45. Black-FIGured Cup.
46. Black-figured Kyathos.
TWO NEW RHODES UNIVERSITY VASES

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Among the most recent additions to the Rhodes Museum there are two vases which deserve to be included in our published catalogue. Both items are examples of the black-figure style but differ greatly in period, shape and provenance. Nonetheless we have numbered them consecutively (45, 46) for the reason outlined in the previous addendum note. It may be that, as the collection grows, this arrangement will have to be altered according to a more strictly chronological sequence. Before describing the vases I should again like to express our gratitude for the continuing generosity of Rhodes Council whose grants are in the main responsible for our steady growth.

45. Black-Figured Cup, thistle-shaped with single handle angled up from the belly, from Etruria. Height 3.8 inches; diameter 2.4 inches.

The black-figure decoration is enlivened with purple and consists of a central band containing two lions and a griffin with the usual incisions for details. The scene is flanked by two large palmettes whose s-shaped stalks continue on to the handle from either side. Below this a band of formalised plant motifs continues the decoration which is rounded off by rays from rays from the narrow black base. The black paint is diluted and the outline of the silhouettes fairly weak; there is little organic unity of composition in the main field but, in addition to the attractive effect of the added purple, the figures are lively and cheerful conveying an overall pleasing impression.

In the second half of the sixth century BC Etruscan workshops imitated Attic imports which in the course of that century displaced Corinthian ware. The local craftsmen were often careless and less than competent imitators of their models, at times even confusing scenes from Greek mythology. The present vase (about 550-500 BC) is an example of PONTIC, which was perhaps the earliest but certainly the most attractive Etruscan black-figure school. The name, given in the hope that the place of making was some Greek colony of the Black Sea, has survived for want of a better and because there is no genuinely Pontic vase painting to dispute it. The style is based on Attic, as exhibited in Etruria by the Tyrrenian amphorae. 2

46. Black-Figured Kyathos, Attic (c. 490 BC), Leafless Group (?). Height (with handle) 6.8 inches, (without) 3.9 inches; diameter 4.4 inches.

The vase is recomposed of fragments, some restorations, mostly of the body

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handle unbroken, otherwise in excellent condition. Despite the few restorations, the figure zone is well preserved. The painter carefully worked out the relationship of individual figures which, reading from left to right, form a harmonious group of a youth running – left arm extended with open palm –, two youths leading horses, two warriors on horse-back, and one warrior in the act of mounting his horse. In the field artistically arranged branches enhance the unity of the scene. All figures are dressed in short cloaks (perhaps the chlamys) which are gaily adorned with groups of white dots and with what appear to be broad white collars. The three warriors are wearing helmets with large plumes and, judging from their stern facial expressions, are about to set out on a trying venture.

The vase, like our kylīx, 4 belongs to the Late Attic Black-Figure style, a period when good painters were generally attracted by the more sophisticated red-figure technique. But standards did not decline immediately, in fact the first quarter of the fifth century witnessed a kind of development in black-figure style. Our kyathos is a good example of the fuller composition favoured then, of the closer grouping of figures (together with much foliage), and particularly of the lively and even humorous scenes which were in vogue at the time. 5 The splendidly preserved glaze and the deep black of the decoration, as well as the fine proportions of the very thin clay, make this vase an excellent addition to our collection.

The kyathos, a comparatively rare shape, was used as a ladle for drawing wine out of the mixing bowl (krater), and it also served as an Attic measure roughly equivalent to 1/12 of a pint. The romantically inclined might like to imagine that an Athenian potter produced this vase in the same year in which his city defeated the Persians at Marathon.

4. No. 41, which, incidentally, in shape, style, and decoration very closely resembles the cup H136 in the South African Museum, Cape Town. For a description, without a photograph unfortunately, see J. Boardman – M. Pope, Greek Vases in Cape Town, Cape Town 1961, 11.

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