

DAVID AARON



Polychrome Mosaic Inlay

1st Century B.C. to 1st Century A.D.

Roman

Glass

H: 3cm x W:3.5cm

A Roman mosaic glass inlay of a female theatre mask, formed from two halves. The features of the opaque white face of the woman are outlined in thick blue-green lines, with brown-gold irises in the eyes. The dark-brown purple hair is pulled up into an elaborate style, with tightly coiled curls and beaded ringlets at the side. A red and yellow fillet with white beads sits on the top of her head, with yellow ribbons hanging on either side. The background is made of pale blue glass.

During the early Roman Imperial period, glass inlays were a popular decorations across various Roman provinces. Colourful glass formed part of the serving wares alongside silver and gold, with many fragments such as this one brought together into mosaic dishes. The mosaic pattern would have been made by sagging molten glass into bowl-shaped moulds, in a technique similar to the modern glass-making method of millefiori, where tiny coloured glass rods are bundled together, wrapped in a sheet of glass, fused and drawn out into a long bar, which was then sliced at right angles to create small patterned tiles. The tiles were then smoothed and polished. These were then sometimes arranged next to each other and fused together with heat to form the full image, or in the case of a symmetrical image made from two parts, one tile would be placed next to a reversed tile from the same rod to form a complete whole.

Literature:

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Anderson Galleries, New York, 20-21 April 1928, Lot 3 or 4.

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