

Shinden Hall

The Shinden Hall was a former Kyoto palace structure moved to Ninnaji in the mid-seventeenth century, but lost to fire in 1887. The current building is a reconstruction, dating from 1914. The reconstruction painstakingly adheres to conventions of palace architecture. For example, the hip-and-gable roof is covered with cypress (*hinoki*) bark shingles, a feature associated specifically with the Shishinden ceremonial hall at the Kyoto Imperial Palace.

The Ninnaji Shinden Hall, which was mainly used for ceremonies and rituals, has three rooms, each one featuring sliding-door-panel paintings by the artist Hara Zaisen (1849–1916), the fourth head of the Hara School of painting. Artists of the Kyoto-based studio were employed by the court to embellish sliding-door panels and other furnishings for the palace. As the Shinden Hall reconstruction was essentially a copy of a former imperial building, Zaisen drew on these traditions in painting its panels. The paintings depict classical Japanese motifs associated with the seasons, such as peonies in spring and geese in autumn.