

Ichinaka Goryō 市中五稜 (active 20th century)

Portable Tea Set with Snow, Moon, and Flowers, 1990s

Heisei era (1989-2019)

Maki-e gold lacquer on wood

Private Collection, courtesy of Erik Thomsen

Okada Yoshio 岡田嘉夫 (b. 1977)

“Figured Patterns” Dried-Lacquer Tray with Sprinkled Design, 2016

Heisei era (1989-2019)

Kanshitsu lacquer body with black-lacquer ground; *maki-e*, *hirame* and inlay decoration

Private Collection, courtesy of Erik Thomsen

Okada Yoshio 岡田嘉夫 (b. 1977)

Box with Full Moon Above the Clouds, 2016

Heisei era (1989-2019)

Togidashi maki-e kanshitsu box with gold foil moon

On loan from Erik and Cornelia Thomsen

Okada, a celebrated contemporary lacquer artist working in Kyoto, exemplifies the use of traditional lacquer techniques to generate completely new expressions. He creates the underlying surface of this box and tray in a process called “dry lacquer” (*kanshitsu*), building up layers of hemp cloth soaked with lacquer and modeling them into the shape of the object. This ancient technique was also used for 8th-century sculpture in Japan. Okada decorates the box using the painstaking burnished sprinkled-picture (*togidashi maki-e*) technique, wherein sprinkled metal designs are covered with another layer of black lacquer before being polished down to reveal the pattern on an entirely smooth surface. For the design of the tray, Okada has taken inspiration from motifs found in pre-modern textiles and lacquers.

Unknown Japanese

Inkstone Box (Suzuribako) with Eight Views of Ōmi (Ōmi-hakkei)

Mid-to-late Edo period (1615-1868)

Wood coated with lacquer and gold, with silk covering
Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center; Purchase, Pratt
Fund, 2008.21

This luxurious writing box displays the poetic landscape theme of the “Eight Views of Ōmi Province” in a unified composition across the cover and insides of the box. The “eight views” as a theme in poetry and painting originally developed in 12th-century China, referring to famous scenic spots around the Xiao and Xiang rivers. By the 16th century, it had been poetically transposed onto the Japanese landscape around Lake Biwa, east of Kyoto, for a codified set of eight new, native “views” depicted in poetry, painting, prints, and lacquers.

The zig-zag movement on the top cover echoes landscape paintings, leading us from the “Sunset Glow at Seta River” in the lower right, to “Autumn Moon at Ishiyama Temple” in the center left, “Clearing Weather at Awazu” in the center right, and “Evening Bell at Mii Temple” in the upper right. The inside of the lid echoes the top cover, repeating the Seta bridge in the lower left, before proceeding through the remaining four views: “Returning Sails at Yabase,” “Night Rain at Karasaki,” “Descending Geese at Katada,” and “Evening Snow on Mt. Hira.”

The prominence of the Ishiyama Temple on the front cover recalls the act of literary composition itself: according to legend, the sight of the full moon reflected on the lake inspired Murasaki Shikibu, the author of the *Tale of Genji*, to begin writing the novel while on pilgrimage to the temple. Leaving the ground predominantly black, with misty clouds of sparsely sprinkled metals, this lacquer artist evokes the evening mood of many of the “eight views.”