

GREEN "MILLEFIORI" PATELLA CUP

Roman, 1st century A.D.

Glass

Diameter: 6 cm (2.36 in)

Reference: 3348



Millefiori glass vessels are quite rare, particularly when possessing bold designs like this small bowl. The term millefiori, or "thousand flowers," was first used by Italian Renaissance writers to describe glass vessels composed of variously colored tesserae cut that were cut from prefabricated rods of glass and then fused together with other glass. Highly desirable objects, vessels of millefiori glass were included among the household goods of the wealthiest individuals. Such bowls can be attributed to the Romano-Italian industry of the Augustan and Tiberian periods, and their distribution extends as far as Egypt and other regions of the eastern Mediterranean.

An exquisite example of the millefiori glass technique, this multi-colored bowl is decorated with green, red, and yellow tesserae arranged from the bottom of the bowl to its rim.

The production of millefiori glass is a complex and painstaking operation requiring tremendous skill and remarkable experience on the part of the glassmaker. The glassmaker must first produce the polychrome glass rods or "canes" that will be cut into small discs. Their chromatic composition determines the color design of the vessel: the combination of several colors merged into a single glass cane would provide a decorative effect like that of this bowl. Glass discs cut from the cane are heated and placed next to each other in a stone or ceramic mold having the form of the bowl. This procedure is combined with the technique of pressing the glass into the mold, hence the term "mold-pressed," followed by grinding, tooling, and polishing to obtain a finely finished, uniform surface.

CONDITION

Complete

PROVENANCE

Acquired on the New York Art Market, 1997.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Oliver A., Millefiori Glass in Antiquity in *Journal of Glass Studies* 10, 1968, pp. 48-70.