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EWER (AQUAMANILE) IN THE FORM OF AN OX. FRITWARE PAINTED IN BLACK AND BLUE UNDER A CLEAR GLAZE

IRAN, KASHAN; EARLY 13TH CENTURY

H: 20; L: 18.8; W: 8.5 CM

In Iran, vessels shaped like oxen have a history that predates Islam. Not least during the period from approximately 1150 to 1250, they were popular in both Iran and in Syria, as were figures of other animals and humans.¹ With its prominent pouring spout forming the ox's muzzle, the filler spout on its back and the small handle, there is no doubt about this ewer's function, while the practical usage of other figures can be more difficult to determine.

Decorations of this specific type are generally made in lustre and often in the so-called Kashan style, where the main motifs are painted in reserve against the lustre background, its effect further subdued by the engraving of small spirals and other squiggles.² Unusually, this style is here transferred to an underglaze decoration in black and blue.

Typically, the painted embellishments are unnaturalistic or foreign to

the animal they adorn. While this ox has eyes and the hint of a tail, its fur has been replaced by spirals, small birds, various borders, geometric shapes and scribbles, as well as a wide border with a Persian inscription. It contains a verse from a poem by Omar Khayyam (1048–1131) that can be translated as: ‘O, if only there were occasion for repose’.

Published in:

¹ *Melanie Gibson: ‘Ceramic Sculpture from the Medieval Islamic World’ in Hadeeth ad-Dar, 35, 2012 pp. 24–28 and Oliver Watson: Persian Lustre Ware, London 1985, pp. 117–121.*

² *Oliver Watson: Persian Lustre Ware, London 1985, pp. 88–108.*

Published in:

Sotheby’s, London, 26/4- 2017, lot 168;

Joachim Meyer, Rasmus Bech Olsen and Peter Wandel: *Beyond words: calligraphy from the World of Islam*, The David Collection, Copenhagen 2024, cat. 71, pp. 216-217;