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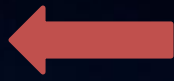
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Karen Polinger
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Ancient Near Eastern literature includes numerous metaphors, similes, and referring to ceramics. This paper presents selected examples of Sumerian, Akkadian, and Assyrian texts using clay, empty or filled vessels, potsherds, potters and the tools of their quarters. By examining systematically for the first time the literary, art historical contexts for ceramic imagery, new light may be shed on the role and meaning of ceramics in the Near East. Among the topics considered are: (1) the importance of ceramics in the nature of ceramic death and destruction imagery; (3) ceramic imagery with (4) literary perceptions of clay, pottery, and the status of potters. The material is significantly to the evidence gleaned from stylistic and technical analysis of ancient Near Eastern ceramics.

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Abstract

Ancient Near Eastern literature includes numerous metaphors, similes, and other figures of speech referring to ceramics. This paper presents selected examples of Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian, and Biblical texts using clay, empty or filled vessels, potsherds, potters and the tools of their trade, and potters' quarters. By examining systematically for the first time the literary, art historical, and archaeological contexts for ceramic imagery, new light may be shed on the role and meaning of ceramics in the ancient Near East. Among the topics considered are: (1) the importance of ceramics in creation of cornucopian connotations; and (4) literature significantly to the evidence gleaned from the material assembled in this study adds to the ceramics.

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CERAMIC IMAGERY IN ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN LITERATURE*

Karen Polinger Foster, 40 Jones Road, Wallingford, CT 06492

ABSTRACT

Ancient Near Eastern literature includes numerous metaphors, similes, and other figures of speech referring to ceramics. This paper presents selected examples of Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian, and Biblical texts using clay, empty or filled vessels, potsherds, potters and the tools of their trade, and potters' quarters. By examining systematically for the first time the literary, art historical, and archaeological contexts for ceramic imagery, new light may be shed on the role and meaning of ceramics in the ancient Near East. Among the topics considered are: (1) the importance of ceramics in creation imagery; (2) the nature of ceramic death and destruction imagery; (3) ceramic imagery with cornucopial connotations; and (4) literary perceptions of clay, pottery, and the status of potters. The material assembled in this study adds significantly to the evidence gleaned from stylistic and technical analysis of ancient Near Eastern ceramics.

INTRODUCTION

Even in the modern age, so dominated by plastic and paper, ceramic imagery is still widely used in figurative language.¹ In describing Brigit Pegeen Kelly's collected poems To the Place of Trumpets, for instance, James Merrill writes that her poems "...suggest a kind of folk art -- their clay washed of narrative grit, serviceably turned and fancifully decorated, fired, then filled at



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