

VISUAL ARTS

Paddy O'Brien

“In search of monsters”

REFLECTION STATEMENT

“[They] uphold morality, enforce taboos, connect to divinity, warn against dangers and, most importantly, entertain.” (Simon Young)

Mythological creatures were a staple of ancient cultures, often used to either explain seemingly supernatural anomalies and dangers of nature, or to populate epic poems and grandiose tales of heroism. These creatures, in a way, embody the values and ideals of the cultures they originate from; Greek and Norse creatures are often used as antagonists to evaluate their ideals of heroism and grandeur, creatures from Japanese and European folklore explore the mysticism and deception of natural phenomena, and cultures such as Inuit and Aztec use creatures to outline the dangers of the world and how it came to be in the first place. Some even argue that these creatures embody what it means to be human, overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds to survive, and using them to warn and entertain new generations. However, as society has progressed and science continues to develop, the importance of these creatures has declined, as the elements they were used to rationalise have now been explained and rationalised.

I've had an acute fascination with such creatures and their cultural significance ever since I was young. Through my work, I wanted to rediscover the mysticism behind these ancient creatures, and examine their role in this modern society. I chose to use charcoal to emulate the raw materials many of these cultures used to originally tell these stories, paying homage to these creatures' ancient roots. The torch is a symbol most associated with discovery, and its prevalence throughout these works punctuates this idea. The accompanying journal helps tie the works together, providing more information on the creatures and their significance, as well as adding a level of personalisation to convey this idea of the long journey taken to discover such magical beasts and their forgotten significance, perhaps mirroring the grand tales of adventure these creatures spawned from.







