

COLNAGHI

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Attributed to the Baltimore Painter
Rhyton in the Shape of a Bull's Head
Greek, Apulian, Late Classical-Early Hellenistic
Period
ca. 330-320 B.C.

terracotta
h: 17 cm, l: 21 cm.

Provenance:

Collection of Chevalier Edme Durand (1768-1835), sold 1836, lot no. 1268;
Collection of Achille Etienne Gigault de la Salle (1772-1855), sold 20 March 1856, lot
no. 35;
by descent to a Private Collection, France.

Published:

J. de Witte, *Description des Antiquités et Objets d'Art qui composent le Cabinet de
Feu M. Le Chevalier Durand*, Paris, February 1836, lot no. 1268.
*Catalogue d'une collection d'antiquités ; Vases grecs peints, Statuettes, Bustes &
Fragments en terre cuite, Belles sculptures en marbres antiques, provenant du
Cabinet de Feu M. de L*** et quelques Pierres Gravées & Camées...*, Paris Drouot,
Thursday 20 March 1856, p. 6, lot no. 35.

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The present artwork is a Greek drinking vessel known as a rhyton. The shape of the cup, based on a drinking horn, was popular during antiquity throughout the Mediterranean and beyond. Ceramic rhyta such as this were used as drinking cups in both daily dining as well as ritual contexts. The user scooped liquid into the large opening at the vessel's top, or liquid was poured in from another source, and then drank either from the top or a small hole at the mouth of the animal, which could be covered with a finger or stopper when not in use.

The lower portion of the present rhyton is in the form of a bull, rendered with delicate naturalism. Of particular note are the veins on either side of the snout, as well as the tenderly rendered dewlap. The bull's coat has been painted black, while the horns are white—the whites of the eyes still preserve a touch of the original white paint. The vessel's neck is decorated in the red-figure painting technique invented in Athens in the century before the production of this cup. The style of the painting, especially the layers of white and yellow paint in addition to the usual black, clearly indicate that this cup was made in Southern Italy in the region of Apulia in the latter decades of the 4th century B.C. There has been some restoration to the ears and the left horn, but otherwise the piece is very well-preserved. The painted scene represents a nude Hermaphroditos, the divine son of Aphrodite and Hermes, as indicated by the combination of male and female attributes, as well as the yellow ornamental bands, which are typical of Apulian representations of the divinity from the time (see Figure A). Hermaphroditos is shown facing to the right, heading towards an altar and carrying a ornamented box in his left hand. To the left of the figure, a discarded piece of fabric indicates that the figure is perhaps moving at a great speed.

The present piece comes with a truly exceptional provenance, as it was published twice in French sale catalogues in the nineteenth centuries. Additionally, it has been attributed to the Baltimore Painter, who is considered to be the most important vase painter of the Late Apulian period.

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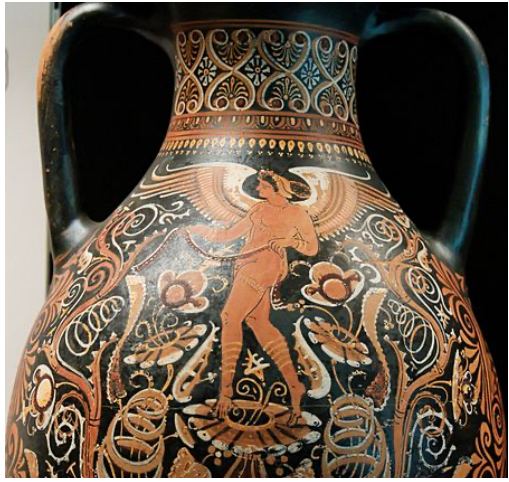


Figure A: Apulian pelike depicting Hermaphroditos, ca. 340 B.C.