



Meet
painter
**William
Kasper**

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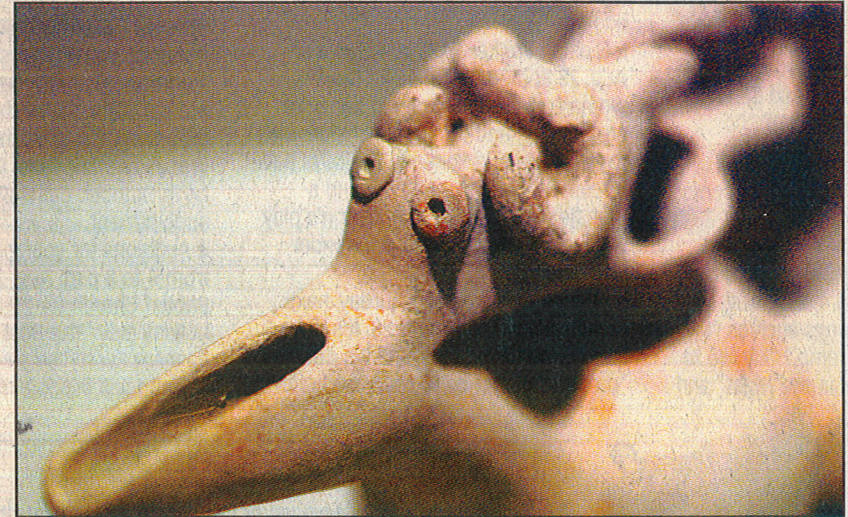
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COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE

Section C

Containing *humor*

STORY BY
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This ram's head vessel with basket handles from western Iran, 700-600 BCE, is a complicated pouring vessel that has three connecting jars.

An exhibit at the MU Museum of Art and Archaeology shows the whimsical side of Ancient Iranian art.

Located near the so-called cradle of civilization, the region now known as Iran has been home to artisans creating both functional and whimsical pieces of pottery long before the Greeks or Chinese became masters.

While it's clear from the remnants these people left behind that they once had a rich culture, the clues as to who these people were are scarce. With no written words left behind, scholars might never know what religions or social structure ancient Iranians followed.

But that doesn't mean we can't wonder.

A new exhibit at the University of Missouri-Columbia Museum of Art and Archaeology stirs one to imagine what the ancient people of Iran

— living between 5,000 B.C. and the third century — were like. If these relics are any indication of who the ancient Iranians were, one could surmise they were fanciful people who had a strident sense of humor.

Called "Wit and Wine: A New Look at Ancient Iranian Ceramics," the visiting exhibit consists of 45 pieces, most of which were used for drinking or pouring wine.

Besides subtle variations in shape and glass tint, the options tend to be somewhat limited in this culture when it comes to selecting wineglasses.

Western wineglasses and carafes tend to be sleek and subtle. In many circles today, wine drinking is regarded as sophisticated and its connoisseurs as highbrow.

But archaeologists believe wine consumption was much more common in Iranian culture, playing

"Some of these pieces are similar to ones you would see in a textbook or at the Louvre."

— JEFF WILCOX,
MUSEUM OF ART
AND ARCHAEOLOGY



Benton Kidd, assistant curator of ancient arts at MU's Museum of Art and Archaeology, talks about pieces in "Wit and Wine: A New Look at Ancient Iranian Ceramics," an exhibit from the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation now open at the museum.

Learn More

What: "Wit and Wine: A New Look at Ancient Iranian Arts," features Iranian ceramics that have been dated between 5,000 B.C. and the third century.

Where: University of Missouri-Columbia Art and Archaeology Museum. The museum is at 1 Pickard Hall on Francis Quadrangle, at the corner of University Avenue and Ninth Street on the MU campus.

When: Through Dec. 22

Hours: The museum is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, with extended hours from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.



Worth poring over:

There are about 45 pieces in the "Wit and Wine" exhibit. Many reflect common items from life in ancient times. Some are shown below.



Bull-shaped vessel from western Iran.



Vessel with two feet from northern Iran, circa 100-800 BCE. The piece mimics common leather vessels during the period. Wine is released through holes in the feet.



Camel-shaped vessel from western or southern Iran during the Parthian period, 250 BCE-AD 224. The camel was a common caravan animal and often used in designs of the period.

But archaeologists believe wine consumption was much more common in Iranian culture, playing an important role in social gatherings.

A glimpse at the new display at the art and archaeology museum certainly suggests this difference, if nothing else, through the unusual and comical forms their wine vessels had.

"There's a real sense of whimsy in these pieces," said Benton Kidd, assistant curator for ancient arts at the MU museum. "You can tell they were created for very special things."

Some of the pieces are rather unusual, such as a wine vessel that is shaped like a pair of boots; its contents are designed to be poured from the toe of each boot, likely at the same time. Other wine vessels take the shape of animals, including a seated camel, a stag and bull.

One particularly amusing vessel is shaped like a bull that has wheels for legs. The container doesn't hold more than a cup, and the bull's mouth serves as a spout.

Kidd said it's not clear if the items in the exhibit were used in ritual or just for fancy. But testing has revealed that most of the cups and

5 p.m. Monday through Friday, with extended hours from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday. It is open from noon to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

How much: There is no admission fee.

Lecture: Exhibit curator Trudy Kawami of the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation will deliver a lecture titled "Ancient Iranian Ceramics as Art" at 6:30 p.m. Sept. 13 at 106 Pickard Hall on the MU campus. A public reception will follow.

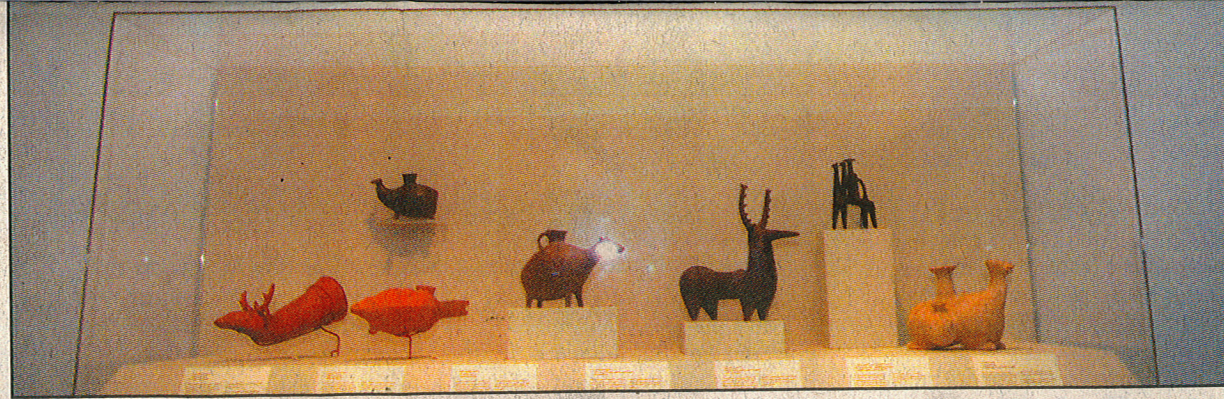
For more information: Call 882-3591 or visit the museum's Web site: museum.research.missouri.edu

vessels at some point held wine.

"The people of Iran were actually the first to cultivate grapes," Kidd said. Like the Greeks, he said, Iranians also made wine flavored with fruit, nuts, honey and grain. "Wouldn't some of these pieces just be great to pour your wine out of?"

In addition to the cups and carafes, the collection also includes two makeup containers and some nonfunctional sculptures, such as a ceramic head of a bull.

■
"Wit and Wine" is on loan from



A photo of modern-day Iran hangs above relics of its ancient past at the "Wit and Wine" exhibit.

the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation, a New York-based organization that has an extensive collection of art from the Far and Near East.

Jeff Wilcox, registrar for the MU museum, said the university landed the rare traveling exhibit through a former curator with the art and archaeology museum.

While there is no rental fee for the exhibit, the museum pays to have it shipped to its next scheduled stop. "Wit and Wine" will be on display in the museum, located on the quad in 1 Pickard Hall, until late December.

"This is a very impressive collection," Wilcox said. "Some of these pieces are similar to ones you would see in a textbook or at the Louvre. There are some very important pieces here."

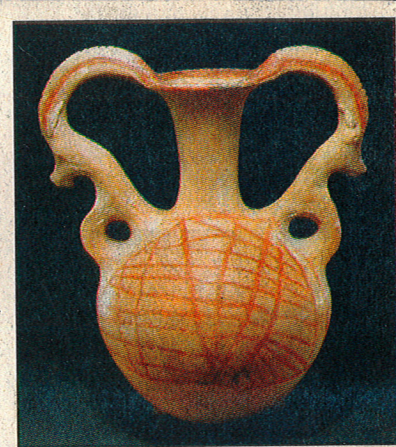
The approximate age of the pieces was determined using a testing method at Oxford University called thermoluminescence. But the exact location the pieces came from is not known because most of the art was purchased on the art market by Arthur Sackler, a wealthy research psychiatrist and art

collector who died in 1987.

Wilcox, who has worked at the MU museum for 27 years, said the museum regularly hosts traveling exhibits. It also has quite an impressive collection of its own.

"What you see here is only about a tenth of our actual collection," he said, noting that the museum has 14,000 catalogued items. "Besides that, there are untold bits of things excavated from professors who visited Israel and Cyprus."

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Twin-spouted vessel with mountain goat handles. Photo courtesy of the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation.



This spouted vessel from central Iran, 800-600 BCE, resembles a water bird with its curving neck and slender profile.