

4030

Fertile Goddess

Edward Bleiberg: Hello. I'm Edward Bleiberg, the Brooklyn Museum's curator of Egyptian art. The Fertile Goddess place setting evokes prehistoric effigies that were used to worship women as creators of life during birth and as nurturers in motherhood. The ample forms and fleshy qualities of early fertility figures, such as the famous Venus of Willendorf, influenced this place setting and are suggested here in the round, vulvar, and seedlike attributes of the plate's imagery, as well as in figures woven into the runner. Roughly woven and stitched, the runner is meant to call to mind the early stages of human civilization, while the coarse burlap backing hints at early textiles. As in the Primordial Goddess place setting, the coil is the runner's predominant form, though here referring to early coil baskets and pottery made by women, many of which were used for farming and food cultivation—thus signifying women's roles in shaping ancient society with regard to agriculture. Shells and starfish also adorn the runner, suggesting other symbols by which the goddess was depicted. The Heritage Floor names grouped around the Fertile Goddess place setting are of various goddesses and are meant to represent the worship of women's generative power and procreative function.