

Times Capsule

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Lacquer artisans add layers to 1,000 years of tradition

A craft preserved from ancient times, lacquering is one of Japan's representative arts, so much so that "japanning" became a word in English for similar lacquerwork. In 1955, the artisan Otomaru Kodo was designated by the government as a "preserver of an important intangible cultural property," making him a living national treasure, in recognition of his contribution to further developing the craft with a technique of building colored layers and carving through them to create fascinating designs. Lacquering techniques have been handed down from generation to generation over more than a thousand years, producing numerous creative works of high artistic value.

Like so many traditional crafts, the art of lacquering requires an enormous amount of patience and perseverance.



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