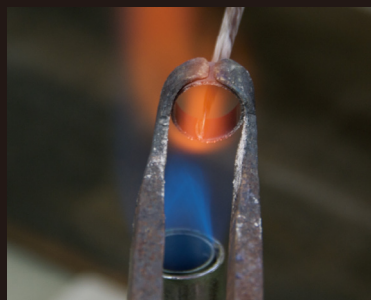


Higo-Zo-gan Working Process

Higo-Zo-gan that has 400 years history is one of the inlaid artworks which uses special technique digging fine ditches by cold chisel on the base iron and rammed down thin gold plate or wires directly into channel cut portion on the base iron. In *Edo* era, this techniques are employed for accessories of sword. Sword guards and diminutive were used among samurais regularly as a symbol of samurai dandyism. This solid and elegant technique is called *Higo-Zo-gan*, and has been succeeded for generations and it has produced many famous masters and masterpieces.

**① Nunome -Cut**

First, dig fine ditches on the base iron one by one with cold chisel lengthwise, crosswise, and diagonally. Then, make belt shaped irons and circle them.

**② Brazing**

Circled iron is brazed by special technique and finished into cylindrical shape.

**③ Zo-gan**

Pressed gold thin plate shaping petals, leaves, and buds are laid into channels cut on the base iron with appropriate shaped antler.

**④ Zo-gan****(Ramming down)**

This is very delicate ramming skill bending gold wire on the round surface of the cylinder base iron.

**⑤ Getting out rust**

To make the inlaid base iron rusted all over, apply oxidization agent, then, dry them in front of a fire. Repeat these procedures 3 times in 48 hours. This is peculiar skilled techniques required for *Higo-Zo-gan*.

**⑥ Anti-rusting by green tea**

Boil green tea and pour it over the rusted iron in container and re-boil them for about 17 minutes. Tannin contained in the tea stops the further rusting and it makes iron color solid black, which is peculiar to *Higo-Zo-gan*.

**⑦ Polishing**

Clean and polish misted inlaid portion and dip them into boiled oil for 3 minutes then, wipe out. When polish stick touches the black colored iron, it causes whitening and scars on the base iron. It is delicate work which requires skilled craftsmanship.

**⑧ Detailed finish**

As a final finish, detailed description will be added. Patterns of flowers, leaves, petals, are directly rammed on the *Zo-gan* design itself. Extremely dexterous skill is required. Skilled craftsmanship is concentrated ungrudgingly.

**⑨ Finishing**

This employs no artificial paint but natural material only. Combination of beautiful black color of base iron originated from rust and gorgeous ornament of pure gold. This completes original *Higo-Zo-gan* beauty.