

INSPIRED!

Creativity and the Muse

"This is the other secret that real artists know and wannabe writers don't. When we sit down each day and do our work, power concentrates around us. The Muse takes note of our dedication. She approves. We have earned favour in her sight. When we sit down and work, we become like a magnetised rod that attracts iron filings. Ideas come. Insights accrete."

Steven Pressfield, The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks & Win Your Inner Creative Battles

CLASSICAL MUSES

"There is also a third kind of madness, which is possession by the Muses, enters into a delicate and virgin soul, and there inspiring frenzy, awakens lyric....But he, who, not being inspired and having no touch of madness in his soul, comes to the door and thinks he will get into the temple by the help of art--he, I say, and his poetry are not admitted; the sane man is nowhere at all when he enters into rivalry with the madman." Plato, Phaedo

The goddess of the inspiration of literature, science and the arts, the original classical Muses were considered to be the personification of knowledge and the arts – especially literature, dance and music. Their role was to enable their human vessels to impart new insights, and new artistic forms. Born of Zeus and Mnemosyne (the goddess of memory), these deities, at first three, then later nine, when the Greek poets Homer and Hesiod made it so, were not responsible for specific portfolios until the Romans assigned each on a particular function. Calliope was the goddess of epic poetry, Clio the goddess of history, while Euterpe inspired players of flutes and writers of lyric poetry. Thalia inspired the writers of comedy and pastoral poetry, while on the other end of the spectrum, Melpomene was the goddess of tragedy. Terpsichore was the goddess of dance, Erato of love poetry, Polyhymnia of sacred poetry, and Urania of astronomy. In order to standardise the way the Muses were depicted in Renaissance and Neoclassical art, they were assigned props, enabling viewers to instantly recognise them. Calliope carries a writing tablet, Clio carries a scroll and books, Euterpe carries a flute and Erato is most commonly seen with a lyre and a crown of roses. Melpomene is often seen with a tragic mask, Polyhymnia often wears a pensive expression, while the more joyful Terpsichore is often seen dancing and carrying a lyre. Thalia is often seen with a comic mask and Urania carries a pair of compasses and the celestial globe.

The Muses inspired the creative spirit in many ways. Some writers invoked them either at the beginning or in the early stages of their work, calling upon them for help and inspiration, while others called upon them, encouraging them to use them as a vessel to enlighten the world through their prose. Muse-worship saw poetry festivals taking place at the tombs of Archilochus on Thasos, and of Hesiod and Thamyris in Boeotia, during which sacrifices were made to the Muses. Near the tomb of Alexander the Great, was a mousaion – a shrine of the Muses built by the Library of Alexandria and its circle of scholars. During the age of Enlightenment there was a drive to re-establish a "Cult of the Muses" and during the 18th Century, pre-revolutionary Paris, the likes of Voltaire, Benjamin Franklin and Danton were members of Les Neuf Soeurs (the nine sisters), a famous Masonic lodge. Stemming from this movement was the side-effect of the word "museum," being used to refer to a place for the public display of knowledge.

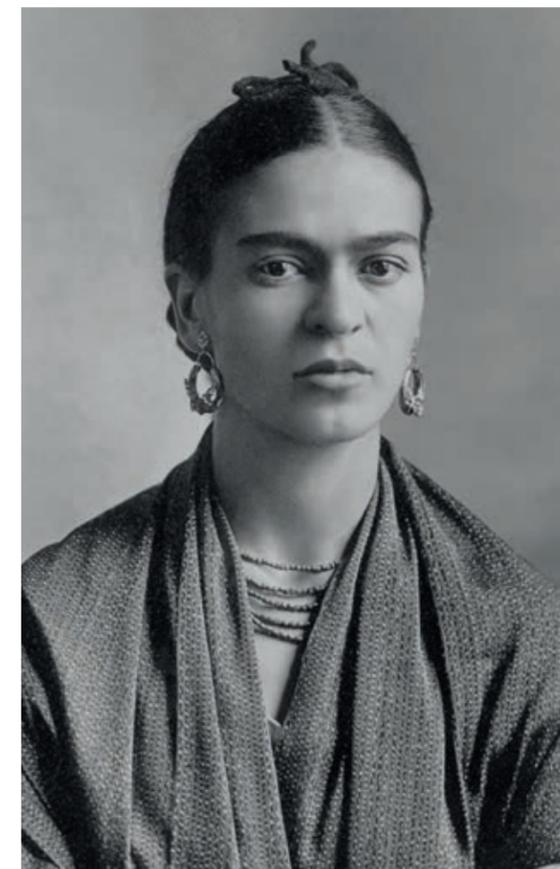


SWEET INSPIRATION

As time marched on, the roles of the Muses evolved, from ethereal beings, to tangible life forms that could galvanise artists, poets and musicians when the world around them no longer inspired their creative process. In more recent history, muses became more like partners in the creative process than merely interlopers. Often, they were strong women, successful artists themselves, who through collaboration, suggestion, and romantic involvement were responsible for inspiring some of the most revered painters, writers and musicians in history. Women like Anais Nin and Frida Kahlo for example, who were phenomenal artists in their own right, but who also inspired their partners to great heights. Nin was an author, who stated that she drew inspiration from Djuna Barnes, D. H. Lawrence, Marcel Proust, André Gide, Jean Cocteau, Paul Valéry, and Arthur Rimbaud. She embarked on a bohemian affair with Henry Miller and theirs are some of the most passionate love letters one can read today. They had a huge influence on each other's work, him criticising her use of the English language while she tried to keep him focused on one train of thought.

Frida Kahlo was a prolific Mexican painter, and shared a passionate and volatile marriage with famous Mexican artist of Diego Rivera. She created at least 140 paintings and dozens of drawings and studies. Fifty-five of her paintings are self-portraits which were symbolic portrayals of her physical and psychological wounds. Rivera had a great influence on her painting style. She had always admired his work. He gave her many insights about her artwork, encouraging and inspiring her, yet he gave her space to explore her creative world on her own. While Rivera didn't have a muse per se, he was inspired by Kahlo's talent and in an interview with a Ms Tibol said, "Frida Kahlo is the greatest Mexican painter. Her work is destined to be multiplied by reproductions and will speak, thanks to books, to the whole world. It is one of the most formidable artistic documents and most intense testimonies on human truth of our time."

Today there seems to be less invocation of the Muses. Artists are turning inward, drawing on their past experience and perception of the world to inspire their creative process and their works. They are drawing on the world around them, from nature, and current events to direct their hands. Added to that there is also a strong argument made, that today's muses are celebrities who are inspiring (whether positively or negatively) mass audience as opposed to one creative soul.





INSPIRED BY A QUEEN

The artistic designers at Breguet draw on the company's rich history for inspiration. For Breguet's Volants de la Reine collection their muse was Breguet's first female client, Queen Marie-Antoinette of France. This new jewellery collection, inspired by the costumes worn by the stylish queen, presents an astonishing complexity of form, recalling the elegant silks and ruffled lace of the period and elaborating upon the company's jewellery timepieces.

The dressmakers of old made vivid and sophisticated costumes, where bows, ribbons, lace and frills competed to proclaim the womanhood and status of those who wore them. This flourishing creativity has inspired some of Breguet's finest jewellery watches. The company once again got down to interpreting the seductive power of these dress accessories in mechanisms and gemstones with the Volants de la Reine model. Thus metal playfully evokes the fleeting beauty of fabric in motion, while the rustling chaos of frills can be imagined in the gem-set bow with scrolls that cling to the bezel and lose themselves haphazardly in the dial of natural mother-of-pearl. Thanks to Breguet's expertise in jewellery, a myriad diamonds bathes the watch in an exquisite fire. The bezel and the flange are set with brilliant-cut diamonds. Baguette diamonds make up an interwoven ribbon surmounted by two cushion-cut sapphires while the scrolls and the bow are decorated with a fine frosting of diamonds. To meet a lady's expectations of proper watchmaking, this timepiece is fitted with a mechanical movement made according to Breguet's watchmaking expertise. The Volants de la Reine watch is complemented by a jewellery set consisting of a ring, a necklace and earrings. Each item of jewellery features one or more blue sapphires as its central theme. ■ Lindsay Grubb



Secret de la Reine

In 1783, Elisabeth Vigée-Le Brun painted a portrait of the queen of France entitled Marie-Antoinette with the rose. In tribute to one of its most illustrious clients, Breguet drew on the world of Marie-Antoinette to create some incomparable timepieces. The collection entitled La Rose de la Reine borrowed the rose of the portrait to recreate it as a shell cameo. As is traditional with secret watches, the time is revealed by pressing on the cameo rose. This finely carved cameo depicts the first petals of the rose, exalted by the diamonds set into the whole of the watch including the emblematic bow of the collection. Available in rose or white gold, this timepiece is fitted with the self-winding calibre 586 movement, visible through a glass with anti-reflective coating on both sides. The floral cameo carved by hand, and the bow is decorated in 18-carat white gold paved with 432 brilliant-cut diamonds (approximately 3,69 carats), pivoting on a shaft to reveal the time. The dial flange is set with 48 brilliant-cut diamonds (approximately 0,101 carats).

Volants de la Reine

This exquisite timepiece features a case in 18-carat white gold with a bezel and case-band set with 146 brilliant-cut diamonds (approximately 2,848 carats). The flange set with 66 brilliant-cut diamonds (approximately 0,132 carats). The frills are set with a frosting of 193 brilliant-cut diamonds (approximately 1,07 carats), 11 baguette diamonds (approximately 0,35 carats) and two cushion-cut sapphires (approximately 0,59 carats). The crown is set with a briolette diamond (approximately 0,28 carats), while the attachment is paved with a frosting of 61 brilliant-cut diamonds (approximately 0,478 carats). The watch, with its self-winding movement, has a sapphire caseback and the dial in mother-of-pearl is decorated with 20 brilliant-cut diamonds (approximately 0,02 carats). The satin strap with folding clasp is set with 26 brilliant-cut diamonds.

