

April 2024

Virtual Museum of Celluloid Library Memoir House Yokohama

Iwai Celluloid Collection - new ivory netsuke and statues made by celluloid

Introducing the neo ivory netsuke collection - Series 1

Director: Isao Iwai

<Foreword>

From the latter half of the 19th century to the 20th century, a material with the general name celluloid (scientific name cellulose nitrate), half of which was derived from natural sources and the other half created by human hands, widely appeared in the European and American markets. This has led to the development of new products and substitutes for uses that were previously limited to natural products, and commercialization has progressed significantly.

Initially, celluloid was used as clothing accessories such as corsets, buttons, buckles, dental materials, and play goods such as billiard balls. Later, as it has been generally recognized that celluloid was an excellent material for dolls, so-called Kewpie-type dolls became popular in the United States, Germany, and France, welcomed by infants and young people, and then the toy market expanded. As a result of this trend, many manufacturers in Japan received orders from overseas through trading companies, and the subcontract processing industry expanded and prospered.

In the first half of the 20th century, with the rise of the film industry, new uses for celluloid were found one after another and the industry grew into a large one. In particular, the rise in the income of the general public and qualitative changes in living standards led to the spread of cameras, and a boom which led to the general development of the celluloid industry and laid the foundations for Japan's light industry.

But as the 20th century progressed, the rapid development of petrochemical and plastic industries gradually invaded the uses of celluloid, then substitutions progressed in high speed and replaced celluloid to plastic. In today's 21st century, unfortunately there are fewer people

who know about celluloid. But celluloid's excellent material properties, especially its color, soft texture, and heart-touching appeal, are different from plastic products, and it is still popular today. There are collectors all over the world, and celluloid products are highly valued and beloved.

Number of products of celluloid, counted 25,000 at their peak. And the most interesting groups include greeting cards, buttons and buckles, cosmetic boxes, jewelry boxes, and elegant jewelry boxes, photo frames, luxury travel sets for ladies, Kewpie dolls, various miniature animals, other decorative arts and crafts, celluloid netsuke (miniature carving attached to the end of the cord of a wallet, tobacco pouch or a pillbox) and statues are coveted by collectors.

Celluloid Library Memoir House Yokohama has a large number of celluloid netsuke (named new ivory/neo ivory netsuke) as part of the Iwai Collection that were popularly manufactured for a time, based on ivory netsuke and statuary items which are much loved by enthusiastic collectors. Research and investigation of this collection is currently underway, and as for this 1st series, we would like to introduce some of the fine collections that have been inspected and photographed.

Virtual Museum of Celluloid Library Memoir House Yokohama will spend the next 18 months completing research on the Iwai Collection and will gradually introduce the collections to the public.

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<Product introduction>









There are many different types of new ivory/neo-ivory statues in the collection. This time we will introduce some of the collection.

Photos of Statue of Buddha, statue de Ninomiya Sontoku (a great person, an old model for

young Japanese people to be industrious. September 4, 1787 – November 17, 1856, he was a Japanese agriculturalist. He lost his parents when he was a boy, but through hard work and diligence, he rebuilt his fallen family at the age of 20. Later, he rebuilt approximately 600 villages), statue of Chinese heroes reminiscent of “Romance of the Three Kingdoms”, statues of the Seven Lucky Gods derived from Buddhism, folk crafts and souvenirs that imitate the lives of ordinary people, and animals such as the "Three Monkeys" famous for "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil", an elephant, a majestic ivory carving, a lion, a deer, and a sailing ship and steamship are attached.

New ivory/neo-ivory statues are made using a variety of techniques that imitate ivory, and some pieces rival the original quality.

A great deal of effort and enthusiasm must have gone into creating these pieces, and we are strongly impressed by their efforts.

<p>1. Buddha statue</p> 	<p>2. Statue of Ninomiya Sontoku</p> 
<p>3. Statues of Chinese heroes</p>	<p>4-1. Seven Lucky Gods (inside the gourd)</p>
	
<p>4-2. Scenery of Kyoto drawn on the tip of the gourd</p>	<p>5. Rickshaw</p>
	
<p>6. Parasol</p>	<p>7. Carrying manure</p>
	

8. Vegetable seller



9. Three monkeys



10. Elephant



11. Lion



12. Deer (on big antlers)



13. Deer





14. Palanquin (Mt. Fuji background)



15. Palanquin (inside the shell)



16. Egg (Hakone Owakudani)	17. Sailing ship
	
18. Sailing ship (Dutch flag)	19. Steamboat
	
20. Demon mask	
