

AMIR MOHTASHEMI



Iznik Dish

Iznik, Ottoman Turkey, 1560-1590

Fritware with polychrome underglaze decoration

28.5cm diameter, 5.5cm deep

Stock no.: HS63

Provenance: German private collection founded in the 19th century.

An Iznik dish decorated with the Quatre Fleurs motif of roses, hyacinths, tulips and prunus blossoms in cobalt blue, viridian green, and bole red, with black outlines against a white ground. Spouting from the same tuft of grass as the flowers is a large question-mark-shaped saz leaf which bisects the well. The rim is decorated with a stylised rock-and-wave pattern in black and cobalt blue, a motif derived from Chinese blue-and-white porcelain such as the fifteenth-century Jiangxi albarello in the Freer Gallery of Art (accession no. [F1954.117a-b](#)). This motif was used as a background on the wells of Iznik dishes as early as 1540, but it became a standard feature for the rims of dishes by the 1570s.¹ The reverse is decorated with alternating foliate motifs around the cavetto in cobalt blue with black outlines.

This dish typifies the Kara Mem style of the second half of the sixteenth century. Named after the chief artist of Süleyman the Magnificent's court, this style represented a move towards naturalism.² The two roses which hang from broken stems on either side of the saz leaf provide an example of this more naturalistic way of presenting flowers. This motif is most commonly seen from 1565 to 1585.³

An Iznik dish with similar composition is in the Cinquantenaire Museum, Brussels (inv. no. [IS.2722](#)), and dated 1550-1600. Like the present example, it features a rock-and-wave rim, and the Quatre Fleurs (including a rose with a broken stem) arranged around a curling saz leaf.

[1] Atasoy, Nurhan, and Julian Raby. Iznik: The Pottery of Ottoman Turkey. 2nd ed. London: Alexandrian Press, 1989. p. 121.

[2] El-Sayed, Laila. 'Interpreting Iznik Floral Motifs', Illuminating Objects, retrieved from <https://sites.courtauld.ac.uk/illuminating-objects/illuminating-objects-home/iznik-dish/> on 11/09/2024.

[3] Hitzel, Frederic, and Mireille Jacotin. Iznik: L'aventure d'une Collection. Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2005. P.