

## CYCLADIC MARBLE KANDILA

Greek-Cycladic, Early Cycladic I/II, ca. 3000-2700 B.C.

Marble

H: 18.0 cm

Reference: 17439



The collared and pedestaled jars, called kandiles, along with shallow bowls are the two best known forms of the Cycladic marble vessel repertory. The form of the kandila is composed of three, very clearly defined geometric shapes: the ample bulbous body with a narrow and flat shoulder is supported by a small trunconical pedestal, which is typically entirely hollowed, and surmounted by the wide trunconical neck fitted with a narrow rounded lip. Four compact vertical handles are placed at intervals around the body; a perforation can be seen in the middle of each. It served to suspend and/or transport the container with a cord; the largest examples, mostly when they were filled up, would hang from a stick placed on the shoulders of two carriers. Although simple, the tripartite design of the vessel is based on a balanced correspondence of proportions (the height of the body and the width of the mouth; the heights of the pedestal and collar).

The jar manufactured from a single block of marble is truly a piece of sculpture in the round. While the structure of the kandiles is almost always the same, their dimensions differ significantly from one example to another and vary between 5-7 cm for the smallest, and 35-38 cm for the largest vessels. The production of the latter would require a considerable amount of time and effort. The different stages of carving were to be completed with smoothing and polishing the surface from the inside and outside. As kandiles are not supplied with the stone lids, they belong to the open type of vessels. Their purpose is unknown, but two important facts should be highlighted regarding these containers. First, kandiles, the provenance of which is guaranteed, are exclusively found at necropoleis, but visible traces of use and repairs (especially on the handles) on some of them indicate that they were not only made for the tombs. On the other hand, the unpractical quality of the shape should be noticed: small pieces have a very limited capacity, while the larger ones are much too heavy (over 20 kg). It can therefore be imagined that before the deposition in the tomb, they were used for rituals or cults, probably connected to the funeral

sphere, the details of which are unknown today.

They come from several Cycladic islands and are generally dated to the first stage of Cycladic culture, known as Early Cycladic I and Early Cycladic I/II (approximately between 3200 and 2800/2700 B.C.). Nowadays, these vessels take their name from their fortuitous resemblance to the oil lamps placed in the Greek Orthodox churches (three examples of prehistoric kandiles were still in use in the Panagia Katapoliani Cathedral on the island of Paros in the late 40's of the last century).

Complete except for the damaged lugs and a missing fragment of the rim which was restored; surface weathered and partially covered with encrustation; a few scratches; a few minor chips on the base and rim.

### PROVENANCE

Swiss private collection, 2004

### EXHIBITED

TEFAF, New York, May 2017

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