

Basic Detail Report



Jar

Date

ca. 850-1000

Primary Maker

Gran Coclé

Medium

pottery and slip paint

Description

This human effigy vessel is exceptional in its form, texture, and design. The motif may be that of the Bear Mother, as signified by the feminine face and bearlike hands and feet. In the Gran Coclé culture there was a myth about a Bear Mother in which a human female was

forced to become the wife of a male bear, and produced part-bear, part-human children. The human-like quality of the face on this vessel and the bear-like appendages may be a reference to these children. The upright stance, small ears, round eyes, markings in the midsection, and clawed hands and feet all connect this vessel to others that reference the mythic creature. The symbol dangling from a string down the front of the figure's chest is probably a vulvar notch, indicating the bear's female sex. Her eyes are formed through the mask created in the black band of slip painted at the top of the face. A similar technique is used to create a small set of lips, which signify the mouth beneath a projecting nose. A dark black band is also used to separate the body from the head of the figure, while various circular lines are employed to create the torso and limbs. Her eyes are formed through the negative space accented by the black banded mask.

Dimensions

Overall: 8 1/8 x 8 1/8 x 8 in. (20.6 x 20.6 x 20.3 cm)