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Mughal Gilt Glass Bottles

India, 18th century

10.5cm high, 5.5cm wide, 5.5cm deep

Stock no.: A4890

This pair of opaque glass bottles are decorated in polychrome gilt with floral patterns and figurative scenes. Each bottle is of rectangular form with a plain square base and domed shoulders. One bottle features a standing woman with one leg raised, holding a branch above her head. Beside her stands a bird resembling a crane. On the reverse a man is seated on a throne. The other panels are painted with blue flowers. The second bottle also depicts figures seated on thrones: a man on one side and a woman on the other. The remaining panels on this bottle are painted with red and yellow flowers. All figures on the pair of bottles are illustrated in profile, set against dense gilt foliage. The bejewelled women are depicted in Indian costumes with detailed textile patterns while the turbaned men wear long caftans with tied belts.

Square glass bottles of this type stem from Dutch and German examples known as case bottles, as they were stored in compartments within a box or case. These bottles were produced in the second half of the seventeenth century. Following the establishment of a trade factory in Gujarat in 1618, the Dutch maintained a strong presence in the region. Some case bottles even had caps with Dutch coins, identifying them as being made abroad in India.

Similar glass bottles are in The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Accession Numbers 1891A-1855 and 14-1867; in the Al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait, Accession Number LNS 82 G; and in The Corning Museum of Glass, New York, Accession Number 59.1.583.

Literature:

Carboni, S. Glass from Islamic Lands, Thames and Hudson, London, 2001.

Carboni, S. Glass of the Sultans. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2001.