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MINIATURE FROM A COPY OF NIZAMI'S *KHAMS*A. 'ISKANDER WATCHING THE SIRENS'

IRAN, SHIRAZ; 1463

LEAF: 33.3 × 22.8 CM

Along with Firdawsi, Nizami (1141-1203) is considered Iran's greatest classical author. As the name indicates, his *Khamsa* (Quintet) comprises five individual works, the last of which is the *Iskandarnama* (Book of Iskandar).

Iskandar is Alexander the Great, who is found as a Persian hero in the works of both Nizami and Firdawsi, and is viewed as a kind of proto-Muslim in the Koran.

On one of his many journeys, where he meets with all manner of wonders, Iskander watches a bevy of sirens bathing in a lake. The water was originally silver-colored, but has now decomposed into black. The coral-like rocks are a Far Eastern feature that was retained in Iran for quite some time.

Published in:

Philipp Walter Schulz: *Die persisch-islamische Miniaturmalerei : ein Beitrag zur Kunstgeschichte Irans*, Leipzig 1914, vol. 2, pl. 38;

Christie's, London, S.K., 20/10-1994, part of lot 293;

Kjeld von Folsach: *For the Privileged Few: Islamic Miniature Painting from The David Collection*, Louisiana, Humlebæk 2007, cat.no. 16;