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Art History Paper 2

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The Sumerian word lama, which is rendered in Akkadian as lamassu, refers to a beneficent protective female deity. The corresponding male deity was called alad, in Akkadian, sedul. In art they were depicted as hybrids, as winged bulls or lions with the head of a human male (Centauroid). There are still surviving figures of šêdu in bas-relief and some statues in museums. They are generally attributed to the ancient Assyrians. To protect houses the shedu were engraved in clay tablets, which were buried under the door's threshold. At the entrance of palaces often placed as a pair. At the entrance of cities they were sculpted in colossal size, and placed as a pair, one at each side of the door of the city, that generally had doors in the surrounding wall, each one looking towards one of the cardinal points. The Shedu is a celestial being from Mesopotamian mythology. He is a human above the waist and a bull below the waist. He also has the horns and the ears of a bull. The bull man helps people fight evil and chaos. He holds the gates of dawn open for the sun god Shamash and supports the sun disc. He is often shown on Cylinder Seals. It appears frequently in Mesopotamian art, sometimes with wings. Statues of the bull-man were often used as gatekeepers. These giant monsters were made of limestone and the task of moving and installing these stone sculptures was no easy one. There is other art showing scores of men dragging the lamassu figures with the aid of ropes and sledges. Since the lamassu monsters were meant for guarding gates and entries into cities the sculptor designed it for a corner. Most of them actually have five legs, two from the front

and for legs in motion from the side view. This provided a conceptual picture of the animal making it more realistic and therefore better to do its job of frighten people, which is one key difference from the calm Egyptian art. The Mesopotamian art seems to strive for fear and the importance of the high ranking officials. For example Sargon, a king of Mesopotamia, once wrote in an inscription "I built a city with the labours of the peoples subdued by my hand..." A lot of their art depicts war and the hunting of animals.

The Egyptians were one of the first major civilizations to codify design elements in art. The wall paintings done in the service of the Pharaohs followed a rigid code of visual rules and meanings. Early Egyptian art is characterized by absence of linear perspective, which results in a seemingly flat space. These artists tended to create images based on what they knew, and not as much on what they see. Objects in these artworks generally do not decrease in size as they increase in distance and there is little shading to indicate depth. Sometimes, distance is indicated through the use of tiered space, where more distant objects are drawn higher above the nearby objects, but in the same scale and with no overlapping of forms. People and objects are almost always drawn in profile. Early Egyptian artists did have a system for maintaining dimensions within artwork. They used a grid system that allowed them to create a smaller version of the artwork, and then scale up the design based upon proportional representation in a larger grid. Almost all of their art is calm, cool, and collected. The people who are usually sculpted such as pharaohs and important people seem not to be looking at the people who are looking at the art but seem to be focusing on a higher power or something of spiritual importance. The Egyptians seem to display in their art that the individual is not important but that the spiritual world is what they are more in touch with. A lot of the art possesses a certain

stiffness, with figures poised upright and rigid in a most regal fashion. Bodily proportions also appear to be mathematically perfect, giving rise to a sense of fantastic perfection in the figures depicted. This most likely was used to reinforce the godliness of the ruling society.