



Lotus petal from a Lotus Pedestal

On display

Title/Description: Lotus petal from a Lotus Pedestal

Born: 0729 - 0749

Object Type: Sculpture

Materials: Wood

Measurements: l. 432 x w. 220 x d. 55 mm

Accession Number: 1204

Historic Period: Tenpyō era (8th Century), Nara period (8th Century)

Production Place: Asia, East Asia, Japan

This lotus petal, rendered in wood and lacquer with gilt, was possibly once attached to a lotus throne or pedestal used to elevate Buddhist devotional statues. A metal attachment at the squared-off end of the petal indicates that this fragment was once attached to a larger more complex form. A complete example of a lotus throne can be viewed in the Sainsbury Centre collection (object number: 1255), and in this instance, the lotus provides a stand for the statue of Jizo Bosatsu. [1]

Within the context of Japanese Buddhism, the lotus bloom symbolises compassion [2], and indicates that the figure seated or standing on the lotus throne has achieved enlightenment and possesses a pure mind. [3] The lotus is a powerful symbol of purity and rebirth because the perfect buds of the flower emerge from a pond's murky, muddy depths.

'The aim of Buddhism is not to create an imagined 'perfect' world, but to support individuals to live mindful and meaningful lives, whatever their environment. The purpose of Buddhism is not to eliminate the mud, but, like the sunlight, to help the lotus grow out of it.' [4]

Lady Sainsbury purchased this large curving lotus petal from Mitsuru Tajima, owner of London Gallery.

Vanessa Tothill, January 2023

[1] <https://www.sainsburycentre.ac.uk/art-and-objects/1255-standing-jizo-bosatsu/>

[2] Penelope Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, Second Edition (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), p. 76.

[3] Jay Igunma and San San May, *Buddhism: Origins, Traditions and Contemporary Life* (London: British Library, 2019) pp. 30-31.

[4] Jay Igunma and San San May, p. 30.

Further Reading

Igunma, Jay and San San May, *Buddhism: Origins, Traditions and Contemporary Life* (London: British Library, 2019)

Mason, Penelope, *History of Japanese Art*, Second Edition (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005)

Tajima Mitsuru, *The Pleasure of Buddhist Art/ Bukkyō bijutsu no yorokobi* (Tokyo: London Art Gallery, 2014)
