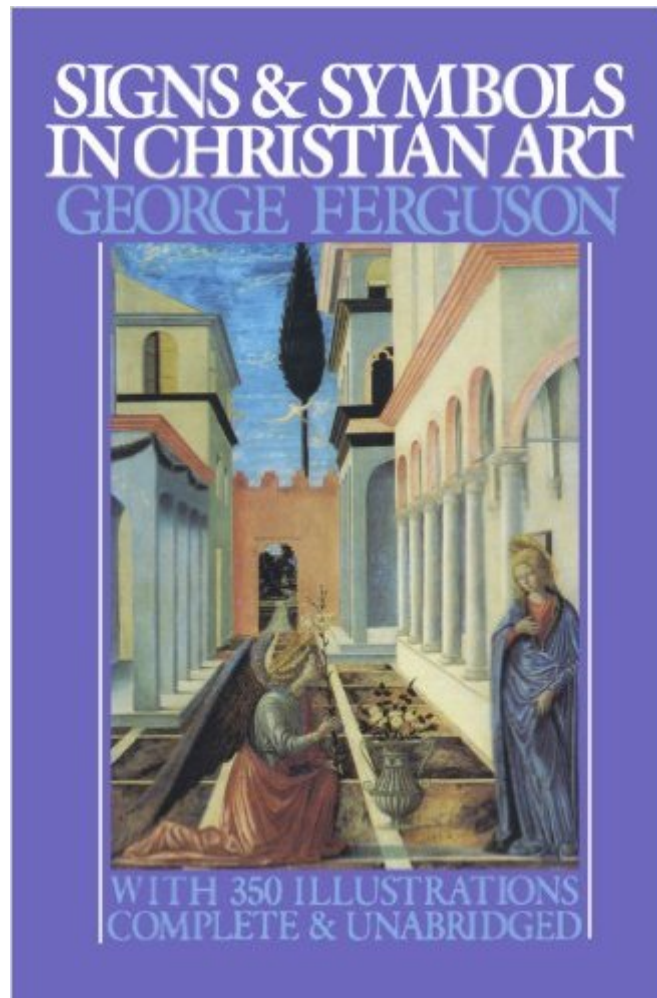


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# Signs And Symbols In Christian Art



## Synopsis

First published in 1954 and having gone through several editions, this comprehensive book remains the authoritative source in the study of symbols in Christian art. This paperback edition includes all of the three hundred fifty illustrations from the original edition, as well as the complete and unabridged text, revealing the symbolism inherent in representations of religious personages, the Earth and Sky, animals, birds, insects, and flowers. In addition to a discussion of objects treated symbolically in Christian art, George Ferguson explores Old Testament characters and events and their symbolic representation in art. In addition to a discussion of objects treated symbolically in Christian art, George Ferguson explores Old Testament characters and events and their symbolic representation in art.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If you've ever wondered about the seemingly strange choices of modern writers or film directors (such as the repeated reference to chocolate "mouse" in the film "Rosemary's Baby"), "Signs and Symbols in Christian Art" will deepen your enjoyment of contemporary artforms as well as antique paintings found in museums. Built around the symbol-system of Roman Catholic Church art, Ferguson's book illustrates the ways in which medieval and renaissance artists tried to visualize scripture and canon for their illiterate audiences. Compact and concise, "Signs and Symbols" serves as a perfect bring-along for your next museum trip - but since the reader can look up various saints and doctrines (such as the Seven Deadly Sins and the Seven Virtues) as well as visual

symbols, this book is more than just an art reference. First-year art students are typically required to use this book in Survey of Western Art 101, but it deserves a place on the bookshelf of any home which aspires to cultural literacy.

Ferguson's book is simply one of the best of its kind. The numerous entries (far more than most) are divided into reasonable sections (animals, plants, saints, etc.). Black and white images in the outer margins assist identification. A thorough explanation of each entry's various meanings within a Christian context is provided (with few oversights). The book is a convenient, portable size and weight. Though I have found books which contain Christian symbols & meanings Ferguson overlooked, I have not yet found a text that is better as a whole, and I collect books of art symbolism. Every art historian--student, amateur, or professional--should own a copy of this book. Art lovers will find it a substantial aid to appreciation. It's a great book to take on museum and cathedral tours, e.g. if you intend to travel around Europe. Christians may also find it a helpful meditation aid. The only real drawback is that Ferguson is limited to Western Christian art. For help with Eastern Christian art symbolism, I recommend starting with Linette Martin's "Sacred Doorways: A Beginner's Guide to Icons." It's less like a reference guide and contains few images, but it's a great start. I look forward to finding more gems like these.

Although not encyclopaedic, this book, first published in 1954, is indispensable to the art history, religious art, iconographic, and religious lives student. The essays are of significant depth without excessive volume, and the illustrations, although of a limited period (Medieval through Renaissance), are pungent enough from which to learn. Two limitations I will remark: There are no representations from Eastern- or Byzantine- iconography. The illustrations are all black and white.

When I bought this book, I needed a quick and dirty reference to religious symbolism in western art--I was pleased and surprised to find out that it's small, lightweight, and therefore portable when I visit museums. (Why don't more publishers consider weight and size when they print books for travelers? Lonely Planet and DK, I'm looking at you.) Its easy size belies the incredible amount of useful information it contains; there are fourteen sections covering everything from the significance of certain animals to religious garments to a brief hagiography for commonly portrayed saints. About one-third of the book is a set of reproductions (sadly b&w in this edition) of famous renaissance religious paintings. There's no discussion or explanation accompanying the paintings--which is the only thing I don't like about the book. And if you read one of the earlier reviews and are wondering

about the chocolate mouse in Rosemary's Baby, it's a reference to mice as a symbol of evil because of their destructiveness.

I use this book frequently, especially when studying art books of Christian art as well as during a recent Bible study of the Book of Exodus. This was an invaluable guide to the symbolism used in art and the various meanings. For example, when studying the symbolic meaning of the priests robes of the Old Testament, the meaning of the pomegranate for the OT and NT is significant. In the OT, the pomegranate stood for the 613 Mosaic laws (the pomegranate was thought to contain 613 seeds). In the NT, the pomegranate is the symbol for the resurrection of Christ. The Hebrews believed following the law led them to God. For the Christian, belief in Jesus' death and resurrection leads to God! Enjoy this read.

If you are an art history student, this book is an absolute must. While there are many books that contradict one another when it comes to symbolism, this book is one that commonly agrees with others I have read or consulted. For as inexpensive as this book is, you cannot afford NOT to get this book!

I am an artist. I wanted to include Christian symbols and signs in my pottery. Many of the signs or quite common, but the reasons for the symbols and signs are forgotten by many. This book both gives detailed pictures of each sign and symbol and also explains completely what each symbol means and why the symbol came about. Each symbol was established for a reason, and it all reflects back to the Bible.

I study Art history, and christian art. This book primarily focuses in on Renaissance paintings and thier symbols. I found it to be useful and detail orientated. A very good reference book.

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