

Literature:

Moriage was a technique perfected by the Ando company in conjunction with Kawade Shibataro at the beginning of the 20th century, a process of stacking the enamel to produce a raised in relief (moriage) decoration.

Length: 5 3/8" 13.5 cm

Width: 4 1/4" 11 cm

Height: 2" 5 cm



BAS-TAILLE ENAMEL FISH VASE

Artist - Kumeno Teitaro

A decorative translucent enamel vase by the highly regarded artist Kumeno Teitaro, the vase manufactured in the technique generically known as Bas - Taille enamel, the artist has applied a decorated ground to the hexagonal copper body, upon which he has fired translucent and coloured enamels literally bringing the fantailed Fish to life. The vase is mounted with shakudo base and top rims, the underside of the base stamped with an impressed artist signature seal.

Literature:

Kumeno Teitaro was known to have participated in the following exhibitions:
1893: World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago, USA). Awarded Bronze Medal.
1903: Japanese National Exposition (Osaka, Japan). Awarded First Prize.
1904: Louisiana Purchase Exposition (St. Louis, USA).

It is believed that this vase and our other fish themed vase by Gonda Hirosuke formed part of the important Avo Krikorian collection sold at Christies Zurich in Feb 2007, page 98 Lots 119-121.

Height: 9 1/2" 24 cm

Diameter: 5 1/2" 14 cm



31

LARGE MUSEN ENAMEL GLOBULAR FISH VASE

Attr - Gonda Hirosuke

A delightful Meiji/Taisho period, circa 1920's Cloisonné vase almost certainly by the highly regarded artist of the period Gonda Hirosuke. The artist has used the Musen or wireless technique to great effect as here he captures two red and one black fantailed fish swimming amidst green marine foliage upon a multi-shaded light blue background. The inside of the vase heavily counter-enamelled and finished with silver mounts to the top and base rims.

Literature:

For an almost identical but significantly smaller version of this vase see Coben & Ferster, Japanese Cloisonné, pg 115 plate 156.

Height: 9 3/4" 25 cm

Diameter: 9" 23 cm





JAPANESE SHIBAYAMA

A simple definition of the Japanese art form generically known as “Shibayama” is “the inlay of a design into an ivory, wood or lacquer base using a variety of carved natural materials of varying textures and colours, most often comprising numerous sea-shells, horn, stained ivory and wood”.

The use of shell as an enhancing and decorative inlay has been practised in Japan for literally hundreds of years, particularly by lacquer artists in the production of writing boxes, inro and similar items. However, it was during the 19th century that the Shibayama family (from whom this style of work derives its name) developed the technique into a highly detailed and truly stunning art form that became hugely popular during the Meiji period.

The Meiji Emperor was a great champion of all the Japanese Arts and appreciated that the foreign currency flowing into the country from the sale of these works, both within Japan and worldwide, would greatly assist in his modernisation programme. Consequently, considerable Government effort was put into encouraging and supporting artistic development, exhibition, and sale both within Japan and abroad. The western world was to become fascinated by these hitherto unseen treasures following exposure at the numerous world trade fairs that commenced with the Paris Exposition in 1867

Also, many high-ranking foreign advisors and their supporting workforces, together with a high number of curious and wealthy early tourists, were enjoying the excitement of life in Japan during the second half of the 19th century. Shibayama art with its intricate designs, superb artistry and mind-boggling technical skills appealed greatly to this new customer base and demand grew strongly.

ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Early pieces by the original Shibayama family largely comprised luxury versions of existing everyday Japanese items such as inro, netsuke, small flower vases and boxes which were usually fashioned from ivory but also utilised gold lacquer. The technique involved carving the desired decoration, often floral, into the body of the object. The various carefully selected materials for the inlays were then shaped, carved, and polished to fit precisely into the

vacant design creating a beautiful, slightly raised jigsaw like effect. To fully appreciate this amazing skill, it is necessary to look at a few pieces as describing the process is somewhat difficult! The exact fit of the inlay and truly realistic delicacy of the carving defies belief.

The materials used for the inlay include vivid seashells such as abalone (electric blue and pink), mother of pearl (white, bronze, purple, grey and yellow), coral (red and pink), turtle shell, coconut shell, various woods, various horn, stained ivory, silver, gold – in fact anything that could be crisply carved or worked.

Rapid growth in demand from about 1870 onwards meant that numerous other studios quickly began the production of a far wider and more diverse range of works of art bringing even greater innovation and creativity. Many manufacturers began combining the talents of inlay artists with those of the metalworkers, enamellers, and lacquerers.

We find dramatic silver vases and koro with elaborate translucent enamel decoration, detailed dragon or Ho-o bird handles and decorative finials with inset panels of ivory and gold lacquer lavishly inlaid. The quality of workmanship in many of these fine items is staggering. The same techniques are used to produce large silver chargers and dishes also with intricate filigree silver and enamel work.

Designs included sumptuous floral displays, tranquil garden or aquatic scenes, rural everyday life, historical and legendary people and events, famous places, in fact anything that was shown to appeal to the insatiable foreign market now established both in Japan and worldwide.

Quality and intricacy continued to reach new heights as technical skills evolved. Newly conceived works of art were added to the existing range of traditional products. These included large tusk vases that often came in pairs, superbly worked with all round designs standing on elaborate lacquer or wooden stands. The same techniques and skills were used on even larger scale furnishings including substantial wood and lacquer wall panels and elaborate display cabinets. At the smaller end of production came delicate paper knives, page turners, card cases, even full sets of ladies dressing table accessories, all richly embellished with dazzling inlays and gold lacquer designs.

SHIBAYAMA TABLE SCREEN

Artist - Masaaki

A gold lacquer and Shibayama encrusted two fold table screen, the larger front panels depict a joyful scene of dancers, musicians and acrobats, decorated in semi precious stones upon a Hiramakie, Kirigane and Kinji ground, probably celebrating a festive occasion like the Sakura season (Cherry blossom), the lower panels finely decorated with floral displays within fans, to the reverse of this decadant object is a tranquil setting depicting birds amidst flora and branches of Wisteria, the lower panels simply decorated with flora within fan shaped cartouches with the panels all being housed within an Oki-Hirame decorated frame held together with intricate silver hinges, the shoulders and frame further embellished with chased silver mounts, artist signed Masaaki.

Literature:

Masaaki is an often seen signature mostly associated with the style of work generically known as Shibayama.

For two other similar quality examples possibly by the same maker Masaaki see –

The Dragon King of the Sea, Impey & Fairley, page 90 plate 37.

The Nasser D. Khalili collection of Japanese Art Lacquer part II - plate 168.

Height: 8" 21.5 cm

Depth: 1/2" 1 cm

Width: 9 1/4" 23.7 cm

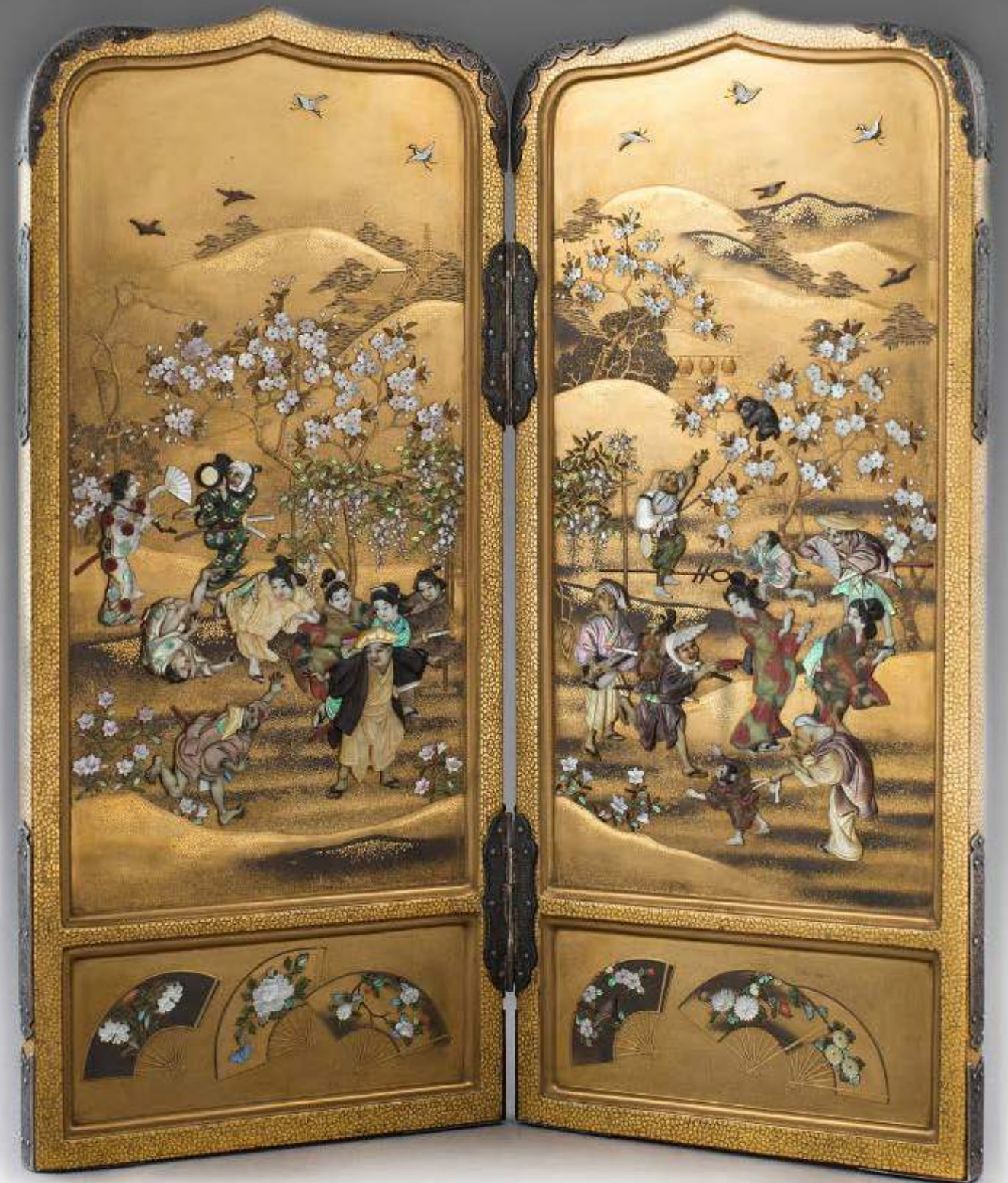


TABLE SCREEN - TSUITATE

Artist - Naomasa

A gold lacquer and Shibayama miniature tsuitate (table screen). The main panel depicts a joyous rendition of a prancing elephant surrounded and ridden upon by a band of boys playing a host of musical instruments and waving banners, the main gold lacquer and Shibayama Ivory panel is held in place with silver mounts upon a hardwood back panel, to the reverse a series of three oval Ivory roundels depicting more tranquil scenes of birds and butterflies in flight amidst floral displays. The panel slots snugly into its original hardwood stand further decorated with gold lacquer & Shibayama decoration.

Literature:

Although obviously produced by a collaboration of artists including a wood carver and silversmith, it would appear that the dominant Shibayama artist has signed the mother of pearl tablet which translates to read "Naomasa".

Height: 15 1/2" 39 cm

Width: 11" 28 cm

Depth: 4 3/4" 12 cm



SILVER MOUNTED SHIBAYAMA TANTO

Artist - Kirusai Soyo/Akashi

A most opulent silver mounted gold lacquer and Shibayama Tanto (dagger) found in stunning original condition. The gold lacquered scabbard is fitted with fine quality silver and gold chiselled chrysanthemum mounts, the intricate Shibayama work comprises of a cockerel in a prunus blossom and chicks within floral displays to one side, with further displays of flora in Ikebana baskets and a hardstone vase to the reverse. The artist has used semi-precious stones and shells to great effect, the Tanto case is signed Akashi in an oblong cartouche, this would usually be the Shibayama artist, the steel blade is carved with the three friends of Winter namely Bamboo, Prunus and Pine. The Kozuka is signed Kirusai with Kao, this being the dominant metalwork artist.

Literature:

The Kozuka is signed Kirusai with Kao as well as an inscription translating to read Autumn of the year of Kinoto-hitsuji, likely to be made by Kirusai Yokoya Soyo. Further examples of his work are recorded in the Tomkinson collection among others.

Length: 15" 38 cm

Width: 1 3/4" 4.5 cm

Depth: 1 1/2" 4 cm





35

MINIATURE TABLE SCREEN

Artist - Unknown

A gold Lacquer and Shibayama miniature Tsutate (table screen), the super quality lacquered panel depicts a Samurai and sword wielding companion hiding in long grasses in a moonlit scene with pavilions in the distance, to the reverse a more tranquil scene of butterflies in flight amidst a fine quality gold lacquer and Shibayama floral display. The panel is housed in a silver mounted carved ivory frame that slots snugly into its purpose made hardwood stand, the stand carved in fine detail, the quality of the overall workmanship is excellent, clearly a Meiji period work by a collaboration of skilled artists.

Height: 10" 25.5 cm

Width: 6 7/8" 17.5 cm

Depth: 4 3/4" 12 cm





JAPANESE LACQUER

Let me at the outset say that in the opinion of many Japanese collectors, fine quality lacquer is currently the most undervalued, under-rated and unrecognised of all the Japanese Arts. Exquisite items can still be found for very modest outlays, items that have taken a master craftsman weeks, months, even years to create.

To put this into some sort of context the lacquer cabinet that features as plate 231 in the Khalili Collections Treasures of Imperial Japan, Lacquer part II, by repute took four artists seven years to complete with over four years of that production dedicated to the lacquer work alone. This incredible masterpiece was presented to the Prince of Wales (King Edward VIII) by the crown Prince Hirohito on a visit to England in 1921, apparently to cement relations between the two countries.

TECHNIQUES

Lacquer, which is the refined sap of the *Rhus Verniciflua* tree, has been used in Japan since at least the sixth century AD. When filtered and concentrated by evaporation it can be used as an extremely durable and highly protective coating for virtually any carefully prepared item fashioned from wood, metal, paper, or other material.

Its resistance to liquids, acids, heat, and the cold, coupled with its ability to be coloured and polished to a high gloss finish, made it absolutely ideal for the production of an immense number of everyday Japanese domestic wares. These range from a multitude of boxes and other containers, bowls, stands

etc through to large items of furniture, armour, armour boxes, palanquins, coffers, and the like. In fact, virtually anything found inside or outside the traditional Japanese home – be it a simple rural dwelling or the magnificent palace of a Daimyo.

Being in everyday use lacquer work provides an opportunity for the Japanese to express and enjoy their exquisite and poignant artistic taste and for the lacquer artist to display his remarkable skill. There are a great many varied techniques used in the making of these works of art, but it is not my intention to go into these in great detail as many reference works are available on this topic. However, the basic processes and principles are the same and give an understanding of the time it takes to produce even a small treasure.

Lacquer usually coloured either black (from iron) or red (from mercury or iron) is painted or spread onto the craftsman made object whatever it may be and allowed to dry. This process is repeated many times slowly building up a thicker stronger

coating which can be polished to a gloss finish if desired. Often clay or other bulking agent is used which greatly thickens the lacquer allowing areas within the design to be built up resulting in a raised effect. This is frequently used to give depth and perspective in landscape designs where hills, trees, valleys, buildings, clouds etc can be given a subtle three-dimensional appearance. Whatever the chosen design, it is then applied to the lacquer base by painting, spreading or sprinkling metal powders, usually gold of varying colours or silver, in a dazzling array of techniques.

Further decorative enhancements include the use of mixed metal inlays often made by sword fitting artists and may depict the mounted warrior on horseback or the weary traveller in a lacquer landscape or perhaps an insect on foliage. Also, various iridescent shells of remarkably vibrant colours can be incorporated into any design whether it be a formal brocade pattern, the wings of a magnificent butterfly or individually

highlighted flowers. The shells used include the electric blue and pink of abalone and the yellows, purples, bronzes, and blacks of mother of pearl, all readily available in Japan. Often these shell inlays sit precisely flush with the polished lacquer surface – another example of remarkable skill.

ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

From an artistic evolution perspective, it is surprising to find that designs remained fairly uniform over the last 400 years or so, largely falling into three categories. The first is the outright utility item with little or no decoration and aimed at a mass domestic market. The second is a more formal design comprising noble family “mon” or crests in gold with scrolling foliage on a black or gold ground. These often came in very large matching sets of wonderful domestic utensils. The third is where the artist has been free to depict the many beautiful scenic or natural subjects that appeal to the refined (and wealthy) Japanese client. Very

often legends, poetry, tragedy, and poignancy are alluded to in a variety of subtle designs.

It was only in the Meiji period that a few artists, most notably Shibata Zeshin and his pupils, brought a more radical and innovative approach to the subject matter found on lacquerwares. The scarce products from the studios of these masters are nowadays very highly prized.

Lacquerware can be found in a huge array of objects, designs, and qualities and, being one of the most ancient and commonly used Japanese art forms, it presents the connoisseur with a very wide scope for collecting.

Interestingly many of the very finest pieces are of a modest size, for example intro, writing (and other) boxes, tea containers etc. These sumptuously decorated works of art with lavish use of pure gold and beautiful artistry have been admired in Japan for centuries yet have still to be fully appreciated by the western world.

36

KAZARIDANA DISPLAY CABINET

Artist - Unknown

This black lacquered hardwood cabinet rests upon a simulated bamboo stand with the bamboo theme following throughout the structure, the display shelves decorated with pierced open fretwork gallery's, the door and drawer fronts decorated in sumptuous gold lacquer decoration upon well textured natural timber panels. The unknown lacquer artist has captured egrets, geese and other native birds either in flight or wading amidst Lotus plants and lakeside foliage, the doors latch closed with mixed metal decorated catches, a further pair of doors adorned with floral displays and silver handles, the sliding panel decorated upon a carved wicker ground features a cockatiel sat upon a perch preening its feathers.

Height: 53 1/2" 136 cm

Width: 45 1/4" 115 cm

Depth: 13" 33 cm





37

GOLD LACQUER & SHIBAYAMA KODANSU

Artist - Shibayama Masayoshi & Kashosai

Large and exceptional lacquer and Shibayama Kodansu cabinet decorated throughout with cockerels formed from multi coloured Abalone shells, horn and other semi-precious materials each painstakingly applied to the Nashiji ground. The cabinet adorned with finely chiselled solid silver gilt mounts and carrying handle, the interior houses four richly lacquered graduated drawers with silver drop handles, the inside of the door lacquered in a spray of chrysanthemum also bears the artist signature.

Literature:

Kodansu cabinets of this type were very opulent and expensive gifts when made, in part due to the length of time involved to produce such a piece, the process would involve at least three collaborating artists, including a lacquerer and, on this occasion, the well listed Lacquer artist Kashosai, has signed the interior door panel.

A silversmith would have been commissioned to manufacture and supply the mounts, however the dominant artist here would have undoubtedly been the Shibayama artist, on this example a direct member of the Shibayama family whose family name originally derived the generic skill known as "Shibayama".

Lacquer part II of the Nasser D Khalili collections, plate 195 shows a cabinet with similar style Nashiji lacquer and Shibayama cockerels, this particular cabinet apparently artist signed by Shinryo.

Height: 8 1/2" 21.5 cm (excluding handle)

Length: 9" 23 cm

Depth: 7" 18 cm





JAPANESE TEXTILES

There is little doubt that a major part of the phenomenon of Japanese works of art exploding onto the worldwide stage leading up to and during the Meiji period was brought about by the Textile manufacturers of Kyoto, the most recognized of which will undoubtedly be the Nishimura company, originally founded in Kyoto in 1670 as textile traders.

It was the 12th generation manager Nishimura Sozamon (1855-1935) aged just 17 and remarkably adopted into the family as the son of a Chinese Scholar who took the company to its dizzy heights. As early as 1873 just one year into his tenure the company were exhibiting at expositions and even during that early period the company picked up awards and medals gaining significant recognition both nationally and overseas, particularly in Paris in 1878. Thereafter, the factory moved to new premises in Kyoto, presumably having outgrown their original site, this move coincided with the building of the new Imperial palace in Tokyo where Nishimura were commissioned to provide 64 embroidered wall panels. the highest accolade had surely now been achieved as “suppliers to the Imperial household” this was the ultimate marketing tool which was now used widely in the sales campaigns and specifically on the product labels, during the 1890’s the company continued to innovate and execute new techniques, they employed the finest artists and embroiderers taking the company from strength to strength, multiple Gold medals and notable awards were achieved at various national and international Expositions, there is little doubt that the appetite for Nishimura products were insatiable, particularly in America and Paris, where known traders were buying and commissioning multiple items for their clients collections and indeed their own gallery’s, make no mistake some of these incredible works of art would have been expensive items at the time, with the finest pieces commissioned for the clients of wealthy merchant traders and Imperial household members.

It seemed as if Sozayemon coupled with his accolade of supplier to the Imperial household had cornered this highly lucrative market, and this was the case certainly until the 1890’s when the company faced stiff competition from the new kid on the block, Iida Takashimaya, a company founded in 1831 by Iida Shinshichi I (1803-1874) as a small retailer of non Silk drapery products, this modest shop called Takashimaya would through successive generations of the Iida family quickly rise to prominence as a major player on the worlds stage becoming suppliers to the

Imperial household and ultimately stiff competition for the long established Nishimura company. Having only gained a licence for the manufacture and sale of Silk products as late as 1855, the new generation led by Iida Shinshichi II began to make inroads into the Kyoto retail market supplying mostly clothing, rugs and its speciality Fukusa to the emerging middle classes, in 1877 Iida first exhibited nationally winning numerous awards.

Following the untimely death of Shinshichi II in 1878, the company passed into the hands of the remaining siblings headed up at this point by the daughter in law of the founder, Iida Utako, who continued development of domestic products but with a keen eye on the emerging decorative textiles market, winning awards at major national and international expositions, the growth was rapid and Iida were clearly beginning to make inroads into the market once dominated by the Nishimura company, even head hunting Nishimuras finest artists to work for them. Eventually in 1887 they too were commissioned by the Imperial household to supply amongst other items drapery and wall coverings for the new Imperial palace, this accolade resulted in two of Iida’s weavers being elevated to the honourable rank of “Imperial artist” followed later in the 1890’s with the Iida company officially recognized and now able to market themselves as “official manufacturers to the Imperial Household”, Iida had outwitted their peers, clearly there was demand for two such important companies in what was at the time and clearly remains today a red hot market for arguably the finest textiles ever produced.

The above plotted history can offer only the briefest insight into an industry that simply took the audiences breath away when it launched onto the world stage during the latter part of the 19th century. For a more in depth study of Japanese textiles I would absolutely recommend “Threads of Silk and Gold” a pioneering study of Japanese textiles that accompanied the first ever textile exhibition held outside Japan, curated by Clare Pollard at the Ashmolean museum in 2012.

As stated the finest products are as highly coveted today as they were during this innovative period though obviously much scarcer, with the finest textiles now preserved in the world’s leading museums and collections, I sincerely hope you enjoy our charming examples representing each of the two dominant company’s of the Meiji period.

SOLD



38

FRAMED SILK TEXTILE

Artist - Nishimura Sozayemon 1855-1935

Charming silk embroidery in a zelkova wood frame depicting the head of a Japanese Chin dog, the original hardwood frame bearing the label of the Nishimura company to the rear.

Literature:

See introduction page.

Length: 20 1/2" 52 cm

Width: 17" 43 cm

Depth: 2" 5 cm



SOLD



39

SILK TEXTILE

Artist - Iida Takashimaya Company

Charming silk embroidered textile of a Japanese Chin dog aside a spray of peacock feathers, the picture housed within its original black lacquer cushioned frame bearing original makers label to the rear.

Literature:

See introduction page.

Height: 26 3/4" 68 cm

Width: 21 3/4" 54.5 cm

Depth: 3 1/2" 8.5 cm



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dear reader

It has given me immense pleasure to produce my inaugural Japanese works of art exhibition catalogue, I do hope you have enjoyed the content and images as much as I have enjoyed collating and writing about the pieces.

My journey into Japanese art from the Meiji period started around 40 years ago working alongside my dear friend Mike Sandy at his long-established and successful antiques business. Mike had a passion for Japanese works of art and so we readily bought and sold these items, eventually jousting with each other for the best of our finds, all good natured of course.

My favourite tale was when Mike called me about a group of Kinkozan pieces he had acquired from a private call and intimated that he might let me buy one, well that was the trigger, I was actually sat on his driveway as he arrived home. Needless to say that about an hour or so later I was leaving his house with two of the finer pieces, he never lets me forget that day, and the error of his ways, big mistake Mike - and one we are all guilty of as passion overrides commercial sense.

Looking back now, as a 16 year old finding his way in the antiques world, it would have seemed an improbable dream that some four decades later I would have been fortunate enough to have purchased, studied and subsequently sold some of the finest pieces ever produced during those magical years of the Meiji period.

A massive thank you to Mike for that valuable introduction, and my thanks to the other passionate and knowledgeable dealers that I have shared many days with on my journey to this production. Special mention to the leading Japanese art specialists that I now regularly enjoy the company of and learn so much from, their knowledge is unsurpassable, their passion is infectious and, without their incredible support, I would not be sharing this book with you today.

I wish to once again thank my worldwide database of clients, many now friends, that have shared the passion and invested in the hundreds of Japanese works that I have sold, whether online or in person your support has been invaluable.

And finally, the biggest thank you must be reserved for my long-suffering wife of 30 plus years, Carolyn. She has supported me and allowed me to invest the "children's inheritance" to indulge in my passion for Japanese works of art, and always without inquisition.

'Thank you Lady Carolyn'

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