

GREEK VASE STYLES

Clay was a very important part of ancient Greek culture. Back then they did not have glass or plastic to make containers out of. Luckily clay was easy to find in Greece. Once clay is fired it is almost indestructible (unless broken) and also fairly waterproof. These features made clay a perfect material to make containers out of. It was used for big storage containers, buckets, cups, perfume bottles, wine bottles, jewellery boxes, and any other type of container for storing things in. All of these uses made the potters in ancient Greece very busy. Their skills became so refined that they were just as important as the clay itself, although they were often poor people or even slaves. Most Greek pottery was shaped for a particular function or a number of functions. They were used around the house, or for ceremonies, or even entertainment

The Greeks thought of the pots as if they were people. They used human terms to describe parts of the pots. For example - handles were called ears and bases were called feet. Today we continue to use some of the terms like mouth, lip, neck, shoulder, and body. The mouth is the opening at the top. The lip is the edge of the pot right around the mouth. Below the lip is the neck. The shoulder is where the neck expands to the size of the body and the body is the main part of the pot.

The Greeks had around 20 different vase styles, each with its own function; each perfectly formed for its purpose, and with most of them exquisitely decorated. On its own, each and every kitchen, storage, funerary, cosmetic or wine vase was a unique work of art that must have embellished the everyday lives of the ordinary people of ancient Greece. Here are a few examples: (not drawn to scale)



ALABASTRON - for perfumes and aromatic oils; could be corked and tied to the wrist.



AMPHORA - for storing supplies



ARYBALLOS, for perfumes and oils



BELL KRATER - a mixing bowl, especially for water and wine



KRATER - a mixing bowl, especially for water and wine



VOLUTE KRATER - a mixing bowl, especially for water and wine



HYDRIA - a water carrier



KANTHAROS - a drinking cup



KYLIX - a drinking cup



LEKYTHOS – contains body oil for athletes or gifts of oil to be interred with the dead



LOUTROFOROS – pouring water for washing hands or ceremonial bath before marriage.



LEBES – the marriage bowl



OINOCHÉ – wine jug



PSYKTER – for cooling wine. It would stand in a bowl of water or ice/snow



PYXIS - for cosmetics



STAMNOS - for carrying liquids

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