

Art and Healing Self-guide

In recognition of the Arts and Health Community Celebration taking place during April 2010, this set of images from the Minneapolis Institute of Arts explores many ways in which the arts complement the process of healing and the pursuit of well being.



Jizo Bōsatsu, Japan, early 13th century, wood, lacquer, colors and gilt

Gallery 220

Jizo (Jee-zo) is a bodhisattva, a divine Buddhist being of infinite grace and compassion who forestalls his own buddhahood in order to help others reach enlightenment. Jizo assists those condemned to the torments of hell, and the wayward souls of deceased children. He is portrayed as a young, itinerant monk who carries a pilgrim's staff and a wish-granting jewel. This statue shows Jizo descending from the heavens, as suggested by the cloud that supports his lotus pedestal.



Female Figure (Paleolithic), France about 20,000 B.C., sandstone

Gallery 236

Imagine what this small figure (5 ¼" x 2 ¼") made over 20,000 years ago would feel like when held in your hand. These small prehistoric female figures have been called Venus figures, after the Roman goddess of love and fertility, because of the emphasis placed on the breasts, abdomen and hips. This figure was likely a ritual object and may have been regarded as powerful. Given the importance of survival through reproduction and securing food, this figure may relate to female fertility and the ability to bear children, and even to success in hunting.



Ere Ibeji, Yoruba, Nigeria, 20th century, wood, beads, thread, metal

Gallery 250

These figures, known as Ere Ibeji (AIR-ay ee-BAY-jee), represent twins (Ere = sacred image; ibeji is from 'ibi' = born and 'eji' = two). The Yoruba of Nigeria have an extraordinary high rate of twin births. The birth of twins is viewed as good fortune whereas the death of one or both twins is regarded as a great misfortune for the family, and requires appeasement of the child's soul. The grieving process may include the commission of one of these carved figures to stand in for the deceased child, although represented with features and attributes of an adult. The figure's caregiver regards the sculpture with the same respect and attention as she would the living child.



Caduceus, Roman, 2nd century, bronze

Gallery 241

In ancient Greece, the caduceus (cuh-DOO-see-us) was the emblem of messengers, who were always granted safe passage. The typical form of a caduceus is a rod around which two snakes are entwined, with small wings at the top. This type of staff was associated with messengers of the gods in Near Eastern religions before becoming an attribute of the Greek god Hermes, and later of the Roman god Mercury. The caduceus is also a symbol of healing. An attribute of Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine and healing, and of his Roman counterpart Aesculapius, it endures today as an international symbol of the medical profession.



Page from the Manafi al-Hayavan, Iran, 14th century, ink and colors on paper

Gallery 243

This leaf depicting two stags comes from a medical text titled *Manafi al-Hayavan (On the Uses Derived from Animals)*. In the late thirteenth century, the Mongol ruler of Iran and Iraq, Ghazan Khan, ordered a copy of the Manafi to be translated into Persian. A Christian doctor who was a court physician to the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad wrote the original in Arabic in 941. It is from books of this kind, many of them broken up and dispersed leaf by precious leaf, that Persian painting has become known.



Bowl, Caddo, United States, Mississippi Valley region, Mississippian, 1250-1499, ceramic

Gallery 260

Many Native cultures have long viewed bears as beings with unusual powers. Bears reappear each spring after a long hibernation, so are associated with renewal and healing. Hunters and warriors frequently emulated bears for their strength and ferocity. Bears often served as clan animals linking an entire extended family group. Skillfully executed by the artist, the bears depicted on this bowl could have evoked any of these meanings.



Francisco Jose de Goya y Lucientes, Self-Portrait with Dr. Arrieta, Spanish, 1820, oil on canvas

Gallery 257 or Gallery 321 (after April 25)

In his last of many self-portraits, Goya depicts himself at the height of a serious illness. Elderly, sick and vulnerable, he leans into the arms of his physician and friend, Dr. Arrieta. The painting was a gift to Arrieta and has an inscription which reads, "Goya, grateful to his friend Arrieta for his expert care, who saved his life during a painful and dangerous illness endured at the end of the year 1819 in the seventy-third year of his life, painted this in 1820." In this scene, Goya portrays the nurturing Dr. Arrieta in rich, full colors in contrast to the faded, muted colors of his own portrayal as the weak and ailing patient.



Kiddush (sanctification) cup, Marion Marshall, Australian, born 1948, silver, 1993

Gallery 362

This contemporary silver cup is for Kiddush, a Jewish ritual of sanctification where blessings are recited over a cup of wine at the beginning of the Sabbath. The purpose is to remind Jews of the sanctity of the day and to recall two Biblical events, the completion of the Creation and the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt. Marshall's cone-shaped cup on a tripod stand of naturalistic vines, branches, leaves and grapes observes the commandment (from *Talmud*, Shabbat 133b) to glorify God through the beautification of objects.



Wassily Kandinsky, Study for Improvisation V, Russian, 1910, oil on pulp board

Gallery 371

Although this colorful, abstract landscape refers to Biblical images, its central meaning is the universal message of hope, conveyed through color and form. Kandinsky, who believed art could make inner truths visible, wanted painting to function like music. He likened colors and forms to melodies and rhythms that could summon emotion and spiritualism. He understood that reds and yellows are warm and moving colors while blue and purple tend to be cool and stable. In a search for balance he believed, ". . . color is the most powerful medium in the hand of the painter." Kandinsky's quest for expressing inner beauty and spirituality was critical to his work.

