

# COLNAGHI

Est. 1760

Wedgwood and Bentley

*A Black Basalt 'Encaustic-Decorated' Two-Handled Vase*

c. 1770 - 1775

painted with the ancient mother goddess Rhea or Cybele riding a lion and holding a tambour (?), flanked by the sun and the moon

24.6 x 22.5 cm.;

9 3/4 x 8 7/8 in.



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## Provenance

Oxborrow Collection;  
Dreweatts, Donnington Priory, Berkshire, 1994;  
With E & H Manners;  
Lindsay Grigsby Collection, acquired from the above in 1994;  
Jeffrey Milkins Collection, no. 877.

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## Literature

D. Edwards, *Black Basalt*, Suffolk 1994, p. 14, colour pl. 7, captioned 'unmarked Wedgwood and Bentley'.

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## Comparative Literature

B. de Montfaucon, *L'antiquité expliquée, et représentée en figures*, Paris 1655-1741, Tome I, plate II (opposite p. 8).

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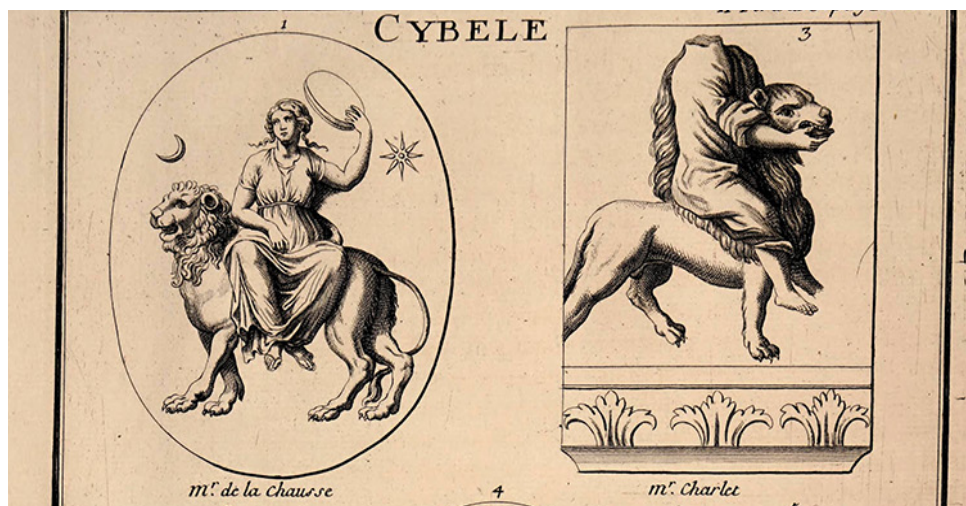
Like the other Wedgwood vase in the current exhibition, this vase is one of a group of so-called basalt vases, more properly known as black stonewares, which Wedgwood, with his shrewd sense of marketing, named after the black hardstone used in antiquity whose appeal lay partly in its resemblance to bronze. These were produced by Wedgwood and Bentley in their Etruria factory from 1768. Unlike its counterpart in the present exhibition, which is directly modelled on the plates published in D'Hancarville's catalogue of Sir William Hamilton's collection of vases, the present vase is not copied from - but loosely inspired by - this famous publication. The form of the vase is based on Greek prototypes, but here the decoration showing the figure of Rhea or Cybele riding on a lion, which does occasionally appear in the iconography of Greek red-figure vases (see fig. 1), is far more "baroque" and three dimensional in its conception, and in fact derives from a plate in Bernard de Montfaucon's *L'antiquité expliquée, et représentée en figures* (1655-1741), a standard source book for classical motifs from the mid seventeenth century onwards (fig. 2). The term "encaustic" was adopted by Wedgwood to suggest a link between the decoration of his basalt vases and Roman wall paintings, such as those which had recently been discovered in the 1730s and 1740s at Pompeii and Herculaneum.

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**Figure 1.** Detail of the goddess Rhea-Cybele riding side-saddle on the back of a lion, wearing a crown and an elaborately embroidered robe. Fragment from an Attic Red Figure Kylix, late 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (10.187)



**Figure 2.** Detail of Cybele riding a lion, from Montfaucon, *L'antiquité expliquée, et représentée en figures*, Paris 1655-1741, Tome I, plate II (opposite p. 8)