

The Fatimids | The Decorative Arts

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In the Fatimid period the minor arts reached new heights in terms of both quality and quantity. Highly skilled artisans and craftsmen produced sophisticated artefacts in an array of media to meet the specifications of a diverse clientele from both the royal court and the cities. The most exquisite objects were reserved for the Fatimid court. Princes and courtiers vied to possess vessels carved from highly prized, imported rock-crystal. Glass was also popular, and Fatimid patronage enabled the industry in Fustat to apply the highest technological standards to blowing, moulding, cutting and embossing their wares.



Name:

Bottle

Dynasty:

Hegira 4th–5th century / AD 10th–11th century Fatimid

Details:

The British Museum

London, England, United Kingdom

Justification:

Fatimid rock-crystal was highly prized in Europe where many are found in church treasuries adapted for liturgical purposes, such as reliquaries.



Name:

Spherical bottle

Dynasty:

Hegira 5th century / AD 11th century Fatimid

Details:

Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum

Berlin, Germany

Justification:

The cut-glass decoration on this small glass bottle imitates rock-crystal.



Name:

Fragment of a glass vessel

Dynasty:

Hegira 4th century / AD 10th century Fatimid

Details:

Museum of Islamic Art

Cairo, Egypt

Justification:

The style of the highly sophisticated blue-glass decoration on this cup recalls that found on rock-crystal vessels.



Name:

Carafe

Dynasty:

Hegira, end of the 4th–first half of the 5th centuries / AD 10th–11th centuries
Fatimid–Zirid

Details:

Museum of Islamic Art
Raqqada, Kairouan, Tunisia

Justification:

A cut-glass vessel from Mansuriyya (Kairouan). It pre-empted later Fatimid glass-production from Egypt.



Name:

Glass dish

Dynasty:

Hegira 4th–6th century/ AD 10th–12th century Fatimid

Details:

Burrell Collection, Glasgow Museums
Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

Justification:

A cut-glass dish, representative of the variety of designs that could be achieved by this technique.
