



# The Mirror of the Gods: How the Renaissance Artists Rediscovered the Pagan Gods

*Malcolm Bull*

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By the end of the 15th century, the remains of the ancient gods littered the landscape of Western Europe. Christianity had erased the religions of ancient Greece and Rome and most Europeans believed the destruction of classical art was God's judgment on the pagan deities. How, then, did European artists during the next three centuries create such monumental works as Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* and Raphael's *Parnassus*?

In *The Mirror of the Gods*, Malcolm Bull tells the revolutionary story of how the great artists of Western Europe--from Botticelli and Leonardo to Titian and Rubens--revived the gods of ancient Greece and Rome. Each chapter focuses on a different deity and sheds dazzling new light on such familiar figures as Venus, Hercules, and Bacchus. Bull draws on hundreds of illustrations to illuminate the ancient myths through the eyes of Renaissance and Baroque artists, not as they appear in classical literature. When the wealthy and powerful princes of Christian Europe began to identify with the pagan gods, myth became the artist's medium for telling the story of his own time. *The Mirror of the Gods* is the fascinating and extraordinary story of how Renaissance artists combined mythological imagery and artistic virtuosity to change the course of western art.

*The Mirror of the Gods* profoundly deepens our understanding of some of the greatest and most subversive artwork in European history. This delightfully told, lavishly illustrated, and extraordinary book amply rewards our ongoing fascination with classical myth and Renaissance art.



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