

 THE LIBRARIES OF   
**MFA**  *The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston*  
**Hirsch Library Research Guide**



### Eagle-headed Apkallu

Assyrian

Assyrian, Neo-Assyrian period, 883-859 BC  
 Gypsum, relief: 42 1/8 x 26 x 1 1/2 in. (107 x 66 x 3.8 cm)  
 width of stone and backing material: 2 5/8 in (6.7 cm)

Museum purchase funded by Agnes Cullen Arnold Endowment Fund

The Annals of Assyrian Kings relate "Protecting colossal figures of stone which by their appearance ward off evil, guarding the footfall, protecting the path of the king their maker, I place to the right and left of the thresholds." Such protective spirits carrying a cone and bucket often appeared as guardians of gateways, royal bedrooms, throne rooms, and other areas of palaces.

These winged figures can have human or eagle heads and are called apkallu, ancient mythical creatures of wisdom. They are often engaged in the act of fertilizing the sacred tree, which symbolizes the king, the chief god Ashur, and the fertility of the land.

The inscription at the top of this panel is one which occurs repeatedly on the panels of the palace of Assurnasirpal II, proclaiming him as the Great King, ruler of the World: "I placed doors of cedar, cypress, dapranu and meskannu in its doorways. I took in great quantities of put therein silver, gold, tin, bronze, iron and booty from the countries over which I gained dominion." (translation by Andre F. Conradie)

#### Online Resources:

[Hirsch Library Online Catalog](#)

[The Metropolitan Museum of Art Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History](#)

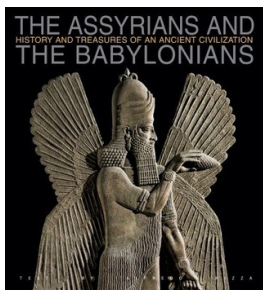
**Articles:** (full-text access available on-site; off-site access available through your school library or Houston Public Library)

[Nakamura, Carolyn. "Dedicating Magic: Neo-Assyrian Apotropaic Figurines and the Protection of Assur." \*World Archaeology\* 36, no. 1 \(2004\): 11-25.](#)

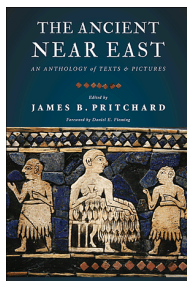
[Grace, Frederick R. "An Assyrian Winged Genius." \*Bulletin of the Fogg Art Museum\* 9, no. 2 \(1940\): 22-28.](#)

[Green, Anthony. "Neo-Assyrian Apotropaic Figures: Figurines, Rituals and Monumental Art, with Special Reference to the Figurines from the Excavations of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq at Nimrud." \*Iraq\* 45, no. 1 \(1983\): 87-96.](#)

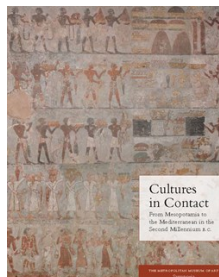
#### Print Resources:



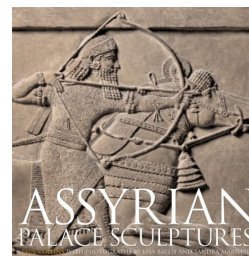
[The Assyrians and the Babylonians](#)



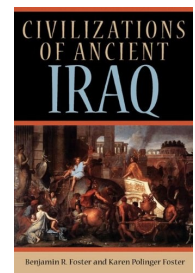
[The Ancient Near East](#)



[Cultures in Contact](#)



[Assyrian Palace Sculptures](#)



[Civilizations of Ancient Iraq](#)

## Bibliography

### General Surveys of Near Eastern Art

- [Gardner, Helen, Fred Kleiner, and Christin J. Mamiya. \*Gardner's Art Through the Ages\*. 12th ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2005. N 5300 .G25 2005 Ref.](#)
- [Sasson, Jack M., John Baines, Gary Beckman, and Karen S. Rubinson. \*Civilizations of the Ancient Near East\*. New York: Scribners, 1995. DS 57 .C55 1995 Reserve](#)
- [Stokstad, Marilyn, and David A. Brinkley. \*Art History\*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008. N 5300 .S923 2008 Ref.](#)
- [Turner, Jane. \*The Dictionary of Art\*. New York: Grove, 1996. N 31 .D5 1996 Ref.](#)

### Near Eastern Art

- [Amiet, Pierre, and Naomi N. Richard. \*Art of the Ancient Near East\*. New York: H. N. Abrams, 1980. N 5345 .A7413 1980](#)
- [Black, Jeremy, and Anthony Green. \*Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary\*. London: British Museum Press, 1992. BL 1620 .B62 1992 Ref.](#)
- [Collon, Dominique. \*Ancient Near Eastern Art\*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. N 5345 .C69 1995 Reserve](#)
- [Lloyd, Seton. \*The Art of the Ancient Near East\*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1961. N 5345 .L55 1961](#)
- [Moortgat, Anton. \*The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia: The Classical Art of the Near East\*. London: Phaidon, 1969. N 5370 .M6613](#)

### Assyrian Art

- [Bersani, Leo, and Ulysse Dutoit. \*The Forms of Violence: Narrative in Assyrian art and Modern Culture\*. New York: Schocken Books, 1985. NB 80 .B4 1985 Reserve](#)
- [Curtis, John, and Dominique Collon. \*Art and Empire: Treasures from Assyria in the British Museum\*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995. N 5370 .A78 1995 Reserve](#)
- [Paley, Samuel M. \*King of the World: Ashur-nasir-pal II of Assyria 883-859 B.C.\* New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1976. NB 80 .P3 Reserve](#)
- [Parrot, André. \*The Arts of Assyria\*. New York: Golden Press, 1961. N 5370 .P333 Reserve](#)
- [Reade, Julian. \*Assyrian Sculpture\*. London: British Museum Press, 1998. NB 80 .B772 1998 Reserve](#)
- [Sheeler, Charles. \*The Great King, King of Assyria: Assyrian Reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art\*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1945. NB 80 .N4 1945 Reserve](#)

### Mesopotamia

- [Lloyd, Seton. \*The Archaeology of Mesopotamia: From the Old Stone Age to the Persian Conquest\*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1978. DS 68 .L57](#)
- [Parrot, André, and André Malraux. \*Sumer: The Dawn of Art\*. New York: Golden Press, 1961. N 5370 .P343 1961](#)
- [Reade, Julian. \*Mesopotamia\*. 2nd ed. London: British Museum Press, 2000. DS 69.5 .R43 2000](#)
- [Wolff, Walther. \*Early Civilizations: Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Aegean\*. London: Herbert, 1989. N 5345 .W6413 1989](#)

This reference guide is just the tip of the iceberg on helpful resources in the library's holdings. Many of the suggested resources above have their own bibliographies. Each of these may lead you to another resource that would also be helpful in your research here in the museum or in another library. To find additional resources, use keywords such as "Near East" and "Assyrian" in the online catalog and in periodical indexes. Once you find a few relevant titles, pay attention to the subject headings to identify similar materials. Examples of useful subject headings are:

*Middle East--Antiquities*  
*Middle East--Religion*  
*Mythology, Oriental*  
*Art, Ancient--Middle East*

For guidelines about writing it may be helpful to look at Sylvan Barnet's *A Short Guide to Writing about Art*, which includes tips for looking, reading, and writing about art. Ask for it at the reference desk. At every stage of your work, please allow the library staff to help you. Contact us at 713-639-7325 or hirsch@mfa.org