

Instructor: The Four Seasons. In 2000, the history of medicine collections and Anthony Benson, formerly of the Division of Educational Media Services at Duke University School of Medicine produced an interactive version of The Four Seasons. This version was reprogrammed for the web with funds donated by Dr. John P. McGovern. The Four Seasons are unique 17th century copper plate engravings from the Trent Collection that were digitally reconstructed for more than 200 photographs in order to reproduce the experience of lifting the multilayered flaps and volvelles to reveal various anatomical dissections, a metaphor for the stages of human life. The prints illustrate not only human anatomy, but are replete with allusions to alchemy, astrology, astronomy botany, geography, palmistry, physiology, uroscopy and zoology. This interactive web version will no longer exist as of December, 2020. This is a recording of the interactive web version. The engravings of The Four Seasons remain in the history of medicine collections as part of the Josiah Charles Trent collection, located in the Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Duke University. Please contact the Rubenstein Library the History of Medicine Collections if you have any questions at all. The Four Seasons historical background, The Four Seasons are four 17th century copper plate engravings approximately 51 centimeters by 41 centimeters of probable German or Flemish origin or possible English origin. One theory proposes they are the design of Robert Fludd. Each presents a season of the year as a metaphor for one of life stages. Birth is represented by spring, youth by summer, adulthood by fall, old age by winter. Although the works primarily illustrate human anatomy they are also densely laced with allusions to what are today known as alchemy, astrology, astronomy, zoology, botany, geography, physiology, uroscopy, and palmistry. Each engraving contains a number of complex parts involving multiple layers of super-imposed paper flaps and volvelles. This copy is believed to be the only one of the series in existence. Little is firmly known of the origin of these works. And despite the considerable efforts of a group of scholars under the leadership of H.F.J Horstmanhoff from the University of Leiden, which has led to the publication The Four Seasons of Human Life published in 2001, they still remain somewhat of a scholarly mystery. The prints can only be traced back to 1912 when they were in the possession of sir D'Arcy Power. Upon his death, the engravings were sold by Sotheby's at an auction held in London on the 9th of June in 1941. They were purchased by Frank Hollings, an antiquarian dealer for 70 pounds. Eventually, they made their way through Henry Schumann, another dealer, into the collection of Duke physician, Dr. Josiah Charles Trent. In March of 1992, Dr. James H Semans and Mrs. Mary Duke Biddle Trent Semans, Dr. Trent's widow, formerly presented these works as part of the Trent collection to the History of Medicine Collections at the Duke University Medical Center Library. This program was produced for the History of Medicine Collections at the Duke University Medical Center Library by the Division of Education Media Services of the Duke University Medical Center with funds donated by Dr. John P. McGovern. The executive producer was Suzanne Porter, curator of the History of Medicine Collections. Interface design, programming, and animation was created by Anthony Benson, digital flap reconstruction by Rob DeVoe, Brian Seabock and Will Kountis. Digital image acquisition and manipulation provided by Courtney Queeny and Ben Easley. CD cover and case design provided by Molly Renda. Original photography provided by Bill Gage and Bill Bamberger. The copyright of this interactive web site is 2000 Duke university.