

# VANGUARD PRESENTS MYTHOLOGY

## Frozen in time: Roberto Lugo’s “Orange and Black” exhibit

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Stepping into the Art@Bainbridge exhibit from the busy Nassau Street sidewalks, we are immediately hit with the quiet but profound intensity of the exhibit. Inside the historic Bainbridge building sits Princeton University Art Museum’s “Roberto Lugo / Orange and Black” exhibit, curated by the Associate Curator of Ancient Mediterranean Art Dr. Carolyn Laferrière.

While ancient Greek ceramics, originating from over two thousand years ago, and 21st-century social oppression may seem to have little in common, Lugo’s work finds a way to blend these motifs together into pieces of art.

Based in Philadelphia, Lugo is an artist, ceramicist, and social activist, striving to portray communal stories of oppression and social injustices. The ceramics portray the daily lives of contemporary individuals in an ancient medium, fusing together the past, present, and future. Lugo believes that just as the daily life of ancient Greek civilizations has been crystallized in these ceramics, stories of contemporary injustice also deserve to be preserved in pottery.

“He really sees himself as tasked with archiving the stories of underrepresented peoples and to show his own lived experience and the lived experience of his communities,” said Laferrière. “To bring them into a museum ... and to [show] Roberto Clemente or Harriet Tubman or Ruby Bridges, is significant because it’s giving them a place within the history of American art.”

The contrast between modern challenges and the ancient medium of classical Greek pottery is reflected in the arrangement of the “Orange and Black” exhibit. Lugo’s piece “Same Boy, Different Breakfast” is placed adjacent to an ancient Greek column krater from the 5th century B.C., attributed to the Hephaistos Painter.

“That vase then asks you, as the viewer, to walk around it or to manipulate it, and to have this embodied experience of it, where your act of looking is then activating the story,” said Laferrière.

Circling “Same Boy, Different Breakfast,” we see a young man in two starkly different settings: on one side, he sits at a desk, writing; on the other, he sits in a jail cell. The jarring contrast reminds the viewer of the divergent shapes our lives may take. The depiction of a moment of celebration and ritual for a young Greek boy compared to his somber duties of the state highlight how the expression of life’s dualities has evolved across the centuries.

Every vase in this exhibit tells a story of a struggle: a struggle for equality, justice, or just the bare minimum of respect. A particularly resonant example is Lugo’s “What Had Happened Was: Ruby Bridges.” Ruby Bridges, at the age of six, became the first Black American schoolchild to integrate into an all-white elementary school in New Orleans, Louisiana. When her integration was met with violent backlash, she had to be escorted to school by U.S. Marshals. To be on the very same vessels as ancient Greek heroes — heroes revered to this day in grand myths — is to elevate her place in history.

“The visual arts can be such a powerful medium for telling stories and for reflecting on our lived experience, our communities, the issues that we are struggling with,” said Laferrière. “And I think this show, [is] collapsing the temporal distance between the fifth century B.C.E. and 2025, to show that artists across time and in very different spaces and different contexts are still ... using this medium to tell these stories.”

Lugo’s exhibit at Art@Bainbridge is a space that invites even the casual viewer to go beyond passive observation and reflect on the state of contemporary America.

What Had Happened Was:  
Ruby Bridges

Top: Same Boy, Different Breakfast  
Bottom: Ancient Greek column krater

photos: Charley Hu  
graphics: Katherine Chen  
photo courtesy: Princeton University Art Museum



## Greek vs. Roman Mythologies

Vanessa He, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Greek and Roman mythology share many deities and stories. However, they each developed their own unique identities. Around 1,000 B.C., Greek myths were first developed. The first ever recorded myth was the “Theogony” by Hesiod, presenting the origins of the Greek gods, and was influenced by Minoan and Mycenaean stories. 1,000 years later, the Romans adopted many of the Greek deities and stories with their own renamed gods.

Although Roman mythology was derived from the Greeks, they each developed different cultures surrounding their beliefs. Greek myths focus on beauty, individuality, and human nature. Their gods are often flawed and emotional, revealing a society that valued creativity, philosophy, and the arts. Meanwhile, Roman mythology was more practical and centered on duty, strength, and loyalty to the state. Roman gods were more stern, often symbolizing Roman beliefs such as discipline and order.

Another difference between the two myths were their interactions with the gods. In Greek myths, the gods frequently interacted with mortals in personal and unpredictable ways. For example, the gods might fall in love with mortals or punish them. Roman myths stood by the principle of divine intervention, where interactions felt more formal and tied to the success of Rome itself, specifically in battle or politics. These interactions represent the different personalities their gods had. Greek gods had more human-like personalities, while Roman gods were more idealized. Zeus was unfaithful and could be angered easily, while Jupiter, the Roman version of Zeus, was portrayed as a stable and fatherly figure as he protected the Roman state and upheld justice.

These differences reveal each of the myths’ purpose to their people. For the Greeks, mythology was a way to explore the depths of human emotion and the flaws of even the most powerful beings. And for Romans, mythology offered a sense of order, strength, and pride in their civilization.

## An Odyssey of my own

Claire Yang, SPORTS CO-EDITOR

One drowsy afternoon, my eight-year-old self decided to browse the library shelves for a new exciting adventure to delve into. When I opened a simple children’s book on Egyptian myths out of sheer curiosity, my fascination with mythology had just begun.

Upon finishing the book, I immediately found myself scanning the shelves for more books and myths. The magical nature of the stories played a huge role in grabbing my attention as a young child, but over time, I grew to learn more about the lessons and themes the tales taught. It amazed me that another child who had lived thousands of years ago had listened to or read the same myths that I was reading in the present.

By third grade, I could name over 25 Egyptian gods and goddesses and their associated traits from memory. One unfortunate classmate made the mistake of asking me to explain the story of Osiris, the Egyptian god of the underworld, for a school project. Not only did I gleefully launch into a 30-minute lecture about his tragic demise, but I also proceeded to bore him to tears about the tragic love story between the goddess of magic, Isis, and Osiris. For me, mythology was my own little passion, something I took pride in and made me unique among my peers.

Most adults in my life found it funny when I went on my little rants about different myths, especially the more gruesome ones. It only fueled my thirst for more and eventually my knowledge grew to include Greek, Norse, Chinese and even Mayan mythology. When everyone started to read the Percy Jackson series, it made me so happy because I could finally apply my knowledge to the “trending” topics.

Mythology holds a special place in my heart because it sparked my creativity and drove me to always learn about new topics. Now that I’m older, I don’t have as much time to research, but sitting down with any myth in a quiet corner of the library takes me back to fond memories of my childhood. In hectic times, the myths are always there to help me escape from reality.

### “Odin’s Discovery of the Runes” from the Hávamál

Odin, chief of the Aesir gods, stood atop a branch of Yggdrasil, the tree that supports the nine realms of existence. He stared down into the Well of Urd from which the tree grew.

Within this pool were the Norns, the three guides of fate, and Odin sought their ability to change the future by carving a rune onto Yggdrasil. Control over creation lay in understanding those shapes, and Odin knew of just one way to learn them. He drew his spear; he had told his fellow gods not to disturb him no matter how long he stayed on the tree. The runes needed proof that Odin was worthy. He flipped himself over the branch and stabbed his spear into his side.

Pain was nothing in the grand pursuit of knowledge; Odin had already given up an eye for understanding. He hung for nine days, searching. On the ninth night, as the torture crescendoed in his body, muscles burning, delirious from loss of blood, he saw shapes with tangible power. He shouted, releasing his spear and ending his torment. He had seen the runes!

Odin left Yggdrasil, returning to Asgard as the most powerful creature in all of creation.

Knowledge and power is rewarded only to the dedicated.

## Short Mythological Stories

Rohan Srivastava, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

## Latin Studies: Mythology An Interview with Dr. Lynda Danvers ’03

Maxime DeVico, BUSINESS CO-EDITOR

Have you always loved mythology or is it a more recent interest?

I’ve kind of always loved mythology. I went to PHS and the Latin classes have always done some language, some history, and some myth as well. I was introduced to myth at 14 years old and also the “Odyssey,” of course, in freshman year English class. And it just sort of grew from there and I have always loved it.

What is your favorite branch of mythology personally and to teach?

I love Mesopotamian myths. So much of Greek myth is based on, or at least talking to, Mesopotamian myth, and there are some wild stories in it. The Greeks take Mesopotamian and sort of distill it a little bit more. [In Mesopotamian myth, there are] people in the underworld who are covered in feathers. That’s what happens when they go to the underworld: they kind of lose their bodies and they become more like birds. It’s a little crazy. You know, myths can range between the very fantastical to the very realistic. I sort of love the dichotomy of that, but also some of the fantastical ones are just so cool to read.

Why do you think mythology is important to teach?

There are so many references, especially to Greek mythology, but [also] lots of mythologies, like Egyptian mythology ... that come up in everyday life, from arts and statues to TV and movies that are not [necessarily even] about mythology. These things pop up in everyday life and everyday culture. It’s good to have that basis and the ability to recognize and talk about it because you never know. Sometimes it’s just things in passing, of course, but sometimes it will give you deeper meaning into what you’re reading, what you’re watching [and] what you’re doing.

Why is teaching Latin and vocabulary in your myth class important?

In my mythology class, one of the things we do is they have words or phrases of the day that connect to the myth in some way. It’s not directly the name like Achilles heel. Sometimes it’s things that are influenced by the myth phrases that we still use, like beware of Greeks bearing gifts is [a reference to] the Trojan horse. There is so much [mythology] that comes up that people don’t realize where [the stories] come from. It’s good to have that kind of common vocabulary and kind of common sense of knowledge because these myths have not gone away in the least.

What is your favorite myth to teach?

My favorite is the House of Atreus, which is where Agamemnon and Menelaus fit in as the leaders of the Trojan war. There’s so much cannibalism in that family ... There is cannibalism after cannibalism after cannibalism. So my favorite day to teach is like, I ... refer to it as cannibalism day because there’s a message. They’re crazy stories, but the message is: don’t transcend human boundaries because if you eat humans, you’re essentially becoming an animal. You’re transgressing these boundaries that have been put down for you. And if you do, your [humanity is] devolving in some way, that you’re kind of forced to do this.

### “Orpheus and Eurydice” from Ovid’s Metamorphoses

Orpheus wasn’t supposed to have seen hell yet. The exit to Hades’ palace was in front of him, his wife’s shadow beside him. He held under his arm the lyre he had just played to petition Hades for his wife’s life. He silently thanked Apollo for giving him the instrument before stepping out of the doors.

The conditions for reviving Eurydice were simple: walk out of the underworld without looking back at his wife. Upon seeing the sun, her life would be returned to her.

Orpheus mulled over the challenge, comforting in the sound of his treasured wife’s footsteps. He was excitedly waiting to exchange words with Eurydice once again.

They continued travelling, protected by Hades, until the end was in sight. Orpheus walked through the border between Elysium and the surface.

Suddenly, Eurydice’s footsteps ceased.

Fear shot through Orpheus’ heart. He was so close. He kept his eyes forward, waiting. Her footsteps never returned. Maybe she had already crossed; maybe she was hurt, stuck, unable to leave the underworld. The thoughts chewed up his mind.

He turned around. Orpheus saw Eurydice, love of his life, one step away from escape, consumed in shadow, and dragged back to the Underworld.

Not trusting in those you love can have dire consequences.