

A MESSAGE FROM THE  
**EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR  
FOR HEALTH AFFAIRS AND DEAN**



Friday, Dec. 16, 2022

**A unique exploration of art and medicine**

Dear Colleague,

As many know, I am an art fan. I like art of all kinds — visual, literature and performance. Admittedly, I am not much of an artist myself, but this passion has always been a big part of my life. As a physician, I have always tried to find ways to further the intersection of art and medicine, and frequently have found a great deal of common ground for exploring these connections.

I shared in a previous message that we have formed a NextGen+Arts committee to explore how NextGen Precision Health can be enriched by engagement with the arts. We are in the process of hosting a competition for artists with ties to the state to create new works for the Roy Blunt NextGen Precision Health building.

The latest intersection of art and medicine recently presented itself in a unique way. The MU Museum of Art and Archaeology **is on the move** and is in the process of relocating to Ellis Library for a 2023 opening. During this transition, I met Dan Eck, the new director of the museum. During our conversation, he posed an interesting question: would it be possible to X-ray a piece of art to help determine its authenticity?



*Pictured, from left to right, are Allison Schmersal, former radiology supervisor; Dan Eck, museum director; Matt Smith, museum preparator; myself; Veronica Eitel, radiology supervisor; Bill Keller, radiology manager; Dr. Talissa Altes, chair of radiology; and Benton Kidd, curator of ancient art.*

The museum has a very nice oil painting of a man that is signed by the very famous artist Amedeo Modigliani. It is a striking piece, but is not mentioned in the catalog of Modigliani's art. An X-ray of the piece could reveal another image painted on the same canvas underneath the art, which would make the case for this art being an authentic Modigliani. Like many artists of his time, Modigliani was poor and would reuse canvases, scraping off old works and painting on used canvases to save money. He also became one of the most counterfeited artists in the world after his death.

Dr. Talissa Altes, chair of the Department of Radiology, arranged a few minutes for us to image the artwork last month. Dan referenced examples of other art with layered images to give us a sense of what we could be looking for. It was exciting to explore this possibility and be there for the reveal. We did, in fact, see in the X-ray what appeared to be a shadow behind the artwork. However, this was far from conclusive evidence of the artwork's authenticity and Dan is sending the images to experts to have them interpreted.



*Though the results were inconclusive, it was enlightening to see the X-ray of the artwork.*

We often think of the healing power of art and the benefits we may get from admiring works of art. It was a first for me to be on the other side of this equation and provide art with the benefits of science. The intersection of art and medicine continues to amaze, and I am excited for more ways we can collaborate to bring healing and expertise to our community and campus.

Sincerely,

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