



UN
LEARNING
SMOOTH
NESS

qīqíqǐ Brand focuses on functional objects crafted primarily with natural lacquer, including homeware and jewellery. The brand creates sensory tension through paradoxical qualities that appear metallic yet remain lightweight, awakening a primal tactile connection between people and materials.

In an age where technology continually smooths over perception, qīqíqǐ seeks to rekindle the memory of touch and embodied experience.

qī qī
qǐ qǐ

qīqíqǐ
BRAND





Collecting natural lacquer from an incision on the lacquer tree (*Toxicodendron vernicifluum*).
Image: Stefanie Hutter

Natural lacquer is derived from the resinous sap of the lacquer tree (*Toxicodendron vernicifluum*), a renewable natural resource. In China, it is known as “*qi*” [漆], while in Japan it is called “*urushi*”.

Used to make both furniture and vessels, lacquer is built up meticulously on a prepared substrate in multiple thin layers. Each layer must be carefully applied, dried, and polished. It cures in a warm, humid environment and requires more than 24 hours of patient curing time.

The finished object demonstrates remarkable strength and durability, with exceptional resistance to water, acids, alkalis, and abrasion.

Lacquer objects have been made in East Asia since prehistoric times. They were exported to Europe from the late 16th century onwards.



1.

The **tools** used in lacquer production are diverse, here are some of the most common ones:

1. **Brush Made from Hair:**

A unique tool in lacquer art, crafted from long human hair. It is soft and highly absorbent, allowing for even application of lacquer without leaving brush marks.

2. **Scraper:**

Used for mixing lacquer and smoothing putty. It comes in various materials, including horn, plastic, wood, and metal.



2.



4.



5.

3. **Orange Oil:**

Serves as both a thinner and a cleaner, used for cleaning lacquer brushes and removing lacquer from the skin.

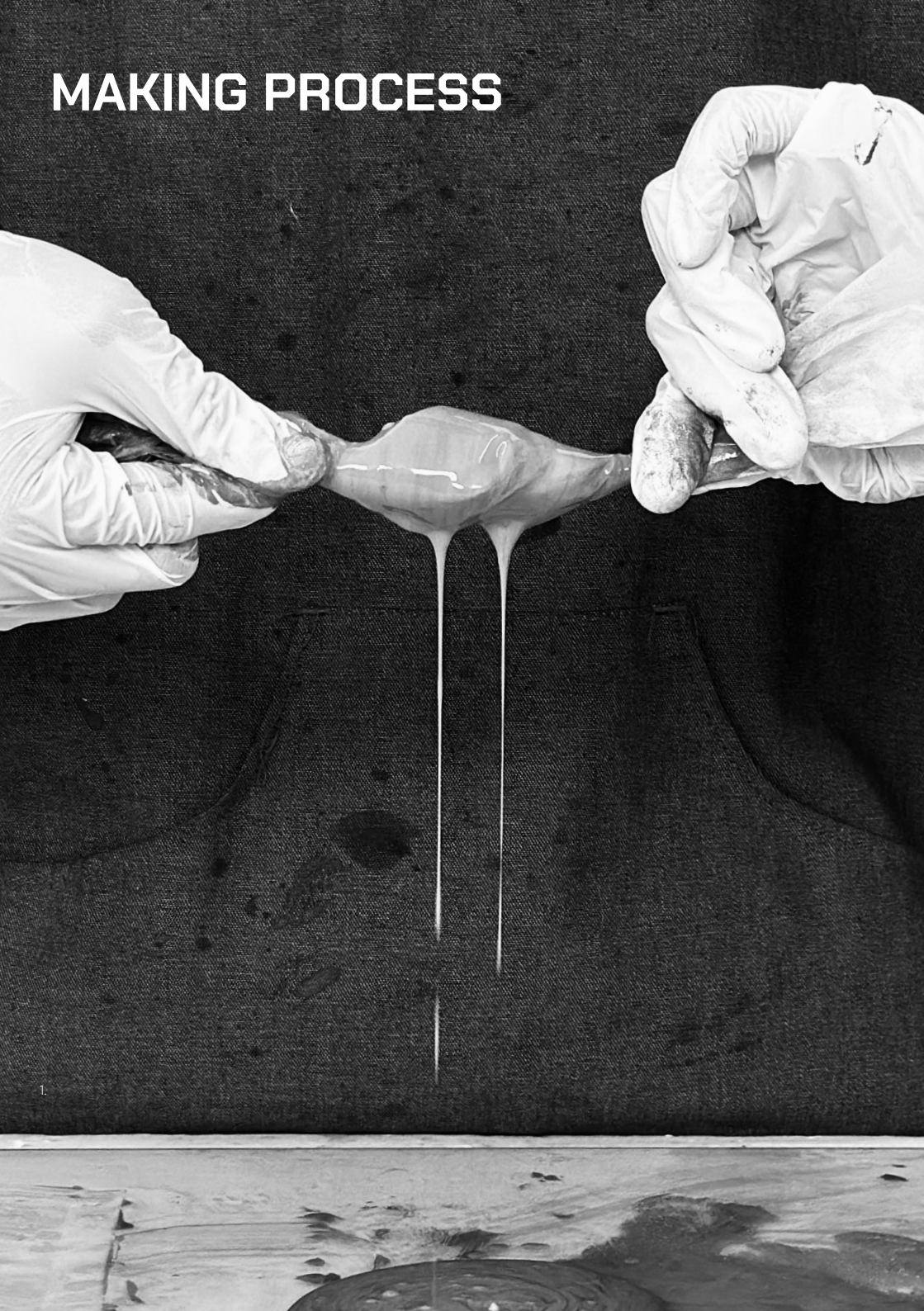
4. **Sieve:**

Used to filter dry lacquer powder, carbon powder, lime, and similar materials. Mesh sizes range from 14 to 120 and should be selected based on the fineness of the material particles.

5. **Sandpaper:**

Used for polishing lacquer surfaces. Different grits of sandpaper provide varying effects depending on the desired finish.

MAKING PROCESS



2.



3.



4.



5.

- fig.1 Filtering lacquer
fig.2 Mixing lacquer with glutinous rice flour
fig.3 Cutting fabric
fig.4 Lacquer meets fabric
fig.5 Polishing



MAIN SERIES

Our main series includes vases, trays, cups, and brooches. Though their surfaces suggest a metallic weight, each piece is astonishingly light. And most weigh under 100 grams, with some as little as 30 grams.

Linen fabric is sewn, twisted, and compressed to form intuitive shapes, allowing the material's own tension and rhythm to guide the form. Multiple layers of natural lacquer are then applied, each permeating the fibres, hardening the surface, and transforming the softness of cloth into resilience and durability, while preserving every crease and texture.

Reinterpreting traditional techniques, we experiment with finishes such as *Ishime-nuri* [a granular, stone-like texture] and *Rōgin-nuri* [a subtle metallic sheen]. Applied to the fabric surface, these finishes retain the pliability and tactility of textiles while adding distinctive functionality. The works are not only practical, but also water-resistant, corrosion-resistant, and acid-resistant.



01

HELD VESSEL



Size: 11x11x18 cm
Weight: 51 g



Size: 7x10x15 cm
Weight: 42 g



Size: 9x9x12 cm
Weight: 39 g



Size: 9x9x20 cm
Weight: 63 g



02



Size: 18x19 cm
Weight: 23 g



Size: 15x16 cm
Weight: 18 g



Size: 19x20 cm
Weight: 26 g



Size: 27x28 cm
Weight: 56 g



RELEASED TRAY



03



Size: 5x6x7 cm
Weight: 16 g



Size: 5x6x7 cm
Weight: 16 g



Size: 4x4x4 cm
Weight: 10 g



Size: 5x6x7 cm
Weight: 16 g



PINCH VESSEL

04



Size: 4x5 cm
Weight: 3 g



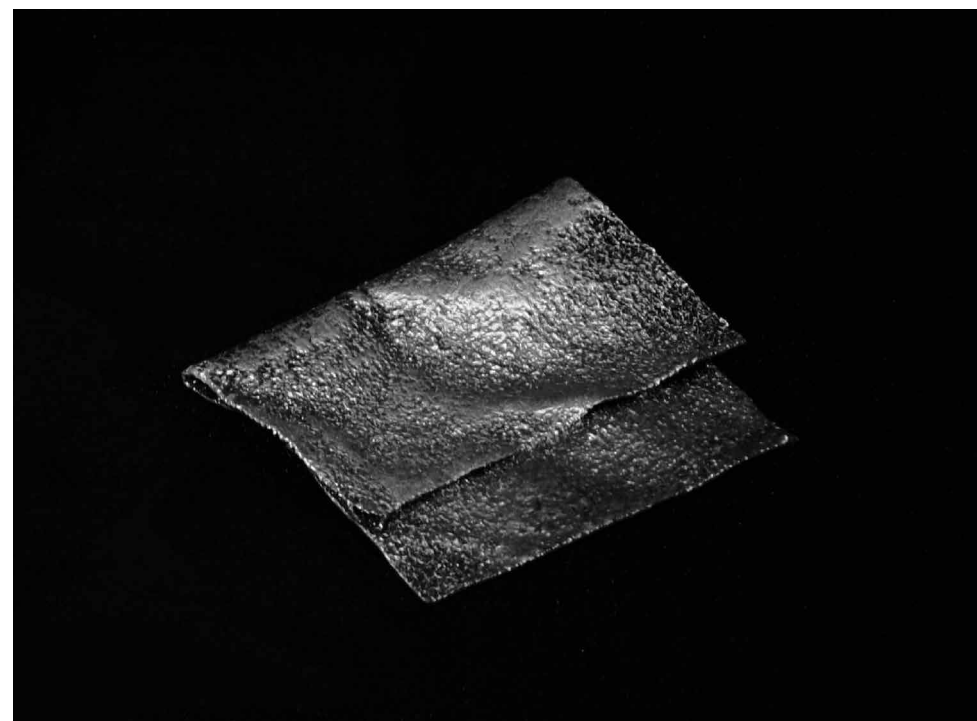
Size: 4x5 cm
Weight: 4 g



Size: 4x5 cm
Weight: 3 g



Size: 4x5 cm
Weight: 3 g



MOTION BROOCH

Horsehair Brushes

In Chinese tradition, the horse symbolises strength, vitality and unceasing energy. Its mane and tail hair are believed to carry protective powers, associated with positive energy that wards off negative influences. For centuries, small brushes or ornaments made from horsehair have been hung in doorways or beside cradles as talismans of protection and peace.

05





06

LACQUER PAPER

Lacquered paper possesses exceptional toughness and resistance to penetration, along with natural moisture and corrosion resistance that make it suitable for long-term preservation. Its surface has a matte finish and a warm, tactile feel. Each sheet is handmade, with edges that reveal subtle natural irregularities.

With its strength and flexibility, lacquered paper can withstand repeated reworking and modification. It lends itself to folding and three-dimensional construction, and when combined with pastel pigments, it produces a soft, mist-like atmosphere. It also performs well with a wide range of media, including acrylic, oil, gouache, and coloured pencils. The dense surface ensures stable adhesion and fluid blending of pigments.

** Sizes and bindings can be customised, whether in single sheets or bound volumes, offering flexibility for different creative approaches.*



Lacquer Book

07



Sizes and bindings can be customised, from single sheets to bound volumes, offering flexibility for different creative approaches.

CO-FOUNDER



Miao Tan ARWS [b.1998]

Miao focuses on material research and product development, combining traditional lacquer techniques with contemporary forms and functions. With a background in fine art and sculpture, they bring sensitivity to texture, proportion, and structure into each design.

Educated in both China and the UK, Miao holds a BA in Oil Painting from Minzu University of China and an MA in Sculpture from the Royal College of Art. They are an Associate Member of the Royal Watercolour Society (ARWS) and recipient of the 2023 New Graduate Award.

Miao is based in London, continuing to expand lacquer's expressive possibilities across functional design and artistic practice.



Siying Cui [b.1996]

Siying oversees the brand's visual direction, presentation, and spatial design, shaping how each object communicates its material and sensory qualities. Their practice bridges design and art through clear visual systems with an intuitive sense of tactility.

Siying holds a BA in Environmental Design from Beijing University of Technology, and an MA in Contemporary Art Practice from the Royal College of Art.

With experience in branding, publishing, and exhibition design, Siying builds qīqíqǐ's identity through cohesive visual storytelling and material expression.



qīqíqǐqì welcomes collaborations with concept stores, galleries, and diverse retail platforms to expand the reach and presentation of our work. We are open to collaborations with designers, artists, researchers, and cross-disciplinary institutions to explore new possibilities for natural lacquer within contemporary contexts.

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