

Artemisia

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The life of seventeenth-century Italian Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi is recounted in the graphic novel *Artemisia*.

Raised by her father, an accomplished artist himself, Artemisia took to painting from a young age. At eighteen, her father entrusted her to the tutelage of Agostino Tassi, known both for his painting skills and his questionable morals. Tassi forced himself on Artemisia, though. Her father, who was only interested in painting, refused to recognize what was happening.

When Artemisia's father was confronted with the truth, he brought a court case against Tassi, despite his daughter's wishes. She was forced to endure intrusive examinations and questioning. As a result of the trial, her reputation was soiled along with Tassi's. Facing an uncertain future, unable even to purchase paints and canvases without a man, Artemisia married and moved from Rome to Florence. She broke free of her husband's restrictions and found success painting, and living, on her own terms.

The book relies on invented dialogue, and it's an effective tactic that maximizes the impact of its dramatic moments. Artemisia's life resonates not just because of her artistic accomplishments, but because of the social obstacles and unequal treatment she was forced to navigate on her way to eventual independence. From simple condescension to the burdens of bringing an accusation of rape, unfortunate aspects of her story still echo today.

The book's art is outstanding, showing many qualities of fine paintings itself, from composition, to contours, to colors. A section at the book's end includes images of some of Artemisia's most famous paintings. *Artemisia* is the informative, compelling graphic biography of an inspiring artist.

PETER DABBENE (May / June 2021)

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