

Jack Thompson: *Gemini*

Looking Questions:

- What do you see in this work? Write down all the details.
- Describe the art elements you see in this sculpture, including form, symmetry, balance, and line.
- How does the artist use color in this sculpture?
- What is unusual in this sculpture? Why?
- Does this sculpture remind you of anything familiar? A book? A period of history? Something you have seen or experienced?
- Does the title of the work help you understand the sculpture? Why or why not?
- If you could tell a story about this work, what would it be?
- How does this sculpture make you feel? What do you see that gives you those feelings?



Jack Thompson, *Gemini*, 2004, modeled and cast ceramic (earthenware) painted with Liquin oil medium and pigments, sealed with clear acrylic lacquer, 30" x 29" x 31", James A. Michener Art Museum. Gift of the artist.

About the Artwork:

Jack Thompson has traveled around the world in search of ideas. He has studied in Mexico, Guatemala, and Ecuador. He draws his inspiration from world mythology, aboriginal cultures, and the people around him. His wife and his own pets have been models for his sculptures. He is the son of a surgeon and a student of modern psychology. Thompson acquired a pseudonym, *Jugo de Vegetables*, or *Vegetable Juice*, while studying at the Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia. The name is meant to emphasize the importance of art over artist.

Thompson is interested in the mythology of symbols and the cycle of life. His surrealist sculptures frequently depict fantastical creatures in the process of transforming from one stage of life to the next, or from vegetable to animal and animal to human. "I see life as a transition from one kind of element to another. That's why I show the dog coming out of a log or an artichoke as the head of a woman. This is a theme that recurs all through my work...something dies and becomes something else, like the body becoming vegetation; like the dog coming out of the log."

In his work, Thompson makes reference to multicultural symbolism. He wants to communicate to the viewer that we all come from the same roots and that our prejudices are bred from ignorance of our commonalities. He describes his work as a vehicle to educate people about their common roots and ancestry, in a world where he feels religious dogmatism can be divisive.

K-12 Activities for Your School Visit and Classroom

Visual Arts

Pre-Visit Activities:

- Jack Thompson felt he was in part a Surrealist artist. What does surreal mean? Learn about Surrealism as an art movement. How does Thompson's work compare with that of other Surrealist artists? Present your findings in a visual display.
- Research the term metamorphosis as it applies to works of art. Create an original painting or drawing that incorporates a metamorphosis.
- Jack Thompson was inspired by his travels. Choose a geographical location on a world map. Research its art forms. Create a set of postcard size copies of these art forms to bring with you to the Michener Art Museum. Compare the cultural images you collect to the works of Thompson and other artists in the Michener's collection. What have you discovered?

Post-Visit Activities:

- Create a sculpture that is an example of a transformation — the transformation of a vegetable to an animal, an animal to a human, or a human to a vegetable.
- Create an original life-cycle inspired by a mythological symbol or character. Construct it in three dimensions.
- Jack Thompson is interested in the funerary boats found in Greek, Egyptian, and Norse mythology. Learn more about these boats, and then create an illustration or mixed media sculpture of a mythological boat of your own. Write a story about the journey you take in this fantastical vessel.

Language Arts

Pre-Visit Activities:

- Mythology is incredible literature. Read D'Aulaire's *Book of Greek Myths and Norse Gods and Goddesses*, or *Treasury of Greek Mythology: Classic Stories of Gods, Goddesses, Heroes & Monsters* by Donna DiNapoli. Older readers would enjoy *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes* by Edith Hamilton or Bulfinch's *Mythology*.
- Define the term "cycle of life." How does Jack Thompson portray the idea of the cycle of life in his work? Learn about other artists who incorporate this concept into their work. Do any of them have art currently on display at the Michener Art Museum?

Post-Visit Activities:

- For sculptor Jack Thompson, the fantastic imagery of the epic poem *The Odyssey*, encountered for the first time while he was still in high school, provided the spark for a lifelong passion for mythology. Read *The Odyssey*. What are your favorite scenes and characters? Do they inspire you to create a work of art? To write a story?
- Jack Thompson once said, "Prejudices are bred from ignorance of our incredible commonalities." Write an essay that presents your personal interpretation of this quote.