



Blue-and-White Albarello

Manises, Spain, Late 15th century

29cm high

Stock no.: A4991

This albarello is covered in a white tin-glaze over an earthenware body. The dark blue decoration consists of vertical rows of alternating solid blue with zig-zag motifs. The shoulder bears alternating triangles and the neck is encircled with horizontal lines. The form of this albarello is waisted with a slightly everted rim and foot.

Albarelli originated in the Middle East and were used in both apothecaries and the home to hold ointments, dry drugs, herbs and spices. These cylindrical ceramic vessels were generally formed with slight inward curves for easy handling and wide openings to reach the contents, and were stored with parchment tied around the rim. Throughout the 13th and 14th centuries albarelli were exported in large quantities from Persia, Syria and Egypt to Europe. This resulted in their production later in European countries, in particular Italy and Spain.

Already an important ceramic centre, Manises became the main producer of albarelli in Spain from the 15th to the mid-16th century. For examples showing similar decoration around the shoulder and neck to this albarello, see Ray, p. 40, plates 86-87. For an example of a bowl with similar zig-zag patterns, see Ecker, p. 79, plate 61.

Literature:

Ecker, H. Caliphs and Kings: The Art and Influence of Islamic Spain, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, 2004.

Ray, A. Spanish Pottery: 1248-1898, V&A Publications, London, 2000.