



## Japanese lobed dish, early 18th century POA

Japanese lobed dish, 18th century, of moulded form with gently scalloped rim, painted in underglaze blue and coloured overglaze enamels with a branch of peony with two large flowers, foliage and three buds, flanked by two butterflies in flight, the reverse decorated with concentric circles in underglaze blue, continuous foliate scroll and small flowerheads to the rim, and a six-character interpretation of a Chenghua mark to the base with usual spur marks.

Condition: Very slight wear to enamels

Notes: Tree peony (?? 'botan' in Japanese) is not native to Japan and was introduced by monks in the 8th century from China, where the flower was also known as 'huawang', ('King of Flowers') and had been used in traditional medicine for millennia. From the Tang dynasty onwards, peony had been associated with royalty and high status owing to Empress Wu's appreciation for the flower, and consequently was cultivated in imperial gardens. In Japan peonies were planted in temple and court gardens as ornamental plants, with Kyoto in particular becoming a centre for their production. During the 17th and 18th centuries, developments in propagation technique resulted in their widespread cultivation at sites across Japan. Their association with honour and good fortune contributed to the popularity of peony as a motif within the art and ceramic design of the Edo Period. They are also one of the 'flowers of the four seasons', representing Spring, and are frequently utilised within ceramic design to allude to the passing of time and cyclical transformation across the four seasons. Butterflies too are associated with Spring and the beautiful transience of life (???? 'mono no aware'). They are frequently shown in pairs to represent a long and happy relationship - especially when depicted alongside peony, which is supposed to allude to a young man approaching the woman he loves.

<b>Material and Technique</b>	Porcelain with underglaze cobalt blue and overglaze enamel decoration
<b>Origin</b>	Japanese
<b>Period</b>	18th Century
<b>Condition</b>	Excellent
<b>Diameter</b>	23cm. (9 1/16in.)