



Curiosity room

List of the
exhibited objects

Showcase 1. *Exotica*

This showcase is called *exotica* and contains objects related to the funerary world of ancient Egypt (*ushabti*, scarab, amulet pillar *djed*, statuette of god Min) and Eastern religious context and every day life.

The Egyptian objects come partly from the monastic collection and partly from the donations at the end of the 19th century of Enrico Pazzi, first director of the museum, and Libera Musiani. In particular *ushabti* are little statuettes that, according to the ancient Egyptian belief, can come alive and help the deceased in his farm works in the afterlife. In the showcase are also displayed: a scarab, powerful amulet that protects the hearth of the deceased, a *djed* pillar, symbol of stability and eternal life and a statuette of the god Min, associated with fertility, reproduction, harvest and virility.

The objects of Chinese origin can be divided into three main groups: religious artifacts, more precisely of the Buddhist and Taoist area, depicting divinities and monks; pieces intended for every day use, such as a comb, a ceramic bowl or a table screen and objects for which the identification is not certain and consequently not attributable to one or the other group.

All of these pieces are characterized by high level of detail, quality and refinement of the execution, and they are produced with various techniques and materials. At the current state of research it is not known how these objects have arrived at the National Museum of Ravenna.



1. **God Min statuette**, bronze on a wood base, Egypt, Late Period
2. **Djed pillar**, faience, Egypt, Late Period
3. **Ushabti**, faience
4. **Scarab**, faience, Egypt, Late Period
5. **Folding screen's panels** with landscape adornment (Shan shui) on the front and inscription on the back, steatite and purplish pigment, China, 19th - 20th century (?)
6. **Comb with inscription**, bamboo and wood, China, 20th century
7. **Sculpted group** representing a scholar or a Taoist sage with acolytes on a mountain landscape, steatite, China, 19th century (?)
8. **Statuette representing a Buddhist monk (Luohan or Arhat)** unidentifiable due to the lack of the object held on his mutilated hands, steatite, China, 19th - 20th century
- 8a. **Statuette representing a Buddhist monk (Luohan or Arhat) probably Kanmen Luohan**, steatite, China, 19th - 20th century
9. **Bowl or dish with floral pattern**, varnished porcelain and gold leaf, Japan, 19th century (?)
10. **Statuette representing a figure of European features (possibly Christ or a saint)**, steatite, China, beginning of the 19th century
11. **Statuette representing Lan Caihe, one of the Eight Immortals of the Taoism**, age and sex unclear, steatite with an extra alabaster base, China, 19th - 20th century



12. **Statuette representing Li Tieguai, one of the Eight Immortals of the Taoism**, steatite, China, 19th - 20th century
13. **Statuette representing Zhong Liquan, one of the Eight Immortals of the Taoism**, steatite, China, 19th century
14. **Statuette representing a Buddisht monk (Luohan) or Bodhidharma, patriarch of the Chinese Buddhism, founder of the Chan school**, alabaster, China, 19th century
- 14a. **Statuette representing a Buddhist monk (Luohan)**, alabaster, China, 19th century (?)
15. **Statuette representing the Sino-Tibetan Tara, goddess (bodhisattva) of the Tibetan Buddhism**, gilded copper-bronze alloy, China or Tibet, 18th - 19th century



Showcase 2. *Figmenta*

In this showcase are exhibit ivories and enamels, object from the so-called minor arts from 12th to 18th century.

The use of ivory to produce prestigious objects for ceremonies, has been widespread since ancient times and has never stopped during the centuries. It is a material with great durability and different types can be distinguished: the rarest, most select, and therefore most precious, and the most common parts of bone, more economic. Ivory is mostly worked with *intaglio* carving, a technique that allows extreme precision and fineness of stroke, but also with abrasion and often by engraving or pyrography. The National Museum collects ivories partly from free donations during the last century, but mostly they comes from the collection of Camaldolesi Monks of Classe.

Enamel is an artistic technique used since ancient times, its golden age dates back to the Middle Ages: from the 12th century the city of Limoges (France) became important for goldsmiths and enamellers. The technique developed in this area is the so-called *champlevé*: the enamel fills the grooves obtained from the incision of the metal with the help of burins and chisels. In the 15th century a new technique was developed in Limoges: painted enamel. The objects created are mainly religious for public and private use, such as the three 16th-century tablets exposed here (Lady of sorrow, Christ in front of Pilate, Flagellation of Christ). From the 17th century the use of enamelled objects for furnishing and decoration with profane themes spreads, as can be seen in the hexagonal bowl with the depiction of a young Bacchus, enriched on the back with a landscape view, all decorated with a phytomorph and zoomorph motif.



16. **Set of 11 statuettes representing mythological, biblical, rural subjects**, bone, France (?), 19th century
17. **Pair of silverware handles representing Hercules and Venus**, ivory, Italy, 18th century
Silverware handle representing a satyr, ivory, Germany (?), 17th century
18. **Bust of a Turk**, bone, Germany (?), 17th - 18th century
Upper part of a statuette representing a male figure, ivory, Netherlands (?), 17th - 18th century
19. **Jesus Christ facing Pontius Pilates and The Flagellation**, copper and varnish, Limoges, 16th century
20. **Heart shaped diptych-reliquary**, metal and Champlevé, 16th century
21. **Our Lady of Sorrow**, copper and varnish, Limoges (?), 16th century
22. **“Memento Mori”**, ivory, France or Flanders, 16th century
23. **Half bust marionette**, ivory, 18th century
24. **Multi-headed dog (Cerberus)**, ivory, Germany, 17th century
25. **Horseman riding a fantastic beast**, ivory, 17th century
26. **Rosary**, bone, Western Europe, 17th century (?)
27. **Woman shaped bottle in a ridiculous pose**, ivory, Germany (?), 17th century
28. **Harnessed elephant (gaming pawn)**, ivory, Baghdad, 12th century
29. **Quiver shaped needle case**, ivory, France or Flanders, 18th century
30. **The Three Marys at the base of the Cross**, wood and enamelled copper in grisaille, Limoges, 16th century



31. **Devotional triptych**, bronze and Champlevé varnish, Russia (?), 18th-19th century
32. **Crucifix**, bronze and Champlevé varnish, France, 13th century
33. **Globe with triumphs depiction**, enamelled glass, Venice, 15th century
34. **Bowl with depiction of Bacchus**, copper and varnish, 17th century
35. **Pair of palm trees on rocks**, ivory, Germany (?), 17th century
36. **Tobacco tin**, inlaid ivory and various materials, Venice, 18th century
37. **Box cover**, inlaid ivory, turtle and coral, Southern Italy, 18th century
38. **Cloak pin**, bone, 5th-6th century
39. **Wreath shaped ornament**, ivory, Western Europe, 17th century (?)
40. **Refined pots**, ivory, Germany, 17th century
Knobs, ivory, Western Europe, 17th century
41. **Pair of handles (?)**, ivory



Showcase 3. *Naturalia / Scientifica*

The *Naturalia* and *Scientifica* showcase contains two distinct nuclei of objects: the first is composed of objects derived from the natural world and then modified by human hands through a difficult and particular process. This nucleus contains very different objects, both for use and for production. Of great interest are the horns made from elephant tusks from Africa, used as musical instruments for ceremonies, whose possession gave power and regality and the dried pumpkins, probably used as containers, characterized by a carved floral decoration painted black.

On the second shelf are displayed the *nautilus* shells from the Indo-Pacific coasts, decorticated to highlight the nacre part and engraved with human and animal figures. These objects were considered at the same time rare singularities of nature for their harmonious geometric structure and, works of art for the added value from the incisions with genre scenes.

Among the most curious objects stands out the model of a three-mast ship of the British navy, made by French prisoners at the time of Napoleon's campaigns, with waste materials, such as ram or steer's bone and wood. Over time these small reproductions, usually enclosed in a box also extremely intricate, became precious and rare items for collectors.

The second nucleus is composed by object of scientific field, artifacts connected with the study of time, physics and mechanics. Note the ivory sundials, the bronze mechanical clock, the brass measuring cups and the *Pepperbox*, a small gun not widely used in Italy, datable to the mid or late nineteenth century and recently donated to the Museum: in this type of civil weapon civil shots were fired individually and the drum was turned manually after each shot.



42. **Ceremonial horns**, hollow elephant fangs, 16th century
43. **Containers**, dried pumpkin, 18th century
44. **Nautilus shell**, 17th century
45. **Bone ship**, bone, wood and straw woven, 18th - 19th century
46. **Nautilus shell**, 17th century
47. **Ceremonial horns**, hollow elephant fangs, 16th century
48. **Clock**, bronze, 17th century
49. **Lantern**, bronze and glass, 19th century
50. **Measuring cups**, brass, 19th century
51. **Pepperbox**, embellished walnut wood and metal, middle 19th century
52. **Sundial**, engraved and painted ivory, 16th century
53. **Perfume bottle**, coconut wood with high relieves
54. **Pouncet-box**, drilled bronze



Showcase 4. *Antiquitates*

In this showcase a large quantity of small objects finely carved and engraved are exposed, as red sulfices, seals and portraits of Popes and Kings and some small gems with cameo. On the top shelf there are eight marble protomes with a stone background and a gilded metal frame. Protome is a decorative element painted, engraved or embossed, consisting of a head or bust of a man, an animal or a fantastic creature. Six represent leaders and barbarian kings: Alaric, Theodatus, Ricimyr, Theobald, Theodoric, Atalaric, the remaining two are Popes: Clement XI and Alexander VIII. In display on the second shelf are *zolfi rossi*, red sulfures, small objects belonging to the art of the glyptics (engraving of gems and hard stones) and to the sphragistics (the study of the seals), obtained using mainly sulfur paste, from which take the name, but also from plaster. Glyptics was, especially in the eighteenth century, very popular, used also in antiquarianism for studying ancient art and for spreading the knowledge about it. Collection of sulfures were important for the iconographic interest, which allowed to study every aspect of antiquity, as well as for the beauty of the forms, the technical capacity and the intrinsic value of the materials. The subjects portrayed on these casts are of extraordinary variety, such as portraits of the Roman age, busts of philosophers, depictions of deities and mythological heroes, subjects of daily life and animals, heraldic symbols and coats of arms. In the two displayers contained in this showcase sulfures are grouped by color and material: sulfures in red paste, pink and in green paste. The casts are of various sizes and depict subjects of a heterogeneous nature: female figures dancing and nude male figures in plastic poses, divinities and Roman emperors, mythological scenes, eminent figures such as bishops and sultans.



Together with the *zolfi* there is also a high-relief depicting a man in white with a blue background in biscuit and some modern gems with portraits of female and male figures.

In this showcase are also exposed 60 matrices - seal. The seals were used to close the documents and certify their integrity and authenticity, reporting a series of signs that uniquely identified the person or institution issuing it. The origin of this practice is very ancient, in the Middle Ages it has a wide diffusion among feudal families, institutions such as corporations, universities and ecclesiastical orders. The seals were affixed to the document or hung on tapes. The matrices were made of metal, mainly in bronze or brass, very variable in shape and size, the first were ring-shaped, around the ninth century, real matrices spread to produce larger seals. The seals on display belonged to various institutions such as the Papacy recognizable by the presence of the papal hat and keys; ecclesiastical orders with representations of saints, religious scenes and liturgical inscriptions, corporations and private families with coats of arms, initials, animals, castles or towers and less commonly mythological scenes or creatures; the cities or states among which we find Venice with the winged lion of Saint Mark and the eagle typical imperial symbol. Some have singular incisions, such as a winged and crowned elephant difficult to interpret or a mermaid. The matrices are mainly round and oval, almond shaped, but there are particular and irregular types, such as the emblem-shaped, or with singular handles for example with long cylindrical shape, cross and even a dolphin. Finally a two-sided rotating seal and some seals with inscriptions in Arabic and Greek characters.



Showcase 5. *Artefacta*

In this showcase European objects from the late medieval and modern period are exhibited. Of undoubted interest is the wooden box with golden and pastille applications, typical object of Renaissance artistic production, with decorations inspired by the classical history, in particular on the front side the meeting between Coriolano and Veturia on the outskirts of Rome. Then the unglazed stoneware beer mug is similar to the type produced in Germany in the sixteenth century, particularly in the city of Siegburg, the micro-carving dioramas in wood depicting genre scenes, the two statuettes of King Clovis and Arthur, miniature copies of the original bronze in the cenotaph of Emperor Maximilian I in Innsbruck, and the decorative pipe and medallions with gallant scenes on the second shelf. Remarkable is the comb of French manufacture, dating from the late fourteenth and early sixteenth century. Between the two rows of teeth the typical decoration of these objects is developed on three registers, with tracery and central rose around which the letters of the gallant inscription are arranged.

Finally there are the vases and the candlestick with inlaid coral, of Sicilian manufacture dating back to the 18th century. To the taste of the eighteenth century belong also the alabaster vase, with the coat of arms of the bishop Piazza († 1769), the fragmentary ceramics depicting the harvest of cherubs and two small statuette of *puttini*, inspired by the Capodimonte porcelain.



69. **Clovis I**, wood, Austria (?), 19th century
70. **Beer mug**, grès, Germany, 16th century (?)
71. **Jewellery box**, gilded wood, Northern Italy, 16th century
72. **Vessel or Situla**, nacre and metal, 16th century (?)
73. **King Arthur**, wood, Austria (?), 19th century
74. **Gothic comb**, wood, 15th century (?)
75. **Ornamental pipe**, wood, Germany (?), 17th century (?)
76. **Devil's head (cane knob)**, wood and metal, Italy (?), 17th century (?)
77. **Medallions**, wood, Europe, 17th century (?)
78. **Dioramas**, wood and gilded stucco frame, Italy (?), 19th century (?)
- 79/80. **Harvest and group of puttos**, Italy (?), 18th century
81. **Small liturgical jars**, gilded copper and coral, Sicily, 17th century
82. **Crested jug**, alabaster, Italy, 18th century

