

The British Museum

The Passage of a Bride: Persephone of Knidos

OBJECT IN FOCUS

9 September - 10 October

Room 3

Admission Free

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1302
PERSEPHONE
FROM THE MUSEUM OF
DURHAM



the concept.....

The Aphrodite of Knidos and the Demeter are great icons of womanhood in the ancient world. These two contrasting deities - the one the naked goddess of love and the other the heavily draped goddess of nature and motherhood - overshadow the importance of a third goddess, namely Persephone. She was daughter of Demeter and her lifesize statue once stood beside that of her mother. In Greek myth Persephone was the virgin bride raped by Hades, god of the Underworld. Her experience was for actual brides an emblematic rite of passage, which deliberately parallels the experience of marriage with that of death. In this respect, the myth of Persephone echoes the experience of every Greek bride whose own marriage was a kind of death, and whose wedding a kind of funeral, which brought her childhood to an end. As she was torn from her mother's breast, she would undergo a rite of passage transferring her to the home of her husband and placing her under the control of his family.

the story.....

PERSEPHONE was the divine queen of the underworld, wife of the god Hades. She was also the goddess of the renewal of nature every spring, when she was allowed to return to her mother Demeter.

Persephone was titled Kore (the Maiden) as the goddess of the earth's bounty. Snatched by Hades when she was playing in a flowery meadow. Kore was carried off to the underworld. Her mother Demeter despaired of her disappearance and searched for her throughout the world accompanied by the goddess Hekate bearing torches. Demeter's grief cast the Earth into perpetual winter and the other gods took pity on the suffering of humankind. Finally, it was settled between Zeus and Demeter that the daughter would return to her mother once a year and herald the spring.



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