

# Locally National:

## Koseki Rokuhei and the Advent of Contemporary Lacquer Art in Iwate



Koseki Rokuhei. Quiet Spin.1982. Pigmented lacquer, mother of pearl inlay, gold, silver. Iwate Prefectural Art Museum.



Koseki Rokuhei. Core Heat (detail). 1965. Pigmented lacquer, gold. Iwate Prefectural Art Museum.



Tapped lacquer tree. Jōbōji, Ninohe City, Iwate Prefecture.

Often overlooked, lacquered art objects produced in Japan after 1945 can be perplexing in their use of modern, abstract visual forms articulated through the “traditional” material of lacquer. This talk explores the work of Iwate artist Koseki Rokuhei through an examination of shifting local, national, and international priorities within a place-based and ecological or environmental humanities framework. Although Koseki was trained to design and produce fine lacquerware suitable for export, he spent much of his life in Iwate creating vessels and sculptural works that blur boundaries between “art” (*bijutsu*) and “craft” (*kōgei*) by combining abstraction with local forms and motifs. This talk discusses how Koseki centered the technical and material possibilities of local Appi River lacquer to create works that communicate compelling, multivalent expressions of place. As such, Koseki’s work forces us to reconsider how eco-local contexts and histories inform the visual and material possibilities of modern art.

This talk is organized by Noriko Murai (Professor of Art History, Sophia University)  
Sophia University, ICC: <https://www.icc-sophia.com/>

## Joel Thielen

May 18, 2023, 18:00~19:30

Room 301, 3F, Building 10,  
Yotsuya Campus, Sophia University

In person only

No registration required,

Free of charge.

Language: English

(No translation)

**Joel Thielen** is a Ph.D. candidate in the History of Art Department at the University of California, Berkeley and a Visiting Researcher at the Institute of Comparative Culture at Sophia University. Joel’s research, situated within the emergent field of eco art history, engages with the art, architecture, and craft objects of modern Japan to explore relationships between local ecologies, cultural heritage, and identity. His dissertation focuses on the lacquer tree landscape of the Appi River region in Iwate Prefecture and its modern material linkages to craft and architectural traditions of local, regional, and national significance.