



The Perfect Body: GODS and GODDESSES



Where to Look

Start on the Plaza Level of the North Pavilion, which has bronze sculptures, and then move upstairs, where you'll find paintings made during the Renaissance, a time of great artistic activity in Europe hundreds of years ago.

Things to Explore

Artists have made paintings and sculptures of men and women with "perfect" bodies for thousands of years, including many of the works of art here in the Museum. In Renaissance art, pictures and statues of Greek and Roman gods and goddesses show us what people who lived back then thought was the perfect body type. What *is* a perfect body? As you explore art today, you'll see that people who lived during the Renaissance didn't always answer this question the way *you* might!

Things to Look For

Find sculptures and paintings of Greek and Roman gods and goddesses. They have special ways of telling you who they are. Mars, the god of war, for example, often wears a soldier's helmet or carries a sword. Mercury, the messenger god, wears winged shoes and a winged helmet, and sometimes carries a stick with two snakes and two wings at the top. Venus, the goddess of love, is often seen with her little son, Cupid. You can check which god or goddess you found in a work of art by reading the label on the sculpture or on the wall nearby.

Questions to Answer

1. What are the main things you notice when you look at the bodies of gods and goddesses in Renaissance sculptures and paintings? For example, what are they wearing? How old are they? Are they physically fit?
2. Do you think they look like real people? Explain your answer.
3. Would people today say that the bodies of these gods and goddesses are perfect? Why or why not?
4. Imitate the poses of some of the gods and goddesses that you found. What do you think the artist was trying to say with these poses?





Things to Draw and Write

1. Find a sculpture or painting of the god or goddess who has the body that comes closest to your idea of the “perfect” body. Now draw or describe in words the work of art you chose.

Title _____

Artist's Name _____

Medium and Year _____

2. Imagine you are a Renaissance artist. Now make lists of all the physical qualities of the perfect male and female bodies created by other Renaissance artists.