



Lotus Mandala of Hevajra

Date

12th century

Medium

Copper alloy

Description

Lotus mandalas count among the most fascinating objects of Esoteric Buddhist art. These three-dimensional representations of deity palaces typically feature a deity at the center of the flower that stands atop a tall stem, with that deity's retinue placed on hinged petals around him or her. The sculpture's mechanical hinges allow for those petals to close around the central deity so that the sculpture resembles a flower bud. Housing the deities in a lotus, a symbol of purity, serves as an ideal metaphor for the perfection of their palatial habitat as envisioned in

meditative practice. The lotus mandala form was probably invented in northeastern India, from where most surviving examples derive. This mandala exhibits features typical for that region, including the shape of the lotus petals, the scrollwork at the sides of the stem, and the copper alloy used. At the center of its blossom is the divine couple Hevajra and Nairatmya. They are surrounded by eight yoginis dancing on the petals. On the outside of the petals are eight cemetery grounds, each presided over by a highly accomplished Tantric Buddhist adept, or mahasiddha, as is common for both two- and three-dimensional mandalas.

Dimensions

12 3/8 × 7 5/8 × 6 5/8 in.