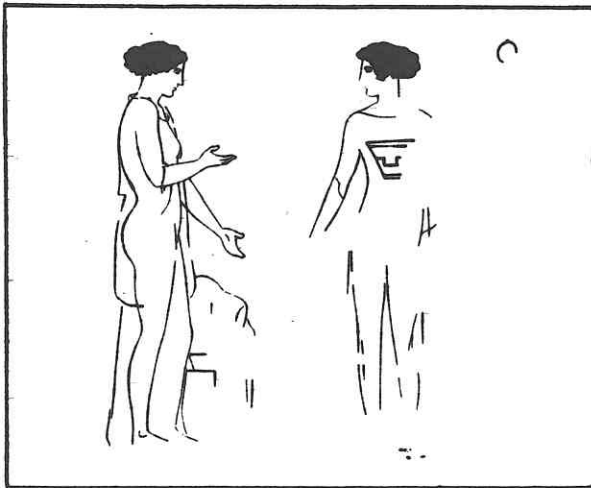


*Death in White and
Colour*

An Exhibition
of
Attic White Lekythoi
of the 5th c. BC.



The Classical Museum

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

1997

PREFACE

The occasion for this exhibition was provided by two funerary Greek vases of the type known as *White lekythoi* or *White-ground lekythoi* which were brought to the Department of Classics for assessment about a year ago. They are presented here for the first time. As collectors' objects they can be traced to county Donegal, as far west in Ireland as one can get from Athens, their place of manufacture. Although badly damaged, they are superb examples of a class of Greek vases which intrigue with their funerary images and delight with their colour, hence the title of this exhibition: *Death in white and colour*. It has been possible to identify them as works of two of the most important masters of White lekythoi: the Achilles Painter and the Thanatos Painter, who were at work in the potters' quarter in the Kerameikos neighbourhood of Athens at the time the Parthenon was being built, between 447/6 BC. and 438 BC. Both vases most likely date from this time. Their figured scenes represent the epitome of classicism in vase painting. We are therefore extremely grateful to their owner for having allowed us to keep them for study and for making them available to us for this exhibition.

The exhibition offered the opportunity to study and display the other vases of the same category in our collection. We are also fortunate enough to be able to include in our display four vases which were loaned to us by the National Museum of Ireland specifically for this occasion. We wish to thank the Director and the Antiquities Department of the National Museum of Ireland for facilitating in every possible way the loan of these vases at very short notice.

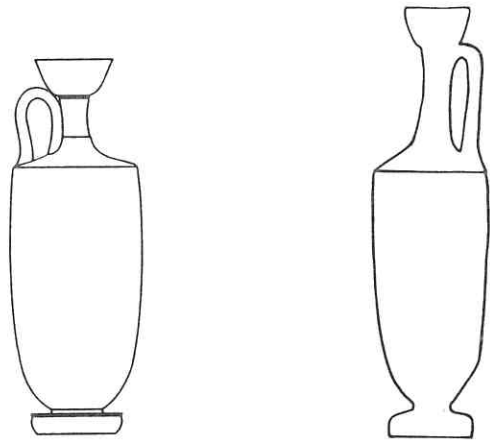
This exhibition would not have been possible without the assistance of four of our postgraduate students, Nora Brown, Heinrich Hall, Noelle Mitchel and Natalie Wise, who to their credit and to their benefit, gave generously of their time to help study the exhibits, write the catalogue, and prepare the display. It is hoped that students who view the exhibition will also benefit from their work. The excellent drawings of the Achilles Painter lekythos were done by artist Tom O'Sullivan. I am afraid that I am responsible for

the rest of the sketches. The Audio Visual Centre, UCD, printed the photographs.

It would be a great pity if the two vases in our care were to leave the country as could well happen. Their quality makes them unique in Ireland, both as examples of their type and as educational material. It is very much hoped that sponsorship may be found so that they can be restored and remain in the Classical Museum, for the good of future generations of students.

CHRISTINA HAYWOOD
Research Curator
Classical Museum
University College Dublin

February 1997



(a) mid 5thc. BC.

(b) late 5th c. BC.

Fig. 1: Lekythoi of early and late shape

INTRODUCTION

The Greeks called *Lekythos* a container used for dispensing oil. Today we use the word to denote a particular type of Greek oil container which we know from archaeology was the most common form used from the 6th century BC. onwards. The characteristics of the shape are a long, narrow neck, one handle, and a cup-shaped mouth. These features are well adapted to the function of the lekythos: the narrow neck helped prevent the unnecessary loss of oil (a valuable commodity in Ancient Greece) by enabling small amounts to be distributed evenly and the mouth to collect the excess. The most popular shape had a tall body and is therefore called 'tall lekythos'. All the examples on our display, save one, are of this type. Lekythoi range in height from the size of a thumb -the *lekythion* which Aristophanes (*Frogs*, v.1236) mentioned as costing an obol was perhaps of this size- to about half a metre. Because oil, particularly olive oil, was used extensively in funerary rituals, and had a special significance for the dead, lekythoi are often found as grave offerings.

White-ground lekythoi instead of the usual black glaze or red clay surface, were coated with a white slip on which the figures and patterns were painted. White ground was first used for black-figure lekythoi in the 6th century BC. The technique was then refined with the introduction of red-figure, and figures and patterns were now drawn in outline and often enhanced with colour. The freedom enjoyed by the painters of white ground, thanks to the clear outlines and extensive use of colour, can only be compared to that enjoyed by panel and mural artists. It is not surprising therefore that White lekythoi should have been receptive to influences from the latter. In the first half of the 5th century, white ground was still used quite frequently for shapes other than lekythoi, e.g. the interior of a series of lovely cups decorated by the Sotades Painter, but the technique soon became specifically associated with the lekythos, and the production of White lekythoi developed as a sideline for a

number of Athenian workshops, particularly those specializing in small shapes. After 470 BC. the iconography became progressively funerary, affording us a privileged glimpse of the death rituals and beliefs of 5th century Athenians.

Throughout the century white ground was also used for small domestic lekythoi with patterns rather than figures ('Pattern lekythoi'). They are well represented in our exhibition. These vases were common and widely exported, unlike the White lekythoi with funerary scenes which were an exclusively Athenian product and are found almost entirely in the graves of Attica.

Exceptionally they also became popular in Eretria, on the island of Euboea, where they were exported from Athens, and some found their way to other Greek cities, e.g. Corinth, and exceptionally to some cities in Southern Italy. The production of White lekythoi declined in the third quarter of the 5th century and they stopped being made at the end of the century. Their demise corresponds with the beginning of the custom of placing large stone lekythoi with either sculptured or painted decoration on tombs as grave markers.

Regrettably, because of their attractive colours and iconography, White lekythoi became very popular among collectors in the last century, thus fuelling an illicit trade. Many of the vases in museums today, like the lekythoi in this exhibition, are unprovenanced. Moreover many of the lekythoi from early excavations were either summarily excavated or poorly published, or both. This means that we have lost invaluable information which would have helped considerably in resolving at least some of the problems connected with the interpretation of this very special type of vase.

THE TECHNIQUE OF WHITE-GROUND

White ground

The ground of the white-ground lekythoi consists of a slip of fine, almost pure clay. It was applied on the surface of the unfired vase with a brush while the vase was rotating on the wheel. The marks of the brush are visible on UCD 542. The slip was then often burnished to give a glossy effect. Initially the slip had a yellowish or beige tinge (NMI 1903.326, NMI 1903.333) due to the presence of some iron in the clay, but later a purer clay was used and the result was a whiter ground. On the darker surface of the earlier lekythoi, a purer and thicker white was often used for women's flesh (NMI 1903.326) and other detail; it has been termed 'second white.' It was not used after the middle of the 5th century when the whiter ground became standard. In the later 5th century the quality of the white ground deteriorated and the surface, which previously had been fairly resistant to wear, often became quite unstable and powdery (UCD 541).

Patterns and outlines

In the case of lekythoi with black figures or patterns, the decoration was applied onto the white ground in the ordinary black-figure technique and, if desired, incisions were added to indicate detail. On the White lekythoi the outlines and details were painted on with a fine brush in a similar manner to those on red figure vases. A preliminary sketch was sometimes executed with charcoal or with a stick. A stick, some lines of which are clearly visible, was used for the preliminary sketch on UCD 131. Before the second quarter of the 5th century, black relief lines were used for the outlines (NMI 1903.326). They were then replaced by lines drawn in the warmer golden-brown dilute glaze which we see on a number of the vases displayed, and on the shoulder palmettes of the Achilles Painter's vase (DR 2).

Around the middle of the 5th century contours in matt colours, black or red, were introduced. The use of

matt did not entirely supercede the use of glazed outlines which remained popular with some vase painters until well into the third quarter of the century. The Achilles Painter in particular resisted matt outlines, although the figures of **DR 2** are drawn in matt. The Thanatos Painter's lekythos (**DR 1**) makes use of both, but glaze predominates on the figure scene. The use of matt outlines was accompanied by a change of technique in drawing: instead of the hard fine brush used for the glaze which left visible bristle marks, a softer brush was employed which left no bristle marks. The new practice was more suitable for the free-flowing style of brushwork of the last quarter of the century, which became closer to that of panel and mural painting (see below: Red-figure white ground).

Colours

Both fired and unfired colours were used to decorate white-ground lekythoi. The Greeks knew only a limited number of colours which could survive the kiln. Red, black, yellow, and the white used for second white were usually fired and were fairly durable (**DR 1**). The use of unfired colours which were mineral- or vegetable-based and were not mixed with glaze provided greater opportunity for variety, adding to the palette greens, blues as well as pink and purple. These colours were painted on after firing with a binder such as egg-white to aid adhesion. On lekythoi they were used extensively after the mid 5th century. Unfortunately they were very fugitive. They have entirely disappeared from **DR 2** with the result that the figures appear naked, but are partly preserved on **UCD 131** and **NMI 1903.317**.

The analysis of colours on terracottas (*Studies in Conservation* 15, 1970, 272ff.) which made use of the same pigments has shown the composition of some of the colours to be as follows:

Red: either red ochre or less commonly, vermilion.

Pink: a mixture of red ochre and chalk before 330 BC, and later it was rose madder, a natural dye made from the root of a plant.

Yellow: yellow ochre.

Blue: Egyptian blue, or a mixture of silica, copper, chalk, and natron (carbonate of soda).

Green: malachite, an ore of copper.

Black: either soot or bitumen.

White: either chalk or gypsum.

* * *

The following lekythoi help illustrate the technical aspects of white lekythoi, although their figure decoration is extremely badly preserved.

UCD 541, PRIA 73, 1973, no 1054.

440 - 430 B.C.

Pres. H. 18.4. Upper parts lost; frieze very worn.

At the shoulder, stopt meander with crossed squares between brown lines. Shoulder slipped with remains of grey and red palmettes and volutes.

Traces of scene in matt red outlines: drapery and stele?

UCD 542, PRIA 73, 1973, no 1051.

Pres. H. 20.6. Upper part of neck and mouth missing.

Rays on the shoulder. Plain frieze. Key between brown lines above.

UCD 543, PRIA 73, 1973, no 1055.

About 425 BC?

Pres. H. 19. Mouth and top of neck lost; much worn.

Shoulder slipped with traces of floral preserved. Very faint traces of scene with standing figure and a stele. Outlines in matt.

BLACK-FIGURE WHITE LEKYTHOI

Figure lekythoi

During the late 6th and early 5th centuries white-ground became common for lekythoi with black figures, and large and elegant pieces were made. Lekythoi with black figures or with figures in a combination of outline and black-figure (showing scenes from mythology or from daily life) continued to be made in the first half of the 5th century, but by then the technique had mostly given way to the outline technique of red-figure, and, except for some fine work e.g. by the Bowdoin workshop, much of the black-figure work is of poor quality. Our two exhibits are representative of the decline of black-figure. **UCD 478**, shows a quasi-mythological scene of the departure of a four-horse chariot, a stereotypical scene on small lekythoi in the first half of the 5th century. Only part of this vase was given a white ground, which was not unusual at that time. The racing two-horse chariot on **NMI 1903.333**, drawn entirely in silhouette, is either taking part in an athletic event or in funeral games.

UCD 478, *PRIA* 73, 1973.
500-475 BC.

Pres. H. 17.4cm. Foot, neck and mouth lost. Rays on reserved shoulder. On upper body, white-ground band with four horizontal palmettes. Below, three females in a chariot and a bearded figure with a lyre.

NMI 1903.333, *PRIA* 73, 1973, no 351.
About 475 BC.

H. 23.2cm. Intact. Worn. Rays on reserved shoulder. Two-horse chariot with charioteer.

Pattern Lekythoi

One class of black figure vases which continued to be made throughout the 5th century is that of the white-ground pattern lekythoi. As their name implies, these lekythoi are decorated with non-figurative patterns (palmettes, meanders, floral and geometric elements)

similar to those which occur on bands above or below the figure friezes of other vases. On the pattern lekythoi the patterns are arranged in bands on the body and shoulders of the vessel. They are usually executed in black or dark brown paint, sometimes with incised detail or, more rarely, with added colour; only very few red-figure examples are known.

Pattern lekythoi were much simpler and quicker to make than the lekythoi with figure scenes and were therefore almost 'mass-produced'. Although they are found in graves, they are not uncommon in domestic contexts, suggesting that they played a more important role as oil containers in daily life than the white lekythoi with figure scenes. Unlike the latter, they were also exported in larger numbers, and are frequently found outside Attica and in other parts of the Greek world, e.g. in Sicily and Southern Italy, where they were also copied locally.

Stylistic studies have shown that pattern lekythoi were not only contemporary with white lekythoi with figure scenes, but were also produced by the same workshops. In some cases, they have even been attributed to the hand of a known vase painter. There are, for example, some lekythoi from the Gela and Diosphos Painters, both belonging to groups active around 500 BC., others may be by the Haimon Painter, from around 475 BC., and by the Beldam Painter, whose workshop produced many such vessels in the second quarter of the fifth century and the following decades.

Of the six examples on display, all are cylinder shaped except for the tiny **UCD 482** which is squat. In the style of their decoration they represent two common types: the type with ivy bands and clusters of berries, and the type with upright palmettes. The squat lekythos (**UCD 482**) with its delicate patterns in many zones is more unusual. None of our exhibits is of high quality, and they have all lost their spouts, but they serve well to illustrate the simple elegance of these modest household items.

OUTLINE WHITE LEKYTHOI (FUNERARY LEKYTHOI)

UCD 122, *PRIA* 73, 1973, no 1033.
500-480 BC.

Pres. H. 11.1cm. Neck handle and mouth lost. Three twelve-leaved palmettes with incised details between tall lotuses on coarse creamy slip. Below, chain of six dotted circles.

UCD 125, *PRIA* 73, 1973, no 1037.
Fifth century BC.

Pres. H. 13cm. Upper parts lost. Ivy branch with three leaves and two clusters framed by a grid, double below, triple above.

UCD 475, *PRIA* 73, 1973, no 1034.
5th century BC.

Pres. H. 10.9cm. Upper parts lost. On the white ground, ivy branch, with three leaves and two clusters of berries; triple grid above.

UCD 480, *PRIA* 73, 1973, no 1035.
Mid 5th century BC.

Pres. H. 17.6cm. Mouth and part of neck lost. On the white ground, ivy branch with four leaves and three clusters, framed by grids.

UCD 477, *PRIA* 73, 1973, no 1036.
5th century BC.

Pres. H. 13.3cm. Mouth lost. On the white ground, ivy branch with three leaves and two clusters of berries framed by grid, double below, triple above.

UCD 482, *PRIA* 73, 1973, no 1038.
450-425 BC.

Pres. H. 7.8cm. On white ground, fine double grid above and below; in the middle, band of opposed triangular blobs between lines.

This is the class of white-ground which is the most appealing, not only for its iconographic subject-matter but also for the special combination of draughtmanship and colour it displays. Twenty major Athenian workshops or vase painters, among them the Thanatos and Achilles Painters, worked in the production of White lekythoi in the 5th century, and many more lesser painters/workshops; of these only a small sample is represented in our exhibition.

Iconography

Initially White lekythoi displayed a variety of scenes, including scenes from mythology. Some of these alluded, metaphorically, to death. Explicit funerary themes appear in the second quarter of the 5th century and, from the middle of the century, they occur to the near exclusion of all other subjects.

The iconographic interest of the funerary white lekythoi is considerable. Some of the themes and scenes they represent are rare or even unknown on contemporary red figure vases. Moreover, and quite exceptionally for Greek vases, they may show mortals after death, either in scenes from the Journey to the Underworld or as apparitions at the tomb. They are represented as ordinary humans, indistinguishable in form from the mourners. Sometimes small figures of winged souls are also depicted; they usually hover about in the background, indicating either the funerary setting or the souls which have already been integrated into the Underworld.

The iconographic repertoire is mostly limited to a few scenes. The *Prothesis*, or laying out of the dead, which was the most common funerary scene on vases and plaques during the Archaic period, is rare on White lekythoi. The most popular theme is the *Visit to the Grave*; over three quarters of all the funerary lekythoi show scenes of mourning at the tomb. This is also the

theme best represented among the vases on display. One mourner (UCD 129, 121), most often two (UCD 131, NMI 1903.317, DR 1), occasionally three stand or sit near the tomb, which consists of a stele (probably made of white-washed wood, as stone stelae are absent during most of the period when white lekythoi were made) on a stepped base, and often a tumulus. A sarcophagus is sometimes shown instead of a stele, and sometimes a funerary altar (NMI 1903.326). The mourners bring offerings in round shallow baskets (NMI 1903.317), and decorate the tomb with multi-coloured fillets (DR 1) and with wreaths (the wreath carried by the winged woman on UCD 126 is probably intended for a tomb). Sometimes mourners play the lyre (NMI 1903.322) or offer it at the grave. Perfume vases (DR 1) and myrtle branches (NMI 1903.326) are brought as offerings, and vases of different types, in particular lekythoi, are sometimes shown lined up on the steps. Women predominate in these scenes as it was their duty to tend the graves. Among our exhibits, male mourners are also well represented however (UCD 129, 131, DR 1). When the shades of the dead are shown, they usually sit sorrowfully on the steps of the tomb, particularly in vases of the later 5th century. The one vase in our display with the possible representation of a dead man (NMI 1903.319) is an earlier vase and shows him as an athlete pacing in front of his tomb. Male mourners or shades are also sometimes represented as warriors. Moreover a fairly common artistic topos on white lekythoi was a *battle scene* raging about the tomb between hoplites or between a hoplite and a horseman. It is probably a conflated scene between a scene of death in action and the ensuing burial at a time when death in battle was a common occurrence.

Indoor scenes representing the *Preparation for the visit to the cemetery* are less common, but were particularly popular among some painters, especially before the middle of the century. The scenes, which derive from domestic iconography, usually show two female figures, both standing, or one sitting the other standing, and holding similar objects to the ones

mourners present at the grave: baskets full of fillets and wreaths, and perfume vases. J. Beazley named these scenes 'mistress and maid' but not all the second female figures seem to be slaves. The lekythos by the Achilles painter (DR 2, Figs 4-5), although it has lost all its colours, is a fine example by the painter who excelled in preparation scenes, endowing them with an atmosphere of serenity and dignity.

The other most typical iconographic themes portray imaginary events and involve mythical beings: *Hypnos and Thanatos* carrying the body of men and women, probably a metaphor for burial, *Charon* welcoming the shades on board his barge, *Hermes* handing over the shades to Charon or appearing beside the tomb. These scenes are particularly interesting for the information they provide regarding popular contemporary beliefs about death and the Underworld. Unfortunately none of these scenes are represented among the lekythoi displayed here.

Development

In the century of its existence the White lekythos underwent several changes. The change of technique from glazed outlines to a predominance of matt outlines after the middle of the century, and from a few fired colours to a large range of bright matt colours was discussed above in the section on technique. The change of techniques went hand in hand with stylistic changes: from the severe style of the second quarter of the century when 'second white' was common, to the high classical style of the third quarter of the century (particularly noticeable on our Thanatos Painter and Achilles Painter vases: DR 1 and DR 2), and the more naturalistic and expressive style of the last quarter of the century (NMI 1903.317).

The shape of the White lekythos shows many subtle variations, but the most striking difference is between the standard cylinder of the second and third quarter of the 5th century which has a fairly stout body (Fig. 1, left), and the slimmer tapering shape with a longer, slimmer neck, of the lekythos of the last quarter of the

century (Fig. 1, right). The only example of the latter shape in our exhibition is NMI 1903.317.

A typical feature of lekythoi of medium and large size is the frequent occurrence of an inner vessel, a smaller false container inside the cylinder shape, which helped to economise oil. Painters appear to have favoured inner containers of different shapes e.g. the Achilles Painter a globular container, the Thanatos Painter a cylindrical one (like that of DR1).

UCD 129, *PRIA* 73, 1973, no 1052.
450 - 440 B.C.

Rest. H. 26.9, D. 7.8. Mouth restored. Very worn; chipped frieze.

At the shoulder, band with key in black between yellow-brown lines. Dense rays and tongues on reserved shoulder. Frieze in matt black outlines. Youth wearing black himation over left shoulder facing left towards stele, the palm of his left hand open. The stele stands on two steps and has a pediment on the top. There are traces of fillets tied to it. On either side of the youth's head, two hanging wreaths.

UCD 126, *PRIA* 73, 1973, no 1052.
Mid 5th century. B.C.

Rest. H. 23.9, D. 7.5. Original upper parts lost.

Double rays on reserved shoulder. The frieze is framed top and bottom by bands of brown right-facing key between brown lines.

Winged female figure, in golden brown dilute glaze, advancing right, probably towards an imaginary or entirely worn stele. She wears saccos and chiton and holds an olive wreath with her outstretched hands.

UCD 121, *PRIA* 73, 1973, no 1052.
Mid 5th century. B.C.

H. 16.2, D. 5.3. Mouth reattached. White ground chipped.

Rays on reserved shoulder. At the top of the frieze a band of brown right-facing key. Outlines in dilute brown glaze. Woman wearing chiton and himation looks back with arms outstretched towards a fillet-bound stele and tymbos.

UCD 131, *PRIA* 73, 1973, no 1053.
440 - 430 B.C.

Pres. H. 26.2; D. 7.8. Handle, neck and foot reattached. Faded colours and outline. Chipped handle, neck and foot.

Shoulder slipped with three palmettes and volutes below tongues. At the shoulder, a meander band with crossed squares. Below, stele on three high steps with black fillets at top and base. It is flanked by two figures; on the left, a yellow haired youth wearing a red himation, arms extended, arranging a fillet; on the right, a yellow haired youth muffled in a black himation. Matt black outlines throughout.



Fig. 2. UCD 131

NMI 1903.326, *PRIA* 73, 1973, no 473.
Second quarter of 5th c. BC.

H. 22.4; D. 7.7. Intact.

Rays on reserved shoulder. Right facing key at shoulder.

Woman, head turning back, approaches an altar holding offerings: a branch in her right and a small object in her left hand. She wears a red himation over a chiton. "Second white" is used for her flesh.

NMI 1903.322, *PRIA* 73, 1973, no 471.
Third quarter of 5th c. BC.

H. 22.1; D. 7.4. Intact but much worn and encrusted.

Rays on reserved shoulder. Two pairs of lines above frieze. Girl standing facing right, a lyre in her hand and an oval object in her extended right hand.

NMI 1903.319, *PRIA* 73, 1973, no 468.
Middle of 5th c. BC.

H. 22.8; D. 7.5. Intact. Flaked and worn surface.
Rays on reserved shoulder. Right facing key band at shoulder.
Outlines in golden brown dilute glaze. Athlete facing his tomb and
tumulus. He is wearing a himation and carries his strigil and
aryballos in his left hand.

NMI 1903.317, *PRIA* 73, 1973, no 464.
Last quarter of 5th c. BC.

H. 31.7; D. 8.6. Mended from numerous fragments.
Late shape. Matt outlines and colours throughout. Grey and red
palmettes on shoulder. At the shoulder, meander band. On frieze,
in the centre, a broad stele wrapped in red sashes, the lower part
worn. Two women on either side. The woman to the left holds out
a basket in both hands; the woman to the right wears a black
peplos and holds out one fillet in her right hand and another in
her left behind her back.



Fig. 3. NMI 1903.317.

Thanatos Painter

The Thanatos Painter is named after a white lekythos in the British Museum which shows Thanatos and Hypnos carrying a dead warrior. He worked in the third quarter of the 5th c. specialising exclusively, it would seem, in white ground, although suggestions have been made that he had a "red figure side" in either the Kleophon or the Persephone Painter. About thirty lekythoi are attributed to him. He used both glazed and matt outlines, or a combination of the two, like on **DR 1**. His figures resemble those of the Bosanquet Painter with whom he has sometimes been identified. His style is close to that of the Achilles Painter, but his choice of themes is different. His subjects are explicitly funerary, especially those drawn in glaze. He has painted scenes with Charon, and an activity-laden scene of hare hunting by the tomb (British Museum, D 60), but by far his most common subject is the one shown on our lekythos: two mourners on either side of a tomb which is a simple stele often decked with black or red fillets. Some of his figures mourn openly, but the majority have a passive or dreamy expression. Some figures are unspecified athletes holding their strigils, images of the dead rather than mourners, and on an iconographically unique lekythos in Boston (Museum of Fine Arts, O1.880) he has painted a mourning scene with pictorial reference to a number of sports (javelin, boxing and discus). He preferred simple shoulder bands without 'saltire' squares, although he did also use the Achillean scheme (see below). A cylindrical inner vessel seems to be a feature of the Thanatos painter.

DR 1. Pls 1 and 2a.

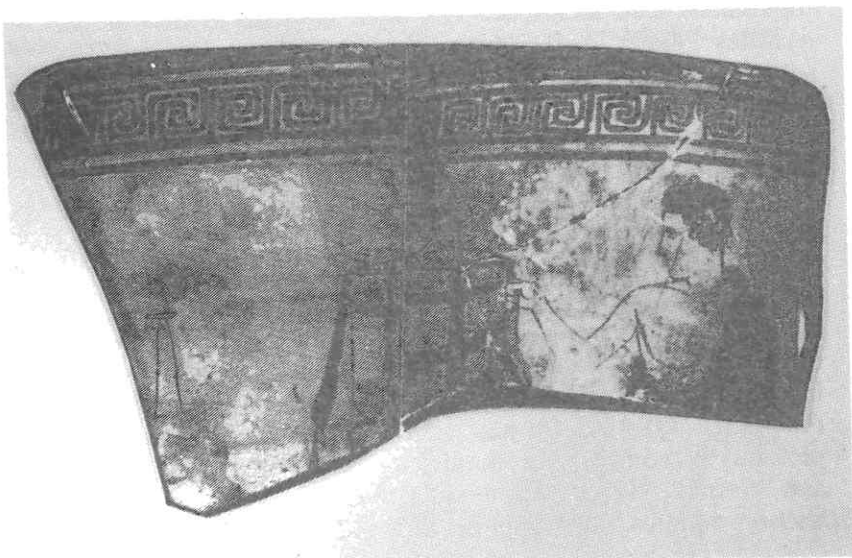
By the Thanatos Painter. Private ownership.
Third quarter of the 5th c. BC.

Estimated height: 30 cm. Composed of several fragments in two large joining parts with large lacunae. Cylindrical inner vessel.

Lower neck: egg pattern in matt black paint.

Shoulder: palmettes in black matt on white ground. Stopt meander band in dilute brown glaze at the shoulder.

Frieze: in dilute brown glaze with some lines in matt black. Two figures on either side of a tomb. A young man, preserved to the waist and wearing a red himation, faces right, body frontal. With his right hand he holds a fillet close to the stele. To the left of the stele, the bottom part of a female figure is preserved: the lower part of a red himation and the feet. Higher up the faint contour of an alabastron in outline was originally held by the figure. The top part of the stele is decked in red fillets, and a black fillet hangs from the left. Part of the bottom step of the tomb is preserved.



Pl. 1. Upper part of DR 1.

Achilles Painter

The Achilles Painter, named after a vase in the Vatican depicting the Homeric hero, was among the finest vase painters of the 5th century. He trained in the workshop of the Berlin Painter and, during his long career (from the 460s BC until about 430 BC), he decorated vases of different shapes in red-figure, and painted Panathenaic prize-amphorae in black-figure, but none of his work is as outstanding as his White lekythoi.

His draughtsmanship was of an exceptionally high standard. He used long, unbroken lines as outlines for his figures and a wide range of colours to enhance them. The serenity and dignity of his figures, and particularly the beauty and elegance of his women, gained him unchallenged popularity; almost one hundred White lekythoi have been attributed to him. Some of these have false interiors, which are characteristically globular in shape.

The Achilles Painter's favourite theme was the so called 'mistress and maid' which, on the lekythoi, is thought to represent a scene of preparation for a visit to the grave. The scene on Lekythos DR 2 is a typical example of this theme. Two women are shown in a domestic setting (mirror, stool, cloth), one is holding the characteristic circular basket connected with the cult of the dead. On his other vases women also hold perfume vases, fillets, or cloth. The Achilles Painter was not a keen painter of explicitly funerary scenes; only eighteen such scenes are known by him. They show a tall and slender stele with a simple finial, and men and women standing on either side in what Kurtz called "dignified inactivity". The stele may be bound with flat fillets. The painter's characteristic tubular fillets, which are decorated with small dark dots either hang from the sides of the tomb or are arranged like wreaths on its base. He also painted scenes of 'departure of the warrior'.

During the first decade of his career, his outlines were in undiluted glaze and he used added white ('second

white') to depict women's flesh and other details against a cream ground. He painted 'mistress and the maid' scenes to the near exclusion of other themes, and frequently used KALOS names. Soon after 450 BC, he abandoned 'second white', and started using a golden-brown dilute glaze for his outlines on a whiter slip than before. His tomb scenes date from this phase, but the 'mistress and maid' theme remains the most common. KALOS inscription occur less often than before. Some vases have KALH inscriptions (HYGIAINON KALOS).

The large majority of the Achilles Painter's lekythoi have glaze outlines. Only six late lekythoi with matt outlines have been attributed to him. Lekyθος DR 2, in red matt outlines, is therefore significant as it belongs to some time after the middle of the painter's career. The colours on Achillean lekythoi were often fired, but were evidently not so in the case of DR 2 as they have completely disappeared. The palmettes on its shoulder are typical of the painter's work of the third quarter of the 5th century. The meander band on the shoulder is interrupted by 'saltire' squares, a scheme which the Achilles Painter favoured and which was imitated by others.

DR 2. Fig. 4 and 5, Pl. 1b.

By the Achilles Painter. Private ownership.
Third quarter of 5th century BC., most likely 445-440 BC.

Pres. H. 35cm; dia. 10.3; dia. of mouth: 6.2cm. Mended from five large fragments. Foot missing. An X-Ray revealed that there is no inner vessel.

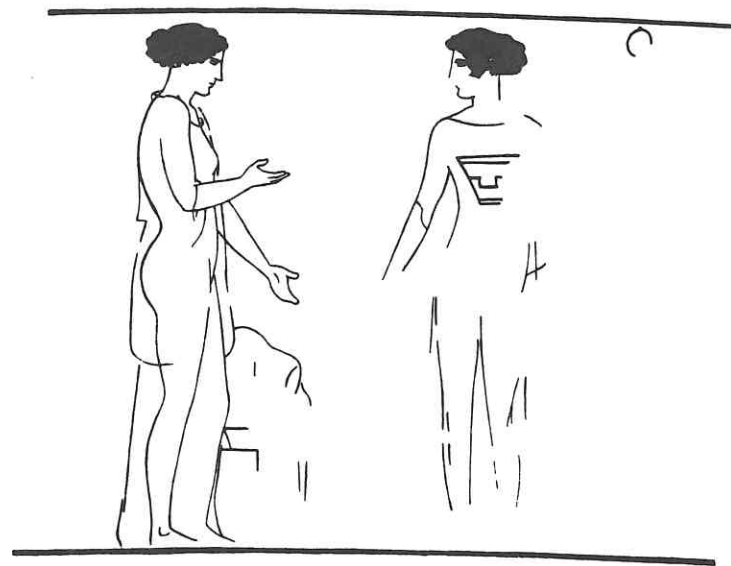
Lower neck: egg-pattern in dilute brown glaze paint.

Shoulder: white slip background and five leaf palmettes in dilute brown glaze. Above frieze, meander band: three meanders alternating right and left between saltire squares.

Frieze: the outlines are in matt red, the colours are not preserved.

Scene of preparation for a visit to the grave. Two women facing each other. The left woman is in profile facing right, her left leg slightly bent. She wears a girded peplos. Her right arm is bent over her left arm which is extended, palm up. She may have held a rolled cloth or, more likely, a fillet between her hands. The

woman to the right is frontal, her head turned to the left. Her right arm, hand worn away, extends down. In the middle of her chest is part of a basket which she held in her left hand, also missing. In front of the left woman there are some lines of what appears to be a himation or a piece of cloth resting on a stool some of the outline of which is also preserved. On the field, above right, is part of a mirror.



Figs 4-5. Measured drawings of shoulder and frieze of DR 2 by the Achilles Painter.

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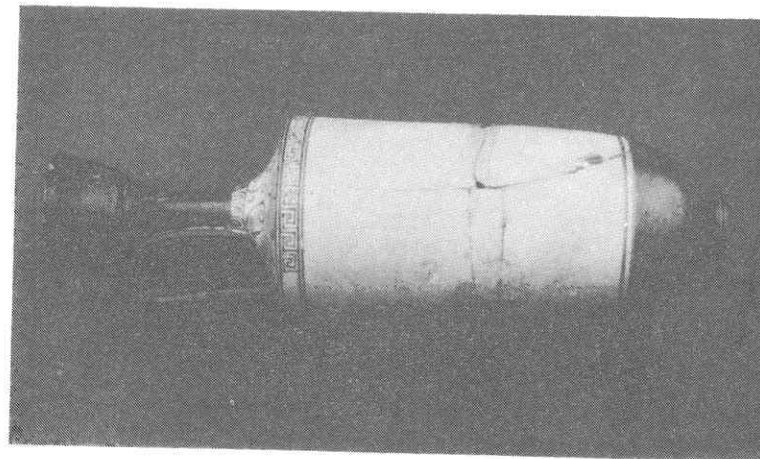
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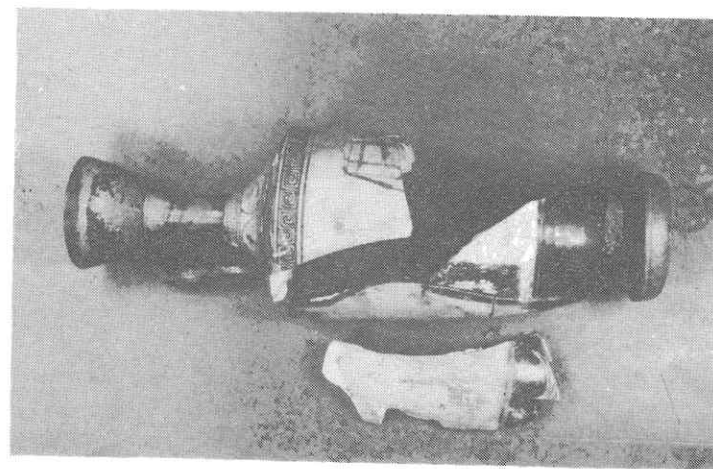
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Pl. 2b. The Achilles Painter lekythos (DR2)



Pl. 2a. The Thanatos Painter lekythos

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