

The Art of Mother - of – Pearl Inlay

Glossy white and pink mother - of – pearl set into a black laquer background sparking with a shine similar to that of fire opals. It is used to adorn small every objects as well as large doors and window panels. Its workmanship requires infinite and meticulous attention to details its.

The art of decorating with inlaid mother - of – pearl dates back to Thailand ‘ s history. The technique of inlay work may have begun in the kingdom of Ayuddhaya in the middle of the fourteenth century. It would seem , however , that the use of shells of decoration has a long tradition stucco pieces decorated with shell have been found at architectural monuments dated to dvaravati period of the sixth to eleventh century .

In the past , most objects decorated with mother - of – pearl were used of the monks , such as the manuscript cabinets found in monasteries. Mother - of – pearl was frequently employed as decoration on doors and windows panel of temple buildings and some of the finest inlay work to be today can be found with in the temple compounds.

The own monastery doors are those at Wat Mahadhatu in Pitsanulok, created the reign of king of Ayuddhaya in the mid-eighteenth century. Other well-known Mother-of-pearl doors are those from Wat Baroma Bhuddharam in Ayuddhaya, which are now at the Temple of the Emerald Buddha compound are reset in a book cabinet reserved in the Nation Museum, BKK.

The best known pieces of the Rattanakosin period are the doors of the panel of the Emerald Buddha and the doors on the Mondop with on the Temple of the Emerald Buddha compound, ad well as the doors on the Mondop at Saraburi. These doors were all made during the reign of King Rama I. Then, too , there are the doors of the ordination Hall at Wat Po made during the reign of King Rama III and those at Wat Rajabopit to the second half of the nineteenth century during King Chulalongkorn’s reign. All of these doors decorated with religiously inspired motives

Technique for Mother-of-pearl inlay work

The present technique Technique for Mother-of-pearl inlay wares is rather different from that of the past. Some of the old metal different to obtain and the old procedures are seen as being time consuming prefers more readily available materials and quicker techniques but there are some craftsmen still do the old technique for making Mother-of-pearl inlay work

According to The present method for Mother-of-pearl inlay objects can be described as follows:

1. The outer surface of the shell is removed with a special cutter
2. And the shell cut into pieces
3. The shell is cut to the desired shape by a special curved bow saw.
4. The cut edges of the shell are carefully smoothed with a hand file
5. The object which are made from wood are ready prepared for decorated with Mother-of-pearl inlay.
6. Each shell piece is pasted with latex glue in its proper place on to the object
7. A mixture of black tempera and filler is then used to fill in the ridged between the base material of the object and the shell forming the design
8. The surface is smoothed with the fingers and left to dry
9. The object is polished until the surface is smooth and clear
10. A clear vanish is applied to the object
11. Taium decorated with Mother-of-pearl inlay



The special vessels are decorated with Mother - of - Pearl Inlay, they can be divided into a categories:

1. Receptacles or “Phan”, come in many forms and usually used to carry aims and articles that are presented to the monks. However, they are some sepicial unique receptacles in the old Thai tradition such as Talum, Tieb
2. Covered boxes : in the Thai tradition there are many forms of covered boxes and given various named by the function which form will be used. The various forms are called Lung, Jiad
3. Trays are known as “Kaba”, “Tad”. There are many forms of these Thai Trays and known by the function which trays will be used such as Kaba Buja, Kaba Maak
4. The vessel of the Buddhist monks: almost of the vessels are decorated with Mother - of - Pearl Inlay in the Thai design. They are called “Fa Batra”, Buddhist manuscript box and Buddhist manuscript case
5. Other vessels: Musical Instruments, covered jug and manuscript box. In present day, they are still used the technique of decorated with Mother - of - Pearl Inlay to decorate the vessels and utensils. It’s show that the technique and the art of Mother - of - Pearl Inlay is still up to date



TIEB , Food container

Bangkok period , 20 century A.D.

Presented by his royal highness Prince Paribatra
Sukhumbandhu , Prince of Nakhorn Svarage



Lung , Food container

Bangkok period , 20 century A.D.

Presented by his royal highness Prince Paribatra
Sukhumbandhu , Prince of Nakhorn Svarage



Drum for a Thai Orchestra

Bangkok period , 20 century A.D.

Presented by his royal highness Prince Paribatra Sukhumbandhu , Prince of Nakhorn Svarage



Pulpit

Bangkok period , 20 century A.D.

Presented by relatives of Phraya Vichavichit in 1960



Pedestal For a Monk's Bowl

Bangkok period , 20 century A.D.

Presented by his royal highness Prince Paribatra Sukhumbandhu , Prince of Nakhorn Svarage



TALUM , Bowl with Pedestal

Bangkok period , 20 century A.D.

Presented by his royal highness Prince Paribatra Sukhumbandhu , Prince of Nakhorn Svarage



Utensil wares and objects decorated with technique of Mother – Of –Pearl Inlay in present day