

5070

Nimura & Sato, *Chest of Drawers*
Wiederer and Brother, *Triplicate Mirror*

Dominic Carter: Like many painters, American decorative artists and craftsmen also began crossing borders, looking for novel designs and exotic styles. This chest of drawers testifies to the enthusiasm of many Americans for things Japanese.

Barry Harwood: In the nineteenth century, they viewed Japan with a great deal of nostalgia, in a way. They considered Japan to be a pre-industrial society, which indeed it was. But it was also clearly a country in which even everyday objects were infused with a sense of good design, and where handwork and handicrafts were highly valued.

Dominic Carter: Curator Barry Harwood says that this chest of drawers poses some intriguing questions.

Barry Harwood: What we're not certain about is whether or not the object itself was made in the Far East and then exported, or if in fact the materials, the raw materials—the bamboo and the tatami mats—were imported and the object was constructed here.

Dominic Carter: A label on the back of the chest does identify the retailer—if not the maker—as the Nimura & Sato company, then located on Fulton Street in downtown Brooklyn. Pieces like this and the folding mirror in the case to your left can make you wonder if the people who bought them truly had an interest in Japanese culture or if they were mostly into stylish exoticism.

