

Andrea Dezsö: The Visitors

Exhibited at the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, February 20-May 31, 2020



Unidentified Inuk Artist

Seal Tupilak

sperm whale tooth

4 1/8 x 2 x 3/4 in. (10.48 x 5.08 x 1.91 cm)

Gift of John P. Kline, on loan from The Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum

Although the concept of a tupilak has varied across Greenland Inuit cultures and throughout their long history, it consistently refers to an evil spiritual being in animal or human form. Suppression of magical practices by Christian missionaries in the eighteenth century resulted in the minimalist, almost abstract form of tupilak shown here. However, despite changes in their cultural usage, the distorted and chimeric figures preserve the culturally essential Inuit concepts of supernatural animation and transformation in an ambiguous combination of metaphor and magic.

Dezsö's work and the tupilak figures share a common engagement with the duality of visual experience and the complexity of bodies, providing a cultural space for considering the relationships between the body, power, and nature. What does the image of the body reveal or conceal about the being? What power does the body provide, and to whom? How does visual experience affect the relationship between humans and nature?



Unidentified Inuk Artist

Standing Tupilak

sperm whale tooth

4 1/2 x 2 1/4 x 2 in. (11.43 x 5.72 x 5.08 cm)

Gift of John P. Kline, on loan from The Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum



Unidentified Inuk Artist

Standing Tupilak Figure

sperm whale tooth

5 3/8 x 1 5/8 x 2 1/4 in. (13.65 x 4.13 x 5.72 cm)

Gift of John P. Kline, on loan from The Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum



Unidentified Inuk Artist

Standing Tupilak

sperm whale tooth

6 x 1 1/8 x 3/4 in. (15.24 x 2.86 x 1.91 cm)

Gift of John P. Kline, on loan from The Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum



Unidentified Inuk Artist

Seal Tupilak

sperm whale tooth

4 1/2 x 1 1/2 x 1 1/4 in. (11.43 x 3.81 x 3.18 cm)

Gift of John P. Kline, on loan from The Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum

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Unidentified Inuk Artist

Baby Seal Tupilak

sperm whale tooth

3 5/8 x 1 3/4 x 1/2 in. (9.21 x 4.45 x 1.27 cm)

Gift of John P. Kline, on loan from The Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum



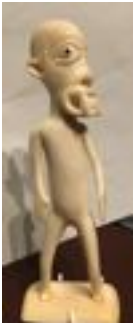
Unidentified Inuk Artist

Baby Bear Tupilak

sperm whale tooth

3 x 1 3/8 x 1 1/8 in. (7.62 x 3.49 x 2.86 cm)

Gift of John P. Kline, on loan from The Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum



Unidentified Inuk Artist

Standing Tupilak with tusks and facial lines

sperm whale tooth

6 1/4 x 1 3/4 x 7/8 in. (15.88 x 4.45 x 2.22 cm)

Gift of John P. Kline, on loan from The Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum



Unknown Artist

Jointed Female Doll

molded clay

5 7/8 in. (15 cm.)

Gift of Edward Perry Warren, Esq., Honorary Degree, 1926

1923.22

This undated terracotta doll depicts a female figure with separate arms and legs attached at the joints, white slip painted on the body, castanets in the hands, and bands around the hair. Although the rough shaping and construction of the body is more typical of the fifth century BCE, the delicately rendered Hellenistic face is unlikely to have been made before the third century BCE. The doll's association with childhood defined the Greek and Roman ritual use of such "toys" as symbolic objects, which were placed in children's graves or devoted to gods before adulthood or marriage. As with the other objects selected for this exhibition, the stylized abstraction of this natural figure underscores the potential to represent aspects of living beings that are indefinite and internal, yet broadly present in our own cultural realities and those of others.



Bowdoin Eye Painter

Attic Red-Figure Eye Cup

ca. 525 BC

terracotta

5 5/16 in. x 16 3/16 in. (13.5 cm x 41.12 cm)

Gift of Edward Perry Warren, Esq., Honorary Degree, 1926
1913.2

Originally used for communal drinking at an Athenian symposium, this cup features athletic figures and palmette motifs, painted in the later red-figure style. The eponymous eye designs on the sides of the cup were understood to provide protection from evil. The ear-like curved handles and mouth-like open base produced a playful but dramatic mask when the cup was raised to the mouth, and the drinker took on the appearance of a woodland spirit. Dezső selected this piece due to its exploration of the fluid connection between mythical reality and familiar life.



Unknown Artist

Stylized Bird Carving

19th century

polychromed wood

14 3/4 in. (37.46 cm.)

Gift of Harold M. Sewall
1898.75

This painted wooden carving of a bird-like creature is an ornamental mouthpiece, often fitted in a mask during ritual dances in traditional cultural practices from the New Ireland province in Papua New Guinea. Such bird figures are consistently featured in the carved objects used in malanggan, communal ceremonies for a variety of social and spiritual events, such as death, adulthood, and transfers of property and status. These carvings are broadly regarded by people of New Ireland as powerful and even dangerous objects.



Unknown Artist

Water Jar

ca. 1880

terracotta

10 in. x 13 in. (25.4 cm. x 33.02 cm.)

Gift of Mrs. Herbert E. Hawkes
1970.31

From the Zuni pueblo in western New Mexico, this unglazed terracotta water jar is decorated with white slip and dark mineral paints with designs that are deeply symbolic. Divided into upper and lower sections, representing the present and past worlds in Zuni creation mythology, this jar features prominent House of Deer and rosette motifs. Deer in Zuni pottery are consistently depicted with red “heartlines” surrounded by white, a visualization of the souls of the deer. This representation thus depicts visually what is unseen in nature to human beings in order to convey the experience of the animals themselves.



Andrea Dezsö

American, born in Romania, 1968

Mother & Child

2016

vinyl paint, markers and ink on paper

38 x 25 in. (96.52 x 63.5 cm)

Courtesy of the Artist

This painting represents Dezsö's practiced approach to developing a richly detailed and colored surface from an ink drawing on paper. Balancing intention and control with improvisation and curiosity, her works visualize unseen and extraordinary connections in the world. In this painting, dynamic patterns and colors disrupt the unity of the forms depicted in deep black ink. Ambiguous yet clearly present, the relationship of the diminutive parent and its robust offspring asks us to reconsider our own experiences. What do we imagine the relationship between a mother and a child looks like? How can our relationships connect or separate us from the world? How do they shape or transform us?



Andrea Dezsö

American, born in Romania, 1968

You Have Many Friends

2017

stone lithography print on paper

24 1/4 x 29 3/4 in. (61.6 x 75.57 cm)

Courtesy of the Artist

This print, created in the wake of the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, examines the need for community and how to address it. Dezsö transforms division into union, disclosing the potential of imagination to reshape the ways in which we see ourselves and others and the relationships that connect us. Unity and clarity in the composition appear as a result of coexisting visual opposites: positive and negative space, light and dark value, repetition and variation, order and randomness, symmetry and asymmetry. All form the complex but cohesive depiction of a community of creatures. These beings and their relationships appear familiar and natural while remaining ambiguous in their connection to our own realities. How are we both distinct and alike from those around us? How do we exist both as individuals and members of a community? How do we support each other? How can we communicate?



Andrea Dezsö

American, born in Romania, 1968

It Feels Like This (Shingles Paintings)

2019

watercolor on Awagami Hakuho paper

17 x 20 1/2 in. (43.18 x 52.07 cm)

Courtesy of the Artist

The uncanny figures in the Shingles Paintings express an intrusion of the unfamiliar during Dezsö's struggle with the shingles virus. Diverging from her practice of carefully layered compositions, these raw and turbulent watercolors translate the unsettling feeling of being invaded with invisible pain and internal distress into a language of images. The distortion and doubling of recognizable bodily forms, disordered interactions between colors and shapes, and ambiguous space of the stark background all express ways in which the experience of self in the body and the mind is vulnerable to the disruption of unknown and unseen forces. How do we experience ourselves as embodied? What control do we have over our bodies? What separates or connects our bodies from or to the world around them? Can we experience our bodies as something other than ourselves? How can experiences of the body redefine the self?



Andrea Dezsö

American, born in Romania, 1968

Neuron People (Shingles Paintings)

2019

watercolor on Awagami Hakuho paper

17 x 20 1/2 in. (43.18 x 52.07 cm)

Courtesy of the Artist

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Andrea Dezsö

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Big Head (Shingles Paintings)

2019

watercolor on Awagami Hakuho paper

17 x 20 1/2 in. (43.18 x 52.07 cm)

Courtesy of the Artist

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Andrea Dezsö

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Pain Body (Shingles Paintings)

2019

watercolor on Awagami Hakuho paper

20 1/2 x 17 in. (52.07 x 43.18 cm)

Courtesy of the Artist

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Andrea Dezsö

American, born in Romania, 1968

Some Things Remain (Shingles Paintings)

2019

watercolor on Awagami Hakuho paper

20 1/2 x 17 in. (52.07 x 43.18 cm)

Courtesy of the Artist

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American, born in Romania, 1968

The Visitors (Shingles Paintings)

2019

watercolor on Awagami Hakuho paper

20 1/2 x 17 in. (52.07 x 43.18 cm)

Courtesy of the Artist

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Ten-Headed Pain Tree (Shingles Paintings)

2019

watercolor on Awagami Hakuho paper

17 x 20 1/2 in. (43.18 x 52.07 cm)

Courtesy of the Artist

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Pain and Joy Beings (Shingles Paintings)

2019

watercolor on Awagami Hakuho paper

17 x 20 1/2 in. (43.18 x 52.07 cm)

Courtesy of the Artist

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Going Home (Shingles Paintings)

2019

watercolor on Awagami Hakuho paper

17 x 20 1/2 in. (43.18 x 52.07 cm)

Courtesy of the Artist

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