

COLNAGHI



A Black-figure Neck Amphora

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Greek

Chalcidian, ca. 530-530 B.C.

Black-figure Neck Amphora

Terracotta

h. 21.9 cm

8 5/8 in.

Provenance

Rh a Galerie, Zurich;

Christos G. Bastis (1904-1999), New York, acquired from the above; thence by descent;

The Christos G. Bastis Collection, Sotheby's, New York, 9 December 1999, lot 84;

Private Collection, acquired from the above;

Antiquities, Christie's, New York, 7 December 2011, lot 90.



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The present vase is a fine neck amphora, well-potted with slender, sloping handles and a high neck. On the obverse, a central lion sits with its body facing rightwards and its head left, with open mouth and tail held aloft. It is flanked by a pair of panthers, with heads shown frontally, and bodies facing inward toward the lion. On the obverse, a siren stands on avian legs with wings outstretched, her female humanoid head facing left. Both sides are decorated with a thick black band below and a vegetal motif of leaves inscribed within arching vines above. Below the black band the lower portion of the vase is decorated with radials that thin as they progress upward.

The pairing of large cats with the mythical Siren presents an interesting moment of reflection upon Ancient bestiary, where for many Greeks the chance of seeing a panther or lion may have seemed just as possible as seeing one of the chimerical beasts of myth.

When the Greeks began founding colonies in Italy and Sicily in the 600s B.C., they initially imported fine decorated pottery. Soon, however, local pottery workshops arose. Chalcidian pottery, one of these local productions in the black-figure technique, was probably made in the city of Rhegion, a colony of the Greek city of Chalkis. This piece thus represents the continual dialogue between trade and local production and innovation between Archaic Greek city-states.

Comparanda



Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1885.652.



Malibu, California, J. Paul Getty Museum, 71.AE.308.

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