Legacy in Lacquer: A Living Art from Burma will feature selections from the NIU Burma Art Collection originating from the renaissance of lacquerware during the British Colonial period to the present. Lacquer has a long tradition in Burma—as a medium and as an evolving art form there for more than a full millennium. It was used both to fabricate and to decorate ordinary household wares as well as ceremonial objects for the nobility and Buddhist monasteries. In the nineteenth century under colonial British rule, lacquerware became a valuable commodity for Western export.

Lacquer originates from the sap of a tree native to much of tropical Southeast Asia, which when processed and polished yields its characteristic high-gloss appearance. It is also a material notable its natural plasticity and its ability to be easily applied to, and adhere well to, nearly any substrate: “Its visual impact can be stunning — objects are dazzlingly coloured, usually with a dominance of scarlet, gold and black, and are sometimes also inlaid with . . . glass to produce a splendid effect of shimmering iridescence”. (Isaacs and Burton, Visions from a Golden Land, 2009)

Beyond its superb aesthetic and historical value, the extraordinary NIU Burma Art Collection is an increasingly globalized teaching and learning asset for cultural historians, religious scholars, and Southeast Asianists everywhere. The purpose of this exhibition, comprised of pieces from within the Collection, is to explore the techniques and designs of a vital living art in the context of Burmese civilization.

The NIU Art Museum is located on the first floor, west end of Altgeld Hall, the “castle,” at the northwest corner of College and Castle Drives on the NIU campus in DeKalb. The galleries are open to the public Tuesday – Friday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., Saturday 12 noon – 4 p.m., and by appointment for group tours. Exhibitions are free; donations are appreciated. Pay parking is available in the Visitor’s Lot on Carroll Avenue and at metered spots in front of Altgeld Hall. Free parking is available on Saturdays and during receptions and visiting artist lectures in the lot northeast of Gilbert and College Drives. The exhibitions of the NIU Art Museum are funded in part by the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, the Friends of the NIU Art Museum, and the Arts Fund 21. For more information, please visit our website: www.niu.edu/artmuseum. You may also visit our group on facebook, follow us on twitter: www.twitter.com/niuartmuseum, or call 815.753.1936.