

Room 4: Furnishings

N-88: Karabitsu (Box with Legs)

Footed chests, called *karabitsu* (lit. “Chinese chest”), were used to store things. Such chests are equipped with feet that raise them above the floor. On this chest, phoenixes in roundels are rendered in thick pieces of green-turban-shell inlay on the body, legs, and top of the lid. Shimmering with a reflective white light, the large, bold design stands out against the glossy black lacquer, exemplifying the sophisticated Japanese aesthetics of the courtly Heian period (794–1192).

N-90: Box; Auspicious flower, butterfly, and bird design in gold and silver on lacquered hide

N-301-1: Box; Design of flowering plants, butterflies, and birds in gold and silver paint

This box was crafted by stretching the tanned hide of a cow, deer, or boar onto a wooden frame and coating it with black and clear lacquers. The techniques for making lacquered-hide boxes were introduced from Tang-dynasty China (618–907), with many being crafted in Japan during the Nara period (710–794).

N-116: Marbles; Known as Hitori-mizutori-dama

N-117: Cubic Marbles; Known as Ishinatori-dama

N-118: Flower-shaped Dish

These marbles are mentioned in the *Record of Hōryū-ji and Biography of Prince Shōtoku*, which was written in the Kamakura period (1192–1333), and were purportedly the treasured possessions of the prince when he was a child. The round marbles are attached to a traditional type of interlaced cord (*kumihimo*), suggesting that they were worn as a decorative accessory. The cube-shaped marbles, which were kept in a lacquered container, may have been used for playing a board game. Both sets of marbles were depicted in the *Illustrated Catalogue of Treasures* (1842), with the round marbles placed on the *Flower-Shaped Dish* (N-118).

N-92 Light Stand; With painted decoration

This stand consists of a base, shaft, and light-reflecting plate. A metal ring, the height of which can be adjusted, is used to hold a simple oil lamp comprised of a shallow dish in which a wick is burned. The round, vertical plate is painted white in a pigment made from powdered seashells to better reflect the light, and features a painting of three children.

N-121: Jar with Four Handles; With celadon glaze

Reportedly dedicated to Hōryū-ji Temple in 734 by Empress Kōmyō, this jar was used to store cloves for their aromatic value. It holds the prestigious title of being the oldest ceramic work with a known history to be passed down to present day. Celadon wares like this one were produced in southern China, and judging from the jar’s round, light shape, it is believed to have been made in China during the early Tang dynasty.

N-99: Printing Block for Textile Decoration; Lion design

Both sides of this printing block are carved with Chinese lion designs, which were coated with ink and stamped onto textiles. In addition to Chinese lions, these patterns often included other animals, such as bears, mythical long-tailed birds, and Mandarin ducks, and were stamped on outer robes worn during *bugaku* performances, a type of court dance.

N-96 – N-98: Needle Cases; With designs in *bachiru*

These cylindrical containers with fitted lids are made of ivory carved on a lathe. They are decorated with motifs such as birds, animals, and flowering plants rendered in a technique called *bachiru*. *Bachiru* refers to an ivory-carving technique in which the surface of the ivory is stained with color and then carved to create designs by revealing the contrasting white ivory underneath.