

**EXHIBITION OF  
CHINESE LACQUER OBJECTS**

華美協進社

**CHINA INSTITUTE IN AMERICA**  
**NEW YORK, N. Y.**



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**125 EAST 65th STREET**

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**NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FORTY-FIVE**



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# FOREWORD

ALMOST at the dawn of their civilization, the Chinese discovered and invented lacquer. The basic ingredient is the sap drawn from the lacquer tree. It is applied to the object with a brush and dries and hardens in dampness and darkness. At first lacquer was used to protect surfaces of wood or metal household objects, caskets, arms and armor; then its brilliancy and pliability became ideal mediums of artistic expression.

The early custom of burying the dead with art objects and in decorated caskets helped to preserve specimens of the Late Chou (1122 B.C.-255 B.C.) and succeeding periods. There have been discovered from tombs in northern and northwestern parts of China, lacquered vessels, figures and casket fragments. Sometimes lacquer was applied to pottery. During the period, the dry lacquer technique was also used.

During later periods, a number of techniques were evolved. The Chinese, as in other fields of art, were the teachers of the Japanese, who did not begin their apprenticeship until the Seventh Century A.D.

The lacquers found in the tombs of Lolang in Northern Korea have provided us with information on the lacquer industry of the Han Dynasty (220 B.C. to 206 A.D.). Many of the pieces found there are inscribed, and they bear the legends of the imperial factories which were organized on a basis of complete division of labor. The inscriptions briefly described the vessels; they give the names of individual workmen, the superintendents of the factories, and those of administrative officials. The techniques of decoration mostly in use then were painting and engraving. There was also some inlay of gold or silver foil (P'ing T'o), a technique which became very prominent during the T'ang Dynasty (618 A.D.-906 A.D.).

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T'ang lacquers scarcely exist anywhere outside of the Shosoin, the Imperial Treasure House in Nara, Japan. We are able to show just one small piece of the P'ing T'o technique, Catalogue Number 12.

Old Chinese books speak of the lacquer work during the Sung Dynasty (960 A.D.-1127 A.D.), but here again the only examples which have been found so far, are some cups and dishes resembling in shape the Ting Yao and the Ying Ching porcelain. During the Ming Dynasty (1368 A.D.-1644 A.D.), carved lacquer became the favorite technique; and the objects made during the reign of Yung Lo and Hsüan Té are of superior quality. Most of these were carved with great sensitivity and subtlety.

Gradually the artistic quality declines and gives way to technical virtuosity. In the 18th Century, the Emperor Ch'ien Lung had a particular liking for carved lacquers. The objects produced in the 18th Century were usually carved with admirable finesse, but with little artistic feeling.

There are few important Chinese lacquer collections in Europe and America. Even Ming Dynasty specimens are rarely seen. Mr. Fritz Low-Beer's collection is most unique; it includes examples of the late Chou Dynasty (1122 B.C.-255 B.C.). Catalogue Number 1 in our exhibition shows that even carved lacquer was in use during the Chou Period.

This is the second in our current series of exhibitions of Chinese Art. The series is intended to be selective and educational, rather than comprehensive, and is sponsored by the China Institute in America with the cooperation of private collectors and the Chinese-American Institute of Cultural Relations of Chungking. These rare specimens from Mr. Low-Beer's collection are being exhibited for the first time in the United States. For this privilege we are indebted to the generosity of the owner. The China Institute also wishes to express its thanks to Mr. C. T. Loo, a member of the Art Committee, whose cooperation has made this exhibition possible.

C. F. YAU

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## LACQUER OBJECTS

From the Collections of

MR. FRITZ LOW-BEER and MR. C. T. LOO

1. WOODEN PLAQUE, lacquered black. Carved with spirals in comma design, and a demon's head. (see Plate I)  
Diameter,  $\frac{7}{8}$  Inches  
Late Eastern Chou
2. WOODEN NAIL, with carved head, lacquered black with traces of gold.  
Length, 3 Inches  
Late Chou Period
3. SHALLOW CIRCULAR BOWL, lacquered red and brown, with a painted design of conventionalized animal and cloud scrolls. (see Plate I)  
Diameter, 10 Inches  
Han Dynasty
4. RECTANGULAR BOX FOR HAIR ORNAMENTS, made in dry lacquer technique, brown lacquer, painted with a design of cloud scrolls in red and dark green.  
Length,  $5\frac{5}{8}$  Inches; Height,  $1\frac{9}{16}$  Inches  
Han Dynasty
5. COMB BOX WITH OVERLAPPING COVER, dry lacquer technique, brown lacquer, painted in a design of cloud scrolls and stylized animals in red and dark green. (see Plate II)  
Length,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  Inches; Height,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  Inches  
Han Dynasty
6. SMALL RECTANGULAR BOX WITH OVERLAPPING COVER, dry lacquer technique, brown lacquer, painted with a design of cloud scrolls and stylized animals.  
Length, 3 In.; Width,  $1\frac{7}{16}$  In.; Height,  $2\frac{1}{6}$  In.  
Han Dynasty

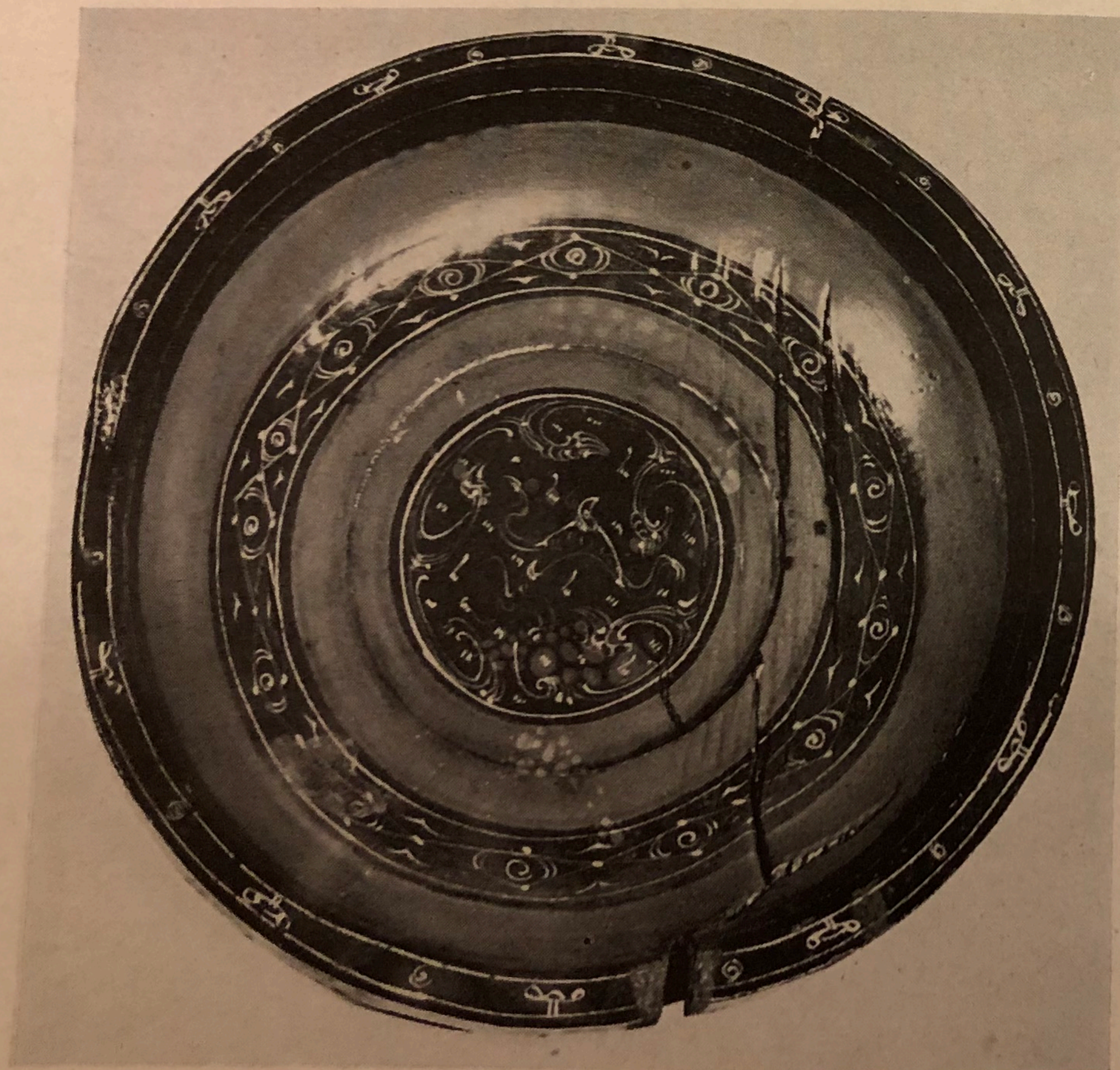
Five



PLATE I



*Catalogue No. 1.*



*Catalogue No. 3.*

*Six*

PLATE II



*Catalogue No. 5.*



*Catalogue No. 12.*



*Catalogue No. 14.*

*Seven*



7. SMALL CYLINDRICAL VESSEL, dry lacquer technique, painted with cloud scrolls.  
Diameter, 1-11/16 Inches; Height, 1 3/4 Inches  
Han Dynasty
8. CIRCULAR COVER OF A VASE, dry lacquer technique, engraved geometrical designs.  
Diameter, 4-1/16 Inches  
Inscribed and dated 4 B.C.  
Published: Wiener Beiträge Zur Kunst and Kultur Geschichte Asiens Band XI 1937; Zur Geschichte der Lackkunst in China by Dr. Otto Maenchen No. 19
9. OVAL BOX AND COVER, lacquered black and fitted with gilt bronze rims, stylized quatrefoil on cover.  
Length, 4 1/2 Inches; Height, 2 1/2 Inches  
Han Dynasty
10. OVAL CUP WITH TWO HANDLES (PEI), lacquered brown outside, red inside.  
Length, 6-1/16 Inches; Width, 4 Inches  
Han Dynasty
11. WOODEN SPOON, lacquered red.  
Length, 9 1/4 Inches  
Han Dynasty
12. FRAGMENT OF CIRCULAR BOX COVER, black lacquer inlaid with silver, flower and bird design. (see Plate II)  
Diameter, 3 5/8 Inches  
T'ang Dynasty  
Published: Ostasiatische Zeitschrift 1937, Chinesisches Lackgerät No. 3
13. THREE FRAMED PANELS, dark brown lacquer, painted in gold lacquer on a yellow background, with a design of cranes and clouds.  
Panel One: 17 x 13 3/4 Inches  
Panel Two: 13 1/2 x 13 1/2 Inches  
Panel Three: 12 1/2 x 9 1/4 Inches  
T'ang Dynasty or Later.
14. SIX LOBED OVAL CUP, olive brown lacquer outside, red lacquer inside. (see Plate II)  
Length, 4 3/8 Inches; Height, 2 3/4 Inches  
Sung Dynasty

15. CIRCULAR DISH WITH FIVE LOBED RIM, black lacquer outside, red lacquer inside.  
Diameter, 5-5/16 Inches  
Sung Dynasty
16. FOOT STOOL, carved red lacquer, with peony and chrysanthemum design. (see Plate III)  
Length, 20 1/8 Inches; Height, 5 7/8 Inches  
Yung Lo Period  
Published: Ostrasiatische Zeitschrift 1937, Chinesisches Lackgerät Plate 2, No. 4
17. CIRCULAR BOX AND COVER, carved red lacquer, with bold lotus design on top.  
Diameter, 7 3/8 Inches; Height, 2 5/8 Inches  
Early 15th Century  
Published: Burlington Magazine, October 1936, "Carved Red Lacquer of the Ming Dynasty," by F. Low-Beer and Otto Maenchen-Helfen, Plate 1A
18. SQUARE BOX WITH SPREADING FOOT AND COVER, carved red lacquer. On the cover, Sage with attendants before garden pavillion.  
Height, 2 1/4 Inches; Length (at foot), 4 1/8 Inches  
Early 15th Century
19. TEN LOBED DISH, carved red lacquer, sages with attendants on a garden terrace in front of a house.  
Diameter, 13 5/8 Inches  
Yung Lo mark and period  
Published: Burlington Magazine, October 1936, "Carved Red Lacquer of the Ming Dynasty," by F. Low-Beer and Otto Maenchen Helfen, Plate 2A
20. CIRCULAR BOX WITH CONVEX LID, carved red lacquer, with conventionalized lotus design.  
Diameter, 2-13/16 Inches  
Yung Lo mark and period
21. SMALL CIRCULAR BOX WITH CONVEX COVER, carved red lacquer, with bold peony design.  
Diameter, 2 1/4 Inches  
Yung Lo mark and period



PLATE III



Catalogue No. 16.

22. TABLE SCREEN, carved red lacquer, panel in wooden frame. Sage sitting in garden pavillion receiving guests. Height, 23 Inches; Width, 14½ Inches  
Hsüan Té mark and period  
Mounting 17th Century
23. SQUARE BOX AND COVER, carved red lacquer, Li Chih and Pheasant design.  
Length, 5 Inches; Height, 3 Inches  
Hsüan Té mark and period  
Published: Burlington Magazine, October 1936, "Carved Red Lacquer of the Ming Dynasty," by F. Low-Beer and Otto Maenchen Helfen, Plate 1C
24. CIRCULAR BOX WITH CONVEX COVER, "cloisonné" lacquer, lotus decoration.  
Diameter, 3¼ Inches  
Hsüan Té mark and period
25. CYLINDRICAL BOX AND COVER, lacquered black, painted and inlaid with Mother-of-Pearl, in a design of pomegranates and leaves.  
Diameter, 8¾ Inches; Height, 2⅛ Inches  
Hsüan Té mark and period
26. CIRCULAR BOX WITH SLIGHTLY CONVEX COVER, carved red lacquer, peony design.  
Diameter, 3¼ Inches  
Early 15th Century
27. CIRCULAR BOX WITH SLIGHTLY CONVEX COVER, carved red lacquer, Li Chih design.  
Diameter, 3-12/16 Inches  
Early 15th Century
28. CIRCULAR BOX WITH FLAT COVER, carved red lacquer, doublesided, Li Chih design.  
Diameter, 3¼ Inches  
Early 15th Century
29. CIRCULAR DOUBLESIDED BOX WITH CONVEX LID, carved red lacquer; sages regarding a scroll, and playing a game.  
Diameter, 4 Inches  
Early 15th Century





Catalogue No. 31.



Catalogue No. 51.

30. CIRCULAR BOX WITH FLAT COVER, carved red lacquer, prunus blossom design on top and bottom.  
Diameter,  $3\frac{1}{4}$  Inches  
Early 15th Century
31. RECTANGULAR BOX WITH SLIDING LID, black lacquer, painted with a design of dragons and clouds in three-tone gold; scales and eyes inlaid with Mother-of-Pearl. (see Plate IV)  
Length,  $6\frac{7}{8}$  In.; Width,  $3\frac{7}{8}$  In.; Height,  $5\frac{7}{8}$  In.  
Early 15th Century
32. WOODEN FIGURE OF RECLINING HORSE, lacquered brown.  
Length, 14 Inches  
Ming Dynasty
33. CIRCULAR BOX WITH SLIGHTLY CONVEX COVER, alternate coats of black and red lacquer in Ju-i design.  
Diameter,  $4\frac{3}{8}$  Inches  
15th Century
34. LEAF-SHAPED BOX AND COVER, black lacquer, praying mantis, inlaid with Mother-of-Pearl.  
Length,  $3\frac{3}{8}$  Inches  
15th Century  
International Exhibition of Chinese Art, London, 1935, No. 1417
35. CIRCULAR BOX AND FLAT COVER, black lacquer, cover inlaid with Mother-of-Pearl, two Phoenixes and clouds.  
Diameter,  $2\frac{15}{16}$  Inches  
15th-16th Century
36. RECTANGULAR BOX AND COVER, black lacquer, flower scrolls inlaid with Mother-of-Pearl.  
Length,  $14\frac{7}{8}$  In.; Width,  $10\frac{3}{4}$  In.; Height,  $3\frac{5}{8}$  In.  
Early 16th Century  
Published: Feddersen Chinesisches Kunstgewerbe, Berlin, 1939, No. 162



37. RECTANGULAR BOX AND COVER WITH CURVED SIDES, alternate coats of black and red lacquer with Ju-i design.  
Length,  $7\frac{1}{8}$  Inches; Height,  $4\frac{7}{8}$  Inches  
15th-16th Century
38. SMALL CIRCULAR BOX WITH COVER, carved red lacquer, Li Chih and diaper design.  
Diameter,  $2\frac{3}{16}$  Inches  
15th-16th Century
39. PAIR OF SIX LOBED DISHES, buff lacquer, incised and painted with a design of cranes in landscape in green, red and gold.  
Diameter,  $6\frac{1}{2}$  Inches  
Chia Ching mark and period
40. FIVE LOBED DISH, red lacquer, incised and painted in green and gold, with a design of dragon and clouds.  
Diameter,  $6\frac{1}{2}$  Inches  
Chia Ching mark and period  
Published: Feddersen Chinesisches Kunstgewerbe, Berlin, 1939, No. 166
41. CIRCULAR BOX AND COVER, dark brown lacquer, lid and sides inlaid with Mother-of-Pearl, two Chi-lin in landscape.  
Diameter,  $3\frac{7}{8}$  Inches  
16th Century
42. CIRCULAR BOWL, carved red lacquer, phoenix and cloud design.  
Diameter, 5 Inches; Height,  $2\frac{5}{8}$  Inches  
Chia Ching mark and period  
Published: Burlington Magazine, October 1936, "Carved Red Lacquer of the Ming Dynasty," by F. Low-Beer and Otto Maenchen Helfen, Plate 2B.
43. RECTANGULAR BOX AND FLAT COVER, carved red lacquer, in a design of pheasants and flowers.  
Length,  $5\frac{5}{8}$  In.; Width,  $4\frac{1}{8}$  In.; Height,  $2\frac{3}{4}$  In.  
Early 16th Century  
Published: Burlington Magazine, October 1936, "Carved Red Lacquer of the Ming Dynasty," by F. Low-Beer and Otto Maenchen Helfen, Plate 1D

44. CIRCULAR BOWL, carved red lacquer, pheasant and flower decoration, silver lined.  
Diameter,  $7\frac{1}{8}$  Inches; Height,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  Inches  
Middle 16th Century
45. STEM CUP, carved red lacquer, floral decoration.  
Diameter,  $6\frac{5}{8}$  Inches; Height,  $4\frac{7}{16}$  Inches  
16th Century
46. STEM CUP, carved red lacquer, silver lined, phoenix and flower decoration.  
Diameter,  $4\frac{3}{4}$  Inches; Height,  $4\frac{1}{8}$  Inches  
16th Century
47. TWO LIBATION CUPS, carved red lacquer, animal masks on handles, silver lined, Li Chih decoration.  
Length,  $4\frac{1}{4}$  Inches; Height,  $1\frac{7}{8}$  Inches  
16th Century
48. CIRCULAR BOWL AND STAND, alternate coats of black and red lacquer, carved design of phoenixes and flowers.  
Diameter of Bowl,  $8\frac{1}{8}$  Inches; Height of Bowl,  $3\frac{7}{8}$  Inches; Diameter of Stand,  $7\frac{5}{8}$  Inches; Height of Stand,  $3\frac{5}{8}$  Inches  
16th Century
49. PAIR OF BOWLS, carved in alternate coats of red and black lacquer, in Ju-i design, silver lined.  
Diameter,  $5\frac{1}{8}$  Inches; Height,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  Inches  
Ming Dynasty
50. LONG RECTANGULAR BOX AND COVER, black lacquer, lid and sides inlaid with carved metal plaques depicting various scenes of Chinese life.  
Length,  $27\frac{3}{4}$  Inches; Height,  $4\frac{1}{8}$  Inches  
Wan Li mark and period
51. CIRCULAR BOX WITH CONVEX COVER, black lacquer, inlaid with Mother-of-Pearl; diaper design and medallions with flower scrolls. Inlaid Wan Li mark. (see Plate IV)  
Diameter,  $8\frac{3}{8}$  Inches  
Wan Li Period



52. CIRCULAR DISH, carved red, green and yellow lacquer, pheasant and flower decoration.  
Diameter,  $6\frac{3}{8}$  Inches  
Wan Li Period  
Published: Burlington Magazine, October 1936, "Carved Red Lacquer of the Ming Dynasty," by F. Low-Beer and Otto Maenchen Helfen, Plate 2F
53. CIRCULAR BOWL, carved buff on red lacquer, dragon design.  
Diameter,  $5\frac{1}{8}$  Inches; Height,  $2\frac{5}{8}$  Inches  
Inscribed: 1587  
Published: Feddersen Chinesisches Kunstgewerbe, Berlin, 1939, No. 175
54. PAIR OF POTS, lacquered red, painted and incised, four medallions with two dragons, and scenes showing sages and attendants on a diaper design background.  
Height,  $3\frac{5}{8}$  Inches  
Inscribed: Hsüan Té; late 16th Century
55. BOX WITH HIGH COVER AND CURVED SIDES, black lacquer inlaid with Mother-of-Pearl, with a design of flower scrolls and diaper background.  
Length, 12 Inches; Width,  $7\frac{1}{8}$  Inches; Height:  $5\frac{1}{4}$  Inches  
Late 16th Century
56. CIRCULAR MIRROR BOX AND COVER, alternate coats of black and red lacquer, in Ju-i and diaper design.  
Diameter,  $6\frac{3}{4}$  Inches  
Wan Li mark and period
57. SQUARE BOX, white lacquer with painted design of bamboo leaves.  
Length, 9 Inches; Width,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  Inches  
Ming Dynasty
58. CYLINDRICAL BRUSH-HOLDER, carved red lacquer, sages in the garden.  
Diameter,  $6\frac{1}{8}$  Inches; Height,  $6\frac{1}{8}$  Inches  
Ming Dynasty
59. PEWTER VASE, lacquered brown.  
Diameter,  $5\frac{7}{8}$  Inches; Height,  $5\frac{5}{8}$  Inches  
Late Ming Dynasty

60. SMALL FIVE LEGGED STAND, marblized lacquer.  
Height,  $4\frac{7}{8}$  Inches  
16th-17th Century
61. CIRCULAR BOX WITH CONVEX COVER, marblized lacquer.  
Diameter,  $7\frac{3}{8}$  Inches; Height, 3 Inches  
Late Ming Dynasty
62. CIRCULAR BOX AND COVER, marblized lacquer, with quatrefoil design on lid.  
Diameter,  $3\frac{1}{8}$  Inches  
Late Ming Dynasty
63. RECTANGULAR BOX AND COVER, with basketwork sides and metal rims, lacquered black, and painted with a design of people in landscape with a pagoda in the background.  
Length,  $16\frac{1}{4}$  In.; Width,  $8\frac{1}{4}$  In.; Height,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  In.  
Inscribed: 1634
64. RECTANGULAR BOX AND COVER, with curved sides and basketwork cover and rims, lacquered red and painted with a river scene and boat.  
Length,  $10\frac{1}{2}$  Inches; Width,  $7\frac{1}{4}$  Inches; Height, 4 Inches  
Inscribed: 1634
65. WALL VASE, lacquered black and painted with an olive green peony decoration.  
Height,  $9\frac{1}{2}$  Inches  
Late Ming Dynasty
66. WINE POT, olive brown lacquered pewter, incised design of children playing under a tree, and a poem. (see Plate V)  
Height,  $5\frac{1}{8}$  Inches  
17th Century
67. EIGHT LOBED BOX AND COVER, gold lacquer, burgautée, with phoenix and cloud design on top of lid and on the bottom of the box.  
Diameter,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  Inches  
17th Century



PLATE V



Catalogue No. 66.

68. OCTAGONAL TRAY, black lacquer, burgauté, house in a garden.  
Length, 4 Inches; Width,  $8\frac{3}{4}$  Inches  
16th-17th Century
69. RECTANGULAR BOX AND COVER, dark brown coromandel lacquer, landscape on lid, dragons and floral sprays on sides.  
Length,  $5\frac{1}{4}$  Inches; Height,  $2\frac{7}{8}$  Inches  
17th Century
70. ARM REST, in black lacquer, engraved design of prunus blossom spray and a poem.  
Length,  $12\frac{5}{8}$  Inches  
17th Century
71. CIRCULAR BOX WITH CONVEX COVER, carved red lacquer, floral design. Inside of lid inscribed: Sacred flowers on a Treasured Box.  
Diameter,  $3\frac{7}{8}$  Inches  
17th-18th Century
72. FOUR FOLD SCREEN, red coromandel lacquer, tree and bird design. (From the Collection of Mr. C. T. Loo).  
Height, 86 Inches; Width, 24 Inches  
17th Century
73. SMALL CIRCULAR BOX WITH CONVEX COVER, carved red lacquer, minutely carved floral decoration.  
Diameter,  $2\frac{5}{16}$  Inches  
18th Century
74. CIRCULAR GIFT BOX WITH HIGH CONVEX LID, carved red lacquer, dragon and cloud design.  
Diameter,  $11\frac{1}{8}$  Inches; Height,  $8\frac{1}{4}$   
18th Century
75. EIGHT LOBED DISH ON THREE LEGS, dark brown lacquer.  
Diameter,  $8\frac{3}{4}$  Inches; Height,  $2\frac{1}{4}$  Inches  
Inscribed: 1848
76. CIRCULAR BOWL, carved red lacquer, silver lined, sages and attendants in landscape.  
Diameter,  $4\frac{1}{8}$  Inches; Height,  $2\frac{3}{8}$  Inches  
16th-17th Century



77. CIRCULAR BOWL, red lacquer, carved rather flat, medallions with sages and attendants, and diaper pattern.  
Diameter, 9 Inches  
Late 16th Century
78. CIRCULAR BOWL, carved red lacquer, fabulous animals on a wave pattern background.  
Diameter, 4-15/16 Inches; Height, 2 1/4 Inches  
Late 16th Century
79. OCTAGONAL TRAY, lacquered black, inside painted flowers and birds; outside inlaid with Mother-of-Pearl, birds and flower sprays.  
Diameter, 9 1/4 Inches; Height, 2 1/2 Inches  
17th Century
80. CHRYSANTHEMUM SHAPED BOX AND COVER, carved red lacquer, chrysanthemum decoration.  
Diameter, 6 1/8 Inches  
18th Century
81. BOX AND COVER IN POMEGRANATE SHAPE, carved red lacquer, peony decoration.  
Length, 4 1/2 Inches  
18th Century
82. JARDINIERE, carved red lacquer, figures in landscape, floral and diaper design.  
Length, 10 Inches; Width, 6 5/8 Inches; Height, 3 1/2 Inches  
18 Century