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INCENSE BURNER, CAST, OPENWORK, ENGRAVED BRASS

INDIA, DECCAN; 17TH CENTURY

H: 24 CM

The incense burner's domed lid can be lifted off, and incense and charcoal were probably inserted through the hole on a base that is missing today.

The form of the incense burner was inspired by the mausoleums in the Deccan that are often crowned by similar domes. This might indicate that it was used in a mausoleum. Another possibility is that it was used in a private context, where the shape was intended to remind the owner of the fragrance of burning incense in the tombs where holy men and women were buried.

The exterior of the incense burner consists of a fine, naturalistic network of tendrils with flowers through which the oxygen and smoke passed — giving the impression of a building overgrown with plants.

Published in:

Mark Zebrowski: *Gold, silver and bronze from Mughal India*, London 1997, pp. 120-121, pl. 139;

Navina Najat Haidar and Marika Sardar: *Sultans of Deccan India, 1500-1700: opulence and fantasy*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New Haven 2015, cat.no. 49;