

## THE DEPICTION OF MYTHOLOGICAL FIGURES IN ART

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### ABSTRACT

Students learn to assess fine art as they are introduced to mythology from different periods in art history in a course named "Mythology in Art History." Students' critical thinking, analytical skills, and topic knowledge will improve with each successive unit. Through exposure to a wide range of 2- and 3-dimensional artworks from a variety of historical and cultural contexts, students will gain an appreciation for, and an understanding of, the components of art and principles of design. Following their rise to prominence, the Pandyas were also avid art patrons. Some examples are the Jaina caverns at Sittanvasal and the Tirumalaipuram caves. It is not uncommon for kings and priests to accept myths because of their religious or spiritual significance. The common belief is that myths about ancient times are accurate.

**KEYWORDS:** Myth, Art, Figure, Religion

### INTRODUCTION

In this work, I argue that mythology may help us make sense of the past. Mythological characters and storylines have appeared in many works of art throughout antiquity. Symphony music, historical painting (landscapes and heroic imagery), theater (tragedy, comedy, opera), and literature (epic, lyric, novel) all spring to mind when considering the prevalence of mythical motifs in these art forms. Even in modern times, mythology is a fascinating topic for creative expression. Artists like Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorrain, who painted historical landscapes in the 17th century, often used characters from old mythology in their works. Oedipus and his story remain popular in popular culture.1) Why is this topical, exactly? The idea that mythology communicates timeless ideas and concepts might be one explanation. The question arises therefore of whether or not we can just accept these myths at face value. It is hard to argue with F. W. J. Schelling's interpretation of mythology. Schelling defines the modern era as the time of his writing (1802–1803, 1804–1805) and compares the mythology of different eras. Schelling's endeavor to create a new mythology for his contemporaries may give a mythical lens through which to see our own era, I shall argue.

When it comes to religion and the spiritual life, myths tend to have the support of kings and priests. Generally speaking, people tend to believe myths as if they were historical documents from long ago. Typically set in a pre-modern era, myths give light on the origins of modern customs and norms while also providing insight into the world's earliest days. Myths were utilized by artists as inspiration for dramatic or idealized situations, many of which included naked people. Of course, Greek and Roman mythology have had a tremendous impact on Western art. It's not surprising to find many such works in Renaissance art, given the ethos of the era. Humanistic ideals were the lens through which artists of the time saw religious and classical topics. In order to explain their perspective on time and space, they rely on mythical and biblical narratives. Roman soldiers in the scene of the Passion of Christ are often shown as Italian soldiers of the period in works by Raphael and Titian. Botticelli, for example, would depict Venus and the Graces in legendary settings since they were among the most attractive Florentine ladies of the time (Muniz, 2010). Mythology has been very significant to every human culture. Even before they could put their myths into words, prehistoric humans had a belief system that conformed to the definition of 'myth' or 'legend' supplied by Leach and Fried, as shown in cave paintings, stone carvings, tombs, and monuments. Carl Jung, a famous psychiatrist of the 20th century, believed that myth was an integral part of the human psyche because it helped people make sense of a world that frequently seemed chaotic and meaningless.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

**MarupuVenkatesam (2022)** When it came to contemporary Telugu painting, the name VaddadiPapaiah was synonymous with experience. Srikakulam, also known as Sikkolu, is where his parents, Mahalakshmi and Ramamurthy, had him born on September 10, 1921. He sketched a picture

of Hanuman when he was just five years old. Papaiah, at the ripe old age of five, drew a portrait of Hanuman. The vibrant paintings of Sri. VaddadiPapaiah include pivotal episodes from the Ramayana, Bharata, Bhagavata, and Puranas, as well as the colorful worlds of music, stars, the full moon, festivals, portraits of celebrities, emotions, the imaginative world, societal structures, and the sky. All of these things are central to the work of VaddadiPapaiah, a seasoned practitioner of contemporary art. Those who appreciated art and wished to see fantastical legendary beings brought to life had a good opportunity to do so between 1960 and 1990. Between 1942 and 1990, a half century's worth of work, he painted hundreds of works in color and black and white. Every drawing and painting he made from the descriptions of the sages Valmiki, Vyasa, poet Potana, etc., was a colorful visual feast that was appreciated by people of all walks of life. His work has been utilized in films based on mythology to illustrate people and environments. His miniatures depict an expansive kingdom. Professionally and personally, VaddadiPapaiah has numerous unique skills that set him apart from the majority of Telugu artists. Many of his works were of mythical subjects. Along with these, he accomplished many other odd things during his life, such as bringing to life innovative topics that no other painter in the nation would dare to do, conceive, or dream. His 100th birthday will be in 2021. We should all take this opportunity to reflect on his many contributions to the arts.

**Maria Syrou et.al (2021)** Cultural traditions throughout the globe have included stories about mythical beings for generations. Some were created entirely in one's mind, while others may have been influenced by real-life cases of malformation syndromes or are hybrids of distinct species. Artists have used chimeras, cyclopes, and other legendary or hybrid creatures in a wide variety of works. It is clear that artworks continue to serve as a source of inspiration since they have been depicted in many works of art throughout history, including ancient and modern sculptures, paintings, drawings, photography, and installations. Modern medical genetics sheds light on the pathophysiology and molecular basis for malformation syndromes and their associated characteristics. Many characters long thought to be fantastical may now be found in real people with real medical conditions. Mythological concepts that have their roots in antiquity continue to be used in modern medicine.

**Rachel Cooksey (2016)** The presentation will analyze the aesthetic traits that Raja Ravi Varma introduced to mythical paintings and later to popular devotional prints with the Ravi Varma Press, as well as the impact of this aesthetic on other areas of visual culture in India. Little was known about Raja Ravi Varma's influence on modern calendar prints until a retrospective exhibition was held in New Delhi in 1993. By studying the development of academic realism in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century India and Ravi Varma's place within it, I was able to better grasp the extent to which a single person can affect the visual culture of a country. Popular prints are too integral to India's visual culture to be ignored in aesthetic and historical analysis, although scholars disagree on how big of a role he had in launching India's modernist movement. Even though I relied heavily on secondary sources, I made the trip to Kerala, where Ravi Varma was born and raised, to see his oil paintings in person at the Sri Chatra Art Gallery. To learn more about the history and significance of popular prints in urban contexts like chai and snack vendors, I stayed in Madurai. This research adds to the expanding body of scholarly work questioning how and where popular art fits within the fluid framework of art history.

**Katharina Gisela Lorenz et.al (2016)** Is there anything we get from using a certain approach vs anything we lose while attempting to decipher visual content? Katharina Lorenz uses experiments on three different types of mythological imagery from Classical Greek pottery, a frieze from Hellenistic Pergamon, and a Roman sarcophagus from the second century CE to show how different theoretical approaches to images (such as iconology, semiotics, and image studies) affect the meanings we draw from ancient Greek and Roman art. This book develops a conversation with the larger field of art history and presents a new framework for the study of ancient visual culture as both a guide to Classical images of myth and a critical history of Classical archaeology's efforts to give meaning to pictures. Not only will it be required reading for those majoring in classical art history and archaeology, but also for anybody curious in the potentials and background of visual culture research. Readers interested in learning more about Greek and Roman culture may find this book useful since it: - proposes a new framework for the study of (ancient) visual culture based on interaction with images from Greek and Roman mythology. Readers interested in the Classical world and those

concerned with more recent historical eras will find this book interesting since it draws parallels between the historiography and technique development in Classical archaeology and ancient art history and the art history of these times. Discusses larger trends in the history of art in western Europe by following intellectual developments in a variety of situations and identifying their parallels and distinctions.

**Igor Fic et.al (2014)** The current study's text provides new insight into the connection between myth, history, and the arts (poetry). It provides a theoretical framework for future empirical research of specific literary works by examining the interconnections between myth, history, and poetry. The research aims to provide circumstances for the analysis of literary works via historical discourse, in which diachronic evaluation of the occurrences is evaluated. To implement this strategy, archetypal criticism's findings must be relied upon heavily, despite their disruptive effects on mythology, history, and poetry. The breadth of the issue, however, necessitates that we also include techniques from Jungian psychoanalysis, structural analysis, and literary hermeneutics. The substance, meaning, and interpretation of constants in mythological, theological, historical, artistic, and esoteric literature are profoundly impacted by all these analytical approaches. Reading poetry and other literary works generally grouped into the canon of European literature suggests that their authors proceeded not only from the contemporary literary context, but that their works are substantially touching elements of religious, mythical, and cultural-historical life. In light of these considerations, it is essential to stress the significance of studies devoted to the examination and categorization of archetypes, symbols, prototypes (antitypes), pictures, and comparisons. Information gained from analyzing individual literary works always leads to discovering the significance of literary works. This will establish the meaning of a literary work as a phenomena that occurs via the reading and interpretation of poetic works independently of time and location. Because each literary critic works with a different interpretation of a given literary text, it is advised that they all follow the same disclosed study trajectory of a literary work.

#### **COURSE RATIONALE**

As a teacher, I want each of my students to feel safe and secure expressing themselves throughout the spectrum of art-related activities (art history, art production, art analysis, and art criticism). At the same time, I care deeply about developing as a professional and often test my own limits in terms of how I might become a better educator. How will art education change, or is there a better approach to educate students to be creative, socially responsible, and respect-guided in their artistic expression and analysis? I ask myself this question in light of shifting youth cultural trends and societal expectations. I also attempt to include multidisciplinary cooperation and idea exchange since they are crucial to grasping context and drawing connections across disciplines. I have been able to use these central features across a variety of creative channels, critical approaches, and pedagogical frameworks, guaranteeing success for each and every one of my students.

This art history course, however, will be different from my prior general and studio art courses since it will integrate the more conventional parts of an art history course with freedom for individual expression. I have planned this course of study with my teaching philosophy in mind, and my goal remains the same: to instill in each student a sense of self-assurance and achievement in relation to the course material, while leaving room for personal development and creative exploration. Ultimately, I want my classroom to be a place where all kids feel they can study and explore topics freely without fear of repercussion. I reflected on a number of factors that might contribute to the academic and social-emotional success of the students in this class. Curriculum-wise, I would think about how I was teaching, whether or not there was a way to provide feedback that was less stressful, whether or not there was a way to bring people together rather than isolating them during class, and whether or not the content was suitable for self-generated transformation. It's important to maintain order in the classroom so that students can concentrate on their studies and feel safe making errors as they learn. Having this in mind, I took care to make my course adaptive to the needs of each student.

History is the study of past civilizations in order to get an appreciation for the people who came before us, the world they lived in, the art they produced, and the choices they made that continue to have consequences for us now. Keeping students engaged and motivated in art history courses requires instructors to use visual culture and critical thinking. In this course, I have been given the opportunity to develop and try out new approaches to teaching art history, as well as to design an

altogether new art history course that incorporates several methods of delivering and evaluating course material. With the goal of facilitating students' comprehension of many creative traditions throughout the world, I've designed a curriculum in which successive units build upon one another via seamless transitions between lessons. I've also come up with novel approaches to pique students' interest, instruct them on how to find relevant material, and provide room for open dialogue and individual expression.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The goal of the course "Mythology in Art History" is to educate students not only on the significance of mythical figures, tales, and allegory throughout history, but also on how to critically examine various creative interpretations of myth and recognize regional or temporal trends in mythological imagery. The following topics will be emphasized throughout this course: a world view, the art of storytelling, critical thinking, and formalized analysis and evaluation:

**Global Perspective:** This art history class is one of a kind since it emphasizes the worldwide reach of visual culture. Since most studies of art history have centered on European artists, many students of this field have been exposed to a narrow and perhaps misleading perspective. I wanted my course to be accessible to students of various racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds, so I designed the lessons to include artwork from a wide range of historical periods and civilizations. Some educators may be wary about highlighting cultures outside of the Western world for fear of undermining the significance of their own. However, I think it is crucial to include teachings from throughout the globe to better understand the function of mythology in art and to make the classroom more inclusive to kids of various backgrounds. I found that by narrowing the scope of each course to just one or two regions, civilizations, or eras, I was better able to give due consideration to the unique population and historical customs of that region, culture, or era. By focusing on one specific region or era at a time, students are able to thoroughly absorb the historical background and obtain a more in-depth knowledge of the artwork created during that time and place, while also highlighting and honoring each group's unique creative style, belief system, and culture. The visual evidence of what life was like in different places and different eras provided by the art created by many civilizations is a great resource for students of the humanities. Teaching art history from a global perspective would not only help students get a deeper appreciation for art and mythology but also promote diversity and inclusion in the classroom by recognizing the contributions of many cultures.

**Storytelling:** Students will be able to examine and comprehend a story via visual symbols and compositions as a central part of this course's focus on visual storytelling. The narrative foundation of mythologies of all kinds includes abundant metaphor and free inquiry into deeper meanings, both of which contribute to the development of the analytical and interpretive abilities necessary for engaging effectively with myths of other cultures. The primary emphasis of this art history course is on the visual representation of mythical narratives, making the development of effective narrative skills an essential goal. The capacity to tell a narrative is ingrained in our brains from a young age and is thought to be a fundamental aspect of human cognition, making it a crucial and relevant talent as the brain matures through puberty. The ability to read and analyze such histories is useful not just for learning about art and art history, but also for helping students develop their own unique identities and learn to sympathize with others who are different from themselves. My goal is to provide a secure learning environment by equipping my students with these traits via storytelling, which promotes a greater awareness of and empathy for human nature. As they go into adulthood, high school students will benefit from having an affinity for and the capacity to empathize to the experiences of others. In this course, we will examine and analyze the symbolism in a variety of myths and tales via class debates, small group activities, and individual projects. Students will be interpreting these myths using the art analysis and criticism abilities they've developed in past art history classes, expanding their knowledge of narrative and aesthetic interpretation in the process. The interconnectedness of language arts and a comprehension of narrative and myth can help pupils learn both subjects in more depth.

### **PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS**

As an art teacher, I often use a wide range of pedagogical approaches, including constructivist, collaborative, integrative, and reflective practices, since I believe they are all essential for the development of each student's unique potential. As a result of the wide variation in students' prior

experience and skill sets, teachers need to use a wide range of strategies in the classroom to ensure that they are reaching every student.<sup>9</sup> You can see exactly how I intend to incorporate each strategy into my lessons by looking at individual days of my unit schedule.

- **Constructivist method:** The constructivist method emphasizes student agency in the learning process, which in turn fosters students' original insights into course material.<sup>10</sup> This method might be taught as part of an evaluation, after a class discussion of new material, like when a student is asked to do an independent aesthetic study of a piece of art in order to develop their own interpretation of the work. Using this approach, students are able to better grasp the material at hand.

- **Collaborative method:** Students using the collaborative method are those who work in groups or pairs to aid one another in the mastery of a subject.<sup>11</sup> Take, for instance, a formative assessment in which I ask groups or pairs of students to evaluate, criticize, compare, and contrast different depictions of the same deity. Using this strategy, students are able to absorb information from a variety of sources and obtain a deeper understanding of the material being taught.

- **Integrative method:** The use of interdisciplinary topics is a requirement of this curriculum and hence an example of the integrative teaching technique. Not only does this curriculum have application to the study of art and global history, but it also has connections to the fields of science and language study.<sup>12</sup> This course's material connects to the biology subfield of a scientific curriculum via an examination of the artwork shown in Units 2–6 from a biological perspective, as well as through an examination of the human anatomy depicted in Renaissance artwork included in Units 8 and 9. By learning to recognize allegory and analyze myth as it is represented in the shown artworks, this course also ties to a language arts curriculum.

- **Reflective method:** As a means of tracking students' and instructors' progress and planning for future enhancements, the reflective teaching approach will be used throughout the duration of the course.<sup>13</sup> This course is structured with regular, open conversations, which is an effective strategy for fostering growth in both the student and the instructor. Exit tickets, unit-ending reflection questions, and class discussions all integrate this method to varying degrees. All of the lessons in "Mythology in Art History" make use of these four strategies. Integrative pedagogy is used throughout the course, and each unit incorporates constructivist, collaborative, and reflective practices that are designed to foster student achievement.

### MURALS UNDER THE PALLAVA, PANDAVA AND CHOLA KINGS

Previous centuries saw the history of painting spread farther south in Tamil Nadu, with variations throughout the area under the reigns of the Pallava, Pandya, and Chola kings. After the Chalukya dynasty had ruled a portion of South India, the Pallava rulers took over. During his reign in the seventh century, King Mahendravarma I oversaw the construction of temples at Panamalai, Mandagapattu, and Kanchipuram. Mahendravarman I is referred to by many names in the inscription at Mandagapattu, including Vichitrachitta (strange),



Sittanvasal — early Pandya period, ninth century CE

His involvement in the arts is shown by the names Chitrakarapuli (tiger among artists) and Chaityakari (temple builder). Even though only shards of the artwork in these temples survive, they were all completed at his urging. The female deity of Panamalai art is portrayed with elegance. Rajsimha, ruler of the Pallavas, supported the arts at the Kanchipuram temple. The only evidence of Somaskanda, as shown in art, is now limited to fragments. Large, round faces. When compared to previous periods of art, the lines are more rhythmic, and there is more decoration. The depiction of the torso is similar to that of older sculpture, although it is now more stretched out.

Similarly, when the Pandyas came to power, they supported the arts. Some of the best preserved examples are the caverns at Tirumalaipuram and the Jaina caves at Sittanavasal. Tirumalaipuram preserves a few layers of paintings, however they are in very poor condition. Shrine brackets, veranda walls, and ceilings are all adorned with artwork at Sittanavasal.

## CONCLUSION

The "Mythology in Art History" course plan exemplifies in great detail the use of a wide variety of teaching strategies and formative assessments throughout all units to ensure that each student is challenged and supported in developing their knowledge and understanding in the manner that is most advantageous to them as individuals. I've decided to offer the material for my class in a number of different ways, each of which builds on the one before it and accommodates different learning styles. Class discussions and daily exit tickets, together with a variety of evaluation tools and pedagogical approaches, will provide a dynamic but predictable setting in which students may learn about mythology in art history. Throughout the years, the Pallava, Pandya, and Chola empires each ruled a portion of Tamil Nadu, each of which contributed to the region's rich painting legacy.

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