

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Innovation in Form: Lacquerware by Jihei Murase III

September 8 - October 12, 2022 | Opening Reception, September 8, 5-8pm

New York – Ippodo Gallery is pleased to present **Innovation in Form: Lacquerware by Jihei Murase III**, a showcase of 35 lacquer works by the artist from September 8th to October 12th. The craft of Jihei Murase III is the culmination of generations of expertise and innovative genius. This long-awaited exhibition is the second showing with Ippodo Gallery New York, after a solo exhibition in 2016. Since his last display, Murase has continued to gain recognition in the United States and Europe for his scrupulous attention to beauty and innovation of form. The artist reveres the beauty of functional things, expertly joining beautiful aesthetics with utility in everyday life.

Japan's long-standing tea tradition requires precise utensils to elevate the performance, necessitating the patronage of a great lacquerware artist. Such is the history of the Murase family, who have been in the wood-working business for seven generations, dating back to the Edo Period (1603-1868). Murase is the third-generation lacquerware master of the Jihei patronymic. He is one of the most renowned creators of Negoro style lacquerware, which finds its origins at the Negoro Temple during the Heian Period (794-1185). Zen monks who practiced at the temple gradually wore down the vermilion lacquer coating over time, exposing mesmerizing flashes of the black undercoat to the open air.

Murase has a hand in every aspect of the lacquer-making process; he begins by smelting iron, which he forges into a hatchet and lathe to carve the dried raw material. Murase then sculpts his envisioned shape by shaving away excess wood. To create one of his signature Negoro style works, he first applies many undercoats of colorful lacquer and binds them with reinforced linen cloth. He then polishes and reapplies the undercoat, building additional protective layers. Finally, he applies and polishes an external layer without completely concealing the vivid color beneath. However, Murase's skill and invention extend to other forms of lacquerware; using the rare aged Zelkova wood, Murase preserves the rugged exterior surface, to which he applies a unique iron lacquer that oxidizes, emitting a fantastic light.

Murase's grandfather, Jihei I, worked closely with famous artist and restaurateur Rosanjin in Nagoya, primarily perfecting the hatsuri ("scallop-shaved") style. As Murase came of age and began creating lacquerware, the relationship between Jihei I and Rosanjin was the foundation from which the artist developed his innovative techniques. Empowered by this inherited knowledge, Murase creates stunning lacquerware pieces that are both functional and elegant.



Flower Vase, Negoro Style, 2022, Lacquer
H 12 3/4 x Φ 10 3/4 in, H32.4 x Φ 27.2 cm

Beyond the creation of his exquisite crafts, Murase pays close attention to the deforestation of Japan's virgin woodlands. Conscious of the need to preserve the endangered ecosystem, Murase does not work with impunity. Rather, he chooses only the most suitable trees, favoring the fine grain of Chestnut, Cypress, Cherry, Yakusugi Cedar, and most impressive of all, the sacred Zelkova –called Jindai Keyaki in Japanese – that has been buried and aged. At the heart of the artist's practice, the wood medium is an opportunity for aggrandizement, further accentuating the beauty of nature.

Jihei Murase III continues to produce lacquerware of the finest grade from his atelier in Tokyo, Japan. When he joined his family's well-established woodworking business in 1980, Murase learned the Way of Tea from Urasenke master Ikeda Sokan of Hibian. Since then, Murase's masterful skill and contributions to lacquerware have been recognized and honored internationally. The public continues to appreciate the mastery of the artist's work around the world, most notably at the Victoria & Albert Museum (London, United Kingdom), the Philadelphia Museum of Art (Philadelphia, PA), Yale University Art Gallery, Asian Art Collection (New Haven, CT), and the National Museum of Modern Art (Tokyo, Japan).



Silver Diamond-Cut Striped Water Container, 2022, Lacquer
H 6 1/2 x Φ 12 3/8 in, H 16.4 x Φ 31.3 cm

About the Gallery

Ippodo Gallery is committed to creating shared empathetic, craft-oriented experiences through engagement with Japanese art and culture. We continue to showcase work by living artists that adheres to our mission to cultivate beauty with a consciousness of the fragility of nature and the strength of quiet serenity. Ippodo Gallery has worked directly with over 200 artists and held thousands of exhibitions over three decades. We are grateful to continue to bring contemporary Japanese fine art and sensibility to Western audiences. Keiko Aono founded Ippodo Gallery Tokyo in 1996, with two locations in the heart of Ginza and the residential area of Gotenyama. Daughter Shoko Aono opened Ippodo Gallery in New York in 2008, forging new connections with a global audience. Since then, she continues to witness the timeless cross-cultural impact of Japanese kogeï art that transcends language.

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