

Signs, Symbols and Iconography: The Hidden Stories in Art

How does the modern viewer recognise and interpret the hidden stories told through signs, symbols iconography in paintings when visiting art galleries. Were paintings merely illustrations of the text, and if so which texts, or did they carry some deeper meaning? How did artists such as Botticelli, Pinturicchio, Titian and Tintoretto approach these subjects? Why were these subjects so popular?

In order to unravel the hidden iconographical content of paintings that may reveal how audiences might have seen these works produced during the Italian Renaissance rather than how we now see them, the modern viewer needs to reacquaint themselves with what was common knowledge during the Renaissance - the knowledge of religious and mythological signs and symbols.

Most often these stories originated from antique literary sources, which had survived through the middle ages and were the preserve of the wealthy and cultured élite. This lecture aims to reveal the hidden language of stories in these paintings and equip the modern viewer with an antique language and a new way to look at paintings through signs, symbols iconography.

Short Reading List:

Ovid	<i>Metamorphoses</i>
Bullfinch, Thomas	<i>Myth and Legend</i>
Graves, Robert	<i>Greek Myths: Volumes 1 & 2</i>
Halls	<i>Dictionary of Signs and Symbols</i>