

ART ANCIEN



### ATHENIAN BLACK-GLAZE PERFUME POT

With inscription: ΣΚΥ  
Athens, c.425-400 BC  
Terracotta  
H. 9cm

### PROVENANCE

Private collection, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, UK; acquired in the late 19th or early 20th century

Subsequently with Charles Ede Gallery, London

### LITERATURE

*Greek Black Glaze*, Charles Ede Gallery, 2021, p. 40

**An extremely fine perfume pot from Athens, a testament to the elegance of Classical Greek pottery.**



### Classical Pottery

This 5th Century BC perfume pot from Athens is a fine testament to the elegance of Classical Greek pottery. A strap handle joins the rounded body to the lip, which flares out and forms a saucer-like shape. The surface is covered in a dark, lustrous sheen, which would have been achieved by applying an iron-rich slip to the clay before it was fired, turning it an almost metallic shade of black. This style is referred to as Black Glazed Ware, and was first developed in Athens as early as the 8th century BC. Within a few hundred years, particularly within the 6th-3rd centuries, these ceramics were among Athens' most important exports, well known, in their own day as well as among modern collectors, for their radiant finish and clarity of form. Likely owing to a misfire during its production, one side of the pot has taken on a dark orange colour, lending the whole vessel a mottled black and copper patina.

An incised inscription reads: ΣΚΥ, suggested to be the beginning of the word Σκύθα or Σκύθης, translating as 'Scythia' and 'Scythian', perhaps implying that this vessel once belonged to a Scythian foreigner. The Scythians were a nomadic people who lived across the Eurasian Steppe from around the 11th century BC to the 2nd century AD; owing to their well-known proficiency on horseback, some scholars have speculated that these people served as the inspiration for the centaurs of Greek myth.

This type of perfume pot - the Talcott Class - was named after the archaeologist Lucy Talcott, who worked on the excavations at the Ancient Agora of Athens and coauthored the definitive study of Archaic and Classical household pottery. This shape is believed to be closely modelled on a metalware form.

