

sleeping

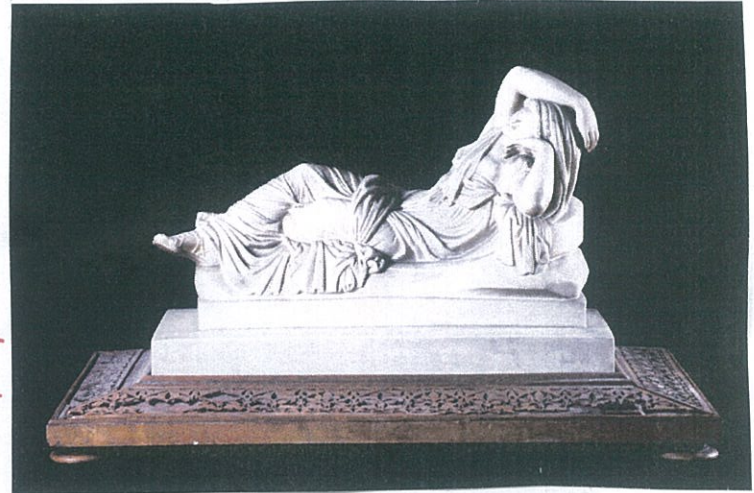
ariadne

the sculpture in the Crawford is a copy of the original, which is in Vatican museum.

A BIT ABOUT THE ARTIST

Edward Ambrose was born in Cork in 1814. In 1845 he went to London and studied at The Royal Academy. He studied in Paris, Rome and Louvain and returned to London in 1851. Ambrose exhibited in the RA that year, and also showed Cupid and Psyche (now in the Crawford) in the Cork exhibition in 1852. He showed at the RA in 1864 and also at Liverpool, where he received a medal for his work.

sleeping ariadne



Edward Ambrose, 'Sleeping Ariadne' (Copy from Original in Vatican Museum), 19th century, Marble, collection Crawford Art Gallery

cupid and psyche



Edward Ambrose, 'Cupid and Psyche', 1840, marble, collection Crawford Art Gallery

THE STORY (greek mythology)

Ariadne was the daughter of the Cretan king, Minos. As her father receives an annual tribute of Athenian boys and girls to be fed to his wife's son, the half-bull, half-human Minotaur, she falls in love with the Athenian champion and prince, Theseus. She takes the initiative, helping Theseus overcome her half-brother, Theseus, having promised to marry her, takes Ariadne with him on his journey back to Athens.



Dionysos seeing Ariadne

Ancient Roman fresco

They stop in Naxos for supplies and rest. Ariadne goes ashore to stretch her legs and somehow ends up asleep. There are essentially two versions of what happens next.

which version

you choose just depends on whether or not you like Theseus, one of the founder heroes of Athens, or not.

1. Some say that Theseus desperately searches for her, is divinely prevented from finding her, and eventually leaves.

you decide

2. Others claim that he abandons her deliberately, leaving her to search around Naxos in increasing despair, until, exhausted, she falls asleep.

Ariadne's fate however is sealed. She is found (just as we see her in the sculpture) by Dionysos, the god of wine. He sees Ariadne and falls in love instantly, so he wakes her and marries her in an exuberant celebration.

As she is mortal she eventually dies, but Dionysos takes her from the underworld, grants her immortality and brings her to Mount Olympus. She essentially she becomes a deity in her own right.

Her wedding crown is placed permanently in the night sky as the constellation Corona borealis (Northern Crown).

The statue shows Ariadne at her key moment, after Theseus has left her, and before Dionysos wakes her. Before she was really anything 'important'.