



# Symbol And Substance In Japanese Lacquer: Laquer Boxes From The Collection Of Elaine Ehrenkranz

*Barbara Teri Okada*

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Lacquer is one of the glories of the Japanese craft tradition. In the course of more than a millennium of experimentation and development, largely anonymous artisans have refined the use of this substance into a vehicle of artistic expression as subtle, sophisticated, and elegant as any in the world. The combination of sculptural form and painterly composition seen in Japanese lacquer has enchanted Western collectors from the time the first lacquer pieces arrived here. This book presents fifty-five examples of Japanese lacquerwork from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries. By focusing on superb examples of the craft of lacquer prior to the nineteenth century, it introduces the reader to the achievement of master craftsmen working at the peak of the skill, during the richest period in the development of their medium. The Ehrenkranz Collection, assembled over a quarter of a century with the eye of a painter and true connoisseur, includes document and scroll boxes, mirror boxes, inkstone boxes, incense containers, and a complete set for the incense ceremony. Each piece in the collection is illustrated with stunning full-color photographs, accompanied by detailed information regarding the lacquer techniques used to produce it. *Symbol and Substance in Japanese Lacquer* is published in conjunction with a fall 1995 exhibition of the Ehrenkranz Collection at the Japan Society in New York City. Elaine Ehrenkranz is a painter and connoisseur who has been collecting lacquer for more than twenty-five years.



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