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# Into the wild

Bringing animals to life in folklore is as historical as using clay to immortalize them in artwork. Animals are powerful conveyors of human intention and emotion, as seen in the current group show *A Clay Bestiary* at Hunterdon Art Museum. The exhibit features ceramic and mixed-media work by 15 artists from around the world, including **Sergei Isupov** and **Jason Walker**, who use animal subjects to inspire human viewers to think more closely about their own lives.

“Many of these artists are doing much more than rendering animals and illustrations,” says Hildreth York, who, along with Ingrid Renard, curated the exhibit. “It becomes fascinating for viewers because of the element of surprise.”

**Chang Hyun Bang’s** *Blurriooo* shows off human feelings of fear and anxiety, as a delicate pig dangles precariously over a beautifully patterned ceramic cliff. *Drift* by **Adelaide Paul** features a curved, sleek horse head mounted on a wall, evoking



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movement and longing. **Russell Wrangle** melds a crab signifying death with a rabbit symbolizing fertility and life in *Crabbit*, reminding museumgoers of their own mortality.

“Animals are kind of a stand-in or a proxy to the human condition,” Wrangle, based in Toquerville, Utah, says. “There are some sensitive topics that can be discussed through animal imagery. They make pretty

1  
**Adelaide Paul**, *Drift*, terra cotta, 6 x 2 x 1". Courtesy the artist.

2  
**Russell Wrangle**, *Crabbit*, ceramic, 8 x 9 x 13". Courtesy the artist.

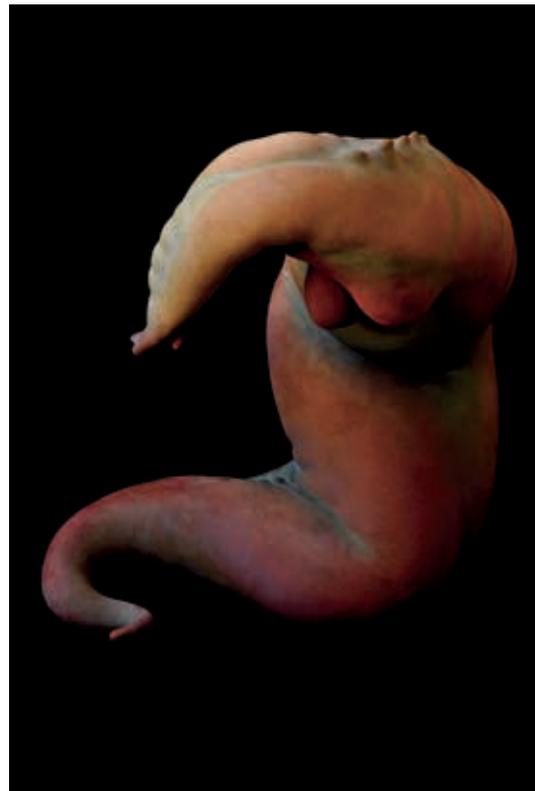
3  
**Chang Hyun Bang**, *Blurriooo*, fired clay, glaze decal, 46 x 37 x 42". Courtesy of the artist.



1



3



4

4  
**Judy Fox**, *Worm 3*, terra cotta and casein, 17 x 17 x 14".  
 Courtesy of artist and P.P.O.W. Gallery.

5  
**Lindsay Pichaske**, *Aristotle's Foil*, low-fire ceramic, milk paint, oil paint, silk flower petals, 16 x 36 x 36".  
 Image by Matthew Weedman.



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dark, tragic stories so accessible."

Wrangle, who says he has long loved stories such as *Aesop's Fables* and *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, also features a work in the exhibit called *Towards to Moche*, a nod to the ancient Moche civilization in Peru. In Wrangle's modern-day work, he hangs a Moche stirrup spout vessel over a bright red hare's mouth.

"The stirrup spout has inspired countless

ceramic artists, so I decided to feature it," Wrangle, who uses animal imagery throughout his work, says. "I was thinking about the idea of a feed bag like they put on horses, and about being fed by art history."

Another piece that blends the ordinary with the extraordinary in the show is *Aristotle's Foil* by Annapolis, Maryland-based artist **Lindsay Pichaske**. Pichaske, who says she has been obsessed with

apes since she was a child and looked up to anthropologists Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey, covered a ceramic ape head in silk red flower petals, symbolizing life processes humans can relate to.

"It's one of my favorite things I've ever made," says Pichaske, whose current works are all inspired by animals. "I used primal colors because red draws out emotion very quickly. Humans and apes are so closely linked genetically, and I hope the piece brings out an emphatic response. I'm also interested in the idea of the uncanny, in that perhaps the piece could come to life and start breathing."

Other pieces in the exhibit offer unique interpretations of the animal kingdom that are similarly thought provoking.

"I don't think most people have any idea of how variable and unusual works about the animal world can be," York says. "Some works are more representational than others, some are humorous and/or ironic, some are 'weird' or surreal, some are whimsical, and some are 'mini' installations." ●