H & H GALLERY

A MAMLUK ENGRAVED BRASS BASIN, EGYPT OR SYRIA, EARLY 16TH CENTURY

H&H Gallery
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REF: 1392

Height: 35 cm (13.8")

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Diameter: 39 cm (15.4")

Description

of waisted form with flaring everted rim, engraved with a series of cartouches filled with inscriptions in thuluth interspersed with roundels containing vegetal interlace on a floral or geometric ground, above and below bands of undulating vines and vegetal motifs, the rim with a band of alternating roundels containing heraldic blazons and inscriptions in thuluth interspersed by floral and vegetal interlace, the engraved areas with inlaid black composition.39 cm. diam.Provenance: Private UK Collection Inscriptions: to the body mimma 'umila bi-rasm al-maqarr al-ashraf al-karim/al-'ali al-mawlawi al-amiri ... /al-maliki al-makhdumi al-humami al-a/, 'One of what was made for the noble authority, the honourable, the high, the lordly, the commander ... the possessing, the masterful, the valiant'; to the rim al-maqarr al-ashraf al-karim / al-'ali al-mawlawi / al-amiri al-kabiri al-maliki / al-'alimi al-'amili a / al-makhdumi al-humami / al-mujahidi al-murabit[i], 'The honourable authority, the high, the lordly, the great commander, the possessing, the learned, the diligent, the masterful, the holy warrior, the defender'.The blazons on the present lot are similar to those on a basin sold at Christie's (Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds, lot 131) which is attributed to the period of the penultimate Mamluk Sultan, Al-Ashraf Qansuh al-Ghuri (r. 1501-16). Whilst the form of the basin is typically Mamluk, the decoration takes on a more dense and small scale form which is reminiscent of Veneto-Saracenic metalwork produced in Syria. Related examples are in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lyon (Rémi Labrusse, Islamophilies. L'Europe moderne et les arts de l'Islam, exhibition catalogue, Paris, 2011, cat.358, p.354), and the Poldi Pezzoli Museum in Milan (inv.1657, published in Doris Behrens-Abouseif, 'Veneto-Saracenic Metalware, a Mamluk Art', Mamluk Studies Review, vol.9, no.2, Chicago, 2005, fig.4, pp.149 and 162).Unlike earlier Mamluk vessels which tended to be inlaid with silver, the present lot displays a new technique which was becoming increasingly popular at the time where a black bituminous material was applied to the recesses of the decoration. The global shortage of precious metals in the 15th and early 16th century ensured that this new fashion became predominant in the ensuing years and eventually replaced inlaid metalwork. For a further discussion see Esin Atil, Renaissance of Islam, Art of the Mamluks, exhibition catalogue, Washington D.C., 1981, no.26, pp.88-89 and 101.

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