

DAVID AARON



Lustre Bowl with an Ibex

10th Century, Iraq

Ceramic

H: 4cm, D: 13cm

Small shallow earthenware bowl decorated with lustre. With rounded sides and an everted rim, resting on a low foot-ring. Covered in an opaque white, probably tin, glaze with gold-brown lustre decoration. An ibex is painted inside, surrounded by a field of dotted decoration, with a scalloped frieze around the rim.

A partial Kufic inscription is painted on its right horn. On the back are three painted lustre discs with smaller discs inside, with dotted decoration. The lustre is painted with a fluid, free hand typical of the best of these types of wares.

The presence of an animal indicates a courtly rather than a religious purpose for the bowl. More than any other pottery, lustre evoked the supreme status of a ruler and his court. These wares were so highly regarded that they were sent far afield, with fragments discovered in Pakistan and Cordoba. This type of monochrome golden lustre decoration seems to have reached its peak in the 10th century, falling out of fashion afterwards.

This bowl is part of an interesting group of similar ceramics decorated with animals in lustre belonging to the Keir Collection (Ernst J. Grube, *Islamic Pottery of the Eighth to the Fifteenth Century in the Keir Collection*, Faber and Faber, London, 1976, nos. 25-30, pp. 65-67). The decoration on the reverse of this cup is characteristic of Abbasid coins, belonging to type E listed by E. Grube (op. Cit., p. 50).

Literature:

Keramik der Islamischen Welt/ Ceramics from the Islamic World 8. – 18. Jahrhundert, Fritz Lehnhoff
(Islamische Kunst), Munich, 4th – 28th April 1989, p. 40, cat. 4.

David Aaron Ltd, 2023, No. 13.