



Iznik Dish

Iznik, Ottoman Turkey, c. 1575

Fritware with underglaze decoration

28.5cm diameter, 5.5cm deep

Stock no.: HS73

Provenance: French private collection.

An Iznik dish decorated with the *Quatre Fleurs* motif of roses, hyacinths, tulips and prunus blossoms in cobalt blue, viridian green, and bole red, with black outlines against a white ground. Sprouting from the same tuft of grass as the flowers is a large question-mark-shaped saz leaf decorated with raised dots of bole red. The rim is decorated with a stylised rock-and-wave pattern in black and cobalt blue, a motif derived from Chinese blue and white porcelain such as the 15th-century Jiangxi albarello in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (accession no. [F1954.117a-b](#)). This motif was used as a background on the wells of Iznik dishes as early as 1540, but it became a standard feature for the rims of dishes by the 1570s.¹ The reverse is plain but for ten small stylised flowers around the cavetto in cobalt blue with black outlines.

The decoration on this dish, sometimes known as 'storm in a teacup', typifies the move towards naturalism during the last quarter of the 16th century.² This is exemplified by the rose on the right hand side of the dish, which hangs from a broken stem. This motif, which represents a move away from symmetry and perfectionism, reached its highpoint between 1565 and 1585.³

A dish with very similar composition, dated to c. 1575, is in the Benaki Museum, Athens (no. 27).⁴ Like

the present example, a saz leaf bisects the dish, with red roses, a red tulip, and blue hyacinths on either side. Both the rim and reverse motifs are very similar. Another comparative example is held in the Cinquantenaire Museum, Brussels (inv. no. [IS.2722](#)), and dated 1550-1600. Like the present example, it features a rock-and-wave rim, and the Quatre Fleurs (including a rose with a broken stem) arranged around a curling saz leaf.

[1] Atasoy, Nurhan, and Julian Raby. *Iznik: The Pottery of Ottoman Turkey*. 2nd ed. London: Alexandrian Press, 1989. p. 121.

[2] El-Sayed, Laila. 'Interpreting Iznik Floral Motifs', *Illuminating Objects*, retrieved from <https://sites.courtauld.ac.uk/illuminating-objects/illuminating-objects-home/iznik-dish/> on 11/09/2024.

[3] Hitzel, Frederic, and Mireille Jacotin. *Iznik: L'aventure d'une Collection*. Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2005. p. 177.

[4] Carswell, John, and Mina Moraitou. *Iznik Ceramics at the Benaki Museum*. Athens: Ginkgo/The Benaki Museum, 2023. p. 86, cat. 32.