

**ELEVEN-HEADED KANNON**

Japanese, Kamakura period, ca. 13th century  
Painted and lacquered wood with halo  
and decorations of cut and gilded metal  
h. (to top of halo) 25<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (65.4 cm.)  
Gift of Robert Allerton, 1963 (3153.1)



This fine thirteenth-century sculpture of the eleven-headed deity Kannon (Jūichimon Kannon) is of such realistic detail and serenity of mood that scholars have tentatively attributed the figure to the Kamakura master Tankei (1173–1254), an identification altogether in keeping with its style and quality. The charm of this small lacquered religious image depends on the intricacy and cleverness of the modulation of the draperies. It possesses all the realism and sculptural directness necessary to illustrate the Kamakura ideal in sculpture at its very best.     HAL

Eleven Headed Kannon (#3153.1)  
Gift of Mr. Robert Allerton  
Wood, painted and lacquered, 15" high.  
Halo, cub; gilt bronze, 25 3/4"h.  
Gilt bronze, beads on wires.

GALT 6  
Japan

12-13th C. (Kamakura Per)  
Gallery 16

ARTIST: Attributed to Tankei, 1173-1254, the son of the famous Unkei. Two of Tankei's works, the central image of Kannon and a figure of an old man, are at the Sanjusangendo in Kyoto.

SUBJECT: Standing figure of 11-headed Kannon. Right arm hand<sup>g'</sup>ing close to side, "charity" mudra with prayer beads. Left arm holding vase, which "contains" the nectar of life, which permits the dead to reconstitute themselves. 11 heads are inserted in high headdress. Decorations in gilt bronze suspended from narrow crown above forehead, and suspended from necklace. Black lacquer lotus pedestal, decorated with gilt and pendant decorations. Double halo with elaborate decoration fits into top of pedestal behind the figure. 5 "magic" sanskrit symbols in halo. The 11-headed Kannon (Kwan Yin, Avalokitesvara) is one of 33 manifestations of the Lord of Mercy, who aids all living things. He is a Bodhisattva, a potential Buddha. His 11 heads (and sometimes multiple arms) express the many ways in which he can help. 2 or 3 of the heads on left have wrathful expressions, destroying evil, though the heads on this image are hard to see. The head on top is the head of Amida Buddha. Kannon remains in the cycle of existence to respond to prayers. He represents the merciful qualities of Amida, the Buddha of the "Western Paradise" (heaven).

MEDIUM AND TECHNIQUE: Finely carved wood, painted (note beard, moustache and lip color), lacquered and gilt. Metal elements added.

STYLE: A small, delicate image, with elaborate ornamentation. Complex as Japanese sculpture became with Esoteric Buddhism. The figure has graceful posture, peaceful expression, graceful gestures.

INSTRUCTIONAL AIDS: Compare this version of the Lord of Mercy with the Kwan Yin in Gallery 18. 2 countries, 2 sects, 2 artists. Point to fine delicate workmanship. Show rich ornaments, decorative intent.