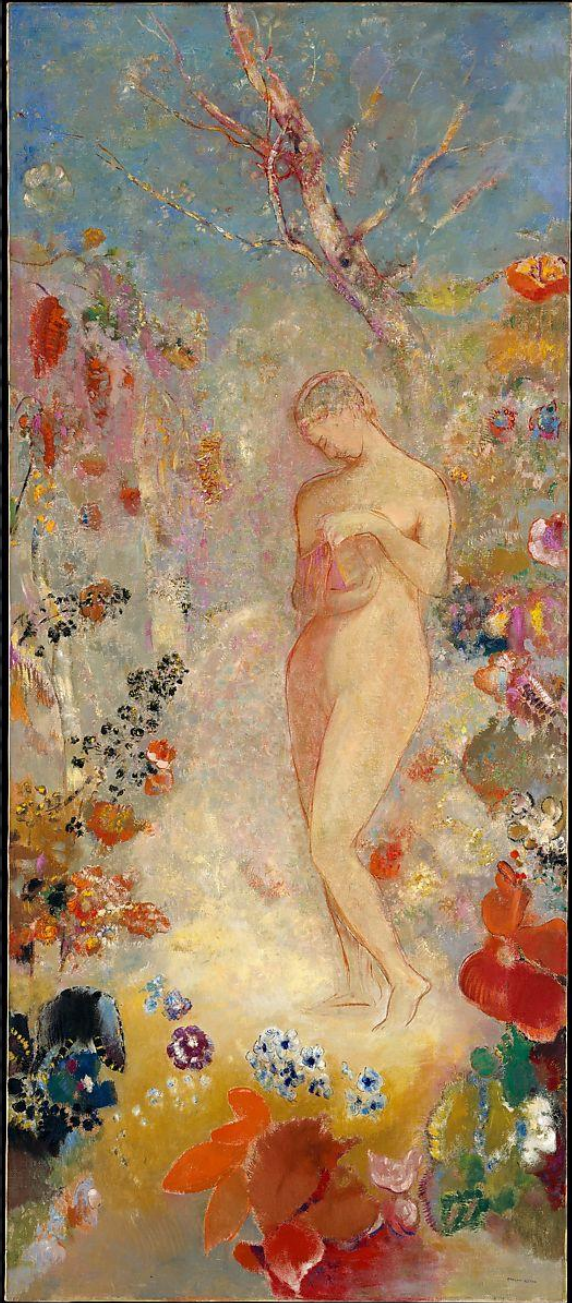


ARTIST IMPRESSIONS OF PANDORA'S BOX



ODILON REDON'S PAINTING PANDORA IN CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY, PANDORA WAS A SUPREMELY BEAUTIFUL WOMAN CREATED BY THE GODS AND SENT TO EARTH TO LIVE AMONG MORTALS. REDON DEPICTS HER NUDE, IN A STATE OF PERFECT INNOCENCE, AND SURROUNDED BY FLOWERS, LIKE THE BIBLICAL EVE IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN. ACCORDING TO LEGEND, WHEN PANDORA OPENED THE BOX CRADLED IN HER ARMS, SHE RELEASED ALL THE EVILS DESTINED TO PLAGUE HUMANITY, BRINGING TO AN END THE IDYLIC GOLDEN AGE. THIS PAINTING IS THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN MADE ABOUT 1914, ON THE EVE OF WORLD WAR I, WHEN THE THEMES OF HARMONY DESTROYED AND CHAOS UNLEASHED MAY HAVE HAD HEIGHTENED RESONANCE.



PANDORA WAS COMPLETED BY JOHN WILLIAM WATERHOUSE

ONE IMMEDIATELY RECOGNISES THIS PAINTING AS CAPTURING THE FAMOUS TALE OF PANDORA OPENING HER BOX. ARTIST WATERHOUSE ADDS LITTLE ELSE TO THIS SCENE OTHER THAN SOME TREES IN THE BACKGROUND WHICH HELP TO CREATE THE PARTICULAR ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH THIS YOUNG LADY CAREFULLY OPENS THIS BEAUTIFULLY CRAFTED BOX. BEHIND HER IS A SMALL POND WHICH TRICKLES DOWN TO HER LEVEL, SUGGESTING A TRANQUIL SETTING WITHOUT ANY OTHER DISTRACTIONS. THE ARTIST WANTED TO ENSURE THAT THE VIEWER'S EYE WAS ALSO NOT DISTRACTED FROM THE MAIN SUBJECT OF THE PAINTING. THE MODEL IS PARTICULARLY PALE-SKINNED, AS WITH MOST WATERHOUSE MUSES, AND THIS GIVES AN IMPRESSION OF PURITY AND VULNERABILITY.



LAWRENCE ALMA-TADEMA SOUGHT A COMPROMISE IN HIS *PANDORA* OF 1881, IN WHICH SHE HELD NOT A BOX BUT A SMALL POT, SUITABLY DECORATED WITH A SPHINX. IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE A SKILFULLY-PAINTED WATERCOLOUR, PANDORA HAS NOT YET GIVEN WAY TO THE TEMPTATION TO OPEN THE POT.



FREDERICK STUART CHURCH (1842–1924), PANDORA (1883), PENCIL AND INK WASH ON PAPER

THE STORY OF PANDORA BROKE OUT OF EUROPE BY 1883, WHEN FREDERICK STUART CHURCH PAINTED HIS MORE ILLUSTRATIVE *PANDORA* (1883). DRESSED MORE MODESTLY (PRESUMABLY FOR A WIDER AUDIENCE), SHE IS SHOWN AS AN INNOCENT YOUNG WOMAN KNEELING ON A LARGE GOLDEN CHEST AS SHE TRIES TO CLOSE ITS LID AND STOP THE STREAM OF RED DEMONS EMERGING. I SUSPECT THAT THIS WAS PAINTED AS AN ILLUSTRATION FOR A PRINTED COLLECTION OF CLASSICAL MYTHS.