

## Japanese Lacquer

### *Finishing Layers and Decoration*

#### *Preparation*

- During the final stage of lacquering, it is very important not to get dust on the wet surfaces
- Artists wear special clothes and work in very clean rooms; afterwards, the lacquered object dries in a dust-free cabinet

#### *Brushes*

- Different types of brushes are used for different techniques and stages of the lacquering process
- For applying basic layers of lacquer, artists use brushes made out of human hair
- These brushes are made by covering lengths of hair in strips of wood—as the brush is worn down, wood is cut away so that new parts of the brush can be used



#### *Polishing and effects*

- Artists have developed many different styles for finishing lacquer works of art
- The five most common of these methods are:
  - painting with lacquer
  - inlaying lacquer, with materials like eggshells, mother of pearl, metals, and ivory
  - carving lacquer
  - creating relief work on the surface of the lacquer
  - using metallic powders to decorate the surface, called *maki-e*



*Japanese writing box and brushes (17<sup>th</sup> century). High relief on the surface was created with the *taka maki-e* technique; landscape decorations are seen on both the box's surface and on the*

#### *Maki-e* (“sprinkled picture”), *metallic decorations*

- Powdered gold, silver, and copper are all commonly used as lacquer decorations
- There are three different “sprinkled picture” techniques:
  - *Hira maki-e*: powdered gold, silver, or copper is sifted onto a wet lacquer surface and then polished flat
  - *Taka maki-e*: powdered metals are sifted onto the wet surface and then built up with more powder
  - *Togidashi maki-e*: powdered metals are sifted onto the wet surface and then covered with more lacquer