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Trotula

Judy Chicago: This is the place setting for Trotula, an eleventh-century gynecologist from southern Italy who wrote a treatise on the diseases of women that was used for five hundred years. She was part of the school of medicine at Salerno in southern Italy, where women were allowed to study medicine at a time when in other parts of Europe this was completely prohibited. The image on her plate derives from that of an Aztec goddess of healing. In the center there is a birth motif and a double snake, or caduceus, the sign of a physician. Her plate sits on a runner quilted in the trapunto technique, which involves selective stuffing of the surface of the quilt. The image is the tree-of-life motif, which seemed appropriate to Trotula's profession and is also one of the images that appears most frequently in needlework history.

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