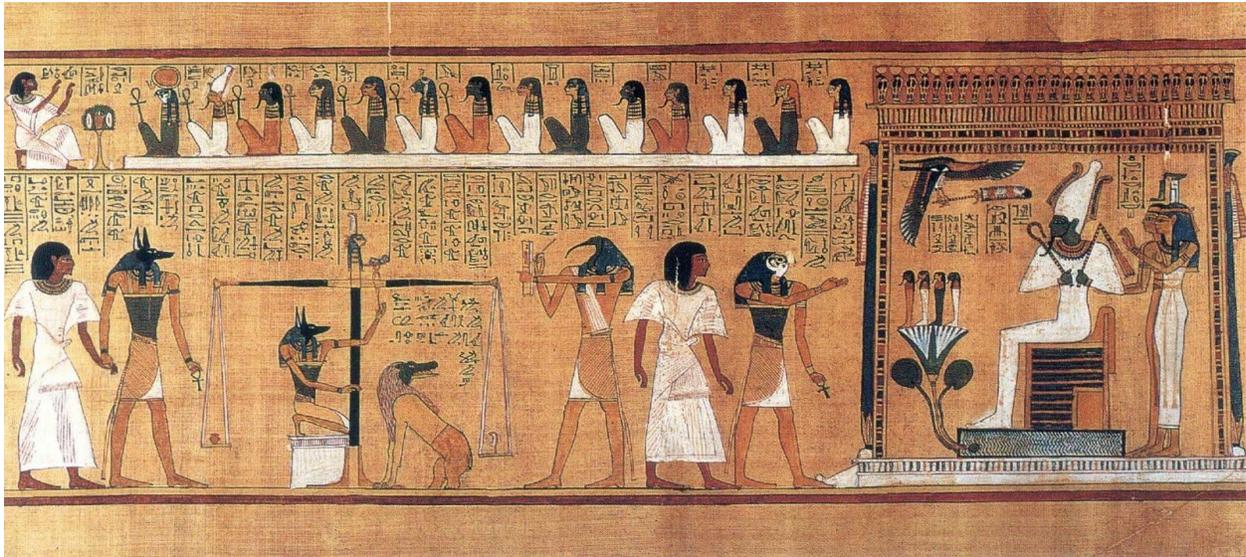


Throughout history, animals have played a significant role in depicting status, emotions, and settings in artworks. Many times, animals are responsible for the integral message of an artwork. From ancient works from ancient Egypt to later ones like Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, animals have continuously been used to enhance and add significance to art pieces.



This piece was uncovered from the tomb of a scribe named Hunefer. It depicts a sort of ritual for the afterlife and features several beings.

In the Last Judgment of Hunefer, various beings are portrayed with animal heads. The identities and roles of each of these beings are determined by their prospective heads. Hunefer is shown wearing a white robe and being guided through the afterlife by several figures. The first of which is Anubis. Anubis has the head of a jackal and is seen holding the hand of Hunefer. The reason as to why Anubis was depicted with a jackal head is because of Egyptian connection of jackals to death. Jackals are wild dogs that often scavenge the remains of decayed dead animals. They often hung around the dead and Egyptians saw this as jackals protecting the dead. As for the color of Anubis's head, black symbolized life, regeneration, and rebirth. Black was the color of the Nile's soil, it was thought to represent life and fertility. Anubis would bring you from your current life to your next.

The next figure is Ammit, he has the head of a crocodile, with the body of a lion and hippopotamus. Each of these animals are ferocious hunters. The role of Ammit can be concluded to be punishing those that fail to live moral lives. Ammit would eat the heart of those who lived immorally and prevent them from passing onto the afterlife. We can see that Hunefer's heart passed the test and moved onto the next stage where Thoth, the deity with a head of a bird called an ibis, records the judgment of Hunefer.

The reason as to why Thoth was depicted with the head of an ibis is possibly because of the curve of the ibis' beak that symbolized the crescent moon. They were seen as a nocturnal and intelligent creature. Afterwards, Hunefer is guided by Horus who is depicted with the head of a falcon. Falcons were a symbol of kingship in Egypt. This matches with Horus's status as he was the son of the supreme god Osiris.



In Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, it is easy to come to the conclusion that the most important figure in this painting is the nude woman laying on the bed. However, we must not overlook the smaller details such as the women in the background and the dog laying besides her at her feet. At first glance, we might ignore the dog and assume it was painted to fill in blank space. However, with each stroke of the paintbrush lies significance. *Venus of Urbino* was assumed to be meant to teach a new wife how to be an ideal Renaissance woman, a mother and a wife. The first subject to suggest this idea would be the sleeping dog laying at the side of Venus on the bed. Sleeping dogs are often associated with fidelity. A symbol that would teach a wife to be loyal and faithful to her husband.

An example of animals and their significance in depicting power and status would be the role of horses in ancient Greek art. From myth to warfare, transportation, and sport, the horse played a significant role in ancient Greece. Horses were one of the first subjects explored by Greek artists and is the greatest depicted animal in ancient Greek art. Artists utilized horses to symbolize wealth, power, and companionship.



Horses were highly coveted and there were many artworks which featured horses as the primary subject. They were also depicted accompanying humans on hunting trips or in battle. These artworks allow us to see the significance of the role of horses in ancient Greek life.

Animals in artworks should not be overlooked and ignored as each subject in an artwork holds its significance. By analyzing the animals in art, we can understand the symbolism each animal carries and its role in telling the artwork's story. In addition, animals tell us more about the time and history of the artwork that may not have been recorded in writing. They offer us a window in to the minds of people, society, morals, and values.

Images

Black-figure cup (c. 510 B.C.) showing a traveler on horseback with dog VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

Knob-handled Patera, ca. 320 BCE, attributed to the White Saccos-Chariot Group Painter, Greek (South Italian, Apulia), terracotta. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 81.89

Venus of Urbino by Titian at Uffizi Gallery Florence

Last Judgement of Hunefer

Sources

<https://www.vmfa.museum/calendar/events/symposium-horse-ancient-greek-art/#2Uk2Hi4HxevBuWk6.99>

Khan Academy, Khan Academy,
www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/ancient-mediterranean-ap/ancient-egypt-ap/v/judgement-in-the-presence-of-osiris-hunefer-s-book-of-the-dead.

www.visituffizi.org/artworks/venus-of-urbino-by-titian/.

itsallgreeklondon.wordpress.com/2014/10/22/the-significance-of-the-horse-in-ancient-greece/.