



**Blue-and-White Albarello**

Spain, probably Catalonia, Second half of the 15th century

Tin-glazed earthenware

28.5 cm high

Stock no.: A4934

This earthenware albarello or pharmacy jar is covered in a white tin-glaze. 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 albarello 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.

Albarelli of this type were referred to in inventories with the Catalan *pots blaus regalats* meaning 'pots with melted blue'. They are usually described as Catalan, but may have been made by Valencian potters.<sup>1</sup>

A similar albarello, dated to 1450–1500 is in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (no. [C.78-1911](#)). Another, dated to the same period, is in the North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh (no. [2021.21.3](#)).

[1] Ray, A. Spanish Pottery: 1248-1898, V&A Publications, London, 2000, p. 40.