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INCENSE BURNER, CAST, PUNCHED, AND ENGRAVED BRONZE

SICILY OR SOUTHERN ITALY; END OF 11TH – BEGINNING OF 12TH CENTURY

H: 35.5 CM

This incense burner in the form of a stylized but well-modeled parrot or falcon belongs to a small group of bronze sculptures that can be ascribed with a fairly great degree of probability to Sicily or southern Italy in around 1100.

The bird is holding on with strong claws to a perch across a sphere that might have been placed on a tall pedestal. The beautifully shaped head can be lifted to gain access to the inside of the bird. Three protrusions once supported a grating, now missing, for charcoal and the incense whose fragrance was released through 33 drop-shaped perforations. The bird's entire body is engraved with feathers, elegant curved palmettes, and a *Kufi* inscription.

Published in:

Sotheby's, London, 19/10-2005, lot.293;

Susan Moore: "The Art Market, trotting all the way to the bank" in *Apollo*, 161, 2005, pp. 104-105;

Joachim Meyer: "The body language of a parrot: an incense burner from the Western Mediterranean" in *Journal of the David Collection*, 4, 2014, pp. 26-41, figs. 1 and 5-8;

Daniel C. Waugh: "The David Collection: Journal of the David Collection. 4" in *The Silk road*, 2014, 12, Featured museum, I: fig. 1;

Joachim Meyer: *Sensual Delights: Incense Burners and Rosewater Sprinklers from the World of Islam*, The David Collection, Copenhagen 2015, cat.no. 2;

Julian Raby: "The inscriptions on the Pisa Griffin and the Mari-Cha Lion : from banal blessings to indices of origin" in Anna Contadini (ed.): *The Pisa griffin and the Mari-Cha lion : metalwork, art and technology in the medieval islamicate Mediterranean*, Pisa 2018, pp. 305-360;

Elizabeth C. Kelly: *Zoomorphic incense burners of Medieval Khurasan: a study of Islamic metalwork*, Oxford 2024, fig. 7.16A;