

# BROOMFIELD'S MURALS

My name is Konstantinos Mitropoulos and I am an Erasmus Student from Greece. I study philosophy in the Philosophy and Social Studies department of the University of Crete. I came to the Museum of Enfield for my work experience within museums. One of my tasks was to de-install the current exhibition and this was the first time I saw the murals of Broomfield House. The Broomfield murals are baroque paintings, which were created by a Flemish artist in 1726. His name was Gerard Lanscroom. The Flemish artist was inspired by Greek Mythology; depicting on the murals about 50 figures. Unfortunately, the wonderful murals were damaged seriously in a fire in 1984.



But thanks to the fire services, the people who worked to restore a piece of mural and the Museum of Enfield, everyone, including myself who visited this exhibition were able to admire the murals, in the Dugdale Centre. With the help of my imagination and the Broomfield's House exhibition, I saw pieces of the murals and pictures of the ceiling. On the ceiling there is a central female figure holding a carpenter's plane. Over her head is Victory in a red robe and with a trumpet, with a cherub holding her helmet aloft.

On the east wall is a panel showing Flora, goddess of flowers and of spring. Cupid fires an arrow at Zephyrus, the West Wind, making him fall in love with Flora. Perhaps the other three female figures are Summer, Autumn and Winter. A river god or possibly Poseidon (Neptune), sits at the bottom left.

On the north wall is Hermes (Mercury) kneeling before Cupid, perhaps in homage to Cupid's mother Aphrodite (Venus), who stands behind. Nearby Aphrodite's husband Hephaistos (Vulcan). From the top right corner, Athena (Minerva) surveys the scene.

On the west wall are the Muses. On the south wall of the landing are two figures in a landscape. Perhaps, these figures are Dionysus (Bacchus) and Ariadne.



## ATHENA

Lanscroom's inspiration from Greek Mythology moved me emotionally because he reminded me of my childhood. I grew up with stories about Greek Myths and I would like to share with you some information about Athena (Minerva), who is my favourite goddess. Athena is an ancient Greek goddess associated with wisdom, handicraft, and warfare; later syncretized with the Roman goddess Minerva. Athena was regarded as the patron and protectress of various cities across Greece, particularly the city of Athens, from which she most

likely received her name. She is usually shown in art wearing a helmet and holding a spear. Her major symbols include owls, olive trees, snakes, and the Gorgoneion.

### BIRTH

According to the myth Zeus married the goddess Metis, who is described as the "wisest among gods and mortal men", and made love with her. After learning that Metis was pregnant, however, he became afraid that the unborn offspring would try to overthrow him, because Gaia and Ouranos had prophesied that Metis would bear children wiser than their father. In order to prevent this, Zeus tricked Metis into letting him swallow her, but it was too late because Metis had already conceived.

After swallowing Metis, Zeus took six more wives in succession until he married his seventh and present wife, Hera. Then Zeus experienced an enormous headache. He was in such pain that he ordered Hephaestus to cleave his head open with the labrys, the double-headed Minoan axe. Athena leaped from Zeus's head, fully grown and armed.

### FOUNDATION OF ATHENS

As I said Athena was the protectress of the city of Athens. According to the famous myth Athena became the patron goddess of the city of Athens after a competition with Poseidon. They agreed that each would give the Athenians one gift and the Athenians would choose whichever gift they preferred. Poseidon struck the ground with his trident and a spring sprang up; the water was salty and not very useful, whereas Athena offered them an olive tree. The Athenians accepted the olive tree and along with it Athena as their patron and named their city 'Athens', for the olive tree brought wood, oil and food.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Athena: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athena>

Broomfield's Murals: Broomfield, An Illustrated History of the House and Garden, Steven Brindle, pages 13-15, Southgate District Civic Trust, 1994

Written by Konstantinos Mitropoulos