

WAJIMA NURI STUDIO RAKU

Our commitment to promote a better understanding of *urushi* work

Japanese people have appreciated the profound qualities of *urushi* since the olden times. *Urushi* as paint applied on a wooden core provides not only extra durability but also an immaculately finished surface, and for this *urushi* was regarded as something pure to expel evil spirit. First used mainly by Buddhists, the use of *urushi* ware has gradually spread among commoners as durable daily utensils. When the tea ceremony came into vogue, it instilled an appreciation of and created a continuous demand for exquisite *urushi* ware. Thus, *urushi* craftspeople at different times have pursued new possibilities and personal expressions in *urushi* ware, and these centuries-old traditions have been handed down to new generations. Wajima is no exception to this, and numerous workshops there have improved their skills and methods by learning from each other.

The burned earth called 'jinoko' for the undercoatings unique to Wajima is diatomaceous earth, and this gives Wajima lacquer ware the famed durability. Accumulated knowledge and skills of the past have created the nation's most renowned *urushi* ware.

Located in the suburbs of Wajima city, WAJIMA NURI STUDIO RAKU enjoys the truly Japanese landscapes. Here in Wajima, lacquer work still remains a community craft, and Wajima lacquer ware is usually created by masters of one special step in a complicated process. Among many such workshops, WAJIMA NURI STUDIO RAKU is one of a few studios which are engaged in fully integrated production, from undercoating to final coating. Our craftsmen have constantly examined every process and refined their works, while searching for new means of personal expressions. Simple and rustic beauty of our lacquer ware is inspired by the natural environment; frogs in rice paddies, vegetables yielded in a field, persimmons in a garden, owls living in a hill behind a house, bamboo sprouts in a bamboo forest.

Lacquer work of WAJIMA NURI STUDIO RAKU

WAJIMA NURI STUDIO RAKU is striving for pursuing possibilities of *urushi* as material through examining the whole process, and 'KOKEMUSU*' is one of the works born through exploring the potential of *urushi*. Our unique undercoating technique enables its bold expression of 'KOKEMUSU*.'

'Nerikanshitsu' is another exclusive technique we have developed based upon 1,300 year-old inherited techniques of Wajima lacquer ware. Our unique undercoating methods enable 3D designs, and prevent our products from cracking under dry environment.

Tea-things 'HAKURAKU'

Tea ceremony utensils, such as tea bowls, water jars, wastewater receptacles, tea scoops, and incense containers, are crafted under the name of HAKURAKU.

Also available are lids for ceramic pots. Shaped by hand, 'nerikanshitsu' articles not only exhibit a dignified and unpretentious appearance but also show a challenge to traditional definitions of craft.

Lacquerware for daily use: enhance your life with *urushi*

Lightness, durability, and beautiful luster are the characteristics of Wajima lacquer ware. It also promises a gentle touch of lips. These hand-made objects, crafted with hard-earned workmanship, bring joy and excitement to our ordinary life.

WAJIMA NURI STUDIO RAKU crafts a wide variety of *urushi* ware, from very traditional to more innovative and playful ones, using not only wood but also sea shells and metals as a core. Textures of *urushi* ware change over time, and we hope that you will appreciate these changes.

Lacquerware repair & retouch

WAJIMA NURI STUDIO RAKU offers *urushi* ware repair and retouch with traditional Wajima lacquering techniques. Cracks, scratches and chips are beautifully repaired, not to mention retouch and application of decoration.

We repair broken pottery with a seam of *urushi* and precious metal as well as adapt to modern demands. We also have a lot of experience in restoring Buddhist statues, Buddhist objects, cultural treasures, and other objects of all ages. Your inquiry is most welcome.

Custom-made lacquerware

Custom-made lacquerware is available. All kinds of lacquerware including tea ceremony utensils, gifts, and novelty goods can be created according to our customer's budget. Wall decoration panels, architectural material, and interior goods can also be crafted. We are ready to answer any *urushi* related requests.

Rikio HIKIMOCHI

He is one of a few master craftsmen who can do the entire process from undercoating to finish. After a 10 year-apprenticeship, he established his own studio and started crafting works under the name of HAKURAKU. His simple and unpretentious tea ceremony utensils had a good reputation among tea practitioners. His incense containers are inspired by the country landscapes, and through crafting them he came up with his unique *urushi* ware and innovative 'NERIKANSHITSU*.'

Kazuyori HIKIMOCHI

Being a son of HIKIMOCHI Rikio and apprenticed under the master craftsman, NUNO Tatsumi, a Buddhist altar maker in Nanao, Kazuyori came back to Wajima in 2017, and is now working at WAJIMA NURI STUDIO RAKU. Young and promising, he has been working for the restoration of temples.

(Translation: Atsuko Yanai)



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