

RIBBED BOWL

Greek-East-Greek, Late 5th-early 3rd century B.C.

Transparent glass

Diameter: 103 cm

Reference: 26728



This bowl is made of transparent glass with a bluish tint. Thick-walled, molded and beveled, it is outstanding for its technical and artistic qualities.

The shape is simple and understated, without handles or spout. The hemispherical body is smooth and polished on the inside, while the outer surface is richly decorated with linear patterns in low relief, arranged in a precise, elaborate fashion. Ribs with rounded ends radiate from the base (emphasized by concentric circles) up to the maximum diameter. The rim and the beveled lip are highlighted by a thick horizontal ribbon that runs around the bowl.

This piece belongs to a rare, though widely studied, class of vessels, produced between the late 5th and the early 3rd century B.C. Existing in a variety of shapes, the best documented are the bowls, which exist in different versions (more or less broad and low, or high and slender), plates, rhyta and goblets. Most often excavated in Anatolia or in the Near East, the examples belonging to this group may have been manufactured in one particular center, whose exact location is not yet determined. This was perhaps a collection of workshops located in a Mesopotamian or Western Asian city, situated on the Tigris River; they would have been influenced by the work of the Achaemenid toreutic artists (craftsmen hammering precious metal tableware), whose formal repertoire was copied by glass craftsmen.

These glass bowls, which would certainly have been regarded as luxury items in ancient times, can indeed be considered as imitations of the many drinking cups made of precious metal (silver especially); they were most probably used during official banquets and receptions for dignitaries, for instance, or even, in some cases, in the religious and/or funeral sphere. The likeness between metal and glass vessels is not limited to cups and bowls; indeed, it more generally applies to all forms, as well as to many decorative motifs shared by toreutic artists and

glass craftsmen (ribs, petals, circles, ovolos, etc.).

CONDITION

Complete and virtually intact. Superficial traces of wear; rim slightly chipped. Surface partially covered with a pale brown patina.

PROVENANCE

Ex-Elie Bustros collection, Beirut, Lebanon, collected in the 1960's; European private collection, acquired from Mr. Bustros in 1982.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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VON SALDERN A., *Two Achaemenid Glass Bowls and a Hoard of Hellenistic Glass Vessels*, in *Journal of Glass Studies*, 17, 1975, pp. 37-46.

On metal parallels, see:

OLIVER A. and LUCKNER K.T., *Silver for the Gods: 800 Years of Greek and Roman Silver*, Toledo (Ohio), 1977.