

Text-9/25-MythsandMonsters-TierneyKugel-FINALDRAFT

Tierney Kugel

Columbia Art League exhibition “Myths & Monsters” explores collective imagination

Columbia Art League (CAL)’s latest exhibition, “Myths & Monsters” will run from Sept. 10 through Oct. 17 with a reception and juried show on Sept. 20. The exhibition includes 72 works from different artists, all incorporating a dark, fantastical theme that encourages reflection on collective imagination throughout history.

The exhibition, which is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11:30 a.m. to 6 p.m, with the exception of closing at 5pm on Saturdays, showcases a variety of artistic mediums, including oil canvas, drawing, sculpture and photography.

Artist Leslie McCullough-Payne was inspired by the fundamental concept of the theme in her acrylic painting titled “Dragon Clouds.”

“Sit down, read the myth, and separate it from the story. The basic concepts [of every myth] all seem to unite.”

McCullough-Payne has been creating art since the 1980s. She used to be a CAL volunteer and submits work to many of their shows each year. McCullough-Payne hopes the painting she entered into the exhibition will prompt viewers to relate her art to other works in the show.

“I want to make you curious and hopefully connect to a different storyline that's presented in the show,” McCullough-Payne said.

The “Myths & Monsters” theme was selected by the Executive Director of CAL, Kelsey Hammond. The art is intended to celebrate storytelling about myths, legends and the unknown. Hammond aimed to attract more artists and viewers by selecting this theme.

“[In]this show people are like, ‘It's a little more unexpected.’ A little bit more like ‘oh right, this is also art.’ So I think that switching things up a little bit, it adds or pulls in another group of people to see the show,” Hammond said.

Hope Martin, a teacher and artist at CAL, appreciates the ambiguous theme that allowed for a wide range of artistic interpretations.

“I would like to take a broader look at monsters because it's so subjective. What I think is beautiful, you may not.”

Located in downtown Columbia, CAL cycles through at least six shows a year in the gallery space, which highlights work from members of the art league and artists in Columbia. “Myths & Monsters” is displayed in the Betty and Art Robbins Gallery.

In addition to the exhibitions, CAL offers art classes and hosts events in Columbia, including Art in the Park. An education director hires local artists to instruct classes. The theme of this exhibition was incorporated into certain classes leading up to the show, which provide a space for artists to develop their skills and build community.

“The idea there is that you have a group of people that will come together, that you will see regularly, because artists really function better when they are in the company of other artists. To see their work, to talk about things, because otherwise, you're just in your own space,” Hammond said.

In addition to providing community to artists, CAL also provides a space for people to engage with the Columbia art scene.

“This is such a great resource, like bring your date here. Have a coffee with a friend and look at some art,” Hammond said. “It's kind of a nice place to start your time at Columbia. Bring your parents here; this is the perfect place to start.”

CAL is a membership organization that holds between six and eight shows throughout the year. Members pay an annual fee to receive discounts on show submissions and classes, and they also get access to member-exclusive art shows that are not juried. CAL works alongside artists to sell their work, where artists set the price, and CAL receives a 35% commission. Additionally, they offer a payment plan to help buyers afford art.

A juried show like “Myths & Monsters” allows for artists to sell their work and make a personal connection with buyers.

“Art is supposed to make an impact on you,” Hammond said. “It's about communication. It's about showing someone your world view or what you've been through, so if you can communicate that with someone else and it resonates with them enough for them to buy your artwork, then you've made this connection with someone you maybe don't even know.”

For more information about the exhibition, upcoming events and membership options, visit the CAL website.