The Underworld krater from Altamura

The Underworld krater was found in 1847 in Altamura in southeastern Italy. The scene on the right-hand side, but by the fourth century BC, was one of the largest textile designs on such vases. There is little information about what was depicted on the krater, but its scale suggests it is from the tomb of a prominent person whose community had the means to create and transport such a substantial vase.

The krater is one of a number of kraters (collected known as Apulians) buried in the tomb of a prominent person, and other goods and grave goods were placed there. The krater is 2.9 m (9.5 ft) high and weighs more than 180 kg (400 lb). A restored krater from Altamura is presented with the krater from Altamura in this exhibition follows two years of restoration in this area of the vase, the figures may have been invented by the nineteenth-century restorer using fragments from this or another vase.

**Persphone and Hades**

Hades, ruler of the netherworld, takes his bride Persephone (Pluto and Proserpina) to Mount Olympos to live with him and his queen. As Hades is about to descend into the Underworld, he hears the distant voice of his brother Zeus, who reminds him of the law of the gods: men cannot marry in the Underworld.

**The Children of Herakles and Megara**

The Furies are depicted in other Underworld scenes on Apulian vases and stand as victims of innocent or guilty persons. In this scene, they are personified as goddesses, one holding a hammer, another a club, and the third a weapon.

**The Furies**

The young woman riding a creature that is part horse, part fish is a puzzling presence in the Underworld krater. She is depicted with a large and imposing black head, possibly representing Charon, the conductor of souls. In other Underworld scenes, she is depicted next to a chariot or a boat, indicating her role as a mediator between the living and the dead.

**Orpheus**

Orpheus is a character in Greek mythology who is often depicted playing a lyre. In this scene, he is shown playing a musical instrument, possibly a lyre, which he uses to charm the Furies and other spirits of theUnderworld.

**Sisyphus**

Sisyphus, the king of Corinth, is depicted as a sculptor. He is shown working on a statue of a man, possibly himself, while other figures are engaged in various activities.

**Hermes**

Hermes is shown as a messenger god, able to travel and communicate between different realms. In this scene, he is depicted as a conductor of souls, guiding the Furies and other spirits of the Underworld.