

Fourth Floor Exhibit

The walls and floor of this partially open-air exhibit are covered in many thousands of small, circular white tiles. The exhibit showcases the practical and artistic possibilities of tile, which, like the tiles themselves, are almost innumerable.

Many of the items on display were originally in residences and commercial buildings. Including these everyday objects in the exhibit highlights the functional role that tile has played in Japanese life. Visitors are invited to reexamine common objects like toilets, signs, and sink basins and learn to see the beauty of their forms and craftsmanship separately from their functions.

The collection also includes several examples of colorfully painted picture tiles salvaged from *sentō* bathhouses. These pieces not only reflect the obvious connection between tiles and bathing culture but also provide insight into Japanese cultural values, aesthetics, and modes of thought over the past century: the painted tiles depict inspiring historical scenes, classic landscapes, and auspicious cultural motifs.

Several large-scale artworks were created for this exhibit, including a tile-strung wire spiderweb that hangs from the oculus and a towering cone of bamboo-shaped stoneware tiles. The arrangement of the eye-catching cone depicts the evolution of tile-making techniques, from the hand-cast tiles at its base to the machine-made, spray-glazed tiles at its top. On the opposite wall is a mosaic mural of the Kasahara neighborhood by actor Harada Daijirō (1944–), who created it for Kasahara's first autumn festival in 1999.