

OTHERHOOD

CAROLYN GERK



ART GALLERY
of GRANDE PRAIRIE

Alberta Foundation for the Arts
Travelling Exhibition Program



TREX

Alberta Foundation for the Arts

TRAVELLING EXHIBITION PROGRAM

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program since 1981. The mandate of the AFA Travelling Exhibition Program is to provide every Albertan with the opportunity to enjoy visual art exhibitions in their community. Three regional galleries and one arts organization coordinate the program for the AFA:

Northwest Region: The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie, Grande Prairie

Northeast and North Central Region: The Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton

Southwest Region: The Alberta Society of Artists, Calgary

Southeast Region: The Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre, Medicine Hat



Each year, more than 300,000 Albertans enjoy many exhibitions in communities ranging from High Level in the north to Milk River in the south and virtually everywhere in between. The AFA Travelling Exhibition Program also offers educational support material to help educators integrate the visual arts into the school curriculum.

Exhibitions for the TREN program are curated from a variety of sources, including private and public collections. A major part of the program assists in making the AFA's extensive art collection available to Albertans. This growing art collection consists of over 8,000 artworks showcasing the creative talents of more than 2000 artists. As the only provincial art collection in Alberta, the AFA collection reflects the development of the vibrant visual arts community in the province and has become an important cultural legacy for all Albertans.



OTHERHOOD

CAROLYN GERK

Folklore and legend are entangled and twisted; one climbs upon the other like vines on a trellis, each stretching to reach the sun and flourish. Lore itself flourishes when stories are whispered behind curtains and around crackling fires. When children pull covers up to their chins, eyes aglow, legends permeate little minds and each story gains strength. The tales are handed down, passed along in the great relay of life, and like wood worn by the sea, they transform into new shapes. The folktales and legends that survive the tests of time are often the tales of heroes and villains. Our heroes are bold and brave, fierce, and powerful, absorbing the self. We see ourselves in the protagonist, making the villains, the monsters, the grotesque obstacle into the other.

So often the heroes of tales have been the courageous, valiant masculine characters whose foes are the monstrous other; often deformed, demonized, feminized. What is it about the feminized body and the female presenting persona that evokes terror and disgust? What becomes of her when we seek to connect with her monstrosity? The artworks in this exhibition seek to examine the feminized body as monster in fable, folklore, and literature.

Otherhood raises the question, what happens when we look back at legend and lore and examine the evolution of the feminized other? In this exhibition, Carolyn Gerk features nineteen relief prints on various papers. Each piece depicts an interpretation of a monstrous woman who has appeared in legends and folklore. She may be frightening and gruesome in some ways, but in others, perhaps her authority shines through. Carolyn's work seeks to depict recurring themes and patterns that arise in our literary views of the feminine. Deformity, deceit, sorrow, and tragedy are linked to our own perceptions of what is horrific and shocking about the feminine figure. Some of the works use patchwork with different papers, referencing the collage nature of the folktale; a story that evolves and gathers fragments of the lives it touches as it travels along. Others carefully pressed into handmade pages, scattered with bits of leaves and string. Edges are deckled and worn, a well-loved and often revisited memory, like a bedtime story that greets us every night.

Curated by Jamie-Lee Cormier

The Traveling Exhibition Program Region 1:
Northwest Alberta is thankful for our generous
sponsor this year:



MEET THE ARTIST

Carolyn Gerk

Artist Statement

I am a self-taught artist and mother living on Treaty 8 land. I work in a variety of physical mediums, including watercolor, ink, linocut and mixed media fiber arts. My work focuses largely on feminism, social issues, literature, film and the natural world.

My artwork evokes a sense of movement and freedom, with wild splashes of color and twisting lines. Figures are encompassed by swirling, loose colors and vibrant pools, and feature examinations of how beauty and horror intersect.

When working with lino carvings, I aim for bold lines contrasting small details, and a sense of fluidity and motion. I adore the richness that comes with a well carved piece; not to mention the satisfaction of working steadily and slowly. When it comes to creating, I work quickly and almost fervently, motivated by a concept or an idea that I can hardly wait to see fulfilled. Linocut carving requires me to slow down and be patient with the process.

A student at heart, I research many of my works before creating them, to study theories and concepts, to ensure the statements made through my work are fully formed. I use many online and print text resources to create my pieces.

As a rural, northern artist, it can be a challenge to find avenues for artistic efforts. Living and working in an area with limited options for displaying and promoting artwork and difficulty with accessing supplies are notable obstacles. I am active in working with my local library, which is a helpful way to keep in touch with arts and culture programming. Recently, I've joined the Peace River Art Club, and am eager to work with local artists in the future. In 2022, I led several youth focused printmaking sessions in my community, and am working to offer more streamlined instructional sessions in 2023. I utilize a good deal of online networking to expand my work and my business. Through these connections, I have joined a collective of creatives who are committed to donating a percentage of sales to charity on a monthly basis. I am passionate about donating to causes that promote social justice and women's rights.

Motherhood also factors greatly into my work. I work from home and, until recently, homeschooled my two children. I often find myself using my knowledge of art and artists to create engaging programming and curriculum. The two jobs, parenting and creating, are deeply entangled, and one often feeds the other.

My studio is merely a corner of my living room, surrounded by noise, mess and love. I am deeply dedicated to my work and rarely have a day when I don't create something. Creating is my work and my passion, and I am tremendously grateful for it.



Northern Alberta Artist Print Residency

In 2022 SNAP (The Society of Northern Alberta-Print-Artists) and Travelling Exhibitions Northwest (Trex NW) invited applications from artists in Northern Alberta with a printmaking practice who wish to work in the SNAP Printshop for a 4-week period to develop a new body of work. Carolyn Gerk was the selected artist and she created a body of work that went towards this travelling exhibition, *Otherhood*.



SNAP - Society of Northern Alberta Print-artists

SNAP is one of Edmonton's most unique and exciting visual arts organizations with a robust programming schedule, dedicated membership program, active printmaking studio, and the drive to be an important community resource.

The Society of Northern Alberta Print-artists (SNAP) is a non-profit artist run centre dedicated to printmaking in all of its traditional and contemporary forms, carrying out the following:

Maintains a publicly accessible printmaking studio facility to enable artists and members of the community to work in a creative environment that is safe and inclusive.

Programs a public gallery featuring print and print-related works by local, national, and international artists.

Offers a wide range of public educational programs in the processes of printmaking and related media.

snapartists.com



Carolyn Gerk

The Girl with the Green Ribbon, #1 and #2

2022

13 x 16 inches, both

Linocut with Watercolour

Collection of the Artist

The folkloric tale of *The Girl with the Green Ribbon* made infamous by author Alvin Schwartz tells of a beautiful young woman, embodying perfection, who hides an unforgivable monstrosity. Behind the emerald ribbon she wears about her neck lies a surreptitious truth; death is imminent. What terrifies in this story is the way in which The Girl wears her ribbon boldly, barely concealing the reality of what she truly is. She is a monster who hides in the light, and she fools us until the very end. We fear the woman who can embody more than one role simultaneously; there is an uncertainty that grates upon the nerves and leaves us wondering what to expect.

In one version of this piece, the girl's ribbon is vibrant, standing out against her plain, expected form. In the other, the light cast from behind her highlights her union with death; a tryst that cannot be undone.



Carolyn Gerik

The Stepmother and the Crone

2022

13 x 16 inches

Linocut print on handmade paper

Collection of the Artist

Many tales feature evil stepmothers. This character is an archetype that may have formed from the prevalence of death in childbirth. Acting as a mother "replacement," she becomes an anti-mother. She nurtures the child only insofar as it benefits her, shunning and harming the child on a whim. She encompasses the beautiful mother role as well as the evil crone role, turning on a dime from fertile maiden to monstrous evil witch, complete with poisoned fruit. The evil stepmother is monstrous in her capacity to fool. She is an imposter, never completely one role or the other. Does this reflect society's inability to accept the 'replacement' parent as somehow impure, spoiled, or less than the angelic image of the birthing mother?

This piece features a blood red apple separating the two halves of one wicked creation, an overt nod to Snow White and the fairy tale design.



Carolyn Gerik

Baby Yaga's Penthouse

2021

10 x 12 inches

Linocut print on handmade paper

Collection of the Artist

A legend of Slavic lore, the Baba Yaga permeates many tales, but holds to a familiar form. She is an old crone with jagged, iron teeth, long, thin legs who flies about in a mortar while wielding a pestle as a weapon. She is a ferocious anti-mother, often feasting upon children. She dwells in a hut in the woods that sits on chicken legs. So much of the Baba Yaga is other and monstrous, but the image of her tidy hut upon gnarled and overgrown bird legs is wonderfully representative of having a foot in both worlds. We see this familiar, cozy cabin combined with animalistic features and the unpredictability of movement and we are unnerved. But who among us doesn't occasionally long for the power to uproot and relocate?

This print features a dark brick home atop rigid bird legs. Jagged plants strike the air below the structure and an almost sentient curl of smoke reaches down around the building. The handmade paper features bits of warm coloring, evoking a tenderness, a softness, like a story passed onward for generations.



Carolyn Gerck
La Llorona
 2022
 13 x 17 inches
 Linocut print with Watercolour
 Collection of the Artist

A member of the long line of horrific mothers, La Llorona is a Latin-American specter who wanders the darkness searching for the children she has killed. She is associated with water, often appearing dripping wet, or floating in a body of water. La Llorona is said to seek out living children to claim as her own, like the ancient Greek tale of Lamia. Similarly, La Llorona is sometimes told to have been scorned by a lover and as a result, eliminates the children they've born. This can be read as a woman having been forced into consort and eradicating the shame and danger of the evidence. She reflects the fears humanity holds about the mother figure, that she can take a life as simply as she can make one, with a little cunning and a little force. We trust mothers, we need mothers, we rely on the care and love of mothers, so to have a mother cast off her own role by egregiously harming her own offspring to eliminate her motherhood is terrifying. If we cannot trust the mother, then whom can we trust?

La Llorona is portrayed wading into a dark body of water her hair entwined with the rippling liquid. She holds a fierce stare with the viewer, her golden eyes unsettling and animalistic.



Carolyn Gerck
La Corriveau
 2022
 15 x 19 inches
 Linocut print
 Collection of the Artist

A very bleak French-Canadian legend, the tale of La Corriveau is the story of a real-life woman, Mary-Josephthe Corriveau of Saint-Vallier. Mary was executed for the suspected poisonings of her husbands. She was then placed on display in a gibbet (an iron cage) for spectators to view as she deteriorated. Legends formed of the witch Corriveau, still bound in her macabre cage, clinging to the backs of travellers, begging to be carried across the river to meet with the devil. As an evil being, she could not cross a sacred waterway without an honorable Christian soul between herself and the waves. It has been speculated that Corriveau may have been an adulterer who was framed for murder and punished for her hedonism. It's peculiar that the monstrosity clung to the identity of the woman herself and not to the system that would dispose of her in such a grotesque way.

This print portrays La Corriveau as nothing more than the gruesome legend of her cage. She drifts through the fog with only whispers of a human form remaining.



Carolyn Gerik

Lilith

2022

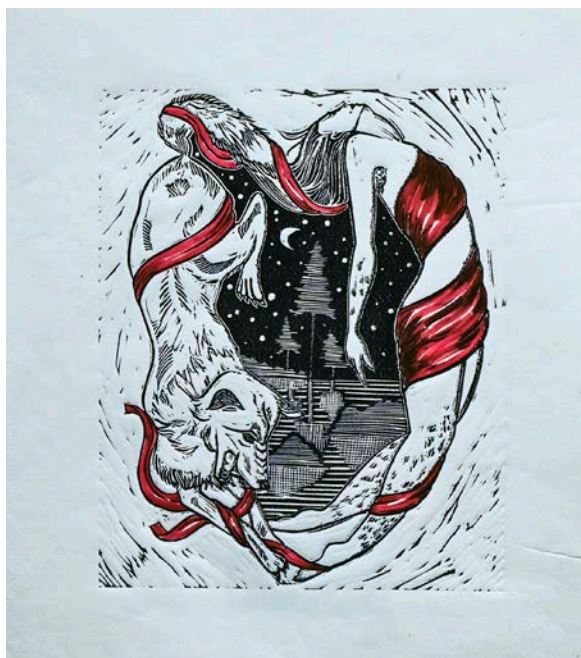
13.5 x 14.5 inches

Linocut print on handmade paper

Collection of the Artist

In Hebrew lore, Lilith was the first wife of Adam, but she has been connected to a number of ancient legends. She has been depicted as a human woman, as a nightmarish demon, as an owl-like creature and as a monster. She is equated with the Greek legend of Lamia and the Latin-American legend of La Llorona in that she is a danger to the newborn and the childbearing woman, snatching lives away during childbirth. Mirroring the image of the vengeful mother, Lilith differs from her cohorts in that she does not actually bear a child. Modern assessments have likened Lilith to a feminist figure, a woman who refuses to bow down before her husband and to bear his child. She is too free to be tamed, and becomes a monstrous figure as a result.

This print features a humanoid figure of Lilith possessing an owl's head and framed with galactic wings. She holds her hands in front of her in some form of prayer, but we see that her hands are dripping with a dark liquid that evokes the hands of the midwife post birth.



Carolyn Gerik

Wolf Woman

2022

16 x 18 inches

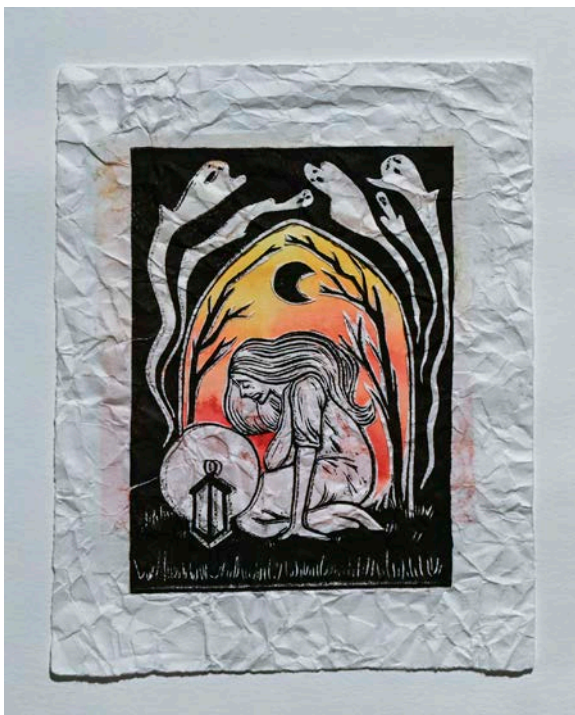
Linocut with Watercolour

Collection of the Artist

The Wolf Woman appears in a number of legends, from old Estonian tales to more modern tales of cryptids in the United States. In the former, a mother abandons her infant at night to seek out her pack in the woods. There, she removes her human skin and leaves it upon a rock while she dances with her own kind. She can be brought back to her own form by presenting her with her baby, for whom she must become human again, in order to suckle. Then, while she bonds with her child, an onlooker might snatch her wolf coat, and keep it from the wild mother, trapping her in her human shape.

Other tales have been told of a girl child abandoned by her parents and raised in the wild as a wolf cub, behaving like a beast, surviving and thriving in the wilderness. She embodies freedom and a connection to the earth. She cannot be bound by societal expectation; she breaks free from the role of timid mother and retains the animalism of girlhood.

This piece depicts the woman and the wolf entwined in a blood red ribbon, encircling the wild home they are both inevitably tied to. Each contains a fluidity, a ferocity and a femininity in her position.



Carolyn Gerk

Banshee's Lament

2022

12 x 16 inches

Linocut print, watercolour, textured paper

Collection of the Artist

The Banshee is a feminized Irish specter who wails to herald an incoming death. Her cry in the depths of night rattles the souls of the living, a chilling premonition of demise. Conceivably, she merely signals a fate predestined, but maybe the truth is that she holds the power to snuff out that sacred life. The Banshee breaks from the feminine norm of the poised, reserved mourning woman by revealing an unabashed display of emotion. Such an uninhibited display seems beastly and animalistic, a loss of control. We might imagine, though, that her very power exists in that measured dose of feeling and the very fear that it produces in its audience.

This print features a black linocut piece over a watercolor background, evoking the sun setting upon a day full of sorrow and mourning. The edges of the print are softened and textured, as worn and weary as a woman deep in the throes of anguish.



Carolyn Gerk

Sphinx

2022

18 x 18 inches

Linocut print

Collection of the Artist

In ancient Greek mythology, the Sphinx was a monster. She possessed the head and sometimes breasts of a woman, the body of a lion and the wings of a falcon or eagle. She guarded the Greek city of Thebes and would discern entry based upon whether travellers could answer her riddle. If they could not, she would feast upon them with her voracious maw. She is often described as wicked, demonic and ruthless, eviscerating the men who failed her test. Eventually, she would be bested by Oedipus, who solved her riddle, sending her diving from the cliffs in despair.

The sphinx, a beastly amalgam of human intelligence and wild voracity, represents the danger of a woman with knowledge and hunger. She has information, and with that education comes control. She had the power to say no, to stop men from setting foot where she did not want them to tread.

This print features a dark background against which the hulking figure of the sphinx sits, a mouth of jagged piercing teeth on full display. She is regal and poised, looking out and daring the viewer to cross her.



Carolyn Gerk

Hag Ridden

2022

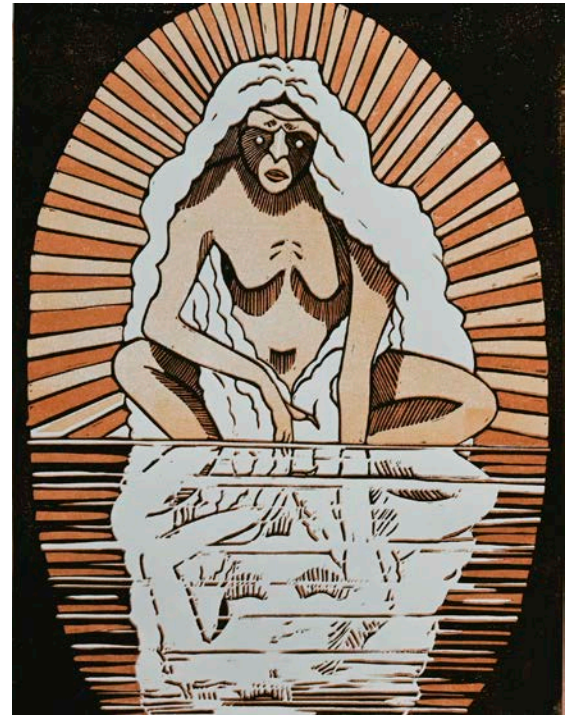
14.5 x 15 inches

Linocut print on handmade paper

Collection of the Artist

This monstrous woman lives not only on the borders of awakening and slumber but also on the edges of myth and reality. Once believed to be an actual, physical nightmare demon perching violently atop the chests of dreamers, breathing deeply of their souls, the Night Hag has since been linked to the medical condition known as sleep paralysis. Sufferers of sleep paralysis often describe feeling a presence in the room, often atop the body, and find themselves completely, terrifyingly immobilized. This woman-monster strikes her victims at their most vulnerable, creating a deep contrast to the image of a comforting mother soothing her child to sleep.

In this print, we see The Night Hag perched atop a sleeping victim in a darkened space. Her mouth is open in what may be a scream or perhaps a deep breath, inhaling the very essence of this unaware sleeper's mind.



Carolyn Gerk

Grendel's Mother

2022

14 x 17 inches

Linocut Reduction print

Collection of the Artist

Grendel's mother is a beast-like creature who appears in the Old English poem Beowulf. She is the mother of Grendel, whom the hero Beowulf slays. She is depicted as vengeful; at once a warrior, a witch and a monster. I've portrayed Grendel's mother as a hulking woman, cast in gold. She is human-like, but highly animalistic. She represents vengeance, the duty of motherhood, the trials of bearing a child.

She is the 'terrible mother', an archetype that represents death and annihilation. She is an opposing personality to the 'great mother' who embodies creation, birth and nurture. Grendel's mother is an ultimate and archaic monster.



Carolyn Gerk

Harpies

2022

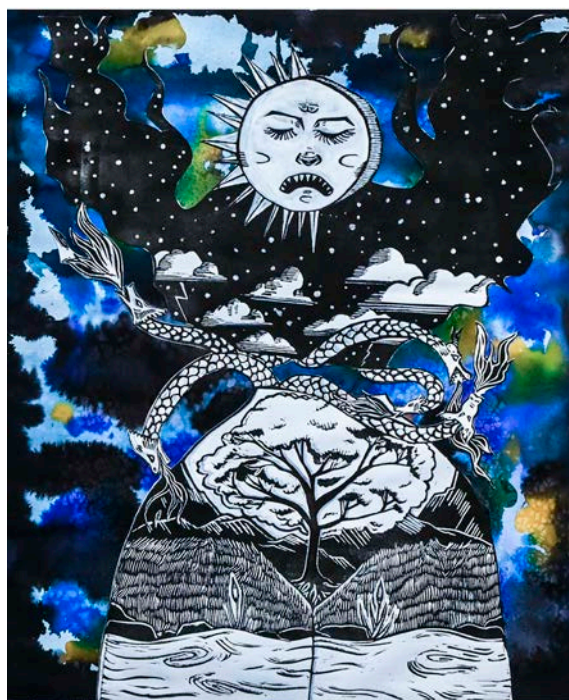
15 x 15 inches

Linocut print

Collection of the Artist

The classic monster of Greek and Roman lore, the Harpie is made up of one half bird and one half woman. Her monstrosity blooms where she exists on the borders of two beautiful beasts. When a figure exists in two worlds, she cannot be fully understood or trusted by either. She embodies the violent storm wind, snatching away what we hold dear. Some of her otherhood lies in her perceived greed and her ability to appropriate what isn't hers. Perhaps she seeks only sustenance, whisking away goods to feed here two othered halves.

She is centered on a white page looking solemn and wistful. Behind her lies a shadow or a pale companion in a golden ink. She rarely travels alone.



Carolyn Gerk

Tiamet

2022

17 x 20 inches

Linocut with watercolour

Collection of the Artist

Tiamet is an ancient Mesopotamian creator goddess, credited with birthing further gods and goddesses. Her offspring rise up and kill their father, Tiamet's husband, Apzu, the God of Groundwater. Tiamet transforms into a primordial sea monster, inflicting wrath upon her own children. Marduk, heroic storm-god, ascends to execute Tiamet, slicing open her middle. Ancient dragons and monsters pour forth from her belly, as a lingering plague upon the world. Tiamet is primordial and chaotic, holding the power to birth and create, which equates to a power over life and death. From her womb, even as she dies, she releases a vicious power, leaving her upper half to become the heavens over earth and her lower half to become the sacred ground.

The main image of Tiamet features two halves of the world, the lower, earthbound segment and the heavens above. She is mounted against a galactic watercolor background which highlights the chaotic notion of elemental creation.



Carolyn Gerk

Scylla

2022

19 x 25.5 inches

Linocut print

Collection of the Artist

Scylla, monster of Greek mythology, is written about as one half of a duo of beasts who guard the cliffs along a dangerous channel. Her companion, Charybdis, like many of the ancient monsters, is depicted as something not at all humanoid, and yet attributed feminine pronouns. She is a swirling whirlpool of madness. Scylla stands along side her, atop her cliff, allowing no safe passage for sailors. Scylla is described as having a wealth of serpentine necks, reaching tentacles, and a wreath of vicious barking dogs about her waist. I've portrayed the monstrous Scylla with a recognizable human form. She stands proudly atop her cliff, secure, knowing that she won't be overtaken, she won't be violated. She sweeps her wildly snapping tendrils off of her shoulders and gazes at the passing sailors, secure in her power.

Produced on warm, deckled paper, this print of Scylla looms over the viewer. She is strong and imperial with an array of curling tentacles protruding from her lower half. Her waist is ringed with the heads of snapping canines, and behind her, a group of snakes fan out like wings. She overlooks a rough sea of crashing waves, daring the viewer to decide which path is the most dangerous.



Carolyn Gerk

Medusa

2022

15.25 x 14.5 inches

Linocut print and watercolour

Collection of the Artist

Medusa's story is a well-known tale; a woman harmed becomes a vengeful monster. Her rage and her story are painted upon her, so much so that any fierce warrior who seeks her will find themselves met with an image so monstrous that they will be ripped from reality and turned to lifeless stone. Medusa has become a feminist icon over time, representing not a marked victim but an animalistic rage that takes back control from the patriarchal system. This piece combines linocut relief printing with watercolor. Medusa is portrayed with bold, heavy lines, and beyond her is a blended, ethereal colorway that signifies two opposing ends of the spectrum of the woman herself.

Carolyn Gerk

Kuchisake-Onna

2022

13 x 16 inches

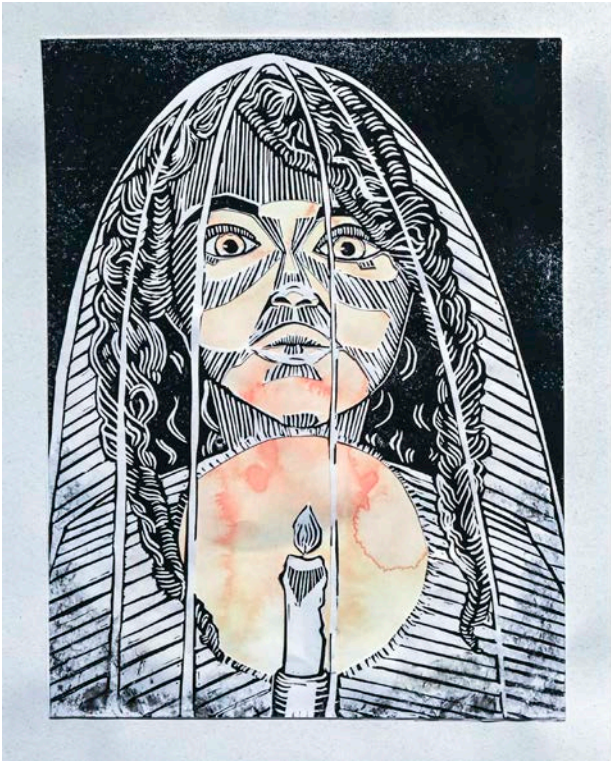
Linocut print with watercolor

Collection of the Artist

A Japanese ghost or yokai, this monstrous woman appears to passers by with her face partially covered, sometimes by her black hair, sometimes by a surgical mask. She asks the people she meets if they find her beautiful. If the answer is 'no', she dispatches them with her shears. If they say yes, she reveals her monstrous 'slit-mouthed' scars and assaults her victims with the same wound. Legends depict her as an adulterous woman who was punished for her sins with the violent injury that has left her with such infamous scars. It might be surmised that she represents the duality of the feminine ideal: she could not be both a faithful wife and an appealing temptress at once, and now uses her tragic dilemma to leave her marks on others.

Kuchisake-Onna is portrayed with a jagged mouth, exposing many teeth. Below her is her weapon of choice, a sharp pair of golden scissors.





Carolyn Gerk

Bertha Mason Rochester, #1 and #2

2022

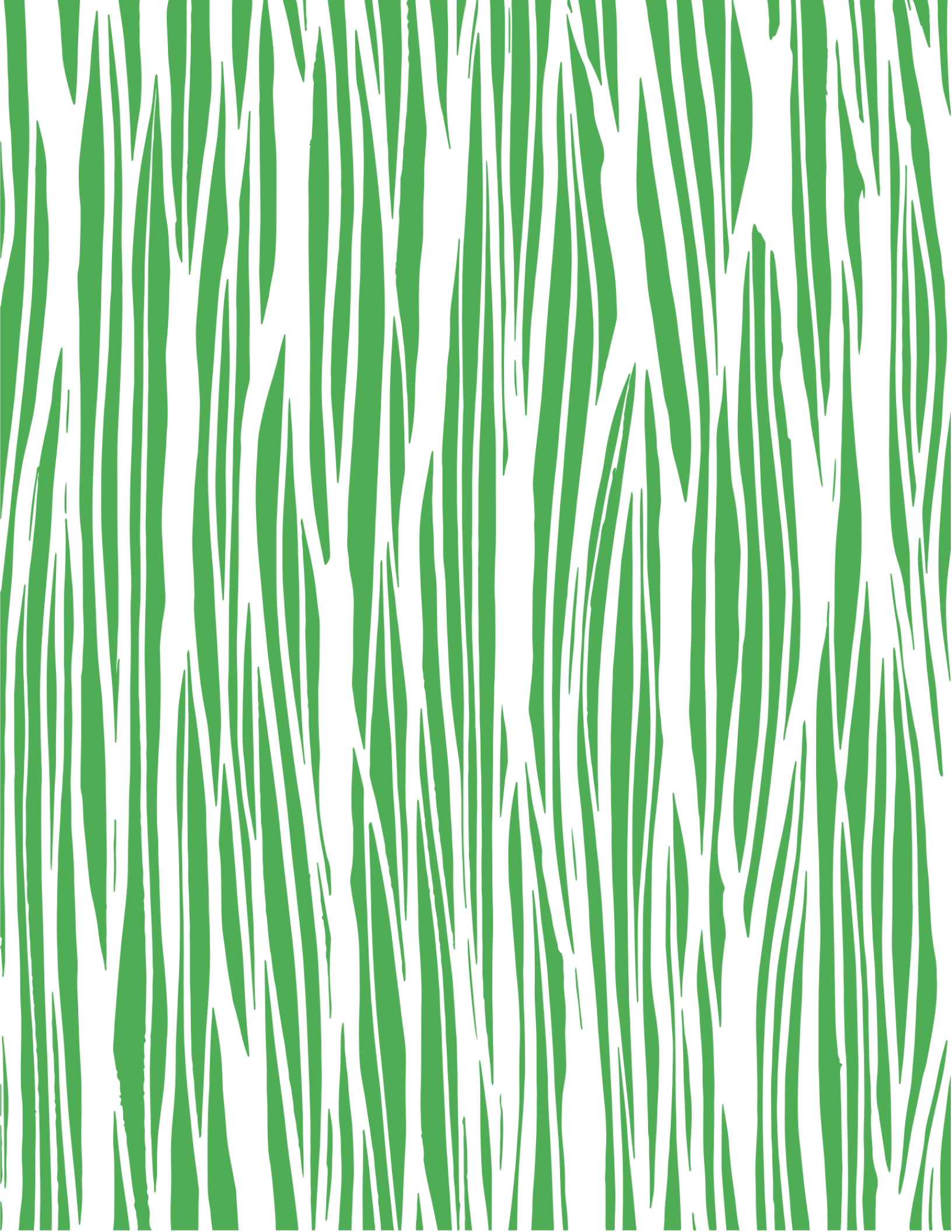
13 x 16 inches, both

Linocut print with handpainted accents

Collection of the Artist

Bertha Mason is best known for two things: being the “property” of Jane Eyre’s boyfriend and for being a symbol of madness. Her inability or unwillingness to conform to the roles and duties of the Victorian wife is societal monstrosity. Compound this with mental illness, a thing best silenced in the era, and general dissatisfaction with the status quo and she becomes a more modern rival to Tiamet or Medusa. The madwoman in the attic is chilling because she represents unpredictability. She is captive and feral, wandering about the caverns of the home with a candle. She is shedding light in doing so, on the way we enforce expectations and how we cast off the mentally ill. The inimitable Mrs. Rochester may lurk in the darkness, but what is perceived as a combustibility may actually be a controlled burn.

One version of Bertha shows a restrained, if shadowed woman, holding a candle in front of her with a glowing flame. Her fire is withdrawn, small, barely perceptible. In the other, Bertha is fully cast in the ethereal glow of her fire, as if the flame comes from within her own skin.



OTHERHOOD

EDUCATION GUIDE

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HOW TO LOOK AT ARTWORK

Based on the Four Stages of Criticism

Age Levels:

K-Grade 3: Do stage 1 and possibly stage 2

Grades 4-6: Do stage 1, 2 and possibly 3

Grades 7-12: Do all four stages

Stage 1: Description

What do we see when we look at a work of art?

- List or describe all that you see. Hint: Start with what you know.
- Describe the subject. What is this a picture of? Landscape, nature, people, animals, flowers, still life, etc.
- Describe the materials used to make this art (medium/materials): Is it an acrylic or watercolor painting? Drawing? Photograph?
- Describe the type of lines. What kind of shapes are used? Natural or geometric? Is there any texture to the surface of the artwork (rough/smooth//dry/wet). Does the work have areas (values) of dark and light?

For Grades 10-12: Describe the style of work. Is it realistic or abstract? Does it have a theme or subject? Can you describe a style that it resembles? For example, Impressionism, Expressionism, Surrealist.

Stage 2: Analysis - Observing Relationships

How is this artwork (composition) arranged?

- List and describe the principles of design (movement, contrast, unity, balance, emphasis, rhythm, scale and space).
- Are there contrasts of light and dark colors?
- Are colors or shapes repeated to create unity or rhythm? Is there a sense of motion?
- Do the objects seem to be close up and in a shallow space or move far back to create deep space and distance?
- Is there one object that stands out and is more emphasized than other objects?

For Grades 10-12:

- Does the artist use complimentary colors against each other to create balance?
- What type of balance is it (symmetrical or asymmetrical)?

Stage 3: Interpretation

What meaning or reasons did the artist have in making this artwork?

This stage is a statement to help make sense of all the observations made in previous stages. It is the most difficult, yet most creative stage. It is the process that makes connections between the artwork and the viewer's personal experiences.

- What do you think this work is about?
- What mood or feeling do you get from this work?
- Why did the artist create this work?
- What do you think the artist thinks or feels about their world?
- Give an explanation of the work or describe the problem the artist is trying to solve. Remember there are no right or wrong answers in the interpretation. Each viewer will bring their own ideas and life experience into their explanations.

Stage 4: Final Conclusion About the Work

What do I think or feel about this work?

Decide what you like or dislike about the work. This is purely subjective, however the decision should be backed with valid explanations and possible ideas as to how the artist could have changed it to make it better.

- Do you like the work? Why or why not?
- What are the strengths about this work?
- What are the weaknesses and how would you change them?
- Has your impression of the work changed after observing and analyzing the piece?



Carolyn Gerk
Bertha Mason Rochester, 2022
Linocut print with handpainted accents
Collection of the Artist

EDUCATOR'S GUIDED TOUR

Otherhood, a series of linocut relief prints by artist Carolyn Gerk, serves as an anthology of the femme monster in folklore. Surveying tales from across millennia and continents, Gerk introduces us to a range of feminised villains whose cultures of origin vary as widely as ancient Mesopotamia and 18th century New France (what is now Quebec). What unites each of these spectres is that their frightening qualities stem from what is perceived as a perversion of their feminine duties, bodies, and sexuality.

In visually cataloguing this impressive range of creatures and characters, Gerk demonstrates that female monsters are a common feature of human culture. Given that roughly half the population of every human society is female-bodied, it might be expected that feminised beasts and villainous femmes would feature in at least some of every society's legends. However, the distinction that Gerk alludes to throughout the *Otherhood* collection is that feminised monsters are not simply equal members in a gender-inclusive pantheon of creatures. Instead, their monstrosity stems specifically from the otherness that pervades perceptions of the female body, female roles in society, and female sexual desire. The title "Otherhood" plays on this idea by altering the word "motherhood", suggesting a mirrored dark side to the dutiful role that is the epitome of female propriety. What is more, when compared with their male counterparts, female-presenting creatures and characters are more likely to have their power or cunning described as evil or perverse, rather than authoritative or awe-inspiring. Inevitably, these villains present a risk to the hegemonic order of society which is defended by archetypal male heroes.



Carolyn Gerk, *Sphinx*, 2022.
Linocut print. Collection of the Artist

In "SPHINX", Gerk's mythical creature is cut from clean, strong lines and decorated with shadows that give a dynamic and muscular appearance to her lion body. Gerk's inclusion of a celestial body behind the creature – it could be either a full moon or the sun – may reference the riddle asked by the sphinx in Greek lore:

"There are two sisters: one gives birth to the other and she, in turn, gives birth to the first. Who are the two sisters?"

The answer to this riddle is "day and night".

The sphinx's strong haunches and large wings are majestic, but the smile of long, jagged teeth splitting her pretty human face indicates that her beauty is merely a disguise for evil intentions. In Greek legend, the sphinx guards the passage of entry into the city Thebes. The legend concludes with a male hero, Oedipus, solving the sphinx's riddle, leading the sphinx to throw herself to her death from a cliff. Later artistic interpretations of this myth have often depicted the sphinx as a femme fatale, her beautiful face and bared breasts ensnaring men just as much as her complex riddles. Oedipus's victory has been viewed as a male triumph over the pitfalls of female seduction; what makes the sphinx a monster rather than a heroic guardian is the danger of her sexual allure. Gerk's print calls the viewer to question why the sphinx, known for being an intelligent and powerful protector of Thebes in Greek legend, was nevertheless most infamous for being cruel to men who could not answer her riddles.

In fascinating contrast, the sphinx from Ancient Egyptian lore predates its Greek counterpart – and was typically depicted as male. While it was also a powerful guardian that barred entry to sacred spaces, the male Egyptian sphinx was ultimately seen as a benevolent and majestic creature. Gerk's inclusion of the female sphinx and its terrifying smile reminds us that, when it comes to beasts of legend, gender does matter.

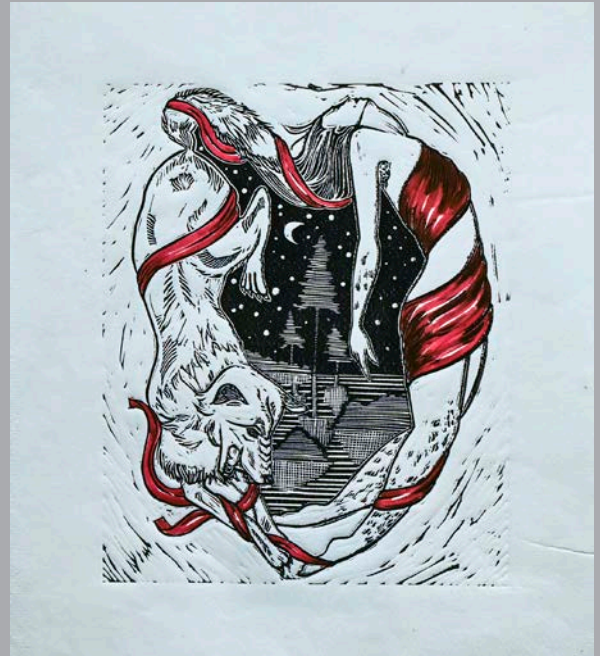
"LA LLARONA" is unique in the Otherhood series for the stylized, doll-like facial proportions of its "monster". In the legend of La Llorona, still widely circulated in Mexico and Mexican diaspora communities today, La Llorona is the most beautiful woman in town before her deviance monsterizes her. In the print, her sweet, youthful features rise out of inky black water, suggesting that her beauty has been tainted or corrupted by darkness. Her eyes glow yellow; she is no longer fully human but a member of the undead. Yet, her knit brows and the tears streaming from her glowing eyes make her look more sorrowful than evil; more pitiable than terrifying. In most tellings of the legend, La Llorona is first a beautiful woman, a committed wife, and loving mother until her husband abandons her for another woman. This betrayal induces a state of insanity, during which she drowns her two children. She continues to haunt communities, searching in variations of the legend either for children to drown or to adopt to replace her lost sons. La Llorona's story exemplifies the process by which women, respectable within traditional roles of domesticity and subservience, become monsters by inverting these roles.



Carolyn Gerk, *La Llorona*, 2022. Linocut print with Watercolour. Collection of the Artist

In the long history of the legend, La Llorona has at times been connected to the ghost of Malinche, a female Indigenous guide to the Hernan Cortes's conquistadors who is often viewed as a national traitor, as well as to Indigenous women who suffered ongoing sexual and gendered violence at the hands of the conquistadors. When taking the colonial context of her story into account, La Llorona's trials at the hands of men and the potential causes of her insanity broaden to include any number of horrors from the colonial era. Gerk's depiction of a young and innocent female face speaks to a view of La Llorona that sees her as a victim more than a monster.

In "WOLF WOMAN", we catch a glimpse of what might be interpreted as female joy, rare within the Otherhood series. The woman depicted seems to be in a state of transcendence, her limbs limp with abandon as she rises, throat and heart first, upwards into a night sky. Close on her heels is a playful wolf, symbolising the nearness of her transformation into a werewolf creature. Hair floats back from her head but also grows visibly under her arms and on her limbs. While post-pubescent hair growth is to be expected on women, it is startling to realise how rarely it is depicted in art or media. Its inclusion in this print reminds viewers of the societal expectation for the female body to be carefully manicured and tamed, while also drawing attention to the natural sameness between this character's human and wolf bodies. The blood red ribbon entwining the two bodies brings to mind the blood associated with the female body through menstruation and childbirth, two natural functions that, while essential



Carolyn Gerk, *Wolf Woman*, 2022. Linocut with Watercolour. Collection of the Artist

for human life, have been seen as unclean, animalistic, or "other" in societies where maleness is normative. The woman in "WOLF WOMAN" appears to experience freedom in joining with the animal version of herself. This print draws on an Estonian folk tale that tells of a woman who is turned into a wolf by an evil stepmother, taking her away from her husband and baby. In many tellings of this tale, the woman is interested in nursing when her baby is brought to her at the edge of the forest, but resists returning to her human form and her domestic duties until forced to do so by her husband, who burns her wolf coat. In this tale and in Gerk's print, it is abandoning oneself to the animal nature of the female body – feared in patriarchal societies – that allows women to find freedom and autonomy in the form of a beast.

In many cultures and societies, women are valued for their adherence to social roles that make them safe, desexualized, and submissive. Female monsters in the lore of such societies often point to a fear of women who break outside of these roles, or who refuse to allow male bodies and perspectives to be normative. Gerk's "Otherhood" series does an excellent job of gathering many of these female monsters and villains in one place and portraying them in the accessible, clean detail of linocut print. By creating this roll call of scary and spooky femmes, Gerk challenges viewers to notice and challenge the long-standing cultural and literary pattern of viewing women as the "other." *Otherhood* asks its viewers to relate to these monsters, and at the same time figure out what it is we are really afraid of.

MISUNDERSTOOD MONSTERS IN WESTERN LITERATURE

In *Otherhood*, Carolyn Gerk surveys a long list of feminised monsters, starting with characters from the earliest days of recorded mythology. Monsters have always been a part of the human imagination, and, while the specifics of their monstrosity reflects the expectations of their cultures of origin, they tend to serve a similar purpose across cultures. Monsters embody a threat to the moral and structural order of the human societies they plague. They represent chaos, deviance, and “otherness” – for better or worse, they do not conform to the expectations of society. In many stories, monsters act as a foil to a hero who represents normative power based on maleness, health, and strength. By defeating the monster, the hero proves his worthiness to maintain societal power. In “Otherhood” the deviance from the norm is clear – the monsters are all female and have all in some way violated expectations for female roles, bodies, or sexuality. Gerk’s series questions the “otherness” of her monsters, and asks readers to challenge the norms that these monsters have failed to meet. In doing so, she joins a long trajectory of the monster narrative in Western art and literature, one that has seen monsters go from manifestations of divine evil to complex creatures that may deserve human sympathy and even acceptance.

Early stories in the Western canon that instruct the reader not to take monstrosity at face value are often those of noble people that have been bewitched into ugliness. Likely stemming from the Ancient Greek myth of Psyche and Cupid, the tale of the bewitched prince was popular in the oral tradition of European folk tales and was written down in a variety of fairy tales in the early modern period. This trope is famously played out in *Beauty and the Beast*, in which the prince has been turned by a witch into a monster and can only regain his human form if the princess tells him she loves him. In *The Frog Prince*, a prince bewitched into a frog uses helpfulness and persistence to get into the bedroom of a princess. In the Norwegian folk tale *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, a girl is traded by her family to a white bear who turns out to be a beautiful prince betrothed against his will to a troll queen. The moral of these stories is that it is worth it for women to look past physical flaws and to redeem the goodness in men by offering true love. It is worth noting that none of these famous tales is about a female character who is bewitched into monstrosity and manages to find a lover who looks past her ugliness. Additionally, the villains of these tales are often female witches, trolls, jealous sisters, or stepmothers who do not get any kind of redemptive story arc. Gerk’s print *THE STEPMOTHER AND THE CRONE* illustrates the irredeemable stepmother / hag villain from these early tales; her main purpose is to thwart or challenge the male hero in his noble quest for true love. Generally, it seems that her wicked behaviour is borne from the jealousy brought on by the otherness of her own age and ugliness. While the seed of the misunderstood monster story – at least for male monsters – was planted in early European fairy and folk tales, it required the advent of humanism to see it grow beyond a “bewitched hero” trope.



Carolyn Gerk

The Stepmother and the Crone
2022

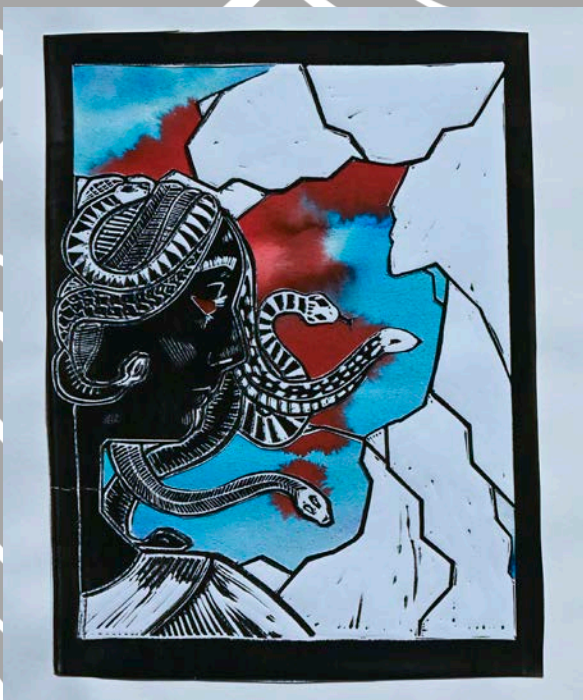
Linocut print on handmade paper
Collection of the Artist

The emphasis on reason and humanism that grew out of the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods led to more complex characters in fiction and playwriting. It wasn't until writers in the Romantic period steered emphasis away from scientific reason, however, that monsters made their literary comeback. Romantic, and particularly Gothic writers were interested in revisiting the mythical, supernatural, and spooky aspects of early legends and folktales. Unlike the one-dimensional good and evil dichotomy of early heroes and villains, Gothic writers blurred the lines and allowed monsters to have emotions too. Mary Shelley's seminal work *Frankenstein* gives The Creature a tragic backstory, and explains his violent behaviour as a psychological reaction to being rejected and othered by society. Victor Hugo's Gothic novel *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* created a protagonist whose deformities make him unfairly feared as a monster, though he has a pure heart. In Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the monstrous Hyde is written as a thinly veiled allegory for the dark parts of human nature that live within all of us. A few decades after *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, early psychologist Carl Jung posited his theory of the shadow self – the socially unacceptable and therefore repressed aspects of the self – often conceptualised as the monster within. The advent of psychology as a discipline launched an era during which psychological complexity became the basis for most literary fiction, making it expected for villains and monsters to have a plausible and even humanising rationale for their actions.

There is a Gothic literary villain depicted in the "Otherhood" series – the character Bertha Mason, who is described in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* as a 'goblin' and a 'vampire' due to her insanity. The mentally ill Bertha is locked up by her husband, but this tragic backstory is not written with the kind of sympathetic treatment afforded The Creature or Quasimodo. Bertha is merely the "other" – the foil to Jane Eyre and the obstacle in Jane's love story, like a wicked witch in a fairy tale. Despite changing views of monsters influenced by Gothic writing and psychological analysis, it wasn't until feminist scholarship in the 20th century began to look critically at how deviance from expected gender roles was used as a method of villainizing women in literature that characters like Bertha could be seen as "misunderstood monsters". Carolyn Gerk's BERTHA MASON is a diptych – two portrayals of the same woman. In the black and white print, Bertha is dulled and subdued, suffering illness and imprisonment in the dimness of the Rochester mansion. In the colourized print, Bertha is lit up with the glow of her candle flame, representing perhaps an inner strength to her madness and a desire for freedom.

A legend that has been popularly reconceived in the current era of feminist analysis is the tale of Medusa, also represented in "Otherhood". Medusa's origin story of being turned into a monster as punishment for surviving sexual assault now tends to be viewed with compassion, and her ability to take revenge on men by turning them to stone as empowerment. In recent years, tattoos of Medusa have come to symbolize the resilience of those who have survived sexual assault.

Today the idea of the misunderstood monster – the "other" – is common in both adult and children's literature. Characters as varied as Boo Radley from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Tim Burton's Edward Scissorhands, and Sully from *Monsters Inc.* represent the modern fascination with seeing the monstrous "other" become humanised and familiar. School children often do units on "fractured fairy tales", rewriting fairy tales from the view of the monster or villain. The popularity of this narrative comes in part from the important work of scholars and activists who have exposed the oppression that has often been baked into representations of female, disabled, queer-coded, or racialized villains. Our modern desire for the world to be explicable, and for evil to be a psychological phenomenon that can be healed also plays a part in this popular trope. Still, female monsters with complex, humanising backstories are rare in popular media and literature. Carolyn Gerk's *Otherhood* series opens the door for further retellings and could inspire new monster legends that can frighten readers, teach important lessons, and humanise female villains all at the same time.



Carolyn Gerk

Medusa

2022

Linocut print and watercolour
Collection of the Artist

PRINTMAKING AND ACTIVISM

Otherhood is a series of 14 linocut prints. Linocut printing starts with a piece of linoleum which is carved into an image, like a big stamp. Ink is then rolled onto the linoleum block and the block is pressed onto paper, producing the printed image. In this way, many reproductions of the same image can be made using one block.

Linocut is just one form of printmaking – wood, stone, and rubber may also be used to create blocks for relief printing and processes like silkscreen and intaglio, while requiring more complex materials, have also been used for centuries to mass produce copies of images. The general accessibility of relief printing and the ability of the printmaking medium to produce many copies of the same image has made printmaking a folk art form throughout much of its history. Since its origin, printmaking has been used to distribute ideas to the masses. Over time, this medium developed as a tool for protest and activism. Additionally, relief printed images tend to be high contrast and use clear lines and shapes which give them a simplicity and high emotional impact. This quality makes relief prints useful for reproducing logos, symbols, and easily recognizable images that support a movement. The below gives a short summary of key activist uses of relief printing.

Religion

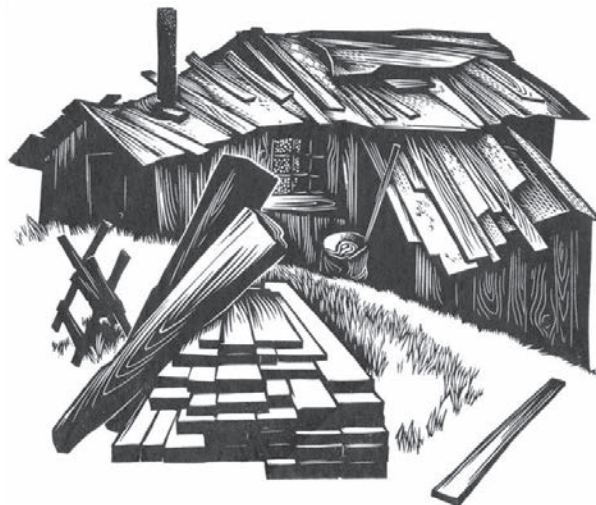
The first uses of relief prints as a method of mass persuasion were for the cause of religion. As early as the second century AD, Chinese scholars were using woodblock prints to disseminate Buddhist teachings.

Printmaking flourished in Europe as a mass media during the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. Although many people who lived in the time of the Reformation were illiterate, woodblock illustrations with symbolic messages allowed theological and political ideas to spread widely and incite change.

Labour Movements

In the early 20th century, printmaking was used as a medium by artists around the world promoting labour reform and working class solidarity.

Chinese activists such as Li Hua formed the New Woodcut Movement and created highly emotive prints illustrating the suffering of Chinese peasants. Linocut and woodblock prints made by Soviet and Yugoslav artists were seen as a reaction against the upper class Parisian art world. Renowned Mexican artists formed the Workshop of Popular Graphic Art and produced prints featuring revolutionary ideas that could be easily understood by the masses when published in newspapers. In the United States, Franklin Roosevelt's Federal Art Project, part of the New Deal, funded artists like Richard V. Correll who used printmaking as a way to document the struggles of poor farming families in dust bowl America. The striking two-toned nature of these black and white prints puts their message in stark terms.



Credit: Copyright Leslie Correll, Labor Archives of Washington, University of Washington Libraries Special Collections.

Richard Correll, *Dwellings of the Jobless #1*. 1939. Lino cut

Anti-War

Alongside its popularity with labour activists, printmaking was used by many influential anti-war activists during the 20th century. In China, Li Hua used his prints to protest the Sino-Japanese War. After German artist Käthe Kollwitz's eighteen year old son was killed in war, she created the series *Krieg* (War), which criticised the pro-war culture that led to the deaths of young men and the grief of their mothers. Many of Kollwitz's contemporaries such as Otto Dix and Frans Masreel joined her in portraying the horrors of war and poverty through their prints. Later, American artists protested the Vietnam War through the use of printmaking. In 1965, printmaker Lorraine Art Schneider created a tiny etching called *Primer*, which she later donated to the American anti-war group 'Another Mother for Peace' who used it in a campaign to protest the Vietnam War. This print became one of the most iconic and widespread anti-war images of all time. In 1967, T.G. Lewis's prints illustrated a comic book by Black politician Julian Bond which connected his anti-war beliefs with the need for civil rights activism.



Primer, Lorraine Schneider, 1965

Civil and Human Rights

The culmination of printmaking's history as an accessible art form for the masses is its use in a wide variety of civil and human rights campaigns from the 20th century until today. In America, Black artists such as Elizabeth Catlett used printed images to illustrate the struggle of Black Americans under Jim Crow laws. Feminist activists have also used printmaking to spread promotional materials; the See Red Women's Workshop, founded in 1974 when printmaking was still cheaper than photocopying, produced art on posters, calendars, and clothing to disseminate messages about women's rights and livelihoods.

In 2017, Indigenous artists Christi Belcourt and Isaac Murdoch created silkscreen printed banners advocating for the environmental protection of water systems. These banner images became widely popularised as symbols of the NoDAPL movement and represent support for Indigenous sovereignty by those who display them. These clean cut and easily recognizable images are a demonstration of the power printmaking has to unite people in a movement even in the modern day.

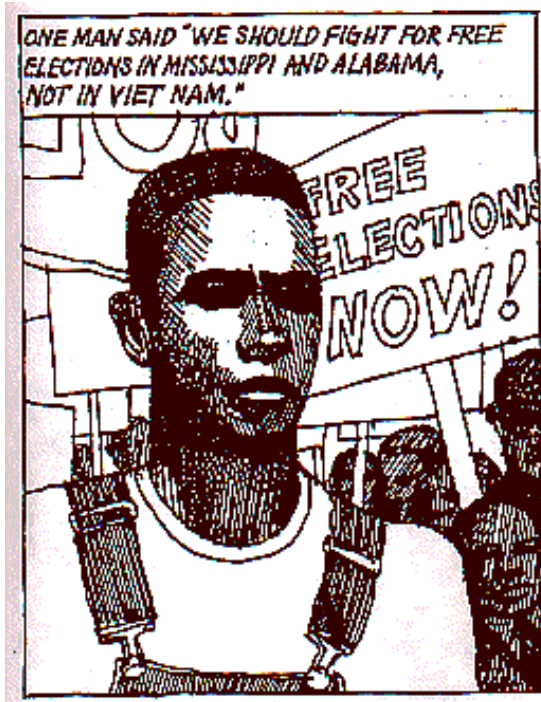
Today, the legacy of printmaking as an accessible medium for artists and activists, especially those working without easy access to arts institutions, continues on. Carolyn Gerk's *Otherhood* series is a continuation of this legacy; her series was made in her own home in a small Northern community in a space she shares with her children. The content of the prints themselves is an openly feminist commentary on the ways that deviations from societal norms for women or, in the case of Medusa, reactions against gendered violence lead women to be seen as monstrous or dangerous.



A Woman's Work is Never Done, See Red Woman's Workshop, 1974.



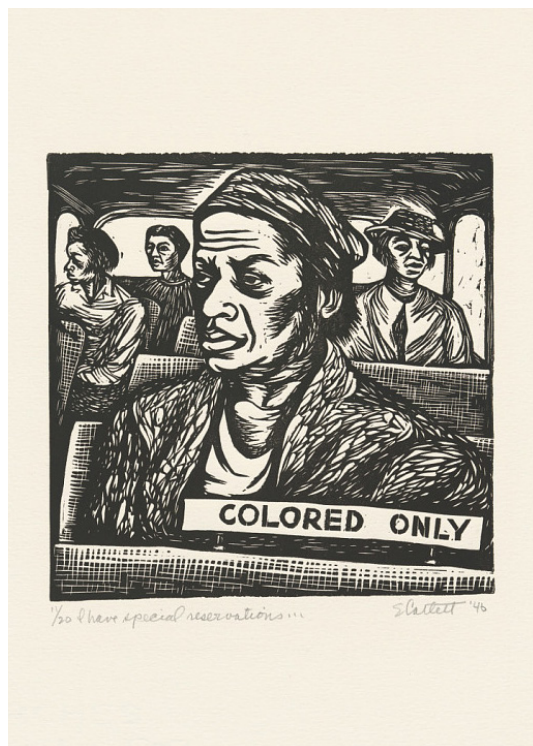
The Volunteers, Käthe Kollwitz, 1923



Vietnam, Page 4, T. G. Lewis, 1967



Water is Life, Isaac Murdoch, 2017.



Elizabeth Catlett, *I Have Special Reservations*, 1946.

INTRODUCTION TO WOMEN AND SYMBOLISM IN ART

Throughout art history, artists have used symbolism to convey meanings within the images they create. Various objects, facial expressions, and colours are clues that the artist uses to explain the connotation and story of their image to the viewer. In many cases, symbols allow a crass or racy message to be shared without explicit obscenity. In other cases, symbols may provide moral instruction, a call to an ideal, or reminders of religious devotion. Women and their bodies have often been used by a male-dominated art world to represent intangible ideas about morality. Many of these symbols can be found in Carolyn Gerk's *Otherhood* series. The below is a quick introduction, sorted by archetype, to some of these symbols in Western art. As you will notice, female archetypes in Western art tend to be drawn from either Classical (Greco-Roman) or Christian belief systems.



Carolyn Gerk *Grendel's Mother*, 2022.
Linocut Reduction print. Collection of the Artist

The Madonna / Virgin Mary

The most represented woman in paintings throughout the Christian world, the Madonna or Virgin Mary has been a regular subject of art for at least 1500 years. When depicted as a human person, she represents purity, virginity, devotion, motherhood, and mourning. She tends to be portrayed as the perfect woman, although as a divinely virgin mother her version of perfection is irreplicable even by women who invest deeply in motherhood roles. There are also many symbols strongly associated with the Madonna which may be used by artists to represent her without depicting her human form.



Fra Filippo Lippi *Annunciation*, 1445-50.

White (colour) - the colour white represents the virginal purity of the Madonna.

Blue (colour) - in the Byzantine empire, blue was a royal colour. Byzantine depictions of Mary honoured her by portraying her in a blue cloak and this tradition continues to the modern day.

Lilies - this white flower represents the virginity of Mary.

Halo - the halo typically depicted above the head of the Madonna indicates her holiness.

Eve

The Bible tells the story of creation; Eve is the first woman. In traditional understandings of the Bible, Eve causes sin to enter human consciousness when she disobeys God by eating a forbidden fruit. She convinces her male partner, Adam, to eat the fruit as well. When Eve is depicted or referenced in art, she represents sinful desire and the dangers of female deviance and sexuality.



Carolyn Gerk *The Stepmother and the Crone*, 2022.
Linocut print on handmade paper. Collection of the Artist

Apple

Eve's forbidden fruit is often depicted as an apple. Apples in art and literature represent something desirable but dangerous. Carolyn Gerk included this symbol in *THE STEPMOTHER AND THE CRONE* as a reference to the story of Snow White, in which the protagonist is tempted with an apple offered by a duplicitous stepmother.

Snake

Eve is convinced to eat the forbidden fruit by a serpent. Although generally considered a male creature in the contemporary understanding of this story, the serpent was thought to be a female creature at other times in history. The presence of a snake in art, particularly when paired with a woman, implies the connection between female sexuality and deviance.



Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Adam and Eve*, 1582

In *Otherhood*, Carolyn Gerk portrays two ancient Greek monsters with serpent features: Scylla and Medusa. In Ancient Greece, serpent-monsters were often female creatures who presented obstacles to mythical heroes. Like the biblical serpent, these monsters were cunning and could lead men astray. In the post-Classical Western world, portrayals of serpents cannot escape an association with Eve and sinful seduction.

Venus

The Roman goddess of love, sexuality and rebirth, Venus has been a favourite subject of painting since the Renaissance era. Venus's status as a goddess allowed male artists to depict her nudity and beauty under the guise of intellectual interest in Classical culture. She is often portrayed lounging luxuriously. Painters in the modern era riffed on these earlier portrayals by painting women in similar poses with the intention of highlighting their sexual availability while no longer making an attempt to raise the female subject to Venus's goddess status; in Manet's famous *Olympia*, the women portrayed as a reference to Venus was a well-known prostitute.

Scallop Shell

In legend, Venus is born out of sea foam that was fertilised when the genitals of the god Uranus were thrown into the sea. Botticelli's iconic painting *The Birth of Venus* (1485) depicts Venus being carried to land in a giant scallop shell. The shell represents the birth of Venus.



Titian *Venus of Urbino*, 1538.

Lounging Pose

Venus was first portrayed in the languid, reclining pose by Giorgione and Titian in the 16th century. Subsequently, portraying any nude woman in the same pose was shorthand for a reference to Venus and held a strong implication of sexual availability. Celebrity painters such as Francisco de Goya, Edouard Manet, Paul Cezanne, and Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres emulated this pose in their paintings of prostitutes and harem concubines.



Edouard Manet *Olympia*, 1863.

In Carolyn Gerk's *WOLF WOMAN*, the woman being transformed into werewolf form is depicted in a limp, sensual pose that may remind viewers of Venus. Like Venus, the wolf woman also represents rebirth and transformation. *WOLF WOMAN*, however, subverts the imagery of the sexually displayed and available Venus; the wolf woman is in the process of leaving behind her alluring body and her sexual duties and is taking on the powerful, unrestrained form of the wolf.

Female Qualities: Domesticity and Promiscuity

Many of the symbols associated with attributes ascribed to women – be they positive or derogatory – originated in portrayals of the archetypal women listed above. Below is a list of common symbols in historic art; these are still referenced – and often subverted – today.

Cat - Cats represent sensuality and seduction, and black cats take on a layer of allusion to female-associated magic and witchcraft (see Manet's *Olympia* above).

Dog - Dogs represent fidelity and are historically depicted with women to indicate their marital devotion (see Titian's *Venus of Urbino* above).

Moon - The moon is traditionally considered feminine and the sun masculine in many cultures, typifying the tendency of societies to see femaleness as the mysterious "other" when contrasted with male normativity. When portrayed in art, the moon often alludes to mystery and magic, including that associated with the female body.

In Gerk's *SPHINX*, the massive moon rising behind the monstrous sphinx highlights the mystery and cunning of her riddles, and the fear of female seduction.

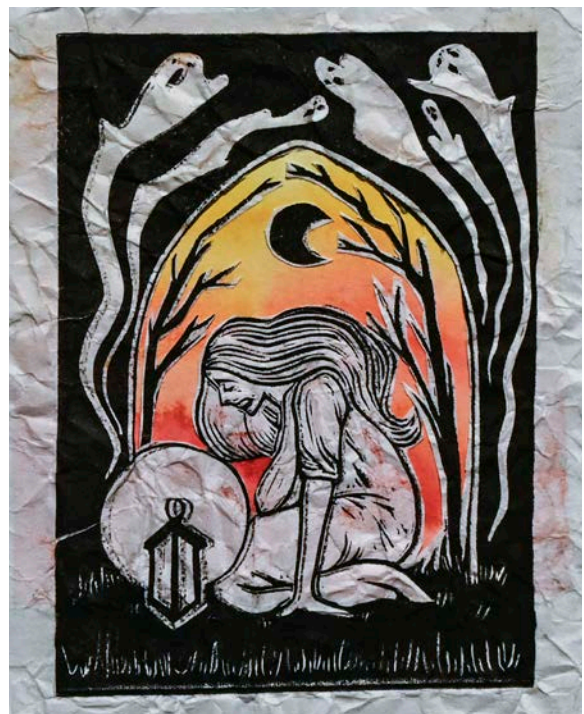
In *BANSHEE'S LAMENT*, a crescent moon hanging above the weeping banshee alludes to the fear of the magic that witches and women wield in the night.

In *WOLF WOMAN* (see above), the sliver of moon can be supposed to be a magic essential in the transformation from woman to werewolf. In conjunction with the blood-red ribbon, the cyclical moon completes symbolism about the female body and what has been seen as the mystery and animalness of menstrual cycles and childbirth.

Red (colour) - red represents passion. It can be used to represent passionate devotion such as in the red shirt iconically worn in depictions of the Madonna, but can also represent lust, sexuality, and blood in alternate contexts.



Carolyn Gerk
Sphinx
2022
Linocut print
Collection of the Artist



Carolyn Gerk
Banshee's Lament
2022
Linocut print, watercolour, textured paper
Collection of the Artist



PRINTED GREETING CARDS

Overview

Create your own relief print. All the pieces in the Otherhood series are linocut prints; they were made from what we might think of as elaborate stamps carved into linoleum blocks. You will carve an image into a foam “block” to make your print. The special thing about carving an image into a block is that you can put ink on the image many times and transfer it onto many pieces of paper. This means you can make many copies of your drawing for family and friends – or even sell the copies to make more money as an artist!



Materials

- Foam sheets or Styrofoam plates, cut to a similar size as your cards
- Blank cards, folded from cardstock or watercolour paper
- Block printing ink (or acrylic paint)
- Brayer rolling tool
- Plastic tray (can upcycle a lid from plastic food packaging etc)
- Flat-bottomed object such as wooden spoon or measuring cup to use as a baren to press paper onto block
- Newspaper to protect table from ink

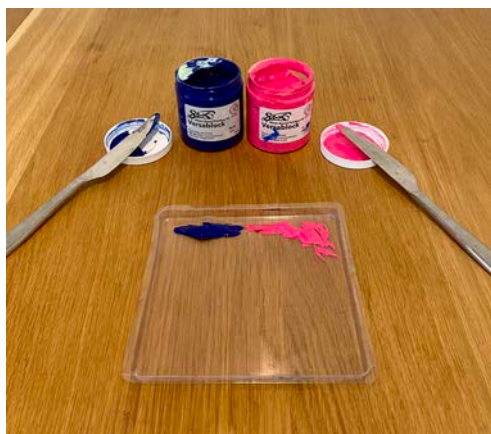
INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1

On a piece of paper, come up with a design you would like to draw onto your foam block. If available, use technology to help you visualise the designs you want to draw. It's good to practise your design, because there are no erasing lines once you are carving the foam! Using a pencil, draw your design onto the foam block. The pencil will “carve” the foam by depressing it. Go over the lines a second time to make sure they go deep into the foam.

*Note: your image will be in reverse once it's printed.





Step 2

Using knowledge of the colour wheel, choose two colours that are adjacent and will blend nicely when mixed. With a knife, spread a dollop of each colour of ink side by side on your plastic tray. With your brayer, roll the ink down the tray, moving carefully from one side to the other. Where your inks meet in the middle, you will develop a blend of the two colours. Roll the ink out until it is thin enough to make a "sticky" noise and has a slightly tacky consistency.



Step 3

Roll the brayer over your foam block, taking care to go from one side to the other so as to maintain the blend of colours on your roller. When the block is covered in ink, take your pencil and wipe out any ink that has filled in the carved lines. Do this quickly so the ink doesn't dry.

Step 4

Figure out which side of your greeting card is the front, and carefully lay this down on top of your inked foam block. Using your baren (mine in the picture is a small measuring cup), press the paper into the foam. When the whole paper has been pressed, peel it off to reveal your print! If the print is patchy (see left card below), this means the ink was too dry. Try again with more ink. If the image doesn't show up, this means the lines were filled in. Try again with slightly less ink and make sure to carve out the lines. Repeat this process until you have a set of greeting cards that you can write to family and friends!



NEGATIVE SPACE COLLAGE

Overview

The linocuts in the "Otherhood" series are created by carving out the negative space out of a linoleum block, then rolling ink onto the image left behind. Understanding negative space is the foundation of relief printing and is essential for working with many other art media as well. The following craft will teach children that negative space is the area around the subject of an image. Usually in a two-toned image, the subject will be white or coloured and the background will be black. When the subject of an image is shown in black and the negative space is shown in white/colour, this is called a figure-ground reversal.

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1

Explain the concept of negative space to participants. If available, use pictures of two-toned images to help participants practise figuring out which is the negative space and which is the subject.

Step 2

Draw a shape onto each of the white/coloured squares of paper. The shape must be connected to the bottom of the square. Cut around the outline of each shape, leaving the "negative space" intact. Save the cut-out shape and the negative space when done.

Step 3

Glue the matching negative and positive space pieces base-to-base on the black construction paper. Alternate between squares and cut-out shapes.

Materials

Black construction paper

Squares or rectangles of coloured or white paper; when lined up they must cover exactly half the black paper

The example pictured has a 9" x 12" black paper and three rectangles of 4" x 4.5" coloured paper. If you want a more complex finished product, you can use smaller rectangles to fit more on the black background. Make sure they will mathematically line up to cover exactly half the background.

Pencils

Scissors

Glue





ANATOMY OF A MONSTER

How to Make Friends with a Monster

Overview

Design your own monster and explain how to befriend them! This activity encourages participants to think about their audience as they draw; they can try to make their monster appear silly, scary, or sweet to viewers. The “Otherhood” series encourages viewers to think critically and empathetically about what makes each monster / villain scary and invites viewers to relate to the monsters. In the extension of this activity, participants will practise procedural writing and empathetic thinking (or pure silliness) by explaining how to befriend their monster.

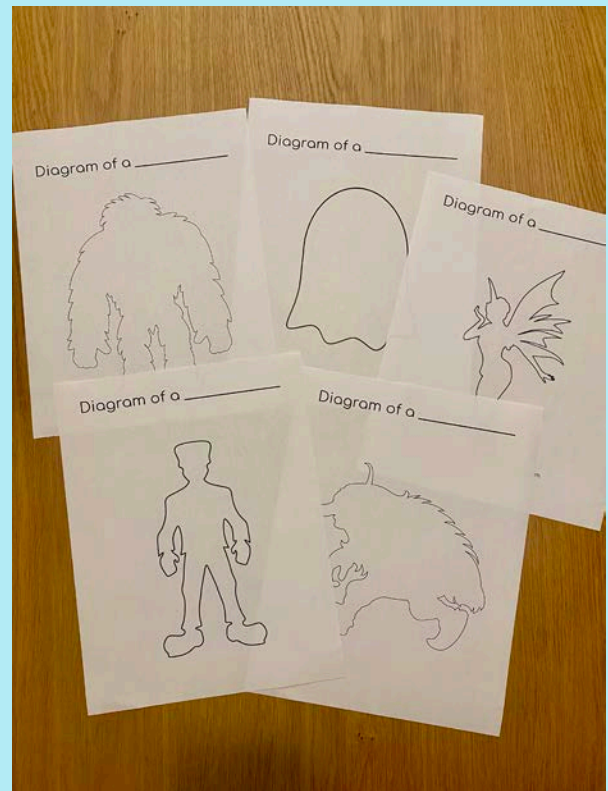
Materials

- Monster outlines
- Pencils or pens
- Colouring tools (pencil crayons, markers, watercolour paints)
- “How to make friends with a _____” pages.
- (optional) monster picture books

INSTRUCTIONS

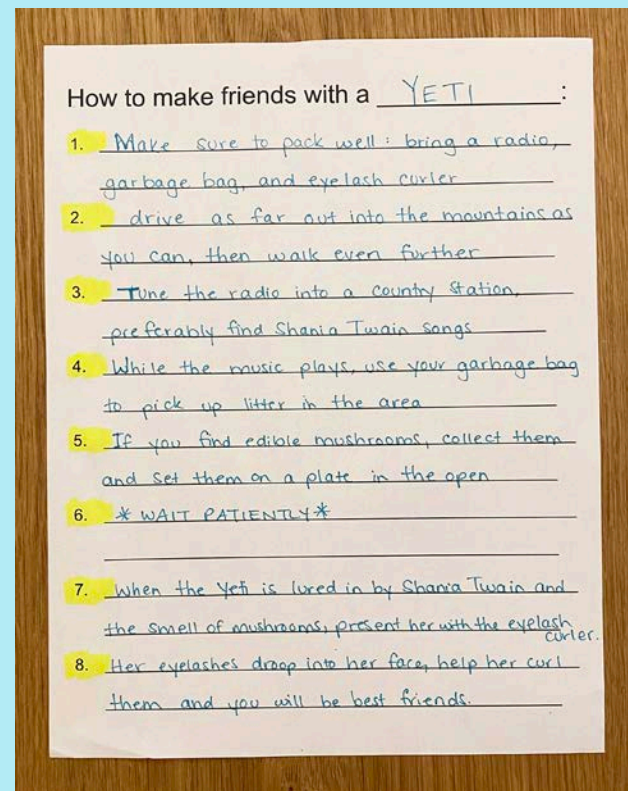
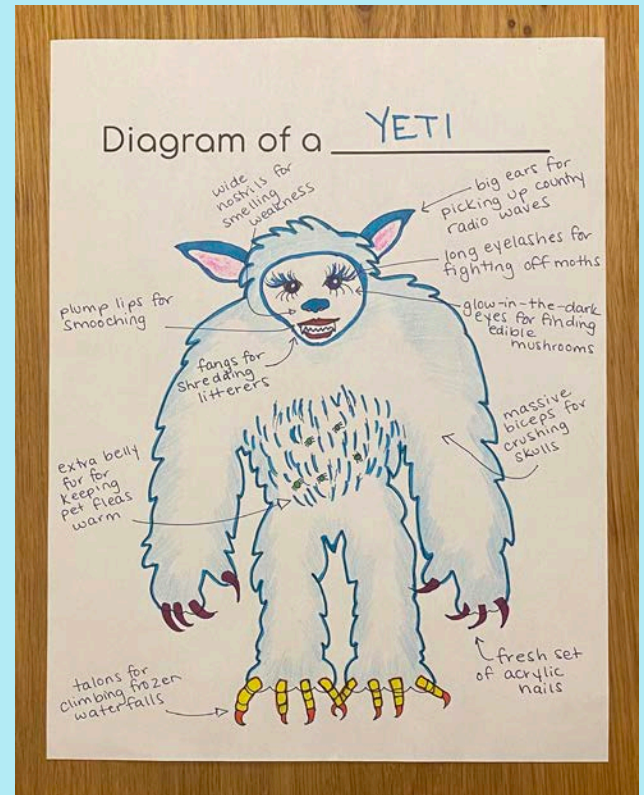
Step 1

Encourage participants to think about monsters they have seen on screen or in books. Show participants an example of a completed monster outline and ask them to come up with a part that could be added to the monster (ex. tail) and what that part might be used for. Ask participants if they think this is a nice monster or an evil monster. How could they tell? Think of examples of nice and evil monsters from pop culture (ex. Sully from Monsters Inc is nice and the demogorgon from Stranger Things is evil). Show participants a “How to make friends” sheet that has been written for the example monster.



Step 2

Allow participants to choose a creature outline and fill it in with body parts. Next, have participants label each part and describe a silly, scary, or sweet use the monster has for that feature. Have participants colour in their monster. Encourage participants to show their monster to another participant and have the viewer guess whether the monster is nice or evil. What features or description helped them guess?



Step 3

Hand out the "How to make friends..." sheet (or alternatively have it photocopied onto the back of the creature outlines). Encourage participants to think about what their creature likes and use their drawing and labels to think about how it behaves. Have them write a list of steps for how to make friends with their monster. At the end of the activity, the teacher or facilitator could collect the creatures and instruction sheets and read them to the group, or participants could present their own work.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TREX Northwest would like to credit the Alberta Foundation for the Arts for the Travelling Exhibition Program. We would like to thank the Art Gallery of Grande Prairie for supporting this region, as well as the following individuals who contributed to the preparation of this travelling exhibition:

Curator: Jamie-Lee Cormier

Education: Jane Suderwald

Art Projects: Jamie-Lee Cormier

Catalogue Design : Melanie Jenner

Published 2023

Special Thanks to:

Gail Lint - Art Collection Consultant, Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Robert Swanston - Chief Preparator, Art Gallery of Grande Prairie

The Traveling Exhibition Program Region 1: Northwest
Alberta is thankful for our generous sponsor this year:



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