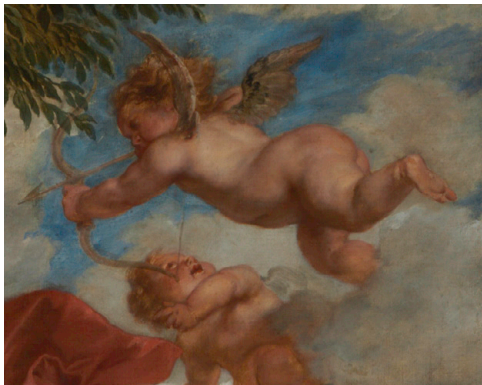




FEBRUARY 2012

A Tale of Love

Sir Anthony van Dyck | *Rinaldo and Armida*



VISIT THE BMA
and look for *Rinaldo and Armida* in the gallery of 15th-19th Century European Art.

Sir Anthony van Dyck (Flemish, 1599-1641).
Detail, *Rinaldo and Armida*. 1629. Oil on canvas.
93 x 90 inches. The Baltimore Museum of Art:
The Jacob Epstein Collection. BMA 1951.103

When Cupid shoots his golden arrow, somebody falls head over heels in love. Or so we are told. Even when Cupid's arrow pierces the cold heart of an enchantress named Armida, love triumphs over all.

Armida is a beautiful but wicked sorceress who serves the powers of evil by luring unsuspecting knights to her idyllic island. Surrounded by various delights, they neglect their military duties and abandon their cause. Armida's greatest desire is to overpower and kill the bold and brave knight, Rinaldo, whom she hates above all others. Rinaldo would not be the first knight to succumb to Armida's irresistible charms and she expects to make quick work of him. The scheming enchantress summons a sea nymph to lull Rinaldo to sleep with sweet song, and the drowsy knight sinks into the haze of deep slumber, unaware of any danger. At this very moment, Cupid breaks through the clouds above and aims his arrow directly at Armida, who suddenly realizes that her detested foe is far more handsome than any of the other knights who have come her way. Gazing upon his face, she feels her evil intentions giving way to passionate love. She gently binds her beloved prisoner with a garland of roses and carries him off in a chariot to her pleasure garden.

Van Dyck's painting illustrates one brief episode in a complex epic poem called *Jerusalem Delivered* by Torquato Tasso, first published in 1581. The poem is divided into 20 Books and has 1918 verses! You can find the entire poem at <http://omacil.org/Tasso>. Look in Book 14, verses 65-68, for sections related to this episode.

CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS

How did the artist develop the characters and plot of the story without using words? What is it about the color, size, and form of Armida's cape that suggests her power over Rinaldo as well as her own turbulent emotions? Why did van Dyck make the face of the sleeping Rinaldo so much darker and blurrier than his knee?

To learn how the legendary story of Rinaldo and Armida relates to the historical First Crusade of 1095-99, visit <http://artbma.org/interact/pachyderm/rinaldoandarmidabma/>. Then write an imaginary newspaper account that explains the who, what, where, when, and why of the episode shown in this painting.

PRINT THE IMAGE ON PAGE 2 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.



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