

## An Exhibition of Lacquer Works by Jihei Murase

### Lacquer Forms : Modern *Negoro*

Ippodo New York : October 13 – November 3, 2016

\*Opening Reception : October 13, 6 – 8p.m.



Front: Line carved incense container, Negoro style, 2016 H2 Φ2 in (H4.5 Φ5 cm)  
Back: Line carved tea caddy with flat lid, Negoro style, 2016 H2 1/4 Φ3 in (H5.6 Φ7.6 cm)

NEW YORK, NY, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016 — Ippodo gallery is pleased to hold an exhibition of lacquer works by Jihei Murase III. Murase is a third-generation lacquerware artist, with the Murase family traditions dating back to the Edo period (1603-1868). Seeking inspiration for the original work of his grandfather honoring the tea ceremony, the objects are created in the style of Negoro, named for the 12<sup>th</sup> century temple which originated the design. The Negoro design is a simple, Zen, modest style, where black reveals itself through vermillion over time, and Murase's work is well known for its expertise in this longstanding tradition. Beyond reverence for the past, the works speak to the changing tides of art and lifestyle in modern society. Delving into form and meaning, works intermingle value of nature, tradition, and harmony in innovation, ultimately challenging conventional tea ceremony with precision and artistry. Tea caddies, scoops, water jars, vases, vessels and trays are all on display at Ippodo Gallery, with 30 items in all.

Whether in vermilion red, silver or black, Murase emphasizes the harmony in form. Although all works can be used in traditional tea ceremony, Murase is foremost a sculptor, paying careful attention to his golden rule of shape down to minutia. Murase's tea wares pays reverence to contemporary Mingei style. Translated as the beauty of functional things, Mingei is known as the art of daily life. Viewable as art objects, they are intertwined with the everyday.

The Murase family perfected their technique over the centuries for top clientele among dilettantes and top restaurateurs. Rosanjin Kitaoji (1883-1959) loved Murase's lacquerware, and was celebrated in Mingei as a chef, potter as well and painter. The Murase family was originally from Nagoya, tea-ceremony was a daily occurrence, necessitating the precision and artistry of top quality objects. In 1952, the family moved to Tokyo and produced tea ceremony utensils under the direction of the tea master Soho Suzuki, connecting with tea ceremony aficionados Jian Matsunaga and Fujio Koyama. Their informal monthly tea ceremony in Tokyo has now endured for almost six decades.

Murase works with a very delicate, sharp chisel he uniquely handcrafts to align the lid and body of his pieces perfectly. The effect is a smooth finish, and a thinned and precise base. For more traditional symmetrical items, he selects trees grown in straight, severe environments. Murase works with timber dried over a hundred years, prized for its delicate, thin grooves. The result is a subtlety shaped by a century of preparation, effortless in its smooth and seamless serenity. Items are hatched from a single slice of wood, a strong and high-quality type called keyaki (or zelcova). Keyaki is naturally curved, thus preserving the line and texture for a natural form. The technique has been perfected since Murase's father began the process.

Lacquer is secondary, intended only to coat form. Murase repeatedly coats the items in black so as not to distract from nature's creation. The silver occasionally oxidizes over time, growing cooler over time. Two layers coat container inside the tea container and on the outside cover, demonstrating dedicated and beautiful craftsmanship, even as the mastery is understated.

Ippodo Gallery continues its mission to present works in harmony with the natural world. As old-growth forests gradually disappear, incorporating precious woods optimizes nature, and pays homage to the natural splendor of Japan.

#### Jihei Murase

- 1957 Born in Tokyo as the grandson of the first generation Jihei who was a craftsman working with the wooden base and lacquer coating under the direction and patronage of Kitaoji Rosanjin.
- 1975 Graduates from Tokyo Metropolitan High School of Music & the Fine Arts
- 1980 Graduates from the Sculpture Department of Tokyo Zokei University.  
In the same year, joined the long-standing family lacquerware wooden base and coating business.  
Receives instruction in the Way of Tea from Ikeda Sokan of Hibi-an, a Master of the Urasenke School of Tea
- 2001 Inherits the name, Jihei III, and the position of 7th generation lacquerware base maker.



Thereafter, exhibits his work widely.

#### Public collections:

- Philadelphia Museum of Art / Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
- Yale University Art Gallery (Asian art collection) / New Haven, Connecticut, USA
- The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo / Japan



Ridged water pitcher, Negoro style, 2016  
H6 3/4 W11 D6 in (H17 W27.5 D15.2 cm)



Sawakuri silver lacquer tray, 2016  
H2 1/4 Φ17 in (H5.6 Φ43 cm)



Standing tray, Negoro style, 2016  
H7 3/4 W12 3/4 D11 1/4 in (H19.6 W32 D28.4 cm)



Hatchet shaved silver lacquer water jar, 2016  
H7 2/4 W9 D8 in (H19 W22.8 D19.8 cm)



Medicine container shaped tea caddy, Negoro style, 2016  
H3 Φ3 in (H7 Φ7.3 cm)

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