



Hispano-Moresque Cup (Encisamera)

Manises, Spain, 16th century

Fritware decorated with copper lustre

8.5cm deep, 15.5cm diameter (including the handles)

Stock no.: A5863

Provenance: French private collection

This small cup dates from early 16th-century Manises. Known as an *ensiamera* or *encisamera* (salad server), this form is first mentioned in 15th-century inventories.¹ It is a bulbous vessel with a short foot-ring and four s-shaped handles (one replaced).

The vessel is decorated with motifs typical of those from the turn of the 16th century. The well is divided in four by a large cross. Each segment contains a cross-hatched tree and two square flowers. The walls are decorated with a block of lustre. A decorative band below the inside rim is divided by triangles containing fleur-de-lys.

The exterior is decorated between the handles with square cartouches filled with wheat ears and square flowers. A more classically 16th century chain border decorates the top of the foot ring. Below the rim is a garbled Latin inscription, based on the opening of St John's Gospel in the New Testament: *in principio erat verbum* (in the beginning was the word). This inscription, and *exsurge domine* (arise, O Lord), were added to Spanish ceramics in the late 15th century and continued to circa 1530. However, as the 16th century progressed, the inscriptions became less legible. A near-identical inscription and font is seen on dishes dated 1500-1525 in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (accession no. [302-1893](#)) and the British Museum, London (accession no. [1855,1201.88](#)). A dish of the same *encisamera* form with a garbled erat verbum inscription is held in the Victoria & Albert Museum

(accession no. [4-1907](#)). It is dated to 1500-1525 from the Valencia region.

n.b. accession nos are clickable links

[1] González Martí, Manuel. *Cerámica del Levante Español*. Barcelona: Labor, 1944. p. 251. In Ray, Anthony. *Spanish Pottery 1248-1898, with a Catalogue of the Collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum*. London: V&A Publications, 2000. p. 100.