PRESS RELEASE

First-ever Exhibition of Contemporary Lacquer Sculpture To Open at the Minneapolis Institute of Art in Fall

Ground-breaking show highlights 16 artists who push the medium in new and dynamic directions

Minneapolis, August 24, 2017—The Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) has organized the first comprehensive exhibition of contemporary Japanese lacquer sculpture. On view from October 7, 2017, through June 24, 2018, “Hard Bodies: Contemporary Japanese Lacquer Sculpture” will feature the work of 16 artists who show the evolution of lacquerware from bowls, cups, boxes, and other utilitarian objects to large-scale works that are conceptually innovative and emphasize lacquer’s sheen and lustrous beauty. The works are drawn from the Clark Collections at Mia, the only collection in the world to have substantial representation of this new form.

“Hard Bodies: Contemporary Japanese Lacquer Sculpture” highlights a small but enterprising group of contemporary artists’ interpretations of an established tradition. Lacquer is a natural polymer distilled from the sap from one of three species of trees from the urushi-sumac group that grow in temperate and subtropical regions. Since the Neolithic era, lacquer has been used by artisans in Asia to coat common household items to make them resistant to both water and insects. Over the centuries, these artisans learned to pigment the sap with lampblack and cinnabar and accentuate their wares with inlaid gold, silver, mother-of-pearl, and other precious materials.

The 16 artists shown in Mia’s exhibition have pushed the medium in entirely new and dynamic directions, producing objects that range from the playful to the sublimely elegant to the fantastic. “Hard Bodies: Contemporary Japanese Lacquer Sculpture” features over 30 sculptures, including Aoki Chie’s likenesses of the human body that seem to morph or melt into bulbous forms; Kurimoto Natsuki’s The Dual Sun II, an
automobile hood inlaid with mother-of-pearl; and Someya Satoshi’s Mount Bull, a mountain rising from the back of an ornately decorated bull.

“Our goal is to introduce the creativity and innovative spirit of these artists to the public,” said Marks, who organized the exhibition.

Catalogue and Programming

“Hard Bodies: Contemporary Japanese Lacquer Sculpture” is accompanied by a fully illustrated, 169-page catalogue written by Andreas Marks of Mia and published by the University of Minnesota Press. The hardcover catalogue is available at The Store at Mia.

Programming includes an opening-day presentation by Marks called “Contemporary Japanese Lacquer Sculpture: A Short History.” The talk will take place on October 7, 2017, and serve as an introduction to the exhibition.

Mia will also host an artist talk on November 19, 2017, featuring Prof. Matsushima Sakurako of Utsunomiya University in Toshigi, Japan, who has three sculptures in the exhibition. The program is titled “Exploring Asian Culture through Urushi Lacquer Arts.”

To reserve tickets for either presentation, call 612.870.3000 or order online.

Support

Generous support for this program is provided by the Gale Family Endowment. Named by a generous gift from Alfred P. Gale, the Gale Family Endowment supports Mia’s efforts to reach a spectrum of audiences through a variety of programs, events, materials, exhibitions, and publications focused on its renowned collection of Asian Art.

About the Clark Center for Japanese Art at Mia

In 1995, Bill and Libby Clark founded the non-profit Clark Center for Japanese Art and Culture in California’s Central Valley and dedicated the Center to collecting, conserving, studying, and exhibiting the arts of Japan. In 2013, the Clarks’ personal collection and that of the Center was acquired by the Minneapolis Institute of Art, and two years later the Center closed. Now, the Center’s longstanding mission is continued through the Clark Center for Japanese Art at Mia.
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About The Minneapolis Institute Of Art

Home to more than 89,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest wide-ranging art collections in the country—Rembrandt to van Gogh, Monet to Matisse, Asian to African—Mia links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration.

General admission to Mia is always free. Some special exhibitions have a nominal admission fee.

Museum Hours

Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday  
10am–5pm

Thursday, Friday  
10am–9pm

Sunday  
11am–5pm

Monday  
Closed

For more information, call + 1 612 870 3000 or visit artsmia.org