

Matter of Ambivalence: Aspects of glass in Ancient Cultures and the Middle Ages

In search of quality: The evolution of glass technology in Central Europe and its impact on the durability of post-medieval glass

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Glasmuseum Hentrich | Head

The problem with glass seems obvious: On the one hand it is a shining, beautiful and precious material, and on the other hand it can break very easily. It is a material that triggers opposing feelings of admiration and fear. In presenting a small number of Ancient and Medieval written sources, further aspects of the ambivalence of glass will be shown, which offer a richer image of the meaning of this material in the respective periods.

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In the European glass technology, only replacing the wood ash with potash improved the quality of the glass. However, the second half of the 17th century brings great changes in the technology of colourless glass, leading to further significant improvement of its quality. Many glasshouses were altering compositions to achieve visually better glass. Unfortunately, just this glass often manifests various symptoms of chemical instability.

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