

On the name “Judith’s Dagger”

Judith’s Dagger

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Although a frequent subject in renaissance paintings already, the Florentine painter Artemisia Gentileschi famously depicted Judith's beheading of Holofernes with unusually visceral and tactile detail, in what is believed to be a self-portrait representing herself and Agostino Tassi, the man who raped her when she was seventeen.

During the trial, she was tortured with thumbscrews to ensure she would not lie. (Tassi was not.) She testified: *"...When I saw myself free, I went to the table drawer and took a knife and moved toward Agostino, saying, 'I'd like to kill you with this knife because you have dishonored me.'"*

In Artemisia's painting of Judith beheading Holofernes, Judith wears a bracelet representing Artemis, her namesake. Indeed, feminist reclamation has often made Judith into an icon of insurrection against patriarchy. In this tradition, we choose as our own namesake not the goddess, Artemis—***instead we choose the knife.***

Signed,
Judith's Dagger

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