

LABYRINTH

The labyrinth at Fruitlands was constructed in 2005. The design was inspired by a Pima basket motif from our museum collection, the labyrinth's stone spirals represent passages through time and experience.

History

In Greek mythology, the labyrinth was an elaborate structure built for King Minos of Crete to hold the Minotaur, a creature that was half man and half bull.

Many of us are familiar with medieval designs that came to full flowering in the 12th & 13th centuries. The grand pavement labyrinths of the gothic cathedrals such as Chartres and Amiens in Northern France and Il Duomo Di Siena in Italy.

During those same years some 500 non-ecclesiastical labyrinths were constructed in Scandinavia. They are thought to have been constructed by early fishing communities, to trap trolls and winds in its' coils in order to ensure safe fishing expeditions.

In recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in the labyrinth symbol, which has inspired a revival in labyrinth building.

Labyrinth vs. Maze

The term Labyrinth is often used interchangeably with maze; however they are two different things. A maze is like a puzzle that has twists and turns and blind alleys. A labyrinth has only one path (unicursal) to the center. The way in is the way out and it is not designed to be difficult to navigate.

Uses

Prehistoric labyrinths are believed to have served as traps for malevolent spirits or as defined paths for ritual dances. In Medieval times it symbolized a hard path to the God with a clearly defined center (God) and one entrance (birth). Labyrinths can be thought of as a symbolic form of pilgrimage. Later, the religious significance faded and they were used primarily for entertainment. There has been a resurgence in the spiritual and meditative aspects of labyrinths.



The Minotaur at the center as Depicted on an ancient gem



A Scandinavian "Trojaburg" labyrinth



Some Poems on Labyrinths



Walking the Labyrinth

I enter you slowly, the grassy way is glossy,
 But scrunch of the leaves tells me autumn has come
 The wind scarcely touches, so gentle its presence,
 The sun is withdrawing, a ripening peach.

But all this backdrop to where I must centre
 Concentric smooth windings of well-watered grass
 And slowly the rhythm asserts its transcendence
 And nothing else matters but walking the walk.

Walking I move now beyond daily questions
 And find my feet take me to places inside
 I walk in this wonder of gladness within me
 Recalling past graces, and moments of bliss.

The loves that have held me,
 The glimpses of freedom
 The dawning of knowing
 The treasure I am.

At some point much later, as gently as starting,
 The ending debouches me back to my life.
 I walk from the labyrinth back to my burdens
 Of doing and planning, of worry and doubt.

But somewhere within me, my feet are still walking
 Still walking in rhythm, still hearing the beat....
 And all shall be well now and all will be well,
 Our walking has purpose, our life's roots are deep.

Anne Kathleen McLaughlin, gsic

Seven Circuits: the Cretan Labyrinth

Climbing the hill, I glimpse among the trees
 broken stubs of stone, standing
 like stubs of shattered tombstones, carved slate
 or marble, victim of storm of vandal, or
 like native rocks on old New England gravesites,
 placed to mark burials
 where there was no money for carving.

On the hilltop the rocks reveal
 their pattern, The foxfire path
 spirals moonwise among trees, among stars.
 I choose a white moonsnail shell for talisman,
 follow the moon as it wanes to darkness.

In the surrounding mist,
 pilgrims pace their millennial journey.
 Generations of monks, encowled,
 whisper their prayers.
 Nuns in rough robes
 counting their heavy wooden beads
 walk their rosary circles
 to join me in the labyrinth's hidden heart.

Returning with the waxing moon, I
 place the shell in tribute on a stone
 to mark my visit and emerge
 from the buried past, waking
 to the full morning's glory.

Pat Parnell

A Poem to be found at the center of a Labyrinth:

INFINITE.PATTERN.AND.
 TANGIBLE.WHOLE.UNFOLDING.
 PATHS.TO.THE.UNFETTERED.SOUL
 Patricia Olynyk

Perhaps you would like to try writing your own poem about our labyrinth.
 What did you see, feel, hear as you were walking through???

We would love to hear your thoughts!
 Drop them at the Wayside or email education@fruitlands.org

Fruitlands Museum the View is just the beginning
 102 Prospect Hill Road Harvard, MA 01451

Fruitlands'
 Labyrinth

