

New Year's Resolutions

There's always room for improvement. As the New Year begins and we take stock of the months that have come to pass, we make resolutions that, kept or not, remind us of how we would like to live at our best. This self-guide peruses some typical resolutions as seen through several of the artworks housed in the museum.



GALLERY 216

A Mother Feeding Her Child (1707) by Willem van Mieris

For three generations of Mieris men art was a family affair, so there was no need to set aside more time to spend with family. Willem van Mieris's father, Frans an Mieris, was one of the leading artists working in the style of "fine painting" practiced in the city of Leiden in 17th-century Holland. Willem and his son carried on the tradition, both making names for themselves as masters of the genre scene. This painting's finely detailed objects, even light, and stylized peasant figures displays Mieris's skill in the Leiden style. Surrounded by the accoutrements of the home, a mother spoon-feeds her child as her son helps by holding the dish of food and the family dog waits for a falling morsel.



GALLERY 140

Marriage Casket (1390/1400), Italy; Venice

January 1 often ushers in bills along with the new year, making it a good time to resolve to save money. If you lived in the 15th century, this object might have been the place to store your valuables. This casket is typical of the high-quality items that the Embriachi workshop in Venice produced for wealthy patrons in northern Italy and the Burgundy region of France. It would have been used to hold jewels and documents and was often presented as a lavish bridal gift. Episodes from several different stories—among them the Judgment of Paris—appear here in a disjointed fashion, which suggests that the box was probably reassembled haphazardly sometime after the Middle Ages.



GALLERY 68

Teapot with Two Cups and Saucers (c. 1700)

by Matthäus Baur (goldsmith)

Here's a surefire way to cut down on caffeine. Serve your tea in metal cups. The heat of the cups and the prospect of burnt lips may stop you cold, but in the early 18th century this inconvenience would have been a small price to pay for the newly fashionable hot, brewed beverages. This jewel-like tea service is made of gilded silver and enameled copper, extravagantly decorated with miniature paintings of allegorical scenes. An early example of a matching service, this ensemble was created a decade or so before the manufacture of hard-paste porcelain was perfected at Meissen, in Germany. The new ceramic medium would outpace metal not only for practicality but also for its delicate beauty.



GALLERY 178

The Moqui Runner (modeled 1896, cast c. 1897)

by Hermon Atkins MacNeil

As the winter doldrums start to zap your energy, what better time to begin an exercise regime? Let this figure, in full flight with one foot barely touching the earth, be your inspiration. This sculpture depicts a crucial moment of the Hopi Snake Dance, when the chief priest runs from the high mesa to the plains, grasping handfuls of serpents. The released snakes then carry the priest's prayer for rain to the Rainmakers beneath the earth. One observer of the ceremony compared these runners to athletes in the Olympics: "They ran with the chest thrown out and with a light step....It was like seeing one of the old Greek games."



GALLERY 171

Bar-room Scene (1835) by William Sidney Mount

If this scene reminds you of your last visit to the neighborhood bar, it might be time to resolve to monitor your drinking. In his popular genre paintings, William Sidney Mount slyly commented on American social and political issues through scenes of everyday life. Temperance was an important social issue during this time period, and Mount ironically juxtaposes the drunken, dancing reveler with a notice for a temperance meeting posted on the back wall. Alcohol consumption was high in the 1830s, and many of New York's temperance societies considered taverns to be symbols of excessive drinking.



GALLERY 155

Red-Figure Fish Plate (340–320 B.C.)

Greek, from Tarentum in Apulia, South Italy

With a dish like this, you can always have healthy food on your plate! Let this plate, which depicts three fish swimming in circles, motivate you to follow the Mediterranean diet and develop better eating habits this year. The designs were created using the red-figure technique: the red tint of the terracotta pottery can be viewed through the painted black details of the fish. Since designs in red-figure pottery were painted rather than incised, artists were able to attain more naturalistic forms, as seen in the realistic representation of these three fish.

Stay tuned!

Here's something you'll want to resolve not to miss! From February 1 to 21, admission to the museum will be FREE for all visitors. We kick off our free hours with Q&ART on Saturday, February 3. Learn everything you wanted to know about art but were afraid to ask! Curators, art educators, and docents will be present all day throughout the museum giving special gallery talks and answering questions.