



Inv. no. Isl 56

SPHINX, CAST, MODELED, AND CARVED FRITWARE PAINTED IN AN OPAQUE WHITE AND A TURQUOISE GLAZE

SYRIA, RAQQA; 2ND HALF OF 12TH CENTURY

H: 37 CM

This sphinx was found in Rafiqa, Raqqa's twin city, in 1924 together with the cock (Isl 57) and the figure of a horseman in Syria's National Museum. As ceramic sculptures, they are unique not only in Syria, but also in the rest of the Islamic world.

They are fountain figures, and all have pipes to carry water up to the figures' heads. The North African historian al-Maqqari wrote that the Spanish Umayyad caliph Abd al-Rahman III had a fountain made with 12 figures: a lion with a gazelle, a crocodile, a serpent, an eagle, an elephant, a dove, a falcon, a peacock, a hen, a cock, a hawk, and a vulture.

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