

The author also covers the mysterious "*vasa murrina*", an enigma commented on by learned people, but yet not explained. Roman authors agree upon a Parthian origin, as well as on the immense interest in these "myrrha-scenting" luxuries. No less an aristocrat than Nero was mentioned as a passionate collector. The British Museum houses a goblet of this kind.

The limited number of objects listed indicates an equally limited body of artisans and of exclusive customers: there is no comparison with, for instance, the overwhelming mass of objects from Apulian Greek goldsmiths or Campanian silversmiths, both reflecting the brilliance of the late efflorescence of Hellenistic life. Yet the exclusive field of precious stones, including gems and cameos, had some affinities with everyday handicrafts. Glass manufacture within the Roman provinces in Imperial times no longer stood for luxury, but constituted a trade that supplied the average family. In spite of this, artisans working with glass were able to turn out brilliant things of beauty: vessels and amphoras in an applied two-coloured technique well-known from the famous "Portland vase" (resembling sardonyx), or drinking vessels in the advanced "*vasum diatretum*"-technique (copying cut rock crystal goblets). It is not the exclusive originals but the adaptations in a plastic material which must be considered the true examples of a refined applied art, to be duplicated for numerous customers. Oddly enough the later category - the moulded or blown Roman glass - speaks out more strongly as an expression of pure Hellenistic art. Related, but yet far removed from these capricious luxuries in stone, are, for instance, the two glass amphorae in blue and white from Pompeii (location: "Tomba del vaso di vetro di blu") now in Naples, where the Golden Age of Augustus, mixed with symbols from Alexandrian lyrics, sparkles in joyful beauty - these private comments by a student of art history, sticking to the old ideals of Hellenism, should not be understood as criticism. Bühlers documentation of a little-known subject is well executed and his comments are of value. Again a piece in the immense puzzle, the lost culture of late Antiquity at its height, is put in place by a devoted scholar.

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*Ancient Art.* The Norbert Schimmel Collection. Edited by *Oscar White Muscarella*. Verlag Philipp von Zabern, Mainz 1974. 265 items. DM 98.-.

This book, properly an illustrated catalogue of selected objects, introduces a first-rate collection of ancient and classical art recently built up by means of private resources. Today such collections are usually found in the U.S.A., while European (French and British) collections of long standing are reported as dispersed or "non-existent". In spite of current heavy taxation the U.S.A. remains the country where it is possible to accumulate vast wealth, a prerequisite if one wishes to indulge a taste in classical or Near-East antiquities of some quality. No doubt Swiss traders and dealers are important intermediaries in the creation of private collections of this kind, as well as the suppliers of public collections

and museums, as only a very limited number of objects can be moved today. Private trading in classical, Mediterranean or Near-East antiquities is a must for museums not situated within the actual areas, with excavation activities in progress. The closing of national borders to works of art - as planned by UNESCO - aims at a status quo: the cultural heritage must be kept where it is! Yet objects will be smuggled out from under-developed areas, and prices will rise and the owning of anything above the insignificant will be the privilege of top industrialists and businessmen.

The Norbert Schimmel Collection reflects a strong interest in Mediterranean and Near-East antiquities, and a taste for high quality combined with artistic values. The collection is dominated by miniature objects up to medium-sized Greek pottery and Roman portrait sculpture below man size, a situation which indicates today's limited resources of supply even for serious clients.

The publication is a joint effort of a group of specialists, mostly American scholars, with Oscar W. Muscarella of the Metropolitan Museum as co-ordinating editor. High-grade -anonym-photos (partly in color) are commented on in concentrated texts with comprehensive references to literature and public collections. A number of such texts are in reality learned essays (for instance, the editor's remarks on Near-East metal work).

The Greek pottery is skilfully dealt with, painted pottery constituting an advanced and precise field thanks to first-rate scholars like J.D. Beazley. Most impressive are (usually small-scale) archaic bronze-sculptures of Greek, Etruscan or Umbro-Etruscan origin. Some pieces of exquisite archaic armour, surpassing the best items of the famous Olympia-collection, probably belong to recent finds from illegal excavations.

The writer is not in a position to comment on the Near-East or Egyptian antiquities dealt with.

Credit goes to Philipp von Zabern of Mainz as publisher and printer for high-grade printing and a most pleasing volume.

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