

Digitization and Research of the Japanese Lacquer Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

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ITP Program Schedules

2010 August – September: Boston (USA), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Digitization of the Japanese lacquer collection (more than 5,000 images), research of its artworks and related archival material, data entry

2010 October: New York City (USA), Columbia University, Donald Keene Center

Research on the reception of Japanese decorative arts in the USA and their collecting history

Presentations

Japanese lacquer seminar

Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, Asian Art Department 9/30 /2010

Collecting Japanese Lacquer in Europe and the United States

New York University, Institute of Fine Arts, JASA (Japanese Art Society of America) 10/12/2010

Negoro lacquer seminar

New York City, Burke Foundation 10/15/2010

Marchands-Merciers and Magots: The Japanese Lacquer Collection of Madame de Pompadour

New York City, Columbia University, Donald Keene Center of Japanese Culture 10/18/2010

Nineteenth-century East-Asia expeditions: Japanese art as ethnographic or decorative art

Poland, Krakow, Manggha Center, Manggha Museum and The Polish Society of Oriental Art 10/21/2010

Japanese lacquer collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

1876 (Philadelphia, Centennial World Exposition) - 1906

Museum acquisitions, bequests from collectors, approximately 40 objects

1906 Denman Waldo Ross bequest of approximately 19 objects

1911 Charles Goddard Weld bequest of 35 objects, including *inro* (the objects had been on loan in the MFA since 1887)

1911 William Sturgis Bigelow bequest of approximately 1,207 objects , including *inro* (most of the objects had been on loan in the MFA since 1889)

1921 Major Henry Lee Higginson bequest of 45 objects

1949 Charles Bain Hoyt bequest of 26 objects

1950 – 2010

Museum acquisitions, bequests, patron acquisitions, approximately 60 objects

Search

Use * to search for word variants. Click "Show All" to view all the objects.

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Web Project Manager, Photograph: Monika Bhojak
Web Design: Kenji Hattori

Folded-letter shaped incense box with cherry blossom motifs



Institution National Museum of Denmark

Accession number EA65

Provenance Royal Danish Kunstskammer

Category Incense utensils

Production Period First half of Edo

Date before / Inventory data 1690

Structure Inro shape lid

Contents Tray

Height 18.5 cm

Depth cm

Width cm

Diameter 11 cm

Design Cherry, maple, peony, karakusa, chrysanthemum, seigaiha

Material Wood, lacquer, metal powder

Background Black lacquer

Technique 1 Dry lacquer structure, Gold, Silver, Adkin powder, hira-makie, usunku-takar-makie, senpaki

Inside

Condition Good

Reference Martha Boyer: Japanese Export Lacquers From the Seventeenth Century in the National Museum of Denmark, The National Museum of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, 1959; Joan Hornby: "Japan", Ethnographic Objects in The Royal Danish Kunstskammer 1650-1812, Eds. Bente Dam-Mikkelsen, Torben Lundbaek, Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen, 1980; Exhibited Japan-Makie, Kyoto National Museum, 2000

Notes Record in the Kunstskammer inventory 1690

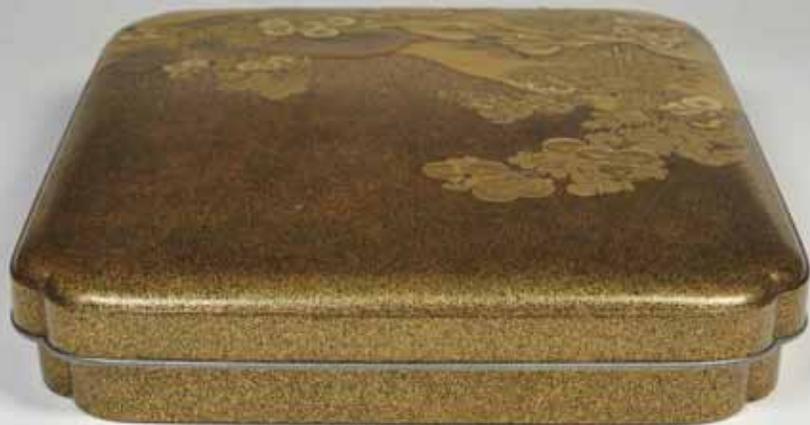
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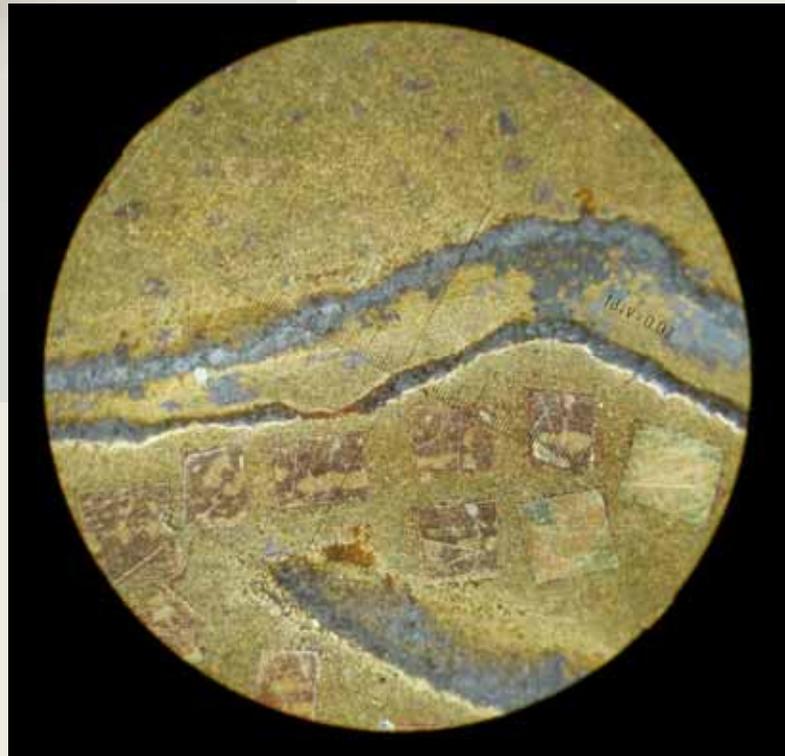


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Writing box (*suzuribako*) decorated with chrysanthemums and a poem. Lacquer on wood with *maki-e* decoration, 18th century, MFA, Bigelow collection



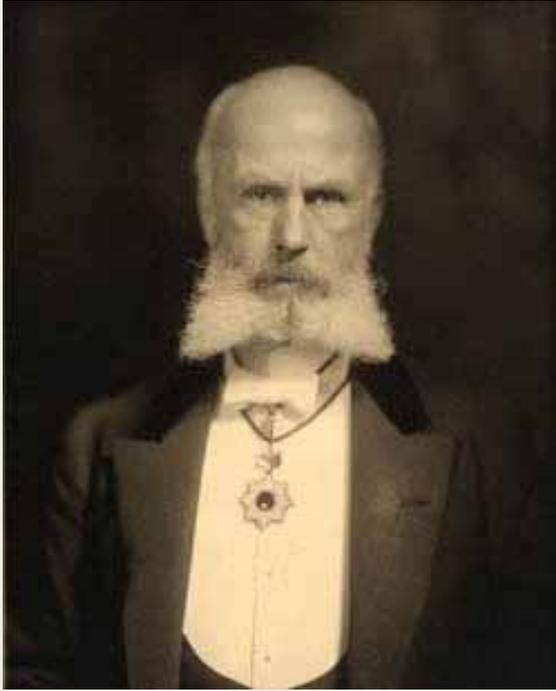


Box for
calligraphy paper
(*tanzakubako*),
decorated with
Tokugawa family
crest, pine and
plum motifs.

Lacquer on
wood with *maki-*
e decoration, late
17th– early 18th
century
MFA, Bigelow
collection

Microscope image, 50X magnification

William Sturgis Bigelow (1850-1926)

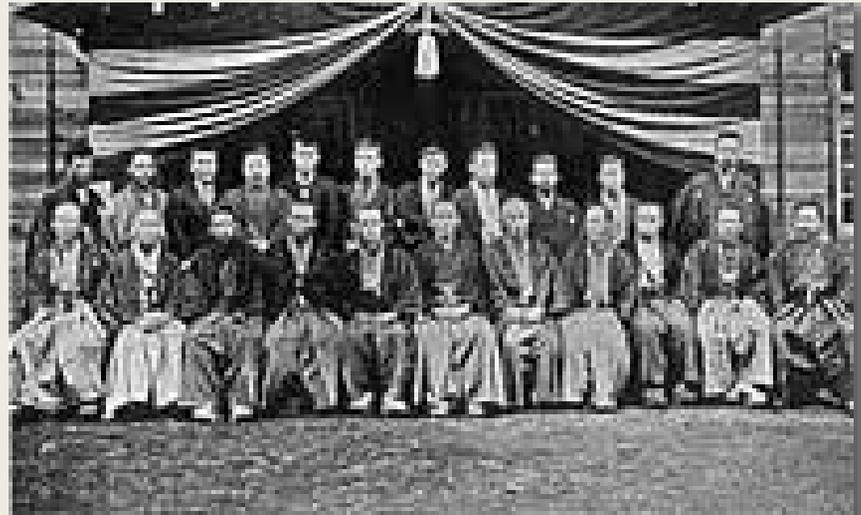


The secretary of the Harvard class of 1871 once wrote to William Sturgis Bigelow requesting some news, "or a story." Bigelow replied,

"Story? God bless you, I have none to tell, sir. Since '81 I have spent about seven years in Japan, when [sic] I saw a great many folks of high and low degree, got together some things of various sorts for the Boston Museum of Fine Arts...and learned a little about Eastern philosophy and religion. I have neither wife nor children, written no books, received no special honors and I belong only to the regular clubs and societies."

In **1881** Bigelow went to Japan, following **Edward S. Morse and Ernest Fenollosa**, who were among the first Americans to study Japanese culture. He later called the cruise to Japan the turning point of his life. During his prolonged stay he studied, traveled, and collected Japanese art. After returning to Boston in 1889, Bigelow devoted much of his time to the study of art and Asian religions. He also entertained lavishly at his home at 56 Beacon Street, often welcoming such university friends as **George and Henry Cabot Lodge, Brooks and Henry Adams, and Theodore Roosevelt**, who regularly made Bigelow's home his Boston headquarters. Bigelow became an active trustee of the Museum of Fine Arts and continued to collect paintings, often consulting with Isabella Stewart Gardner.

Okakura Kakuzo (1863-1913)

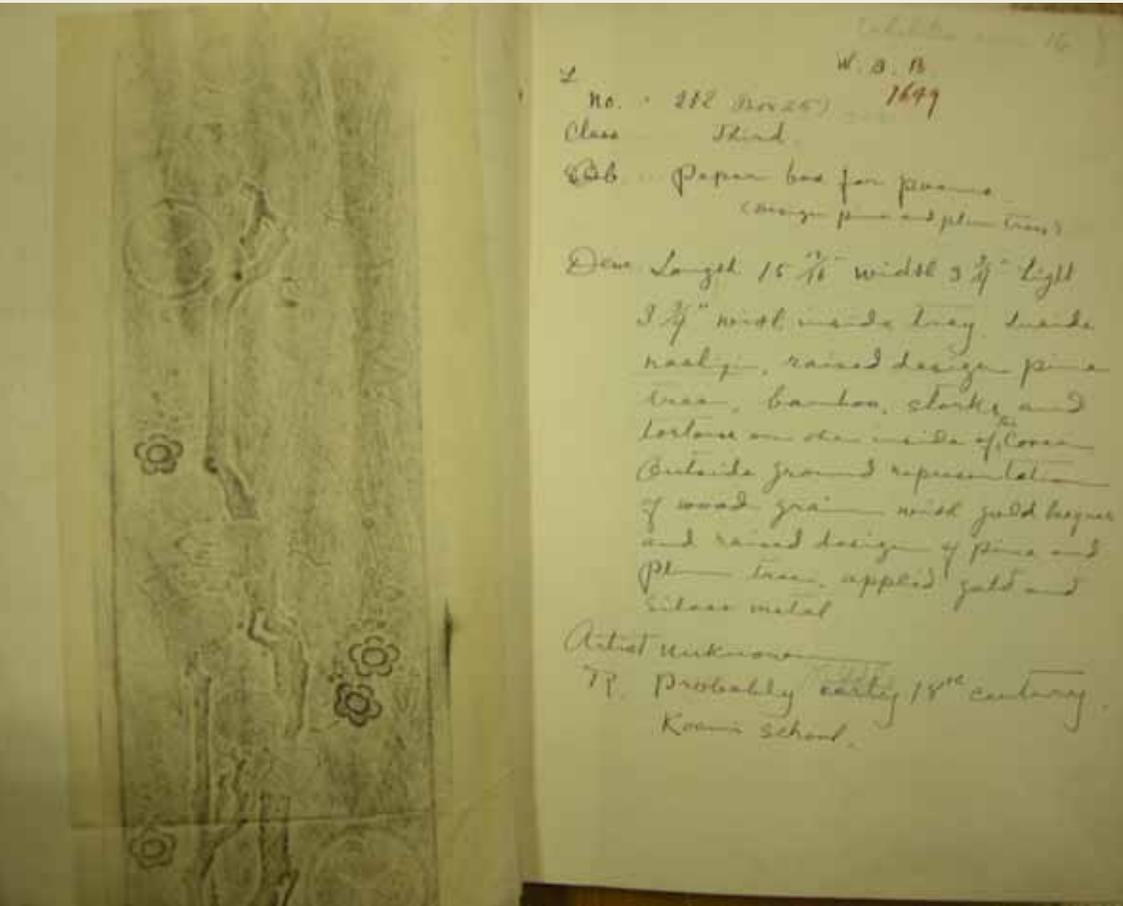


Members of the Nihon Bijutsuin at Izura

Okakura joined the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston as their expert in Chinese and Japanese Art in 1904. Okakura's book, the well-received *The Awakening of Japan* was published in New York. In 1905 he built a villa at Izura, where the Nihon Bijutsuin was relocated to in the next year. At the same time his most famous book, *The Book of Tea* was released in New York. In 1910 became curator of the Department of Chinese and Japanese Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

**Notes and rubbings depicting
Japanese lacquers at the
MFA by Rokkaku Shisui,
1907-08 (MFA Archives)**

**Rokkaku Shisui (1867-
1950), lacquer artist**



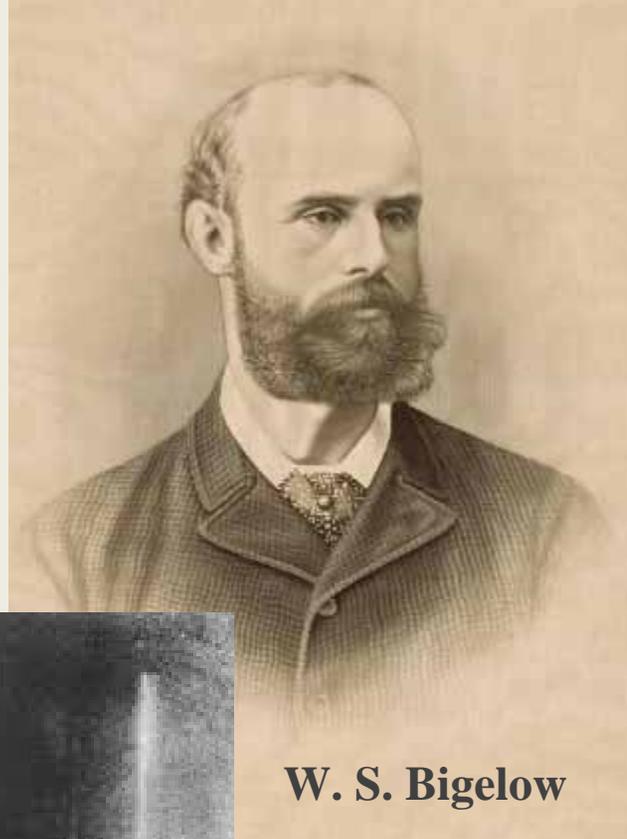
After graduation in 1893 from the Tokyo Fine Arts School, he toured Japan with Okakura Kakuzo to survey art works, especially those at Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines. His lacquer survey significantly contributed to the establishment of the future Cultural Property system.

In 1907 as a member of the Nihon Bijutsuin he was invited by Okakura to visit the Boston Museum of Fine Arts to describe and restore its lacquer holdings.

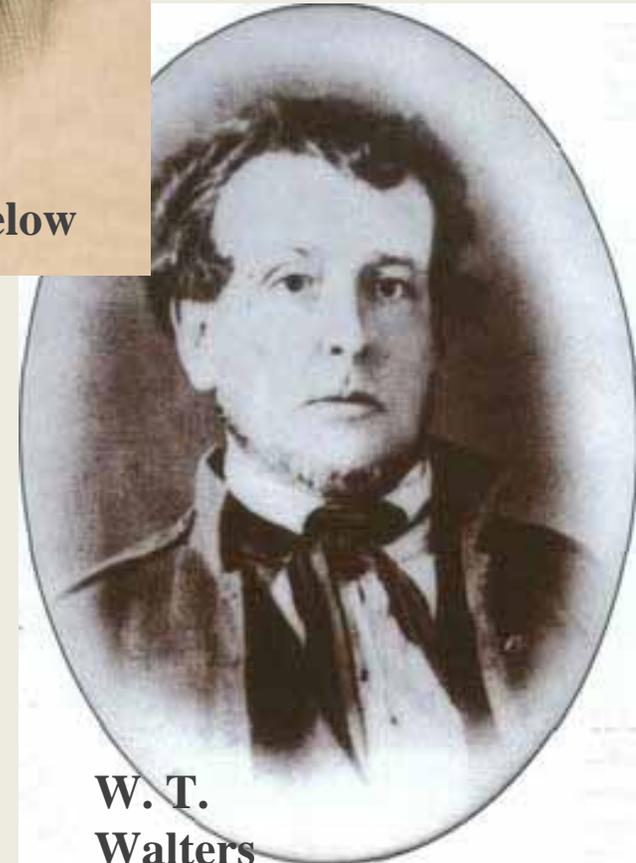


H. O. Havemeyer

**Louis Comfort
Tiffany (1848-
1933)**



W. S. Bigelow



**W. T.
Walters**

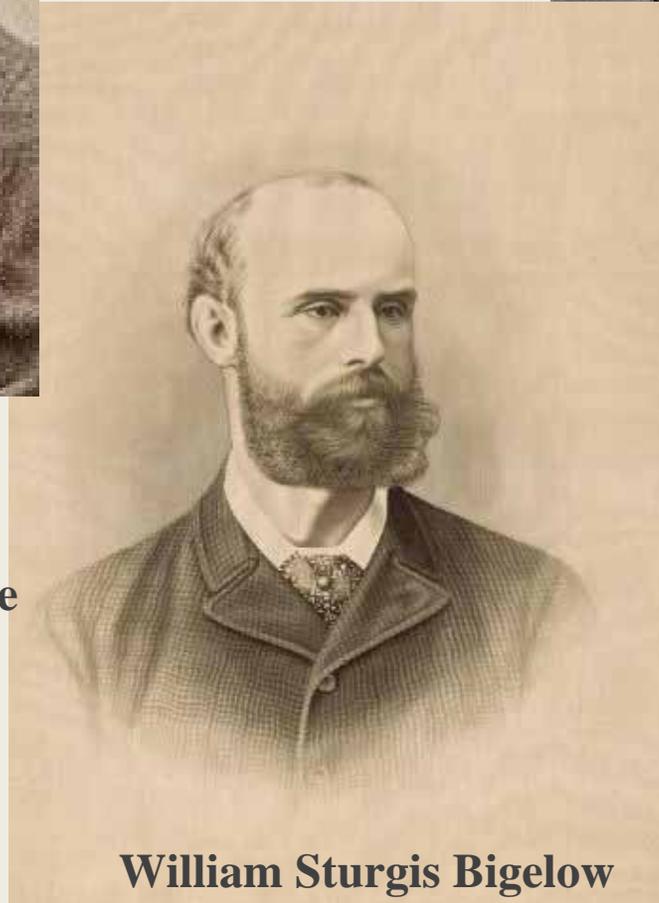
**Philadelphia,
Centennial
Exhibition 1867**

**Collectors of
Japanese lacquer**

**Contemporaries
at Harvard**



**Kaneko Kentaro (1853-1942),
Statesman, diplomat of the
Meiji Government**



William Sturgis Bigelow



**Theodore Roosevelt
(1858-1919),
26th President of the
United States**