



**17th century silver parcel gilt filigree Batavian box of octagonal form
£8,500.00**

A superb late 17th century silver parcel gilt filigree Batavian box of octagonal form, probably used to keep Betel leaves.

Employing a combination of wide, flattened wire components and thinner fine twisted filigree work this wonderful box demonstrates the high level of craftsmanship that was available in the Batavian region. Each cell is filled with delicate floral motifs creating a sumptuous carpet of decoration covering every surface including the base.

The lid centres on a raised petal motif with central boss from which radiates more petals which are surrounded by larger motifs that together form an open lotus flower. The petal motif is also used on the base. Unlike many such boxes the base is also formed of intricate filigree work rather than the usual solid metal base which highlights the quality of the box. The base itself sits on a foot of very fine zig zag motif filigree.

The interior of the box is richly gilded indicating the proposed contents were viewed as precious and that it was intended as a high-status object. The Lotus motif is associated with purity, serenity, enlightenment and optimism for the future in the cultures of Southeast Asia making it a suitable motif for prestigious gifts.

The cultural and artistic interplay of the region is clear in the design of this box. It bears similarities to Chinese lacquer ware which was traded throughout the region and which often incorporated lotus and other flora which are connected to Buddhist beliefs and proved to be popular elements in local designs.

A similar box is illustrated in Asian Art and Dutch Taste by Jan Veenendaal. It displays a closer affinity to Chinese wares and incorporates enamel on a filigree base, its shape and form are particularly close to our example.

The early 17th century was a period of rapid colonial expansion by the European nations, the nascent Dutch Republic being at the forefront of a global expansion in maritime trade and colonisation. Southeast Asia was an area that they were particularly drawn too especially the spice islands and area that now constitute the Malay Archipelago.

By 1619 the Dutch had a considerable presence in the area that today is Jakarta building a new settlement on the site of Jayakarta and consolidating their control of the newly christened Batavia region. The establishment of the colony and the increase in trade that resulted had the effect of attracting craftsmen from the area as new avenues opened for local production.

The production of local silverware escalated in this period. In Europe a growing demand for exotic items was naturally a spur to production and distribution. On top of this trend, there was a burgeoning local market as well as the VOC using such items as gifts to local rulers and extending the trade to markets in India to encourage their own regional trade and influence.

As the Betel leaf had a long history of use and cultural significance in Southeast Asia and India, containers were often seen as a symbol of status and wealth and were therefore crafted in silver with opulent and technically difficult designs. Such works were ideal for the local trade and as diplomatic gifts.

Measurements:

Width: 13cm

Height: 4.4cm

Weight: 309 grams

Origin	European Other
Condition	Excellent