



## Tall vessel with two handles

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On display

**Title/Description:** Tall vessel with two handles

**Object Type:** Vase

**Materials:** Marble

**Measurements:** w. 270 mm

**Accession Number:** 1043

**Historic Period:** Late Classic/Early Post- Classic period (AD 800-1000)

**Production Place:** Honduras, Mesoamerica

**Cultural Group:** Ulúa

**Credit Line:** Purchased with support from the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Art Trust, 1991

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Finely carved translucent white marble vessels of the Terminal Classic period (AD 800-1000) are known from the Ulua Valley in Honduras (Stone, 1938). Although the inhabitants of this region were in contact with the Maya groups to the north and west and the non-Maya peoples of the Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica, they remained a distinct entity.

Just over one hundred of these vessels are known. Schaffer (1992) has suggested that production may have been limited to only a few workshops over perhaps two or three generations. They range from tall cylindrical vessels, often with ring bases, to shallow dishes, usually with tripod bases. Schaffer has argued that the tall vessels, such as this example, are an outgrowth of Ulua polychrome painted ceramic vessels of the seventh century, whereas the shorter examples (such as object 746) are most closely related to the style of the tripod vessels from Teotihuacan, which were adopted first by the Maya and then incorporated into the Ulua tradition. This example is carved from white marble with the characteristic pink veining of the Ulua region and the imagery is oriented around a simplified anthropomorphic face on each side, embedded in a pattern of scrolls.

The taller vessel includes a plain upper border, with the principal area of design inscribed within two borders of overlapping plaque motifs. The anthropomorphic faces are characterised by prominent eyes with drilled pupils, broad mouths and paw scrolls below. A large area on one side of the vessel has been damaged by contact with organic acids in the soil over an extended period. The foot of the vessel is perforated with pairs of step designs and a lower border of smaller plaque motifs. The handles are in the shape of felines, with the paws of the creatures rendered two-dimensionally on the body of the vessel.

Entry taken from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection 3 volume catalogue, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997).

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## **Provenance**

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia from K. J. Hewett, London, on the advice of Robert Sainsbury in 1991 out of funds provided by the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Art Trust.

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