

PENELOPE IN ART

Iconographic path on the representations of the character of Penelope in ancient and modern art

***Odysseus and Penelope*, 470-50 B.C., Terracotta plaque, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art**

The protagonists of the painting are Penelope, in her classic pose, and Odysseus, who is represented in his clothes as a beggar holding out hands to his beloved. On the relief we also find characters unrelated to the opera scene: Telemachus, Laertes and Eumeo.



Penelope Painter, *Penelope to the loom*, 430 B.C., ceramic, Civic Museum of Chiusi

On the vase is represented Penelope in anguish sitting next to her loom as she waits with hope for her husband Odysseus. Next to her is a young man who appears to be her son Telemachus, but it is assumed that he may also be one of her suitors due to his position of pride.



Joseph Wright of Derby, *Penelope unravels her canvas in the light of a candle*, 1783, oil painting on canvas, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum

The work depicts Penelope during the night while she undoes her canvas, on her right there is Telemachus who sleeps observed by her mother and on her left there is Argo. In front of them there is a statue of Odysseus in the dim light that represents how much the hero is missing from the three protagonists of the painting.



Carlo Carrà, *Penelope*, 1917, oil on canvas, private collection

The work depicts Penelope through the point of view of metaphysics, therefore beyond the physical appearance of reality. However, Penelope's classic expression of melancholy always remains the same.



Antonio Lacquaniti

Ulisse e Penelope, acrylic

The work represent the different moods of Penelope during the absence of her husband in a modern key. Penelope is pictured like a polyhedric woman.



Maria Lazzarini

Penelope and Odysseus, acrylic

The work of art composed by two paintings, *Over the horizon* and *The travel*, that represent Penelope and Ulysses respectively. Penelope is represented while looking at the sea, waiting for her dear. Ulysses instead is represented from his boat that crosses waves.



Alberto Savinio, *Penelope*, tempera su tela

Among the salient features of Alberto Savinio's painting, there is the insertion of zoomorphic parts grafted onto human bodies. Here we have the example of the duck's beak that distinguishes the *Portrait of Penelope*, Odysseus' wife. According to a variant of the myth, after her birth, Penelope was abandoned by her father in the waters in the sea. She was saved by the intervention of a group of ducks which pushed her ashore. Surely Savinio drew inspiration from this myth for the painting that dates back to 1933. The figure of Penelope stands next to the window, a position denouncing the wait. The window corner is open to the sea and we can see the clouds.



Penelope al telaio, digital graphics, 2021

Last but not least, this path ends with a graphic design made by one of our classmates. In this drawing Penelope is represented on the loom, weaving the canvas that will be undone during the night. This action underlines Penelope's cunning in deceiving the Suitors, so that they cannot marry her and consequently aspire to the throne of Ulysses, and her determination not to surrender to the enemy and not to betray the heart of her beloved by waiting for his return home.



CREDITS

Slide 2: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/253053>

Slide 3: https://veja.abril.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/telemaco_penelope.jpg?quality=70&strip=info

Slide 4: <https://www.gabriellapapini.com/ulisse-larte-e-il-mito-musei-san-domenico-forli/>

Slide 5: <https://images.app.goo.gl/WRiD7zTfjnBzJJRT7>

Slide 6: <https://images.app.goo.gl/BP7wdRMYRRE44bx1A>

Slide 7: <https://images.app.goo.gl/KMy36utRoqomQoZt6>

Slide 8: <https://www.albertosavinio.it/galleria3>