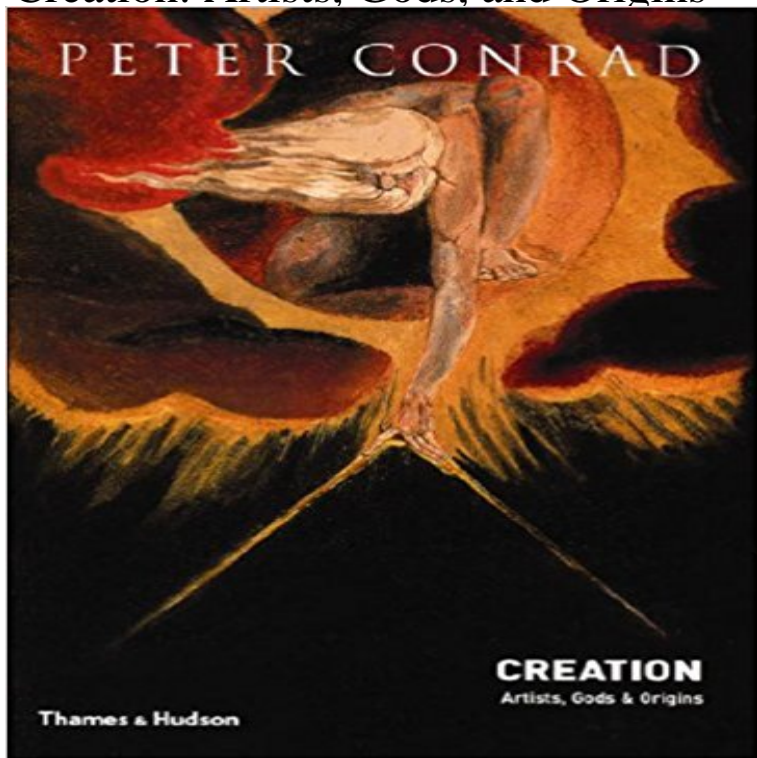


# Creation: Artists, Gods, and Origins



A new history of Western civilization told through creation myths from the past two thousand years by one of the great cultural critics of our time. [The world] was created not once but as many times as there have been original artworks. Marcel Proust In the 1940s, near the end of his life, Matisse designed a chapel near his villa in Vence. A Dominican novice said that he assumed the artist had been directly inspired in this work by the Heavenly Father. Yes, Matisse replied, but that god is me. Since the beginning of civilization, humans have debated this fundamental question: did God create man, or did man create God? At the heart of the question lies a debate over who has the right to create, and this has led to a tension between the concept of God on one hand and artists of all types painters, sculptors, composers, thinkers, writers on the other. Sometimes respectful, sometimes antagonistic, this creative rivalry has led to sublime works of painting, poetry, and music. Peter Conrad's exuberantly original new book operates on many levels. It is a treasure trove of creation myths and stories whether from Genesis or from Ovid exploring their origins and how they have been interpreted and subverted by artists over time. It also helps us understand what makes artistically creative people unusual. Brilliantly crafted, wonderfully written, and well informed on two thousand years of literature, music, art, religion, and mysticism, this book is a forceful reminder of the extraordinary power of our creative traditions. 150 illustrations.

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