

## Wajima Museum of Urushi Art

The museum explores the history of lacquerware through works from Wajima and other lacquer-producing areas of Japan, as well as examples from other countries. There are videos to explain the process of making lacquerware, from choosing the best wood to adding decorative finishes. Visitors can also see a real Japanese sumac tree (urushi; *Toxicodendron vernicifluum*). Sap from the tree is collected through tapping, then heated and refined to make lacquer.

For artists and craftspeople, lacquer is a versatile medium. It functions as a coating which can be built up in layers to create shape and dimension, and as an adhesive for decorative effects. Regular exhibitions of works by contemporary lacquer artists from Japan and around the world showcase the possibilities of a material that has been used for over 3,000 years.

Contemporary lacquered objects on permanent display include a full-sized grand piano and a globe of the world, both decorated with gold using *chinkin* (gold inlay) and *maki-e* (“sprinkled picture”) techniques. *Chinkin* involves incising fine lines in the lacquer with a sharp metal tool, which are then inlaid with gold leaf. The *maki-e* technique employs lacquer as an adhesive. Lacquer is applied to the base and dusted with gold or silver powder before the lacquer dries. The size of the metallic particles can be varied for effect. A final layer of clear, high-gloss lacquer is added to protect the *maki-e* decoration.

The museum is open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.