Small American sterling silver overlay hip flask

Maker Not Recorded

£550



REF: 8772

Langfords
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Height: 100 mm (3.94")

Width: 60 mm (2.36")

Depth: 20 mm (0.79")

Description

Small oval antique American hip flask with a glass body that is decoratively overlaid with sterling silver and fitted with a silver collar and a domed, one-twist, bayonet cover. The glass body features hand engraved silver openwork overlay in a scrolled leaf pattern that is enhanced with hand engraving. Capacity 1¼ fl oz (35 ml)

The inclusion of a silver overlay is particularly appealing among collectors. The graceful, undulating curves that are typical of the Art Nouveau style were particularly well suited to this medium. Most of the bottles with silver overlay were crafted from clear glass, so those examples that feature colour glass are among the most sought after of this genre.

In 1889, the decorative technique of applying sterling silver designs to glass was patented by Oscar Pierre Erand and John Benjamin Round for Stevens & Williams Ltd in Birmingham, with silver overlay finding its first wave of popularity in the early 1900s. Sterling silver was applied to glass by a chemical method so that a cut-out design of silver metal appeared against a clear or coloured glass background. Where the silver was thick enough a silversmith might further embellish the piece with hand engraving.

From 1895 to the early 1920s the art of silver overlay had a fervent following and became a decorative rage. It was particularly popular in America. The silver designers would choose patterns that complemented the piece, for instance this perfume flask is decorated with swirling foliage, where a waterscape of bulrushes might decorate a water jug, or a wine jug could feature intertwining grapevines.