

Scenes from a Greek Wedding

**Paul Denis
Royal Ontario Museum**

Among the many fine Attic red-figure vase fragments the ROM received from the Vincent and Olga Diniacopoulos Collection, there is a related group that comes from a very large lebes gamikos or wedding bowl, dating from about 425 BC. This group of superbly painted fragments is attributed to the Washing Painter, an Athenian vase painter who specialized in decorating wedding vases, the lebes gamikos and the loutrophoros.

The scenes preserved on the Diniacopoulos fragments are typical of most lebes gamikos from that period and depict several events from a young Athenian woman's wedding. The stand on which the globular bowl would have rested depicts a procession of women. One of the women in the parade is holding a loutrophoros filled with water taken from the Enneakrounos, the fountain house for the spring Kallirrhoe. The bride-to-be bathed in water from this spring as a ritual cleansing before her wedding. The bowl is painted with various scenes of the bride being adorned by her friends. Boxes filled with jewellery, baskets, and her wedding crown are presented to the bride as she prepares for her marriage. The nuptial scenes decorating these vases when combined with the literary sources help us to understand and visualize a wedding in ancient Athens.

