

7 best proofs that Astrology Has A Long History in Art

You will be amazed to know Artworks incorporating astrological images have been around for as long as astrology itself. Here are 7 of them.

1. **Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi, *Book of the Fixed Stars* (c. 964)**

In 964 CE, Persian astronomer AL-Sufi penned a treatise on fixed stars and constellations, a major Islamic astronomical text that was revised for centuries. You will be amazed to know Al-Sufi's approach combined the work of second-century Alexandrian astronomer Ptolemy with a Bedouin celestial mapping system; hand-drawn illustrations proved how the same stars which appear as red dots hinted at different shapes. Plus, some illustrations such as this one of Ursa Major from the oldest extant copy of the book(c.1009) hold only Ptolemy's constellations. Other images interpret crisscrossing readings of the same stars, such as an image of Andromeda that outlines the Ptolemaic reading together with Bedouin images of a camel, fish, and more.

2. **Limbourg Brothers, *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* (c. 1411–1416)**

Late-medieval Europeans with means sometimes consumed a personalized book of hours-a tiny prayer book with texts to be read at specific times. You will be surprised to know among the most celebrated of these and one of the famous Gothic illuminated manuscripts is the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* (*The Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry*(*The Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry*) by Dutch miniaturists Paul, Jean, and Herman de Limbourg. The tiny book holds full-page illustrations for each month, while most eyes dart to the thorough depictions of peasants and aristocrats, astrological signs always show at the top in rich blue lunettes.

Astrology is also shown somewhere in this book in back-to-back images of a nude man standing in a mandala shape with all 12 zodiac signs allowing regions of his body: Aries atop the head, Taurus clinging the neck, Gemini at the shoulders, and so on. This type of anatomical diagram was a common picture in books of hours and dated back to the Hellenistic era. There were numerous ways to establish the connection of corporeal regions to stars signs-sometimes zodiac symbols were written as text and sometimes they were illustrated: the could be standing or unbalanced into a circle with his feet nearly resting on his head, to match the zodiac circle.

3. **Jan Brueghel the Younger, *God Creating the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars in the Firmament* (c. 1650)**

There was a time when astrology and the church symphonically coexisted, as in the Limbourg Brothers' book of hours and again in this landscape by Flemish Baroque painter Jan Brueghel the Younger. The painting describes the fourth day of creation as interpreted in Genesis, in which God made the sun, the moon, and the stars to distinguish light and darkness.

Brueghel used zodiac symbols in a dramatic arc that sweeps across the sky and is headed by a levitating God, although much more detail can be discovered in the artist's foreground depiction of earthly flora. Following in the footsteps of his painter father,

Brueghel was famous for leafy landscapes, which he often apply as backdrops for allegories, mythological scenes, and animals.

4. John Singer Sargent, *Pagan Gods* (1895)

By the time the ex-pat American artist John Singer Sargent was ordered to paint murals for the Boston Public Library in 1893, the Church and astrology had parted ways.

Primarily a social painter, Sargent decided to make an ambitious cycle, labeled *Triumph of Religion*, capturing moments in Jewish and Christian history.

As a foil, he added a panel of pagan gods at the north ceiling vault. One of these was the Egyptian deity Neith, who made the universe and mothered the sun, and Sargent ornamented her with a golden zodiac neckplate. Sargent labeled her as “the origin of things, the Mother of gods . . . who spans the entire arch, touching the horizon with her hands and with her feet as on Egyptian ceilings and zodiacs,” hinting that Sargent may have known of the Dendera zodiac that had also once graced a ceiling.

You can see Neith’s head touches that of Astarte, the ancient Near Eastern goddess of sensuality, and in the lunette under her Sargent portrayed Israelites being oppressed by the Egyptian pharaoh. Regardless of the message that Sargent may have been trying to spread about the virtue of monotheism in the face of appealing to ancient goddesses, the pagan seems to have the last word. Bostonians recommended that section of the mural.

1. Ernest Procter, *The Zodiac* (1925)

While in Hilma af Klint’s painting, the zodiac sign is decreased to minimalist symbols, in this work, made 10 years later by English artist Ernest Procter, the signs have been rejuvenated as humans and animals. Procter painted the zodiac cycle as a circle roaming the sun, with Virgo at the center mounting Libra’s scales while ditching herself from Leo.

In the artist’s wife’s words, he “was much taken up with the subject [of the zodiac] and had written several poems about it.” This painting is part of a series of works Procter created based on mythology.

6. Martin Wong, *Gemini* (1985)

Ceramicist and painter Martin Wong moved from the West Coast to downtown New York City in 1978. After that, he was straight away drawn to the streetscapes of Manhattan’s Lower East Side. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, until he demised AIDS-related complications in 1999, he demonstrated in his paintings the neighborhood as it was then, with its vacant lots, vibrant life, and run-down tenements. These performances often made space for stars, in works such as *Everything, Must Go* (1983), where constellations float above a pile of debris from a destroyed building, or *Gemini* (1985), a cityscape projecting a pair of a fireman under a night sky.

7. Nolan Oswald Dennis, *Ecliptic (Black Liberation Zodiac)* (2017)

You can see in the work of Johannesburg-based artist Nolan Oswald Dennis, the inseparable symbols of the zodiac are revisited totally. Plus, in an ongoing series that he

is been working on since 2007,” Black Liberation Zodiac,” the artist picks symbols from the global Black liberation movement’s iconography, such as fists, guns, and books, and makes new diagrams using the International Astronomical Union’s constellation charts. “Sometimes I map them astrologically, or place them more intuitively, in choice spots on the charts I’m creating,” Dennis elaborates. “Once I start mapping, new configurations emerge, allowing me to interpret the symbols anew.”

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Meta description

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