



Greenman Green Woman World History



Greenman world history has the Greenman appearing in architecture and art throughout history; going back as far as Roman times. I will attempt to lay out some of the relevant timelines and styles of when the Greenman and Green Woman have appeared in Earth's history in the next few pages. That said, times are changing, and more and more you begin to see the Green Woman appear. I might note that both mean the same thing; rebirth, the cycle of new growth, and the coming of spring.

Common Designs:

The Greenman is seen as a foliated head in architecture and art over the years. Basically, it is a male or female face made of foliage or covered with foliage, which normally spreads out from the center of the face working outward. The Greenman is primarily interpreted as a symbol of rebirth, representing the cycle of new growth that occurs every spring. Below you will see several basic designs.

- a. Foliated Head: completely covered in green leaves
- b. Disgorging Head: spews vegetation from its mouth, and has a somewhat strange look about it.
- c. Bloodsucker Head: sprouts vegetation from all facial orifices such as tear ducts, nostrils, mouth, and ears. This design is somewhat darker than the normal Foliated head design which is more common today.



d. I would also add one newer design where the face and foliage is smoothly integrated together creating a more softer and natural look. I call this the 'Celestial head'.

1. The Greenman sculpture found in the ruins of Hatra, modern-day Iraq, dates back to the 2nd century. Art historians note a formal connection between this piece and the masks found in Iron Age Celtic art, where faces emerge from intricately stylized vegetation. However, tracing the historical lineage of this connection proves challenging due to the scarcity of surviving wooden examples from that era. Greenman, in the form of a partly foliated mask, appears at the center of the 4th-century in English cathedrals and churches and governmental buildings.



2. The Greenman can be also found in 6th-century Byzantine mosaic in the Great Palace Mosaic Museum, Istanbul. The simplest depiction of Greenman's face is usually created with him peering out of dense foliage. Some of them have leaves for hair, and even a leafy beard. Often leaves or leafy shoots are shown growing from his open mouth and sometimes even from the nose and eyes. In the most abstract examples, the carving at first glance appears to be merely stylized foliage, with the facial element hidden within, only becoming apparent on closer examination. The face is almost always male, however Green Women are becoming popular.

3. The foliated heads first appears in England during the early 12th century deriving from those of France, and were especially popular in the Gothic architecture of the 13th to 15th centuries. In this era the idea that the Greenman motif representing a mythological figure started to appear as a plant like creature on buildings.

4. The Greenman has also been seen in Germany in early 13th century as corbels and architectural art; such as the base of the Bamberg Horseman, on the Bamberg Cathedral, seen on the right.



5. The historian and professor Ronald Edmund Hutton CBE FSA FRHistS FLSW FBA traces the Greenman to India. Lady Raglan coined the term Greenman in 1939. The medieval foliated heads were revealed to have been a motif originally developed in India, which traveled through the medieval Arab empire to Christian Europe. There it became a decoration for monks' manuscripts, from which it spread to churches.

6. You can also find the Greenman today on the Canadian Parliament buildings in Ottawa carved in stone and wood.



It is fair to say that the Greenman and Green Woman go back as far as India and the Roman Empire. However, the meaning has gradually changed into what it is today; a sign of spring and the coming of the growing season.

I have always viewed the Greenman and Green Woman as symbols of rebirth, embodying the essence of spring and the elemental spirit of nature. They represent the creatures of the forest, possessing a heart of gold and kind spirit. Their singular purpose is to nurture the earth, fostering growth and helping nature to thrive and flourish.

Gary A Crosby MMM CD
Darkwood Woodcarving
Oromocto, New Brunswick
<https://dwwcarving.com>