



Intact Kashan Lustre Bowl

Kashan, Iran, ca. 1200–1220

Fritware with metal oxide glaze

15.6cm diameter

Stock no.: A5874

The city of Kashan played an important role in the development of Persian pottery during the Seljuq period. Most notable is the style of ceramics named after the city, the 'Kashan-style' lustreware, of which this bowl is an example.

The Kashan style, distinguished from earlier periods both by its new forms and motifs, lasted between ca. 1200 and ca. 1220, when the chaos of the Mongol invasions brought an end to production.¹

The present bowl has conical walls and stands on a tall, straight foot, a form which emerged at the turn of the 13th century.² Decoration is applied with shimmering brown lustre glaze. The well of the bowl is decorated with intersecting diagonal lines, forming a grid of hexagons and triangles, which are decorated with irregular pseudo-calligraphic swirls. A bowl dated to 1210 decorated with a similar grid pattern in the well, is held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (accession no. [61.40](#)). The decoration of the cavetto comprises concentric bands of decoration. The lowest band features a band of golden lustre, decorated in reserve with large heart-shaped palmette motifs of the type often seen on 13th-century Kashan tiles, such as three examples made in the 1260s in the British Museum, London (accession nos [G.476](#), [G.478](#), and [G.450](#)). A bowl with similar palmettes is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (accession no. [68.215.10](#)).

The thick, golden lustre glaze is lightened by incised spirals, a typical feature of the Kashan style.³ The outermost decorative band contains an illegible Naskhi inscription. The exterior of the bowl is decorated with an unusual pattern comprising slashed figures of eight, resembling ampersands. This decoration is

seen on a Kashan bowl, dating to 1200-1220, in the Al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait (accession no. LNS 106C).⁴

¹ Watson, Oliver. *Ceramics from Islamic Lands*. London: Thames & Hudson in association with the al-Sabah Collection, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyah, Kuwait National Museum, 2004. p. 347.

² Watson. *Op. Cit.* p. 358.

³ Ettinghausen, Richard and Grabar, Oleg. *The Art and Architecture of Islam: 650–1250*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987/1994. p. 349.

⁴ Illustrated in Watson. *Op. Cit.* p. 360.