

# Reclining pan in the st. louis art museum essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The sculpture was owned by the powerful Barberini Family in Rome, then purchase by St. Louis Art Museum in 1947. 1 Reclining Pan at the St. Louis Art Museum under discussion presents a commanding image of the satyr/god Pan, measuring approximately 2 feet tall and 4 feet long. Pan appears to have fallen asleep in a drunken stupor since he lies upon a wineskin amid four bunches of grapes that adorn his rocky bed. His left arm encircles his head, a gesture evocative of sleep, and his muscular right arm falls to the side, still clutching the syrinx or reed pipes he fashioned in frustration at his failure to win the nymph syrinx. He opens his mouth in a wide grimace, allowing his tongue to protrude slightly and thus animating his expression to connote the beginning stages of his transition from slumber to wakefulness.

The nebris he wears around his neck has been knotted on his chest, its colored hooves resembling less an animal torso than some sort of decorative fashion accessory. His furry legs splay open, revealing a rather odd and unexpected bit of prudishness since his penis, an important attribute of Pan who is renowned for his sexual exploits, has been hidden by draped fabric that also separates his torso from the underlying stone platform. The aforementioned grape clusters, the woody trunk of a grapevine, and single grape leaf embellish his stone perch while a salamander slithers in the crevices that have been cut into the marble. Pan is the son of Hermes and the nymph Dryope. He is not completely human in form, but part man and part goat. He has the ears, horns and legs of a goat. His lovers included Echo, Selene, Cyparissus, Daphnis, and Olympus. Pan is a god of creativity, music, poetry, sensuality and sexuality, or panic and nightmares, who haunts forests, caverns, mountains, brooks and streams. His favourite time is noon

when he seduces young men while teaching them to play the syrinx, or pan-pipes. These are named after a nymph that pan desired. Syrinx was devoted to Artemis and fled from Pan's advances.

As she did, she transformed into a bed of marsh reeds. When the wind blew through these they made a sad but beautiful sound and pan was inspired to cut two of the reeds, fasten them together to make a pipe that he could play. Pan represents unbridled male sexuality, and is the equivalent of a greek "green man". He is also (along with Herm the Hunter) an early model for the images of the Christian Devil. As a phallic figure it's easy to see why.

Guanyin's origin is debated among scholars. The root of this debate lies in the history of religion in China. China's indigenous religion is Taoism.

It is possible that Guanshi'yin originated as a Taoist deity, the Queen Mother of the West. With the introduction of Mahayana Buddhism to China in around the fourth to fifth centuries AD, Taoism and Buddhism became religious rivals in China. The Buddhist tactic was to change, and even supplant, indigenous Taoist deities in favor of Buddhist deities. Over the centuries, this trend has had the effect that it is now virtually impossible to determine Guanyin's true origin. The official Buddhist view is that Guanyin originated with the male Avalokitesvara, though Guanyin's origin may be more complex than this simple, linear derivation.

While it is certain that the name "Guanshi'yin" is derived from the name "Avalokitesvara".<sup>5</sup> According to Mahayana doctrine, Avalokitesvara is the bodhisattvas who has made a great vow to listen to the prayers of all sentient beings in times of difficulty, and to postpone his own Buddha hood

until he has assisted every being on Earth in achieving nirvana. Mahayana sutras associated with Avalokitesvara include the Heart Sutra and the Lotus Sutra, particularly the 25th chapter, which is sometimes referred to as the Avalokitesvara Sutra.

Six forms of Avalokitesvara in Mahayana were great compassion; great loving-kindness; lion-courage; universal light; leader amongst gods and men; and the great omnipresent Brahman. Each of this bodhisattva's six qualities of pity, etc. , breaks the hindrances respectively of the hells, pretas (hungry ghost), animals, asuras (demi god), men, and devas. After the introduction of Mahayana Buddhism to China in around the fourth to fifth centuries AD, he's been named " Guanshi'yin" or " Guanyin" because it's derived from the name " Avalokitesvara". 6

According to Chinese accounts, Avalokitesvara was manifested in Guanyin, the third daughter of King Zhuang of the Spring and Autumn period (770-460 BC). Her father wanted her to get married but she wanted to become a nun. The old man punished her for her willfulness by making her clean out toilets in the temple but she would not relent. So he ordered her execution by sword. The sword broke into a thousand pieces so her father ordered her strangled to death while she was sleeping. This approach finally worked but Guanyin's arrival in hell caused the underworld to turn into a paradise.

Yama, the king of hell, did not appreciate this renovation at all and sent her back to the land of the living. She was transported to the tiny mountain island of Putuo Shan off the coast of Zhejiang Province. Guanyin lived on the island for nine years, healing the sick and saving mariners from shipwreck.

Putuo Shan is consequently one of the sacred mountains of Chinese Buddhism and still attracts pilgrims from all over Asia. While Guanyin was doing good deeds, her wicked father fell ill but the ever-compassionate Guanyin cut off her arms and plucked out her eyes to use as ingredients for a medicine that saved the old codger's life.

To show his gratitude he ordered the construction of a statue in her honor telling the sculptor to make the statue *quanshou quanyan* meaning "with completely formed arms and eyes." The sculptor was probably from Henan and he misunderstood. He made the sculpture with *qianshou qianyan* "a thousand arms and eyes." From that day on, Guanyin has been represented with a lot of arms and eyes. 7 Representations of the bodhisattva in China prior to the Song dynasty were masculine in appearance. Guanyin's image is depicted as a young man dressed in Northern Song Buddhist robes sitting gracefully.

He is depicted looking or glancing down, symbolizing that Guanyin continues to watch over the world. 8 This Guanyin sculpture was made around Late Song dynasty, the appearance of the bodhisattva showing the slender build, feminine curved face, even though the Guanyin is still portrayed as a male figure, it shows some transition between male and female characteristics. Later images display attributes of both genders. One interpretation of this development contends that the bodhisattva is neither male nor female but has transcended sexual distinctions, as he has all other dualities in the sphere of *samsara* (the temporal world).

According to this opinion, the flowing drapery and soft contours of the body seen in statues and paintings have been intentionally combined with a visible moustache to emphasize the absence of sexual identity. Furthermore, the Lotus Sutra relates that Avalokitesvara has the ability of assuming whatever form is required to relieve suffering and also has the power to grant children. Another point of view, while accepting the validity of this philosophical doctrine, holds that from at least the 12th century the popular devotional cult of Guanyin has superimposed onto the bodhisattva qualities of a mother-goddess. . Ichnographically, Avalokitesvara is protean. He appears in diverse forms and yet mainly as a male figure in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism. When Avalokiteshvara was brought to China in the fifth century, the Chinese made him their own, but over several centuries, through miracles attributed to him, along with indigenous female life stories and images, they transformed him into the female Guan Shih Yin or Guanyin. It could be because of the fact that in India the father is the one that gives his love to the family and the mother is the symbol of wisdom and in China it is the reverse.

Of all the great Buddhist deities, only Guanyin underwent a sexual transformation. Since the Yuan Dynasty, the image has gradually been converted into that of a young woman, a stunning beauty holding a holy vase in her hand, pouring out holy water to save the multitude. 10 Guan Yin is an extremely popular Goddess in Chinese folk belief and is worshiped in Chinese communities throughout East and South East Asia. Guan Yin is revered in the general Chinese population due to her unconditional love,

compassion and mercy. She is generally regarded by many as the protector of women and children.

By this association she is also seen as a fertility goddess capable of granting children. She is also seen as the champion of the unfortunate, the sick, the disabled, the poor, and those in trouble. Some coastal and river areas of China regard her as the protector of fishermen, sailors, and generally people who are out at sea, thus many also come to believe that Mazu, the Taoist goddess of the sea, is a manifestation of Guan Yin. Due to her association with the legend of the Great Flood, where she sent down a dog holding rice grains in its tail after the flood, she is worshiped as a rice goddess.

In some quarters, especially among business people and traders, she is looked upon as a Goddess of Luck and Fortune. In recent years there have been claims of her being the protector of air travelers. 11 There are also legends about Guanyin, Shan Tsai, and Lung Nue. Shan Tsai was a disabled boy from India who was very interested in studying the Buddha Dharma. When he heard that there was a Buddhist teacher on the rocky island of Putuo he quickly journeyed there to learn. Upon arriving the island, he managed to find Bodhisattva Guanyin despite his severe disability.

Guanyin, after having a discussion with Shan Tsai, decided to test the boy's resolve to fully study the Buddhist teachings. She conjured the illusion of three sword-wielding pirates running up the hill to attack her. Guanyin took off and dashed off to the edge of a cliff, the three illusions still chasing her. Shan Tsai, seeing that his teacher was in danger, hobbled uphill. Guanyin then jumped over the edge of the cliff, and soon after this the three bandits

followed. Shan Tsai, still wanting to save his teacher, managed to crawl his way over the cliff edge.

Shan Tsai fell down the cliff but was halted in mid air by Guanyin, who now asked him to walk. Shan Tsai found that he could walk normally and that he was no longer crippled. When he looked into a pool of water he also discovered that he now had a very handsome face. From that day forth, Guanyin taught Shan Tsai the entire Buddha Dharma. 12 Many years after Shan Tsai became a disciple of Guanyin, a distressing event happened in the South Sea. The son of the Dragon Kings (a ruler-god of the sea) was caught by a fisherman while taking the form of a fish. Being stuck on land, he was unable to transform back into his dragon form.

His father, despite being a mighty Dragon King, was unable to do anything while his son was on land. Distressed, the son called out to all of Heaven and Earth. Hearing this cry, Guanyin quickly sent Shan Tsai to recover the fish and gave him all the money she had. The fish at this point was about to be sold in the market. It was causing quite a stir as it was alive hours after being caught. This drew a much larger crowd than usual at the market. Many people decided that this prodigious situation meant that eating the fish would grant them immortality, and so all present wanted to buy the fish.

Soon a bidding war started, and Shan Tsai was easily outbid. Shan Tsai begged the fish seller to spare the life of the fish. The crowd, now angry at someone so daring, was about to prise him away from the fish when Guanyin projected her voice from far away, saying " A life should definitely belong to one who tries to save it, not one who tries to take it. " The crowd realizing



their shameful actions and desire, dispersed. Shan Tsai brought the fish back to Guanyin, who promptly returned it to the sea. There the fish transformed back to a dragon and returned home.

Paintings of Guanyin today sometimes portray her holding a fish basket, which represents the afore mentioned tale. But the story does not end here. As a reward for Guanyin's help saving his son, the Dragon King sent his daughter, a girl called Lung Nue (" dragon girl"), to present to Guanyin the ' Pearl of Light'. The ' Pearl of Light' was a precious jewel owned by the Dragon King that constantly shone. Lung Nue, overwhelmed by the presence of Guanyin, asked to be her disciple so that she might study the Buddha Dharma. Guanyin accepted her offer with just one request: that Lung Nue be the new owner of the ' Pearl of Light'.

In popular iconography, Lung Nue and Shan Tsai are often seen alongside Guanyin as two children. Lung Nue is seen either holding a bowl or an ingot, which represents the Pearl of Light, whereas Shan Tsai is seen with palms joined and knees slightly bent to show that he was once crippled. <sup>13</sup> The popularity of Guanyin in China has come from the successful translation from the Bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara in Mahayana Buddhism to the Goddess that Protects women and children. Even though at the time this sculpture was produced, Guanyin was still portrayed at a male figure, it showed the transition from the male figure to the female goddess.