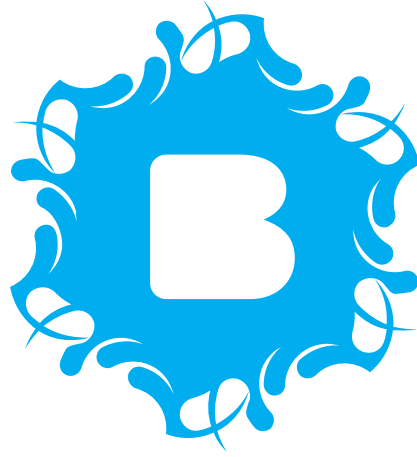


Press Release



October 2008

Ancient Female Figures and Judy Chicago's *Fertile Goddess* at the Brooklyn Museum's Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art

Nine extraordinary ancient female figures are the focus of the third Herstory Gallery exhibition in the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art. *The Fertile Goddess* explores these objects that served as a source of inspiration for the depiction of the Fertile Goddess at *The Dinner Party* by Judy Chicago, on view in the adjacent gallery. The exhibition, which will be on view December 19, 2008, through May 31, 2009, includes both the oldest sculpture in the Brooklyn Museum's vast collection, made by people living in Mesopotamia in the late fifth millennium B.C.E., and a ceramic figure made by Judy Chicago in 1977.

Speculation about the meaning and functions of such figures began with their discovery and continues today. Were they goddesses, ritual objects, votive offerings, vehicles for working magic or fulfilling wishes, talismans for protection, teaching or initiation devices, or an ancient culture's embodiment of women? All of these explanations have been put forth.

All nine ancient female figures have certain striking similarities despite being from different cultures and geographical locations. They are highly stylized female forms that either emphasize or reduce to abstraction the breasts, bellies, and thighs. Small in scale and not made to stand upright by themselves, they seem to be made to be transportable. These figures range from the fifth to the first millennium B.C.E. and come from ancient Mesopotamia (modern Iraq or Syria), Nubia (modern Sudan), Egypt, Cyprus, Greece, Anatolia (modern Turkey), and Iran.

The Fertile Goddess is co-curated by Maura Reilly, founding Curator of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, and Madeleine E. Cody, Research Associate in Egyptian, Classical, and Ancient Middle Eastern Art at the Brooklyn Museum.

A variety of public programs including films and lectures will be presented in conjunction with the exhibition. For more information visit www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa.

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