



Symbols and Allegories in Art (A Guide to Imagery)

By Matilde Battistini

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Symbols and Allegories in Art (A Guide to Imagery) By Matilde Battistini

From antiquity, when the gods and goddesses were commonly featured in works of art, through to the twentieth century, when Surrealists drew on archetypes from the unconscious, artists have embedded symbols in their works. As with previous volumes in the Guide to Imagery series, the goal of this book is to provide contemporary readers and museum visitors with the tools to read the hidden meanings in works of art.

This latest volume is divided thematically into four sections featuring symbols related to time, man, space (earth and sky), and allegories or moral lessons. Readers will learn, for instance, that night, the primordial mother of the cosmos, was often portrayed in ancient art as a woman wrapped in a black veil, whereas day or noon was often represented in Renaissance art as a strong, virile man evoking the full manifestation of the sun's energy.

Each entry in the book contains a main reference image in which details of the symbol or allegory being analyzed are called out for discussion. In the margin, for quick access by the reader, is a summary of the essential characteristics of the symbol in question, the derivation of its name, and the religious tradition from which it springs.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This sixth volume of the Getty's superb Guide to Imagery series does not disappoint, following a winning formula to satisfying results. Like its predecessors, the book lushly reproduces masterworks and breaks them down into their component parts, explaining the meanings attached to each in helpful marginal text. The volume contains a selection of exemplary paintings from the last 500 years, but it's particularly heavy on the Renaissance-familiar standouts include van Eyck's The Arnolfini Marriage, Holbein the Younger's The Ambassadors, Botticelli's Spring and several fantastic works by Bruegel the Elder. The book is divided into four sections—"Time," "Man," "Space" and "Allegories"—with plenty of subsections in each. For anyone unfamiliar with Renaissance symbols and tropes, this book adds depth and nuance to the sensual power of its greatest works.

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About the Author

Matilde Battistini is an art critic and author, along with Stefano Zuffi, of *Picasso, L'opera di un genio* and *La Natura Morta*.

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