

Pitcher

Date

4th-5th century C.E.

Medium

Blown glass

Description

In addition to nearly sixty Greek and Etruscan vases (see cat. nos. 3, 4), the collection of Edward S. Burgess—bequeathed to the College in 1928—also includes a number of terracotta figurines and nearly seventy pieces of ancient Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic glass. According to Burgess's sister, Julia, he had written a two-volume scholarly manuscript on the subject of ancient glass that remained unpublished at his death. The objects shown here are a representative sampling of the variety of glass vessels contained in the Burgess Collection. Although glass production originated in northwestern Iran around 2500 BCE, there was little evolution in technique until about 50 BCE, when glassblowing was invented near Jerusalem. For over two millennia, glass vessels had been made in molds through a laborious casting process. By contrast, glassblowers situate a blob of molten glass at the end of a hollow tube and blow into it to inflate the viscous substance into a bubble, then manipulate it with various tools; when the glass

cools, it hardens, maintaining its shape. Soon after this development, artisans began blowing glass into two- and four-part molds, creating multifaceted vessels with patterns and designs impressed on their surfaces, such as the jug illustrated above (center). Glassblowing revolutionized the production of glass vessels, allowing for much greater production in less time. Prices fell, and glass began to replace ceramics for household goods in many parts of the Roman Empire, especially in present-day Egypt, Israel, and Syria. Smaller examples, such as most of those seen here, likely held perfume, ointment, or cosmetics. Although economic instability and the localization of craft and trade after the fall of the Roman empire in 476 CE caused glassmaking to decline, it continued on a lesser scale and was further refined in Islamic territories into the early modern period. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017) Blue transparent glass. Blown everted rim with thread wrapped around; narrowing cylindrical neck; globular body; thick thread wrapped around twice for base; vertical loop handle rim to shoulder.

Dimensions

Overall: 2 1/2 x 1 7/16 x 1 1/8 in. (6.4 x 3.7 x 2.9 cm) Diameter (rim): 1 in. (2.5 cm) Diameter (base): 1 1/8 in. (2.9 cm)

