

Idol of Disputation

Description: a small ceramic figurine of a leering, fat humanoid (some versions are male, some female). The Idol of Disputation will show up as magical on a standard scan. The Idol is sturdy enough to be dropped, but it **will** break if deliberately thrown to the ground.

Powers: Normally, an Idol of Disputation generates a field (12 feet radius) that encourages people to argue. It won't force people to disagree with each other, but if they were inclined to do so anyway this artifact will more or less egg them on. Note that the argument does **not** have to be hostile, and that the artifact will not impose an emotional state on anyone; universities will often keep Idols around in order to encourage wide-ranging and vigorous student debates in class.

On the other hand: **smash** the artifact, and for the next five minutes anybody that was in that 12 foot radius when the Idol was broken will start screaming matches at everybody else at any excuse, or none. This does not **have** to end in violence, but people's judgement will be very much impaired. The effects would also absolutely include whoever smashed the artifact in the first place,

which means that people using an Idol of Disputation to cover their getaway will need to be creative in deploying one.

There's not much else to say about Idols of Disputation, really. They exist, they've got useful non-awful applications, and people who have one try their best to keep it from getting smashed. Possession of one isn't *prima facie* evidence of an intent to commit a crime, although -- obviously! -- law enforcement officials would be quick to disagree on that. And then whoever's carrying one would disagree with the disagreement, and that lasts until the Idol gets confiscated, or everybody involved has a good laugh.

Needless to say, though: deliberately breaking one is considered assault. When it's not considered incitement to riot. Or, tragically, manslaughter.

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