

Love Hurts!

A self-guided tour of five works of art inspired by heartache, jealousy, sadness, and tragedy

All works of art are in the Ahmanson Building. Begin on the third floor. When you get off the elevator, take a left, and then a right. Walk all the way to the furthest gallery, 305. You can see gallery numbers at about eye level painted on the walls in between each gallery. Once in gallery 305, look to the large relief on the back wall:

- 1 John Deare, *Judgment of Jupiter*
Poor Paris of Troy! He is about to be handed the task (signified by the apple) of choosing who is the most beautiful among the three gorgeous women emerging from this sculpture. To attract his attention, each will disrobe and offer him a bribe. He chooses Venus (Aphrodite), whose winning bribe is to present him the most beautiful woman in the world as his wife. She is Helen of Sparta, who becomes Helen of Troy—and the direct result is the Trojan War!

Go back toward the elevators. Pass the “blue room”, gallery 330 on your right. Stop at the very small painting on your right:

- 2 Antoine Watteau, *The Perfect Accord*
In love, all is not what it seems. The French of the rococo period (roughly the first part of the eighteenth century) enjoyed scenes of aristocrats at play. Watteau excelled at these scenes but often included an ironic or satirical twist. Here, a not-very-attractive older gentleman plays a flute, wooing a lovely young lass. (Note the well-dressed and well-matched couple in the background— they have already hooked up!) The clown in the striped shirt on the left and the statue of Pan on the right imply that the painting’s theme is both erotic and comical. The love scene’s comedic punch line is the title: *The Perfect Accord*. One might think the wooing couple would make beautiful music together. In reality, French society would have considered the older musician a completely inappropriate match for the beautiful young lady—making this a scene of *discord!*

Go into gallery 330 (aka the “blue room”). Veer right and view the second painting on your right:

- 3 Francois Le Moyne, *Diana and Callisto*
The scoundrel Zeus (Jupiter), lord of the gods, is at it again. His long-suffering wife Hera (Juno) has quite had it with all his extra-marital affairs. He has taken to disguising himself as all sorts of things (gold coins? A bull?) to curry favor with the objects of his affection. French aristocrats loved these scenes because they were an acceptable way to visually show erotic tales of lovely nude women. Anyway, this rather complicated story comes down to this: Callisto, daughter of a king, has taken a vow to remain a virgin and is serving as one of the goddess Diana’s nymphs. Details differ in various versions, but Zeus manages to disguise himself, separate Callisto from the other nymphs, and impregnate her. Callisto’s pregnancy is discovered when she is reunited with Diana and the others, and the women bathe in the woods, which is the scene pictured here. Furious, Diana expels Callisto from the group. Another long series of events ensues, but the outcome is that the jealous Juno turns Callisto into a bear. Subsequently, Jupiter places both Callisto and her son safely in the heavens, where we know them today as the constellations Ursa Major and Ursa Minor.

Continue making your way around to the back left of gallery 330:

- ④ Francois Boucher, *Cupid Wounding Psyche*
You have to look up to see this love story—it was painted to decorate an aristocratic home in Paris and was intended to hang up high above a door in a room used for informal entertainment. The story is well known from antiquity and, like other tales with similarly erotic content, was acceptable for decoration in such a setting. Psyche is not a goddess but is so beautiful that Venus, the goddess of beauty, becomes jealous. So she sends her son, Cupid, to make Psyche fall in love with an ugly mortal by piercing her with one of his famous love-inducing arrows. As he arrives at her side, she awakens; Cupid, about to strike with the arrow, is so startled that he scratches himself instead. So he falls in love with her. A series of calamities, godly tests, and other events ensues, but the two are together at last—and Psyche eventually becomes immortal like her husband.

Go down to the Second Floor. Once you get off the elevator, turn right. Take a second right at the Giacomettis. Take a third right at the small skull sculpture. Walk a few steps and go left into gallery 224. Turn to your left:

- ⑤ Pablo Picasso, *Weeping Woman with Handkerchief*
What could be more emblematic of love hurting than a weeping figure? Here is one of Picasso's series of weeping women paintings—he painted nearly sixty different weeping women between January and November 1937. The wall label gives the details, and here are a few more items to consider: On a personal level, Picasso's love affair with Dora Maar ends unhappily. Was this painting a veiled (literally) symbol of that relationship? One reason we are not so sure is that Dora did not have red hair like the woman does in this painting. As the label also informs us, the painting is related to the artist's famous antiwar mural, *Guernica*. See that in this painting, the woman wears a veil—a Spanish mantilla; she is the embodiment of Spanish womanhood. She weeps uncontrollably, perhaps hurt out of love for her war-torn country and possibly in deep mourning for the loss of loved ones killed by the destruction.

Text prepared by Mary Lenihan, Director of Adult Programs, Education and Public Programs Department, Los Angeles County Museum of Art. © 2013 Museum Associates/LACMA

Be sure to visit us at any information table to enter this evening's raffle!

LACMA