



Inv. no. 20/1988

CAT. 18. "AUTOMATON POURING WINE." MINIATURE FROM A COPY OF AL-JAZARI'S *KITAB FI MARIFAT AL-HIYAL AL-HANDASIYYA* (BOOK OF KNOWLEDGE OF INGENIOUS MECHANICAL DEVICES)

SYRIA OR EGYPT; RAMADAN 715 H = DECEMBER 1315

THE LEAF H: 31.5; W: 22 CM

At the beginning of the 13th century, al-Jazari wrote his book about mechanical devices that covered everything from clocks, automatized pitchers, robots that could pour wine, pumps, and various types of fountains to door knockers, combination locks, etc. It was dedicated to Sultan Nasr al-Din Mahmud, who ruled in Diyarbakir between 1201 and 1222.

The manuscript's figures, including the one shown here, were not conceived as narrative illustrations for a story. They were intended to serve as drawings that together with the text could instruct other specialists in how the different automatons could be made. This is also clear from the little detail drawings that help explain specific functions. The text for this miniature explains how wine flows eight times per hour from the bottle down into the beaker, which is then

raised to the automaton's lips.

Although the painting in this exhibition shows a robot pouring wine, the figure is essentially depicted in the same way as a human being, although it is a bit stiffer than figures found in contemporary illustrations to fictional works.