

THE IMAGINED LANDSCAPE

This week concentrates on representations of landscape in ancient art. We will be using two case studies to explore this use of iconography:

- Representations of gardens and landscapes on Minoan wall paintings
- Assyrian royal reliefs

These case studies have been chosen because:

- The cultural importance of gardens and manipulated landscapes to both culture
- The rich visual representations of gardens and landscapes in both cultural settings
- The very different cultural interpretations that have been made of the two art forms, allowing us to contrast different ways in which art may have been perceived, created and used by different ancient societies

It is worth noting that ancient Egypt is another important source of visual representation of tamed and wild landscapes particularly in tomb paintings.

Please keep the following ideas to the forefront:

1. The use of ART AS COMMUNICATION.
2. The concept of a LANDSCAPE as a CULTURAL IMAGE (Daniels and Cosgrove 1988, 1). The meanings of landscapes (visual, verbal, physical) are complex and interwoven. Landscape and the geographical knowledge that creates landscape might be compared to a cultural image or symbol.
3. The social power of landscape imagery.
4. Landscape is a natural scene mediated by culture: both a represented and presented text (a signifier and a signified). Landscape is a medium of cultural expression

These should help you to question/critically analyse the interpretations of the art forms that you come across and likewise to develop your own readings of these representations.