

INNOVATION THROUGH TRADITION

N. Ito, R. Murahashi, T. Ohmukai with H. Murayama, and M. Shimura

February 2 - 23, 2008

at

Medialia... Rack and Hamper Gallery
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This exhibition focuses on the traditional techniques and materials in contemporary art by four Japanese artists: Naoko Ito, Ryumei Murahashi, Tsutomu Ohmukai in collaboration with Hideki Murayama, and Myohseki Shimura.

Naoko Ito (b.1954) uses the ancient Japanese technique of lacquerware for making non-figurative contemporary art. Lacquerware techniques have been traditionally applied for utilitarian purposes, though Ito's personal narrative propels her to combine various materials with the lacquerware, making her work precious and unique. Ito has exhibited both nationally and internationally. Her work has been shown in Brussels, where she studied metalwork, as well as in Paris and New York. Her work is also in the collections of various museums in both Europe and Japan.

Ryumei Murahashi (b.1958) studied industrial design at the Kyushu Art and Technology University. After graduating in 1985, he returned to the university to study intaglio etching. Since 1987, Murahashi has been showing his work both nationally and internationally. In 1995, the *KATANA* (Japanese sword) shape - as a spiritual symbol - became Murahashi's creative theme spontaneously. The work is first engraved on a copper plate and then printed on Japanese rice paper with American printing ink. The main body of the work is mounted in the traditional format of the Japanese scroll.

The joining of the disciplines of graphic design by **Tsutomu Ohmukai** (b.1948) and traditional mounting (hyogu) by **Hideki Murayama** (b. 1954) - both Kyoto-based artists - offers a unique artistic image. The traditional forms shown in this exhibit have been adapted to the sensibilities of the 21st century. The graphics are printed on Japanese rice paper by the methods of silkscreen and calligraphy -an intaglio print technique. The graphics display a repetition and juxtaposition of straight and curved lines, which suggest more patterns and resonate visual kinetic energy. Geometric forms are introduced in the works and allude to the third-dimension. The mounting and graphics of their hanging scrolls present the interaction and collaboration of two separate artistic expressions.

Myohseki Shimura (1949) studied at the Fukuoka Educational College as a calligraphy major. In 1980, Shimura was awarded grand prix at a prestigious national competition for calligraphy. Tenkoku is the art of engraving seals, which originated in China. This ancient and delicate art is a universe expressed within a square inch. Shimura is a master of traditional tenkoku and a calligrapher who stepped beyond the tradition and the new world of the tenkoku. His unique accomplishments are recognized throughout Japan, China, and Korea. He has developed his sensitive lines for seal engraving, which are usually contained within one square inch into powerful yet sensitive lines within three square inches. Even through the process of enlargement, the original delicate nuance of the traditional Tenkoku is retained. In this show, his marble tiles and ceramic vases are exhibited.

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