Ancient Beasts at Michael C. Carlos Museum

From the cannibal Cyclops Polyphemus to the winged horse Pegasus, the ancient world gave birth to a vast array of creatures. Delve into a mythic realm of bizarre beings and treasured tales at "Monsters, Demons, and Winged-Beasts: Composite Creatures of the Ancient World," on view through June 19 at the Michael C. Carlos Museum.

Marvel at more than 150 objects — cylinder seals and Greek vases to decorated armor — that explore fascinating creations from the Greek perspective, with "monstrous" imagery depicted through works in gold, silver, precious and semi-precious stone, terracotta and papyrus.

The oldest piece on view dates from 4000 BCE, while the most recent is approximately 1400 years old, according to Jasper Gaunt, curator of Greek and Roman art at the Carlos Museum. He said more than a dozen independent civilizations are represented, in a geographical area stretching from Spain to Northwest China, from Egypt to France.

"Monsters, Demons, and Winged-Beasts" focuses on the ways in which the Greeks borrowed imagery from ancient Egypt and the Near East and developed a repertoire of richly imagined creatures that proliferated throughout the Greco-Roman world. Profoundly inspiring Greece in their artistic production, these images were quickly assimilated and became purely Hellenic.

From the siren (the human-headed bird whose call is fatal) to the Chimera (the fire-snorting lion with a serpent's tail), the exhibition illustrates the ways in which these creatures have appeared through millennia, and how their significance changed over time.