

AMIR MOHTASHEMI



Fatimid Kilga (water purifier)

Fatimid period, Egypt, 10th -12th century

35cm high, 48cm wide, 33cm deep

Provenance: Private European Collection

Stock no.: A4551

Carved from a single block of white marble with grey veins, the jar-stand consists of a hollow interior and rests upon hoof-shaped feet. A tongue-shaped basin juts from the front of the stand. The carved decoration features scallop-shaped incisions on each foot, while a seated figure wearing a headdress and holding a drinking vessel is depicted on both the left and right panels. These panels also feature an incised border with pendant shaped medallions in each corner.

The marble jar-stand, locally referred to as a kilga, functioned as a water purifier, and was frequently used during the Fatimid period (909-1171). The stands were designed to support a large terracotta pot placed above which contained the unpurified water. As terracotta has a porous body, the water would drip down from the base of the pot which acted as a natural water filtration system (Knauer, p. 69). The smoothly worn interior of the jar-stand also indicates that water once filled the basin. The clean water would then be collected directly from the kilga. A similar kilga is in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, (Accession Number 20.176). It also depicts a seated figure holding a cup in addition to similar fluted decoration on the feet.

Literature:

Knauer, E. R. 'Marble Jar-Stands from Egypt', in, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Journal, No.14, 1980, pp. 67-101.