

COLNAGHI



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Greek

Attic, ca. 530-520 B.C.

*Black-figure Eye Cup*

Terracotta

d. 36.8 cm

14 ½ in. (including handles)

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Provenance

*Antiquities*, Sotheby's, London, 18 May 1987, lot 263;

Art Market, Belgium;

*Antiquities*, Christie's, New York, 14 April 2011, lot 218.

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The Eye Cup is richly decorated with added red and white details throughout its surface. On both exterior sides, a maenad is depicted clutching vines in each hand, animated and dynamic in pose. She is flanked by large painted eyes, a characteristic feature of this cup type. Vines and bunches of grapes extend on either side of the handles, their stems intertwining gracefully between them. Rays encircle the base of the vessel, while a red band marks the top of the stem. The interior is adorned with concentric circles arranged on a reserved tondo, completing the carefully balanced decorative scheme.

Large eyes on Greek pottery were believed to protect against evil. Depicted on wide, shallow wine cups such as this, they could also add a touch of humor to social gatherings. When raised to the lips, this cup acts as a mask covering the face of the drinker: the base of the cup resembles a silly snout, while the handles form ears flanking wide eyes.

For the shape, subject and decorative scheme of spiralling vines beneath the handles, *cf.* Adophseck, *Schloss Fasanerie 18*, CVA 1, pl. 17.1-3; Haifa Maritime Museum 262; and W. Hornbostel, *Aus Gräbern und Heiligtumern*, 1980, no. 67. Additionally, a very similar vase was acquired by the Middlebury College Museum of Art (2012.001, shown below), featuring the same twining tendrils under the handles, a very similar treatment of the grape clusters, and overall a strikingly similar decorative scheme. This vase was attributed to the group of Walter 48.42 by Beazley; it is an interesting question whether this vase should also be attributed to that group.

## Comparanda



Middlebury, Vermont, Middlebury College Museum of Art, 2012.001.

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