



### **Mughal Rosewater Sprinkler**

North India, probably Lucknow, 18th century

Silver, parcel gilt, niello

33cm high, 12cm wide, 7.3cm deep

Stock no.: A5876

Provenance: French private collection

A rare Mughal rosewater sprinkler (*gulabpalash*) in the form of a scallop shell or flattened bud. Rather than the typical bulbous flask and elongated neck of rosewater sprinklers (see, for example, [02635\(IS\)](#) in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London), this rosewater sprinkler is in the form of a scallop shell or a flattened bud. As is typical of Mughal rosewater sprinklers, the neck unscrews from the body and the bud at the top, which is pierced to create a spraying effect when the bottle is shaken, unscrews from the neck. The foot is in the form of an upturned flower, mirroring the base of the neck, to which the handles are attached. The handles are in the form of acanthus leaves, a motif particularly prevalent in Lucknow, which was borrowed and adapted from Ancient Greek architecture.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the distinctive form, the ornamentation on the neck and body is also unusual. A matte effect is created with fine stippling made by circular punch marks. A pattern of roses, perhaps to reinforce the connection to the liquid within, is etched into the body and neck, and inlaid with a black mixture of sulphur, copper, silver, and lead, known as niello. A rather similar pattern, although created with openwork, is seen on a scabbard for a katar in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond (accession no. [2003.49](#)). Dated to 18th century Lucknow, the leafy chevron pattern on the edges of the scabbard also resembles the edges of the rosewater sprinkler.

This rosewater sprinkler is one of a pair, with the other held in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (accession no. [2003.54](#)). Not only does it share the form and ornamentation, but also its dimensions. These rosewater sprinklers are part of a wider group of parcel gilt flattened rosewater sprinklers. A heart-shaped example dated to the late 18th century in the National Museum of Asian Art at the

Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (accession no. [F1990.1](#)), has handles in the form of a peacock and a peahen. Another, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (accession no. [2018.230](#)), is dated to the late 18th century and attributed to Lucknow. This example also features heavy use of the acanthus leaf motif.

*n.b. accession nos are clickable links*

[1] Markel, Stephen. "This Blaze of Wealth and Magnificence": The Luxury Arts of Lucknow', in *India's Fabled City: The Art of Courtly Lucknow*. Los Angeles: LACMA and DelMonico Books, 2010. pp. 198-225: p. 206.