

Basic Detail Report



Netsuke

Date

19th to 20th century

Medium

Ivory and pigments

Description

This 19th-20th century octopus Netsuke reflects a time in Japan's Edo period (1603-1868), when a lack of storage

space in the form of pockets was an issue. Items could be tucked away in the folds of kimono sleeves, but the best mode of carrying items involved taking a container, tying a cord to it which would run underneath a belt sash or obi, and then having a toggle at the top to hold the cord in place. Netsuke were the toggle that held the containers in place. The only specifications for netsuke were determined by their function. Usually this meant rounded shapes with one flat side that a string could be run through, the result being that they would not jostle when moved or snag clothing. Fairly early into their production craftsmen began to make them out of ivory from China imported by Dutch traders. Later examples are crafted in metal, bone, porcelain, lacquer, and cloisonné. Netsuke also quickly took on a whole host of subjects drawn from Japanese religion, flora, fauna, and daily life. With ivory netsuke, detailing with sumi ink or painting was a common way to finish a piece.

Dimensions

Overall: 1 5/8 x 1 in. (4.1 x 2.5 cm)