

Greek Kylix

My main focus when doing research was on the purpose of Greek pottery within the context of the symposium. A Greek symposium is a conference or meeting thrown most often by the rich elite to discuss a popular topic of debate such as philosophy, religion, politics and such, although they were far from formal. These events would emulate the spirit of a party and would always include delicious foods, drink, all forms of entertainment, and love making. As a result, the presentation of the decor, ranging from the couches to the garments had to be beautiful and interesting as to spark any form of conversation between guests. The pottery was no exception, especially those served on the table holding food, water and wine. Greek Kylixes and water vases were often ordered by the thrower of the symposium with the intention of being vigorously deliberative and self-critical in order to coincide with the debate culture within contemporary Greek polis. Many of these forms of pottery included imagery of everyday life, the Gods acting out stories, and scenes from famous works of poetry such as the Iliad. The imagery on the kylix that I focused on, on the other hand, was not based on any of these common themes. Rather, it told of the story of each individual that drank from its bowl.



Dionysus Cup, Exekias, (540-530 BC)



Symposium with Gorgoneion, 525 BC

The thing about the kylix that caught my attention the most was the union of presentation and form by actively turning the functional, shallow wine bowl into a mask. I loved how with every backward tilt of the head, which is required when drinking such a large shallow bowl, the wild, almost hypnotic eyes painted around the underbelly of the bowl would replace the eyes of the drinker, commenting on the nature of those who indulge so heavily in such affairs. The gorgon's face painted onto the bottom of the shallow bowl represents the subtle passage of time (which goes unnoticed especially when under the influence of alcohol) and how by the time they have finished drinking and are staring into the empty bowl, all that is staring back is the image of the monster that they have inevitably become.



What an onlooker would see as someone took a sip from the kylix.

My kylix, on the other hand, is expected only to hold. Water, in contrast, is a sobering drink, and is often associated with health, serenity and inward reflection due to its clear and reflective nature. I wanted to emulate this sense of serenity and calm by making both sets of eyes “blink” when switched out continuously. Instead of the wide, almost fearful eyes on the sides of the wine kylix, my water kylix portrays the slow blinking of one who is deep in thought, reflecting on pure emotions of happiness and belonging. I also wanted to add a little bit of a look of sadness by turning the eyes upward as if the brows were furrowed in concern, since oftentimes gazing inward can result in some less wanted feelings and memories. On the inside of the kylix, I painted nothing, contrary to almost every kylix recorded. I added a very traditional greek pattern along the inside of the lip to ensure that the culture I referenced can be easily distinguished, but aside from that I used nothing but two coats of black slip. I did this to recreate the feeling of a

deep pool of water, which often reflects images the best, allowing for the drinker to take a step back from drinking and gaze deeply at their external face. This is not intended to be narcissistic or egotistical, although depending on the person, it can easily turn that way. It is, on the other hand, meant to complete the picture of yourself by joining the internal you, as you close your eyes, drink deeply and think, and the external you as seen in mirrors, glass and water. In these forms there is no external interpretation from other people. It is just you and your reflection, and do with it what you will, it is always a good learning experience to truly question and explore oneself.



The

surface of the inside of the bowl, from the perspective of the drinker.

black

Making Greek Vases: <https://youtu.be/WhPW50r07L8>

(The video above is about 4 and a half minutes showing the process of ancient Greek pottery, starting from the creation of the clay to the complicated chemical firing of the pottery.)

It's really cool, I would recommend watching it.) The way I went about creating my kylix was pretty similar aside from the very beginning and the very end. I didn't make my own clay, and I didn't use the complicated chemical process within the kiln to change the color of the slip and clay. During the whole process everything pretty much fell apart. The handles fell off the bowl and the bowl fell off the stem, but in the end after being epoxyed back together by Trevor, the end result looks a lot more ancient and roughed up, which I ended up really liking. If I had any takeaways from this experience it's that handles always need a really thick base wherever it is being attached, even if it looks funky at first. Structural integrity is much more important.



The classic Greek pattern can be seen lining the inner rim of the lip of the bowl.

Open and closed eyes, as seen from eye level.



Open and closed eyes, as seen upside down.

