

PRESS RELEASE
THE POETRY OF SHAPE
JAPANESE LACQUER WORKS BY
NAGATOSHI ONISHI

4th July until 19th October 2008

Opens Thursday, 3rd July at 3.00 p.m.

For the first time in Scandinavia, in the summer and autumn of 2008, the Danish Museum of Art and Design is presenting an extraordinary exhibition by the greatest living Japanese artist working in the traditional and highly complex lacquer technique.

NAGATOSHI ONISHI (born 1933) is a veritable institution in Japan and is world-famous as an artist in lacquer, a teacher and a scholar in the field. The Museum's exhibition offers an unprecedented opportunity, not only to meet a utterly unique artistic personality, but also to become acquainted with a demanding artistic technique which is by no means familiar in Northern Europe.

URUSHI, the Japanese art of lacquer, has a history of more than a thousand years. Lacquer itself is a natural material which is obtained from the sap of a particular tree. Lacquer is traditionally applied to wood or bamboo and is then allowed to dry. It is a complicated and extremely time-consuming process which must take place in an absolutely dust-free area. The lacquer's natural colour is dark brown, but this can be altered with coloured pigments, then dried and subsequently decorated. The surface can be left silky smooth or can be polished.

Nagatoshi Onishi's works in lacquer are executed in another, simpler style. They are created in a technique where the object is built-up of pieces of fabric dipped in lacquer, which permits considerable flexibility in shaping. Onishi's lacquer works are devoid of decoration, they are monochrome in red, black or, occasionally, gold, freely formed into rhythmic vessels and other objects, inspired by the organic forms of nature.

In 1998, Onishi established his own lacquer centre, GANSEN (meaning "precious" in Japanese) in the countryside outside Tokyo. Here he accepts students and has his own, very private lacquer studio where he produces the highly-renowned works, each one unique, which he has exhibited in the Far East, the USA and Australia and can now be seen in this country.

From 1982 until 2000, Mr Onishi was Professor in the Art of Lacquer at the Academy of Art in Tokyo. Today he conducts his academic efforts partly, for example, through being President of WUCC (The World Urushi Culture Council) while also continuing to write comprehensively on the subject.

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Information

Secretary and Press Officer: Lotte Rohde

Tel. (+00 45) 33 18 56 77 mail lro@Kunstindustrimuseet.dk

DET DANSKE

KUNSTINDUSTRIMUSEUM

BREDGADE 68

DENMARK

TEL +45 3318 5660

FAX +45 3318 5666

INFO@KUNSTINDUSTRIMUSEET.DK

WWW.KUNSTINDUSTRIMUSEET.DK

CVR NR 55798516

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