

The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300-1990s: 2 Volumes

By Jane Davidson Reid

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Daring in concept and astonishing in scope, *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts* is a unique reference work: a topically classified chronology of more than 30,000 artworks from circa 1300 to the present day that take as their theme the subjects of Greek and Roman mythology. In more than three hundred major entries, alphabetically arranged by subject, artworks are listed in chronological order, delineating the history of artistic interest in the subject, including painting, sculpture, music, dance, opera, drama, and literature over the last seven centuries. By bringing together information heretofore segregated by discipline, time period, or other constraint, Jane Davidson Reid has created an invaluable tool for the study of the history of the arts in the Western world.

Ranging from Achilles to Zeus, entries cover all the important mythic beings of the classical world, from gods, goddesses, and heroes to nymphs, shepherds, and satyrs. A headnote to each entry identifies the subject, briefly describes relevant events and episodes recounted in Greek and Roman myths, and explains thematic cross-currents represented in the list of artworks that follows. A list of classical literary sources follows the headnote. Each listing of an artwork includes the artist's name, the title of the work, and the date of its creation, publication, or first performance, as appropriate. Also noted are the medium or genre of the work, the present location of works in the fine arts, and other pertinent information. Sources of data on each artwork appear in each listing.

Enhanced by a comprehensive system of cross-references, a complete list of the sources of data cited in the listings, and an extensive artist index, which will enable readers to locate works by a given artist across numerous entries, this work presents its vast body of data in a way that is easily accessible to specialist and nonspecialist alike. No other work equals its interdisciplinary scope; no other work matches its usefulness to historians of the arts; and no other work possesses its appeal to scholars, students, and general readers interested in classical mythology and its enduring popularity in Western traditions of artistic expression.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal
A phenomenal and monumental work of reference for the continuing afterlife of classical Greek and Roman myth in Western arts (chiefly painting, sculpture, music, dance, and literature), these volumes constitute a book of the year by any measure, as well as offering superb value. The text is organized under 300 headings or subheadings by name (e.g., Herakles) or theme (Seven Against Thebes), with instructive headnotes and structured suborganization for major or complex entries like Herakles, which has 15 subheads. Each entry gives chronological listings of works dealing with the theme, and each listing (author-title-date in nature) is sourced for additional information; the result is more than 30,000 citations. A full bibliography and an artist index seem flawless. This is a lifetime's work of richness and vision, much more accessible and extensive in range and inclusiveness than any other publication on the topic. The book is solidly bound in two classically designed blue volumes; it is too bad that the spine lacks Reid's name, for, like other enduring reference titles, that is how librarians will know it. The typefaces and two-column layout are clear, clean, and easy to use. Absolutely essential for any humanities reference collection.
- *Jack Perry Brown, Art Inst. of Chicago Lib.*
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From Booklist
This interdisciplinary catalog lists 30,000 artworks dating from the late medieval/early Renaissance period to the present that treat Greek and Roman mythological subjects. It defines the arts broadly, including examples from the visual arts (painting, sculpture, printmaking), literature, music, dance, and theater. Reid, a faculty member at Mount Holyoke College, was assisted by a team of nine scholars with expertise in diverse areas of the arts.

The body of the work consists of 205 alphabetically arranged subject entries. While most of them represent mythological persons, other subjects are included (e.g., *Trojan War*, *Bacchanalia*). Some stories and characters from classical literature as opposed to mythology are included (e.g., *Lysistrata*), but Reid excluded historical subjects and allegorical personifications. Subject headings use the Greek mythological name (e.g., *Aphrodite* rather than *Venus*). *See* references lead the reader from Roman to Greek names. Longer subject entries are divided into subentries. For example, *Prometheus* has the subentries *Prometheus the Creator*, *Prometheus Bound*, and *Prometheus Freed*.

Each subject entry and subentry begins with a headnote several paragraphs in length that describes the subject and its place in classical mythology. Reid summarizes the subject's activities, clarifies terminology and nomenclature, and describes differences in the Greek and Roman traditions. Headnotes also address any frequently used representations of the subject, such as the image of Narcissus gazing at himself in a mirror. Headnotes conclude with citations to the subject in classical literature, suggestions for further reading, and *see also* references to related subject entries.

Lists of artwork follow the headnotes. Reid attempted to "cover comprehensively both the work of the most important artists of the Western tradition, even those whose interest in classical subjects was minimal, and the work of lesser artists who created mythological subjects extensively." Artists who dealt with mythological studies extensively include Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Nicholas Poussin, Handel, and Shelley. Contemporary artists are well represented and include such surprises as Erica Jong, Margaret Atwood, Helen Frankenthaler, and Martha Graham. Individual works are listed in chronological order,

regardless of medium. Multiple works by a single artist (e.g., Picasso's numerous representations of the minotaur) are grouped together and inserted into the chronological listing according to the date of the earliest piece.

Each entry includes the artist's name and dates, title, genre or medium, date of execution or first performance, and, as appropriate, performance or publication data, locations of works of visual art, and versions, revisions, translations, and other associated works. The sources Reid used to identify the work are listed at the end of the entry. For the visual arts, catalog, plate, or figure numbers are included. A citation to a literary work itself is often given as a source. A "List of Sources" at the end of the second volume provides complete bibliographic citations.

Satyrs and Fauns is an example of the interdisciplinary nature of the listings. It begins with an entry for a drawing by Renaissance artist Jacopo Bellini and concludes with an entry for a 1982 photomontage by Giulio Paolino entitled *The Marble Faun*. Also listed are Michelangelo's *Head of a Faun*; paintings by Rubens, Dali, and Picasso; sculptural works by Rodin and Paul Manship; a dance of satyrs in Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale*; Debussy's composition *L'Apr{Š}es-midi d'un faune* and choreography by Nijinsky for the same piece; Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*; and poems by Ezra Pound and Sylvia Plath.

The set concludes with an index of artists providing dates, nationality, disciplines, and references to the entries and subentries within which their work is listed.

The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts will become an indispensible source for tracking classical influence in all fields of artistic endeavor. Its interdisciplinary approach makes it valuable for scholars in many fields. It is an essential purchase for academic and large public libraries.

Review
"A truly innovative approach to bibliography....This work responds to the need for a new generation of sources that cross the boundaries of individual disciplines. This guide belongs in every reference collection."--Choice

"A phenomenal and monumental work of reference....These volumes constitute a book of the year by any measure, as well as offering superb value....This is a lifetime's work of richness and vision, much more accessible and extensive in range and inclusiveness than any other publication on the topic....Absolutely essential for any humanities reference collection."--Library Journal

"One cannot overestimate the value of this set to scholars and interested laypersons from many disciplines....No respectable research or college library can afford to be without the guide, and many writers and scholars will also choose to invest in it for their personal libraries."--American Reference Books Annual

"The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts will become an indispensable source for tracking classical influence in all fields of artistic endeavor. Its interdisciplinary approach makes it valuable for scholars in many fields. It is an essential purchase for academic and larger public libraries."--Booklist/Reference Books Bulletin

"Each of Reid's lists of creative works maps a part of Western civilization's imaginative response to the classical civilizations and to the world in general. Scholars and students can find no better guide to that imagination's manifold manifestations than Reid's scholarly tour de force."--Wilson Library Bulletin

"This impressive two-volume set is unique in its coverage....Researchers of classical figures and/or themes and their depiction in the arts in the European tradition will find this an invaluable guide....Highly

recommended."--Reference Book Review

"Art historians will fairly revel in the body of information which is brought together in the Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology for the first time."--Southeastern College Art Conference Review

"Splendid....As much fun to browse as to consult."--Classical World

"A very necessary purchase for most research collections!"--Umbrella

"Invaluable to art historians in tracing the evolution of myth in Western culture."--College and Research Libraries News

Users Review

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