

BRONZE VASE ON A FAIENCE BASE

Egyptian, 12th Dynasty

Faience

H: 21 cm (8.25 in)

Reference: 17641



This bronze vase is a variant of the pottery jars used to carry water in the Middle Kingdom. The spherical body ascends to a distinctive, rounded shoulder and slightly tapering neck, narrower in diameter at the junction than at the top. The neck flares out into a trumpetlike shape with a discernible horizontal fascia forming the lip. Since the vessel's rounded body prevented it from standing upright without support, it was necessary to include a stand, which in this case was created in faience. The design of the stand is consistent with excavated examples dated to the Middle Kingdom; created as a single unit, it is hollow on the inside and comprises wide and narrow rings that are separated by a cylindrical body. The lower ring was intended to create a stable base so that the vessel might rest easily in the opening provided by the upper ring.

It is extraordinary to encounter such a complete bronze vessel together with its perfectly fitted faience stand. Metal vessels in general are exceedingly rare within the repertoire of Middle Kingdom vases, because Egyptian artists of that epoch were still experimenting with the technology of copper and bronze working. The passage of time also contributed to the disappearance of such pieces. Stands are also extremely hard to find, especially in faience, a material that, if not used for tile, was typically reserved for amulets, small-scale bowls, intricate inlays, and figures of animals and deities. However, fragments of a stand related to this one and dating to the eleventh century b.c. can be found in the Giza Museum. It is possible that this vessel and its stand either belonged to an elaborate temple service or were among the tomb furnishings of an elite member of the royal bureaucracy.

PROVENANCE

ex Sleiman Aboutaam, Beirut, 1976–77;

ex Charles Pankow Collection, California

PUBLISHED

Sotheby's, New York, The Charles Pankow Collection of Egyptian Art, December 8, 2004, lot 47;

Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, Fine Egyptian, Classical, Western Asiatic and Islamic Antiquities, February 17, 1978, lot 194