

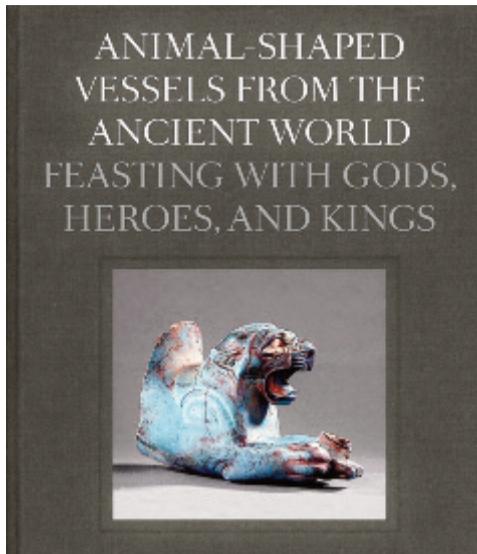
## Book Review

From September 7, 2018 through January 6, 2019 the Harvard Art Museums had an exhibit of *Animal-Shaped Vessels from the Ancient World: Feasting with Gods, Heroes, and Kings*. The exhibit was coordinated by Susanne Ebbinghaus, the George M.A. Hanfmann Curator of Ancient Art and head of the Division of Asian and Mediterranean Art at the Harvard Art Museums.

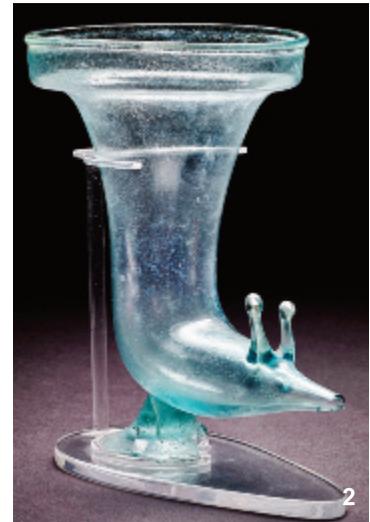
The introduction to the exhibit states: *"While the songs, speeches, and prayers that enlivened ancient feasts are now largely lost to us, the vessels used to drink or pour liquids at these festive occasions have survived. And many—for reasons not always entirely clear—were made in the shape of animals: bulls and rams, lions and deer, graceful birds and braying donkeys, among others. What is more, the tradition of crafting animal-shaped vessels is not unique to one culture or geographic locale; the affinity for this type of object spans ancient civilizations in the Mediterranean, the Near and Far East, and South America"*.

Other than an amazing collection of illustrations, the text of the book presents stimulating thought into such things as 1: Throughout time what array of beverages did these drinking vessels hold? 2: How did one actually manage to drink from these awkwardly shaped items? 3: With such a preference for animal shaped vessels, what was the symbolic and mythical relationship with the animals and could some of the vessels have also been used as masks? 4: What was the relationship between the drinking vessels and social status?

The book, which corresponds with the exhibit, is edited by the Curator, Susanne Ebbinghaus. It is a beautifully presented Hardcover book of 404 pages and approximately 335 color and black/white illustrations. There are 24 expert contributors to the book. It is published by Harvard Art Museums and distributed by Yale University Press. At \$55.00, this book is a bargain.



**Picture 1: Rhyton with forepart of a Griffen, Persian, 5th-4th century BCE. Silver, partially gilded.**



**Picture 2: Footed rhyton with horned head, Roman, 1st-2nd century CE. Glass.**

**Picture 3: Donkey head kantharos, Greek, 520-500 BCE. Terracotta, black figure technique.**



**Picture 4: Rhyton with a centaur holding a goat, Perhaps Saka, late 1st millennium BCE. Bronze and copper.**