



Doughnut-shaped animal effigy vessel

Date

1100–300 BCE

Primary Maker

Unidentified artist

Medium

Earthenware

Description

Doughnut-shaped bridge-spouted vessel with black and buff animal at base of spout sitting or leaping over central circular hole in vessel. Animal may be a monkey.

Burnished, polychrome (black and buff on red slip). Minor

repairs to vessel. Chacras, Manabi, Chorrera. _____ Zoomorphic (animal) motifs were commonly employed on a wide range of Pre-Columbian artifacts, including pottery, textiles, and metalwork. Pre-Colombian works of art depict both wild and domesticated animals, creatures commonly encountered in everyday life, and creatures found rarely--or not at all--in the natural world. Aspects of many different animals can be found in Pre-Colombian art, often mixed with human attributes in what may appear to us to be startling fantasy combinations. Many artworks feature animals such as the great cats (jaguars or pumas), said to be full of spiritual power, which were key elements of Pre-Colombian religious traditions. Monkeys live only in areas with abundant water resources, and therefore may symbolize water when found on the artwork of desert-dwelling people, such as the Nasca culture of coastal Peru. Monkeys are associated with agriculture and fertility, and because of their similarities to people, are sometimes depicted engaging in human-like activities, even in warfare. The Incas are said to have venerated the monkey for its cunning. Some cultures see monkeys as the embodiment of spirits, but they are commonly hunted for food in the tropical lowlands where they are common. The three species of monkey most likely represented in Peruvian and Ecuadorian art, which are native to the coast of Ecuador, are the spider monkey (*Ateles paniscus*), the white-fronted capuchin monkey (*Cebus albifrons*), and the mantled howler monkey (*Alouatta palliata*). It is likely that monkeys were traded and kept as pets, which would account for their presence in the art of people far outside their normal range.

Dimensions

7 7/8 × 5 7/8 inches (20 × 15 cm)