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National Gallery of Art Explores Ovid's Myths through Art in Programs Coinciding with Arena Stage Production of *Metamorphoses*



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, Italian, 1696–1770

Apollo Pursuing Daphne, c. 1755/1760

oil on canvas

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Samuel H. Kress Collection

Washington, DC—In celebration of selected works of art in its collection that depict myths and in conjunction with Mary Zimmerman's reinterpretation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, now at Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater, the National Gallery of Art is presenting a series of lectures and gallery talks. The Gallery's collection is rich in narratives from this always-popular classic by the great Latin poet, whose story, told in a loose mythicohistorical framework, extends from the creation of the world to the deification of Julius Caesar.

"We are presenting programs highlighting mythology in our collection in conjunction with Arena Stage's production of *Metamorphoses* so that audiences in Washington, DC, can see the stories depicted not only in the play but also in great works of art," said Earl

A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "The masterpieces shown in our galleries bring historical context to the myths explored in Mary Zimmerman's play, and the Gallery's library houses many fine illustrated copies of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a number of which will be on display in the West Building this summer."

Ovid's Myths in the Collection

The Gallery has a remarkable array of works derived from classical literature, from Homer to Virgil, from Aesop to Ovid. The collection is particularly rich in imagery from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*—the stirring stories of Midas, Orpheus and Eurydice, Narcissus, Pomona, Phaeton, Philemon and Baucis, and Cupid and Psyche are found in paintings, sculptures, ceramics, prints, and drawings. Currently on view in the West Building galleries are major canvases by Titian (*Venus and Adonis*, c. 1560), Sir Peter Paul Rubens (*The Fall of Phaeton*, c. 1604/1605), Rembrandt van Rijn (*Philemon and Baucis*, c. 1658), and Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (*Apollo Pursuing Daphne*, c. 1755/1760). Peter Vischer the Younger's *Orpheus and Eurydice* (c. 1515) is one of many sculptures that interpret Ovid's stories.

***Metamorphoses* at Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater**

Following its acclaimed 16-week run at Chicago's Lookingglass Theatre Company this fall, *Metamorphoses* brings the mythical tales of Ovid to life at Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater from February 8 through March 17, 2013, 10 years after the Broadway premiere. Written and directed by the Tony Award-winner Mary Zimmerman, *Metamorphoses* is based on David Slavitt's translation. Its performance at Arena Stage marks the first time that Zimmerman has directed the production since its Broadway run. It is also the first time Zimmerman is staging *Metamorphoses* in the round. More information is available at <http://www.arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/metamorphoses/>.

Related Programs

All programs are free and open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis unless otherwise noted.

Lectures

Miraculous Transformations: Images from Ovid's Metamorphoses

Eric Denker, lecturer

March 3 at noon and March 6 at 3:30 p.m. (West Building Lecture Hall)

Gallery Talks

West Building Main Floor, Rotunda

Twenty-minute public tours focusing on two works of art at the Gallery illustrating myths from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* will be offered in March. All talks will begin in the West Building Rotunda. For more information, please consult the bimonthly calendar of events or the gallery talks section of the website at www.nga.gov/programs/galtalks.

Apollo and Daphne by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo

Eric Denker, senior lecturer, March 4, 7, 8 at 11:00 a.m.

The Fall of Phaeton by Sir Peter Paul Rubens

Faya Causey, head of academic programs, March 11, 13, 14 at 11:00 a.m.

Panel Discussion

Sunday, March 3, at 3:30 p.m.

Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater

Following the matinee (2:00 p.m.), Faya Causey, head of academic programs; Eric Denker, senior lecturer; and Yuri Long, library circulation technician, all National Gallery of Art, will join Amrita Ramanan, literary manager, Arena Stage, in a panel discussion. These experts will explore how Mary Zimmerman's *Metamorphoses* relates to Ovid's original Latin verse and how the same myths are represented in the Gallery's collections of art and rare books.

Gallery Shops

In celebration of Arena Stage's production and the Gallery's collection, the Shops are offering a selection of related publications exploring art and mythology for all ages. These include *The Whole Truth...and Other Myths: Retelling Ancient Tales*, a collection of Greek and Roman myths as told by master storyteller Helen Hoover

through some of the great masterpieces in the Gallery's collection; *The Greek Myths* by Robert Graves; *Gods and Heroes in Art* by Lucia Impelluso; and *Symbols and Allegories in Art (A Guide to Imagery)* by Matilde Battistini. Young readers may pick up *Fandex Family Field Guides: Mythology* by Kathryn and Ross Petras and *D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths*.

Exhibition

This summer, the Gallery presents *From the Library: Metamorphoses in Graphics* from August 10, 2013, through February 9, 2014, on the West Building's Ground Floor. By the 16th century, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* had become the most important single source for mythological lore of the ancient world, and it was read in many different languages, from the original Latin to vernacular translations in German, Italian, French, English, and Dutch, to name but a few. In addition, it was edited, adapted, reworked and rewritten in various styles according to changing tastes and needs. From scholarly versions with dense Latin text and apparatus such as commentaries and notes, to picture books with abbreviated text in rhymes and large illustrations, from tiny pocket-sized books to lavishly bound multivolume tomes, there was an edition of the *Metamorphoses* to suit everyone.

This exhibition explores some aspects of the continuing prominence that Ovid's *Metamorphoses* enjoyed from the early 16th to the early 20th centuries through the extensive holdings of early printed editions in the library's rare book collection. This installation explores how the text was used, the kinds of books that were produced and who read them, and the various types of images that accompanied the text in this diverse range of editions. Together, these books illustrate the history of the *Metamorphoses* and its enduring popularity with readers, scholars, artists, and poets.

Related Podcast

Amber and the Ancient World

Faya Causey, head of academic programs, National Gallery of Art

<http://www.nga.gov/podcasts/lectures/2012.shtm#103012nl01>

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Amber, a tree resin that has metamorphosed over millions of years into a hard, transparent polymer, has captivated mankind since the Paleolithic era. It has been treasured in both its raw and carved state. In this lecture, recorded on May 13, 2012, at the National Gallery of Art, Faya Causey presents the myths and legends woven around amber and explored in her new book *Amber and the Ancient World*. Causey explains its employment in magic and medicine, its transport and carving, and its incorporation into jewelry, amulets, and other objects of prestige. The book showcases remarkable amber carvings in the J. Paul Getty Museum and masterpieces from other collections. Causey also discusses the launch of the accompanying online catalogue, *Ancient Carved Amber in the J. Paul Getty Museum*—a first-of-its-kind publication.

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>).

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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