



Processional Figure of Nandi

South India, Late 19th to early 20th century

Carved and painted wood, wrought iron, glass

132.1cm high, 137.2cm long

Stock no.: A5682

A monumental statue of Nandi, the mount or vahana of the Hindu deity Shiva, in the form of a zebu bull.

Monumental figures of vahanas were commonly carved for temporary use, to be processed through towns and displayed outside temples. They were replaced regularly due to the degradation of the wood in the hot and humid southern Indian climate. The paintwork on this bull correlates with depictions of the

Shiva atop Nandi originating from 19th century Tamil Nadu in the British Museum (accession nos [2007.3005.16](#) and [1993.0806.0.77](#)). The highly textured floral motifs on the rim of the saddle, the harness, and in the floral garland, correspond to depictions of Nandi originating from Thanjavur, in Tamil

Nadu.¹ Very similar wooden Nandi statues are found in the Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore (accession no. [1995-01825](#)) and the Museum of Asian Art, Berlin (accession no. [15958](#)), both of which originate from 19th-20th century South India. Neither, however, is in as good condition as the present example.

n.b. accession nos are clickable links

¹ See Chakravarthy, Pradeep. *Thanjavur: A Cultural History*. New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2010.