

# OBJECT of the month

## October 2021

### BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

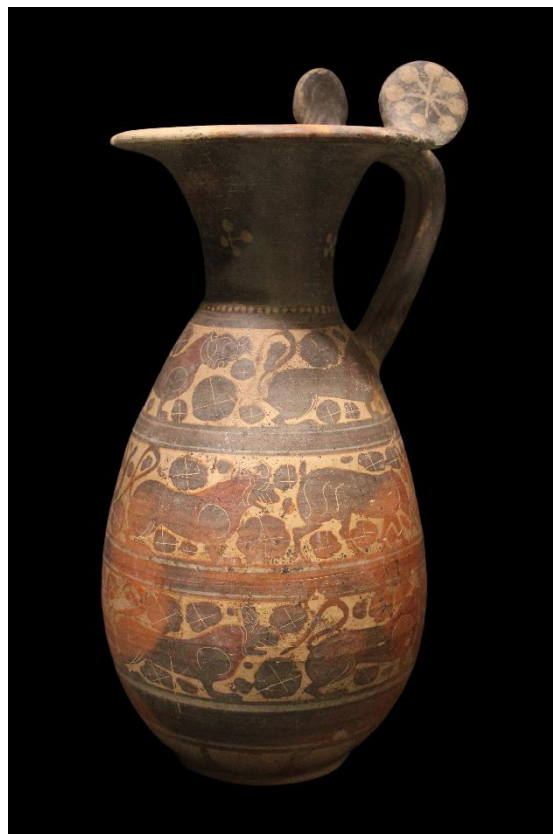
I'm Rick Hoffman, a Museum Guide at the Dayton Art Institute since 1996 and I'd like to share a small work of art in our Antiquities Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World Gallery. Because of its size, it might not get the attention that the larger objects in this gallery receive but is worth a very close look. It is an Etrusco-Corinthian Olpe that was made in the first half of the 6th century B.C.E. This makes it one of the older pieces of art in our collection.

Let's take a look at this piece from a distance. We can see a pitcher that has a yellow background with dark brown animal designs that are in between three distinct dark brown bands that go around it. All the animals are going towards the right. It is pear-shaped and it has two distinct circles on the rim on either side of the handle. These circles or round flaps by the handle are called rotelles. It is dark brown except for a circumferential band of white dots and stars in white overpaint which decorate the neck and rotelles. The Olpe is eleven and a half inches tall and the diameter is six and a quarter inches. The large red patches over most of its body are from uneven heat distribution during the firing.

The main characteristic of Etrusco-Corinthian style are the unusually-proportioned animal figures with shoulder markings and typical animal features, decorated in three registers or horizontal levels, arranged one above the other, especially when the levels are clearly separated by lines.

The decoration of this Olpe is the hallmark of the "orientalizing" style, the "animal frieze." Look closer now. Ours has three registers each decorated with processions of lions and grazing deer. The lions have short legs and oversized rumps and shoulders with bloated bodies. The deer appear to be grazing and have large bodies with short legs along with exaggerated antlers. The deer's torsos have S-shapes on them to indicate ribs. There are also rosettes crowded into every available space around their bodies. It was executed in dark brown to red-brown slip with added red and white paint as well as incised details. The animals are enlivened with red overpaint and incised lines.

You're probably curious: what is an Olpe and where was it made? An Olpe was originally a leather flask or vessel for oils or wine. But later on, the word came to mean an earthenware pitcher without a spout. They are also defined as a jug with pear-shaped body, a handle and an even rim. No definitive account of their use has been documented; their use probably depended upon the circumstances of the



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situation at the time of use. The undecorated versions of these may have been common in households while the more decorated ones probably belonged to the more affluent owners.

Ours is an Etrusco-Corinthian example. What does this mean? It was made in the region of Italy which in the 6th century B.C.E. covered a territory at its greatest extent of roughly what are now Tuscany, Western Umbria, northern Lazio, as well as what are now the Po Valley, southeastern Lombardy, southeastern Veneto and Campania regions. Etrusco-Corinthian was a universal Etruscan style of pottery. The main centers of production in Italy were at Vulci, Caere and Tarquinia. Research indicates that our Olpe is the work of the Etrusco–Corinthian Heracle Painter who was active at Vulci about 580–560 B.C.E. but this is not definitive.

You can see this unique artwork in-person in Gallery 211, Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World at the Dayton Art Institute on your next visit to the museum.

## END TRANSCRIPT

Click [here](#) to access the video presentation.

## FEATURED ARTWORKS\*

Artist unidentified (Etruscan, Italo-Corinthian), *Terracotta Olpe (Jug)*, about 600–575 B.C.E., terracotta. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY. Purchase by subscription, 1896, 96.18.39

Attributed to the Rosni Painter (Etruscan), *Black-Figure Pottery Olpe*, about 580–570 B.C.E., pottery. Image courtesy of Kallos Gallery, London.

## MEDIA CREDITS\*

[metmuseum.org](http://metmuseum.org)

[kallogallery.com](http://kallogallery.com)

[wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org)

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## QUESTIONS?

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