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# TEACHING TUESDAY

## INAMI WOOD CARVING

MAY 30, 2017

Inami chokoku, or Inami wood carving, is a traditional Japanese craft originating from Toyama prefecture. Using high quality wood from camphor and zelvoka trees, wood carvers use over 200 types of chisels and carving knives to create breath-taking intricate works of art.

The first carvers were originally carpenters as well as wood carvers, so it fits that the origins of Inami woodcarving start at Zuisen-ji temple in. This wooden temple was first built in 1390, but was burnt down many times. With each rebuilding, the carving techniques became increasingly sophisticated and exquisite, until they developed in to the techniques used in Inami carving today. Inami carving quickly spread to other temples and shrines, such as Honganji Temple or Nikko Toshogu. By the Meiji period, specialist woodcarvers had emerged and began to produce goods for the populace, including transoms, the decorative ventilation over the sliding doors of traditional Japanese homes.

Inami carving is unique because no files are used to create smooth curves, and each work is carved out of a single piece of wood which is carved on both sides. Artists first sketch their design onto the wood, then begin to carefully shave away the pieces using only chisels and woodcarving knives. Carving from both sides allows the carvers to create a deep relief affect, and they use a variety of motifs including birds, flowers, people, insects, landscapes and more.