



FACT SHEET ON VEHARA SILVER PLATED HOMEWARES

Vehara Silver Plated Homewares

Vehara's silverplated homewares are all handmade by Cambodian artisans using copper, bronze and silver imported from Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong and various other Asian countries. Our collection includes both in-house designs, as well as traditional pieces.

Silversmithing in Cambodia

Silverworks in Cambodia date back to the Khmer empire, which spanned the 9th to 15th century, reaching its peak during the 11th century. During this time royalty and the upper class used silver for religious ceremonies, funerals and other rituals.

Between the 17th and the 19th century, silversmith villages emerged in the areas south of the ancient royal port of Oudong the Cambodian capital during that period, and were supported by the Cambodian Royal Palace. In 1866, King Norodom moved the Royal court from Oudong to the new Royal Palace in Phnom Penh and the city became the official capital of Cambodia the following year.

During Pol Pot's terror regime between 1975 and 1979 many of Cambodia's silversmiths were among the 1.7 million people (21% of the country's population) who lost their lives. Despite these upheavals, the villages survive to this day. Cambodia's skilled silversmith artisans continue to live there, practising and passing on their art form, using tools that have remained relatively unchanged. While the rest of the world has turned to mechanization to increase production and returns, Cambodian silversmiths continue to hand produce their beautiful, fine, detailed silverworks.

Process of Making Silver Plated Objects

Cambodian silverworks are among the finest and most detailed in the world. From the first stage of hand pressing copper/ bronze sheets to the final electroplating stage, every step of making a Cambodian silver plated or silver object is a piece of art. The process of making a 10 cm cube/box, for example, involves nine steps and takes approximately 24 man-hours.

The first stage is the hand pressing of a copper/bronze mixture into sheets. The size and shape of each sheet is dependant on both the object that is to be made and the specific workmanship styles of the silversmith. The sheet is then placed on a wooden tray coated with hot melted wax. Additional wax is poured around the borders of the sheet to keep the sheet in place. This sheet is then left usually overnight.

Once the wax is set and dry, the shape of the box is drawn onto the sheet (the shape is the same as that used for making die cut boxes). The silversmith draws the motifs onto the sheet and begins the process of chasing whereby the detail on the front of the sheet is worked on. Metal tools of varying sizes and a wooden hammer are used. Once the chasing is done, the tray is heated to melt the hot wax. The sheet is removed and turned over and the wax left to set. Once set, the process of repousse begins where the details are worked on the reverse side. Finally, the wax is melted again, the sheet turned back to the "chasing" side and the details are finalized. This design, repousse and chasing step alone is 20 man-hours excluding the time it takes for the wax to set and reset 3 times.

Scissors are used to cut out the shape of the box. The trimmed sheet is then bent and manipulated to create the desired shape. The lid of the box and the base are matched up before welding occurs. Matching the lids with the base is a process of trial and error as they must fit perfectly. Small pieces of metal that may stick out of the box are heated and either burned into ash or welded into the box.

The joints and edges of the box are smoothed out with a metal file and scourer of varying degrees of thickness and grades and the object is placed in a mixture of acid wash to get rid of impurities. The box is then plunged into soapy water (laundry detergent) and polished with a metal scourer until smooth and shiny.

Once the box is smooth and clean, it is electroplated. This involves placing the box in a solution containing silver ions and then passing an electric current through the system. This causes the silver ions to adhere to the box. The silver plated box is taken out and left to dry in direct sunlight which ensures the box is completely dry. Drying in direct sunlight also helps to increase the shine of the silver.

Finally, soot is rubbed onto the box to intensify and enhance the relief.

Product Care, Cleaning and Handling of Vehara Silver Plated Products

Our silver products are copper/bronze based and silver plated. Like all silver products, tarnishing will occur over time. Tarnish is caused by moisture, sulfur and other airborne chemicals, and the natural acids, salts and oils that accumulate on your skin. Tarnish (silver sulfide) is first visible on silver as a yellowish cast which over time deepens to brown and eventually becomes a very dark and iridescent purple/black. Tarnish does not pose a threat to silver objects. In fact, most damage to silver occurs as a result of polishing which removes layers of silver with each polish.

The **best care, handling and cleaning method** to use is:

1. Use a clean cotton cloth to handle silver and silver plated objects to avoid frequent cleaning.
2. Avoid touching silver and silver plated objects with sweaty hands.
3. Clean with "**Vehara Cleaning Solution**" for optimum result and shine. Our solution is gentle and will not remove silver during cleaning. It will keep your silver plated objects in pristine condition. (Available through us or your nearest stockist).
4. Cleaning when tarnish is light is better for your silver plated objects than if tarnish is dark.
5. If you do not have our cleaning solution, clean each silver plated object with lemon or vinegar, rinse well with clean water, dry with a clean cotton cloth and air dry in direct sunlight. This method is suitable when the silver plated object is dull and not tarnished in spots. Drying in direct sunlight ensures that no moisture is left. It also increases the shine on the silver.

Do Not Use Conventional Silver Cleaners, Silver Plating Solutions, Silver Polishing Cloths Or Any Other Method Of Silver Cleaning Other Than The Method Above As They Are Abrasive And Will Strip The Silver Off. They Will Also Cause Discoloration Which Is Sometimes Irreversible.

Our silver plated objects have a black powder on them which makes the relief on the objects stand out. If there is too much powder, it may get on your hands or clothing. Washing with soap and water will remove the stain. If there is too much powder residue on the silver plated object, take a clean dry cloth and give the silver plated object a wipe. When cleaning the objects with water and lemon, the black residue will still stay in the crevices so that the relief on the objects is still evident and contrasting.