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Blue-and-White Albarello

Manises, Spain, 15th century

28.5cm high

Stock no.: A4934

This albarelo is covered in a white tin-glaze over an earthenware body. The deep blue decoration consists of three large inverted leaves, each bearing central crosshatched patterns. The remaining space is filled with similar leaf motifs facing upwards; the shoulder has alternating triangles and the neck encircled with horizontal lines. The form of this albarelo is waisted with a slightly everted rim and foot.

Albarelli originated in the Middle East and were used in both apothecaries and the home to hold ointments, dry drugs, herbs and spices. These cylindrical ceramic vessels were generally formed with slight inward curves for easy handling and wide openings to reach the contents, and were stored with parchment tied around the rim. Throughout the 13th and 14th centuries albarelli were exported in large quantities from Persia, Syria and Egypt to Europe. This resulted in their production later in European countries, in particular Italy and Spain.

Already an important ceramic centre, Manises became the main producer of albarelli in Spain from the 15th to the mid-16th century. For similar examples to this albarelo, see Ray, p. 40, plates 86-88.

Literature:

Ray, A. Spanish Pottery: 1248-1898, V&A Publications, London, 2000.