



Orestes Pursued by the Furies

Date

1862

Primary Maker

Adolphe-William Bouguereau

Medium

Oil on canvas

Description

This is a large oil on canvas painting. There are five figures clustered in the center, leaving the dark landscape background largely unnoticed. A thorny vine creeps across their path in the right foreground. The one male, nude, holding his hands over his ears with an expression of pain on his face, is swarthy and surrounded by four females in various tints of pale. Three of the females, hair swarming with snakes, are the furies: Tisiphone, Alecto, and Megaera point at his crime, as he covers his ears and tries to escape. The female to his left, his mother, has a knife buried deep in her chest. Her head is tilted back and she is supported by one of the furies. The mother's hair hangs down long past her waist, blood drips on her creamy white skin and garments. Her lower body is draped in a swirling red cloth. The three furies have an eerie cast to their skin, and their faces are distorted in anger. The one on the right side of the canvas holds a torch in her left hand, but the flames are subdued in comparison to the red garment draped about the murdered woman. Orestes, the one male in the painting, murdered her for killing his father.

Dimensions

91 x 109 5/8 in. (231.1 x 278.4 cm) Overall, Frame: 101 7/8 x 121 1/4 x 4 in. (258.8 x 308 x 10.2 cm)