

**“DRINK THAT YOU MAY LIVE”:
ANCIENT GLASS FROM THE YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY**

Unprecedented exhibition highlights the artistry and technical virtuosity of glassmakers in the ancient world
August 4–November 12, 2017

August 4, 2017, New Haven, Conn.—The Yale University Art Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of *“Drink That You May Live”*: *Ancient Glass from the Yale University Art Gallery*. The museum is home to one of the most comprehensive collections of ancient glass in the United States—encompassing a wide variety of precious objects, from small core-formed Egyptian cosmetic containers to elaborately decorated free-blown Roman vessels—but this rich assemblage has never before been the subject of a dedicated exhibition.

“Drink That You May Live” showcases approximately 130 pieces from the Gallery’s holdings, many of which are on display for the first time. The exhibition draws from the fields of art history, archaeology, and social history in recounting the progression of glassmaking technology in antiquity, while also exploring the concept of glassmaking workshops, social and economic activities in relation to glass, the proliferation of glass as a decorative art, and the contexts in which archaeologists today continue to recover this ancient material.

Originating in Mesopotamia in the third millennium B.C., glassmaking underwent significant development in New Kingdom Egypt and gained widespread popularity in the Roman and Byzantine Empires. Objects on view span approximately two millennia, dating from the 15th century B.C. through the 7th century A.D. An eye for beauty and a well-honed technical virtuosity were crucial to artisans undertaking this delicate craft, and makers in the ancient Mediterranean region and the Near East produced stunning vessels that employed a variety of decorative schemes and manufacturing techniques. At the junction of artistry and craftsmanship, glassmaking evolved via cross-cultural circulation and sharing and was advanced by the innovations of individual workshops. Many trends came and went, while others revolutionized the industry and are still in use today.

In antiquity, glassmaking began as a labor- and time-intensive enterprise that produced small objects only the wealthy could afford. As new technologies arose over time—the most significant of which was the development of the free-blowing technique in the second to first century B.C.—the



Inscribed Cup with a Palmette Band, Roman, Eastern Mediterranean, possibly Syrian, 3rd–4th century A.D. Free-blown glass with gold leaf, 5¼ × 18¼ in. (15 × 48 cm). Yale University Art Gallery, Hobart and Edward Small Moore Memorial Collection, Bequest of Mrs. William H. Moore, 1955.6.205



Bowl, Hellenistic or Roman, Eastern Mediterranean, late 2nd century B.C.–early 1st century A.D. Cast mosaic glass, $3\frac{1}{8} \times 5\frac{5}{8}$ in. (7.8 × 14.1 cm). Yale University Art Gallery, Hobart and Edward Small Moore Memorial Collection, Bequest of Mrs. William H. Moore, 1955.6.20

process of glassmaking became more efficient and glass largely supplanted ceramics and metals as a common household ware. While many people think of glassware today in primarily utilitarian terms, ancient glassmakers combined utility with whimsy. The phrase “Drink that you may live” is an exhortation to the drinker that was inscribed on numerous glass cups—including the gilded drinking vessel from which the exhibition takes its title—and it reflects the frequent use of glass at banquets and drinking parties in the ancient world.

In rare instances, glassmakers inscribed their names on their work. Among the most important of the Gallery’s ancient glass vessels is a globular bowl signed by Ennion, preeminent among the few ancient glassmakers whose names are known. The Gallery is also fortunate to have in its collection glass artifacts recovered from the excavations at the ancient cities of Dura-Europos (present-day Syria), conducted in 1928–37 by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, and Gerasa (present-day Jordan), conducted in 1928–29 by Yale University and the British School of Archaeology. Examples from these sites are interspersed throughout the exhibition, demonstrating how art historians and archaeologists can use this material as a point of comparison with which to contextualize and understand similar objects.

The elegance of the vessels in this exhibition serves as a continual reminder that ancient glass was also an art form. Glassmakers achieved remarkable visual effects in their use of mold-made designs, mosaic patterns, painting, gilding, and other intricate surface decorations. While some adornments were purely aesthetic, others were deeply personal, proclaiming the owner’s religious beliefs, commemorating a pilgrimage, or telling a favorite mythological story. The objects on view thus not only exemplify various glassmaking techniques but also give us a glimpse into the craft production, daily life, religion, trade, and luxury of the ancient world.

“*Drink That You May Live*” is organized by Sara E. Cole, PH.D. 2015, Curatorial Assistant in the Antiquities Department at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, and former Graduate Curatorial Intern in the Department of Ancient Art at the Yale University Art Gallery. Cole states, “Ancient glass can be appreciated for its delicate beauty and for the technical proficiency of its makers, but by delving deeper into the lives of individual objects, one realizes that they also have complex stories to tell about the contexts in which they were owned and used. The Gallery’s collection, with its impressive breadth and depth, provides fertile ground for exploring these narratives.”



Signed by Ennion, *Globular Bowl*, Roman, Eastern Mediterranean, possibly Syrian, mid-1st century A.D. Mold-blown glass, H. $6\frac{1}{2} \times$ DIAM. $8\frac{1}{8}$ in. (16.5 × 22.4 cm). Yale University Art Gallery, Hobart and Edward Small Moore Memorial Collection, Bequest of Mrs. William H. Moore, 1955.6.66

On View

August 4–November 12, 2017

Exhibition Tours

Tuesdays, September 12 and October 17

12:30 pm

All programs are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted. For more detailed programming information, visit artgallery.yale.edu/calendar.

Exhibition Credits

Exhibition organized by Sara E. Cole, PH.D. 2015, Curatorial Assistant, Antiquities Department, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, and former Graduate Curatorial Intern, Department of Ancient Art, Yale University Art Gallery. Made possible by the Jane and Gerald Katcher Fund for Education; the Nolen-Bradley Family Fund for Education; and the John F. Wieland, Jr., B.A. 1988, Fund for Student Exhibitions.

Yale University Art Gallery

The Yale University Art Gallery, the oldest college art museum in the United States, was founded in 1832 when the patriot-artist John Trumbull gave more than 100 of his paintings to Yale College. Since then its collections have grown to more than 200,000 objects ranging in date from ancient times to the present.

General Information

The Yale University Art Gallery is located at 1111 Chapel Street, New Haven, Connecticut. Museum hours: Tuesday–Friday, 10 am–5 pm; Thursday until 8 pm (September–June); and Saturday–Sunday, 11 am–5 pm. The Gallery is closed Mondays and major holidays. Free and open to the public. For general information, please call 203.432.0600 or visit the website at artgallery.yale.edu.

Press Contact

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