

Hestia

Hestia was the Greek virgin goddess of the hearth fire, domestic and household life, and the family (*Vesta is the Roman equivalent*). She was one of the most ancient goddesses in Greek mythology. Because of her significance for the well being of the home, in every household, the fire was not allowed to be extinguished. Each Greek and Roman city had a public temple of Hestia (Vesta). In Rome, her circular temple was considered the central hearth of the city served by the priestesses, Vestals, who took vows of chastity and tended her fire, never allowing it to go out. They were considered sacred persons. When a new colony was established, the flame from Hestia's public hearth in the mother city would be carried to the new settlement, symbolizing the alliance between the mother state and the colonies.

Hestia/Vesta is represented as a fully-draped woman or just as a naked flame and, although her temples were numerous, depictions of her were less common than other gods and goddesses in the Greco-Roman world.

Her symbols consisted of hearth (fireplace), kettle, torch, candle, and mainly fire. Her favorite animal was the donkey; the animal usually used for turning the millstone of the bakers whom she served as their patron deity.

What you see in this artwork:

- A woman figure wearing a Roman hairstyle, but having only a head scarf in agreement with the tradition of draped cover of statues of this deity.
- The name "Hestia" in Greek letters is embedded in the background.
- Map of Rome at its greatest extent (3rd century A.D.) and ancient Greece (1st century B.C.) with fire lines from all the colonies centering on Rome and Delphi in Greece, where her main temples were located.
- On the top right is the asteroid Vesta, one of the largest (530 km in diameter). It was the 4th asteroid to be discovered (1807) and was photographed in detail in 2011 by the NASA "Dawn" spacecraft. The goddess is staring at this asteroid and emitting two flames to its direction.
- As a sign of modern interpretation, a contemporary fireplace with a supply of natural gas to reduce pollution, instead of the wood, also containing a switch for saving gas, unlike the eternal burning of the original ancient hearths.
- Four traditional symbols are shown: a Greek kettle hanging inside the hearth, an ancient oil lamp on the mantle of the hearth; a running torch, used to transfer the Olympiads fires is strapped to the leg, and a donkey, her favorite animal in contemporary cartoon style having his tail on fire, is embedded in the background.
- The connections of the goddess to everywhere and to everything are with flames.
- Colors. The dominant colors are yellow, red, and orange that represent fire.

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