



Stand for a tea bowl in red carved lacquer, 1403–24, China, Museum no FE-33–1974. Given by Sir Harry and Lady Garner.

Americas complete the display.

lacquerware developed in the
 Rare historical examples of
 lacquer in European interiors.
 re-use and integration of Asian
 'japanning' techniques and the
 East, and also examines European
 other parts of Asia and the Middle
 East Asian lacquer and its impact on
 them in a global context. It illustrates
 the symbol on the cases once
 traditions of Asian lacquer and places
 showcases the rich and diverse
 This guide will help you to explore
 and cross-museum display that
Lustrous Surfaces is a cross-cultural
 countries around the world.

BC to the present day.
 dating from the 2nd century
 lacquerware in the world,
 largest collections of Asian
 objects from among the Museum's

V&A curators have chosen over 110
 lacquer collection to highlight the
 unique manufacturing techniques,
 surface treatments and decorative

Lustrous Surfaces: Lacquer in Asia and Beyond

What is lacquer?

Asian lacquer is made from the
 sap of different trees from the
Anacardiaceae family. There are three
 Europe, where it was highly prized
 for its exotic designs and appealing
 glossy finish.

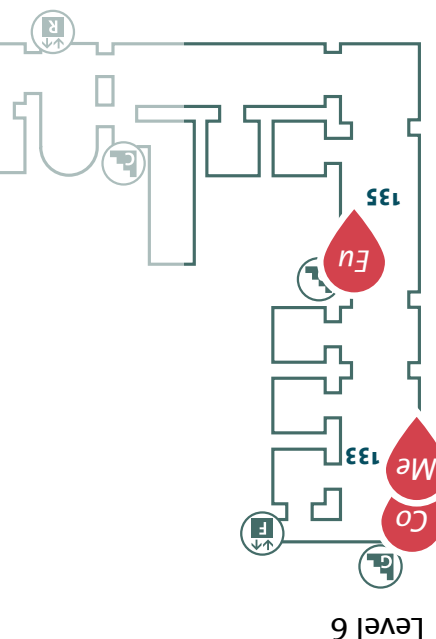
East Asian lacquer comes from the
 sap of *Toxicodendron vernicifluum*.
 To make lacquer, first the tree's milky
 sap is filtered to remove impurities
 and gently heated to reduce its
 moisture content. This produces a
 viscous, dark brown lacquer that is
 applied to an object in thin layers to
 create a protective coat. The lacquer
 is then hardened in humid conditions

and polished to create a glossy
 sheen. Lacquer has often been
 compared to modern plastic
 because of its similar lightweight
 and waterproof qualities.



Tiered food box in black lacquer with striped maki-e
 decoration by Murose Kazumi (born 1950), 2004.
 Japan, Museum no. FE-318–2005

Lacquer techniques at the V&A



- Af** **Afghanistan** Bookbinder's lacquer 15th century
- Ch** **China** Diaoyi 12th century
- Co** **Colombia** Barniz de Pasto 16th century
- Eu** **Europe** European lacquer (Japanning) 17th century
- In** **India** Lac 16th century
- Io** **Indonesia** Palembang lacquer 18th century
- Ir** **Iran** Bookbinder's lacquer 16th century
- Ja** **Japan** Maki-e 8th century
- Ko** **Korea** Najeon chilgi 11th century
- Me** **Mexico** Peribán lacquer 1st century
- My** **Myanmar (Burma)** Yun 16th century
- Pa** **Pakistan** Lac 16th century
- Th** **Thailand** Tai khern 16th century
- Ti** **Tibet** Gyatsi 19th century

Lacquer techniques across the world



Display guide

Lustrous Surfaces: Lacquer in Asia and Beyond

14 October 2017 – 16 September 2018

V&A

Lustrous Surfaces: Lacquer in Asia and Beyond

14 October 2017 – 16 September 2018

Events and activities accompanying this display are
 happening throughout the year. For more information
 please visit vam.ac.uk/whatson

To find out more about lacquer and this display, visit
vam.ac.uk/lustrous-surfaces

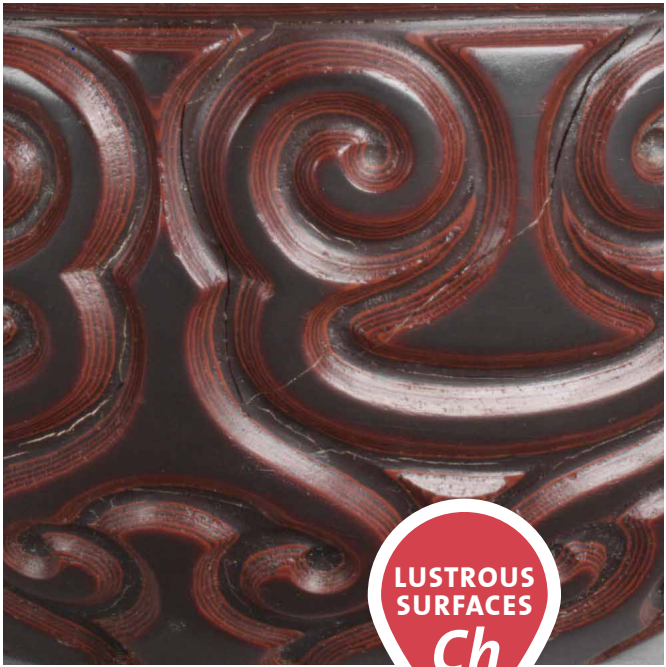
If you love the V&A why not become a Member?
 Ask staff for details or join online at vam.ac.uk/membership

We hope you enjoyed your visit. Please let us know by
 dropping us an email to comments@vam.ac.uk

With thanks to the Jorge Welsh Works of Art, London – Lisbon; Overseas Korean
 Cultural Heritage Foundation; and Toshiba International Foundation.

Cover: Lacquered stationery box inlaid with shell decoration by Lee Kwang-Woong
 (born 1971), 2014–15, Korea, Museum no FE-25–2015. Purchase supported by Samsung.

Lacquer techniques



China *Diaoqi*

CHINA, THE T.T. TSUI GALLERY, ROOM 44, LEVEL 1

The carved lacquer technique *diaoqi* is the best known of the many different decorative styles developed in China. Several layers of lacquer are applied to a base. Each coat must harden before the next is applied. This is repeated until the lacquer reaches sufficient thickness to be carved in relief using a sharp tool.

LUSTROUS SURFACES
Ch

Korea *Najeon chilgi*

KOREA, ROOM 47G, LEVEL 1

Lacquer inlaid with shell, known as *najeon chilgi*, is the most distinctive type of Korean lacquerware. Iridescent shell pieces are delicately cut and glued to a lacquer ground. The whole surface is then coated with a thin layer of lacquer and hardened. This is repeated until the lacquer level mirrors the shell's thickness. The lacquer on the shell is scraped off between coats to reveal the decorative pattern.

LUSTROUS SURFACES
Ko



Japan *Maki-e*

JAPAN, THE TOSHIBA GALLERY, ROOM 45, LEVEL 1



Maki-e, which translates as 'sprinkled picture', is the decorative technique most associated with Japanese lacquer. It involves building up a decorative design by sprinkling gold, silver or coloured powders of different shapes and weights onto wet lacquer. The predominant type of *maki-e* is gold powder on black lacquer.

LUSTROUS SURFACES
Ja

Myanmar (Burma) *Yun*

SOUTH-EAST ASIA, ROOM 47A, LEVEL 1

Yun ware is a characteristic Myanmar lacquer technique. A woven split bamboo body is first filled with low grade lacquer mixed with clay. Layers of lacquer are then applied, mixed with increasingly fine fillers. After each coat, the object is smoothed and hardened. A design is engraved onto the final surface layer and colour applied to the incisions. Once hardened, the excess colour is rubbed off and the design is sealed. The same process is repeated for other colours.

LUSTROUS SURFACES
My



LUSTROUS SURFACES
Th

Thailand *Tai khern*

SOUTH-EAST ASIA, ROOM 47A, LEVEL 1

Lacquerware from the Chiang Mai area, a major centre of lacquer production in Thailand, is exemplified by *tai khern*, named after the original Tai people who settled in the region. Like *yun* ware in Myanmar, it utilises engraving on a lacquered surface. The engraved designs are submerged in a colour solution for about three days. When withdrawn, the designs are filled with colour.

Indonesia

Palembang lacquer

SOUTH-EAST ASIA, ROOM 47A, LEVEL 1

Palembang lacquerware from South Sumatra combines Malay and Chinese traditions. The vessels are crafted by Malay woodworkers in shapes appealing to Indonesian tastes. They are then lacquered

and decorated by local Chinese artisans, often with 'golden' stencilled motifs. This golden appearance is achieved by covering fine silver flakes with a layer of clear lacquer.

LUSTROUS SURFACES
Io



LUSTROUS SURFACES
In

LUSTROUS SURFACES
Pa

India and Pakistan *Lac (Lakh)*

SOUTH ASIA, ROOM 41, AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA, ROOM 47A, LEVEL 1

Lac, an insect resin, was once used widely in South Asia for a variety of purposes. A key decorative technique was for sticks of coloured *lac* to be pressed against the surface of wooden items as they turned on a lathe. The heat generated as the item revolved melted the *lac* covering the wood with a layer of colour.



LUSTROUS SURFACES
Ir

LUSTROUS SURFACES
Af

Iran and Afghanistan *Bookbinder's lacquer*

ISLAMIC MIDDLE EAST, THE JAMEEL GALLERY, ROOM 42, LEVEL 1

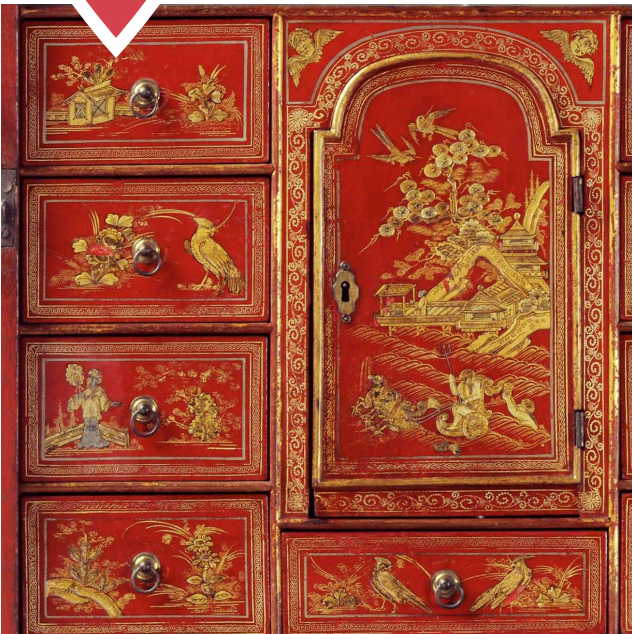
Islamic lacquer, known as 'bookbinder's lacquer', is a combination of materials used to imitate the colour combinations and glossiness of Chinese lacquer. The technique appeared first in bookbinding, where lacquer-style decoration was used instead of the traditional leather facing. The local tradition of painted and varnished woodwork was adapted to the decoration of pasteboard book covers, made from layers of paper glued together.

Europe *European lacquer (Japanning)*

FURNITURE, THE DR. SUSAN WEBER GALLERY, ROOM 135, LEVEL 6

To imitate Asian lacquer, plant resins or shellac (a secretion from insects) are mixed with alcohol or oil. As with true lacquer, the quality of the finished product depends on the careful drying and polishing of the individual layers.

LUSTROUS SURFACES
Eu



LUSTROUS SURFACES
Co

LUSTROUS SURFACES
Me

On display December 2017

Colombia and Mexico *Barniz de Pasto and Peribán lacquer*

FURNITURE, THE DR. SUSAN WEBER GALLERY, ROOM 133, LEVEL 6

Barniz de Pasto is one of several lacquer techniques developed in South America, with pre-Hispanic origins. A plant resin called *mopa mopa* is processed into thin sheets and heat-bonded to create complex, applied designs. In Central America, in the Mexican *Peribán* lacquer tradition, a thick mixture of oil and clay was applied and inlaid.



LUSTROUS SURFACES
Ti

Tibet *Gyatsi*

SOUTH-EAST ASIA, ROOM 47A, LEVEL 1

Lacquer, called *gyatsi* in Tibetan, has been in use from at least the time of the 13th Dalai Lama (1876–1933). As in Myanmar, the techniques used involve the building up of several layers of lacquer, with each coating hardened and rubbed down before the application of the next.

