

# ***Fantastic Beings:*** **Ancient Myths in Contemporary Art** **4 October 2025 - 22 March 2026**

**Artists breathe new life into mythical stories**



Müge Yılmaz  
 Mother of my Mother  
 (Sitting Kybele), 2025  
 CNC cut and hand  
 carved birch multiplex  
 painted with natural  
 pigment and 3D printed  
 aluminium detail  
 60 x 40 cm



Theresa Weber  
 Chimera, 2024  
 Ornaments, plastics,  
 print on wood board  
 40 x 30 cm  
 Image by Marjorie Brunet Plaza



Nina van de Ven  
 Schwalbe, 2024  
 Pastel and charcoal on paper  
 150 x 220 cm



Tanja Ritterbex  
 Yesterday when mermaids  
 were real, 2025 acrylic on canvas  
 100 x 75 cm

From 4 October 2025 to 22 March 2026, museum van Bommel van Dam in Venlo presents *Fantastic Beings*. This international group exhibition brings together mostly recent works by established and emerging artists. Mythical figures and age-old stories are their source of inspiration. Through fabulous creatures rendered in textiles, drawings, ceramics, paintings, videos and installations, they reflect on current themes such as identity, culture and social relations. What makes this exhibition unique is the way it connects the old and the new: myths may be stories from the past, but at the same time they are living traditions. They continue to evolve, inspiring new generations.

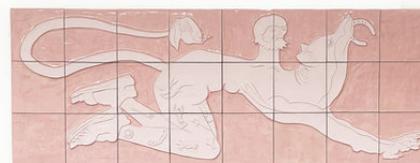
Participating artists include Jamel Armand, afro eisma, Alejandro Galván, Camille Henrot, Susanna Inglada, Hella Jongerius, Wouter Osterholt, Tanja Ritterbex, RojoNegro, Buhlebezwe Siwani, María Sosa, Nina van de Ven, Theresa Weber and Müge Yılmaz.



Alejandro Galván  
 Las Estrellas me iluminan al revés, 2022  
 Watercolor, pencil and ink on wood,  
 180 x 244 cm  
 Image by Gert-Jan van Rooij



Müge Yılmaz,  
 Ishtar as a Ghost, 2023  
 CNC cut and hand carved birch  
 multiplex painted with lacquer  
 65 x 195 cm



Nina van de Ven,  
 Stretching Pete, 2025  
 Ceramic tiles  
 164 x 1 x 61 cm

## **A journey through cultures and eras**

*Fantastic Beings* presents works by contemporary artists from the Netherlands, Germany, France, Spain, Turkey, South Africa and Mexico. All of them draw from the rich tradition of mythology and fantasy in art - a tradition that has existed for thousands of years, from the prehistoric cave paintings of Lascaux and the richly decorated Egyptian temples to the Renaissance masters and post-war CoBrA artists such as Karel Appel. For example, Jamel Armand explores relationships with unknown ancestors through the figures in his paintings - a tribute to a culture with which he still feels connected despite a generational rupture. afro eisma chooses wondrous creatures as guides, reminiscent of protectors and messengers in ancient stories. And Müge Yılmaz and Buhlebezwe Siwani create works that explore the spiritual and ritual aspects of myths.

Museum director Rieke Righolt: "In a world where technology and globalization blur the boundaries between cultures, the mythical figures and fabulous beings from ancient stories offer a way to connect with the past while also discovering new meanings."



María Sosa, *Los monstruos no vivían aquí*,  
2020 Batik on stick dyed cotton fabric  
from Brazil and logwood  
540 x 250 cm  
Image Courtesy of the artist



afra eisma,  
*spring is yours*, 2024  
Acrylic yarn, latex, backing  
380 x 298 cm  
Image by Gert-Jan van Rooij



Buhlebezwe Siwani,  
*Inkanyamba*, 2021 Soap,  
pigment and resin on  
canvas  
200 x 140 cm  
Collectie AkzoNobel  
Art Foundation

### Contemporary reinterpretations

Upon entering *Fantastic Beings*, visitors are confronted by a monumental textile head: *Medusa* (2022). This work by Spanish artist Susanna Inglada (1983) deviates strikingly from the familiar monster with snake hair from Greek mythology. Tears stream from her eyes. Inglada portrays the often-overlooked side of the story: Medusa was raped by the sea god Poseidon, after which Athena, out of jealousy, transformed her into a monster. "*This monumental work offers a new, female perspective on a myth that for centuries was mainly told by men*," says curator James Hannan.

Equally impressive is the more than five-meter-wide installation *Los monstruos no vivían aquí* (2020) by Mexican artist María Sosa (1985). Painted batik cloth depicts fantastical creatures derived from medieval European world maps. Unknown regions on these maps were often marked with the phrase "here be monsters." The irony: European explorers did not encounter monsters in the Americas - instead, they themselves had a devastating impact on the indigenous peoples.

One of the highlights of *Fantastic Beings* is *Grosse Fatigue* (2013), a groundbreaking film by French artist Camille Henrot (1978). For this work, Henrot received the prestigious Silver Lion at the 55th Venice Biennale. The film brings together creation myths from different civilizations into an overwhelming mix of scientific discovery and mythology. Spoken word and rapid image sequences bombard the viewer with knowledge as a stream of associations.

With *Angry Animals* (2024) by Dutch designer Hella Jongerius (1963), museum van Bommel van Dam also presents a Dutch premiere: after Berlin, New York and Paris, this new series of ceramics will be shown in the Netherlands for the first time. Wild animals rarely have a voice - except in fairy tales. With heads contorted in rage and frustration, Jongerius gives expression to the suffering of our "*silent partners*." These objects, nearly unusable as functional ware, stand as a quiet resistance against human consumption.

### An inspiration from the museum collection

A special role in the exhibition is played by a series of painted etchings from the 1980s, drawn from the museum's own collection. They were made by the Limburg-based artist Marianne van der Heijden (1922-1998). Over the years, Van der Heijden made a clear artistic shift: from religiously inspired art to critical reflections on belief. One example is *Aanbidding van het beest* (*Adoration of the Beast*, 1984). At first glance it seems to reference ritual worship - yet the central figure is not a saint but a mysterious, even menacing being. In Van der Heijden's modern-looking fantastic creatures, her personal search for identity and faith is reflected.

### A mysterious autumn in Venlo

Alongside *Fantastic Beings*, the exhibition *Mysterious Universe - Eugène Brands / Gabriel Lester* will also be on view at museum van Bommel van Dam this autumn, from 6 September 2025 to 4 January 2026. The exhibition explores the cosmic fascination of CoBrA artist Eugène Brands (1913-2002), presented in an immersive setting by contemporary artist and inventor Gabriel Lester (1972). Both exhibitions share a fascination with the mysterious and the unknown: where *Fantastic Beings* breathes new life into age-old myths, *Mysterious Universe* explores the spiritual quest through the cosmos.

### About [museum van Bommel van Dam](#)

*Museum van Bommel van Dam*, located in the beautifully renovated former main post office on Keulsepoort in Venlo, is the leading museum for modern and contemporary art in North Limburg. Its foundation is the art collection of Maarten and Reina van Bommel-van Dam. Today the museum holds an extensive post-war and contemporary art collection and offers a vibrant program of exhibitions and public events.

[museum van Bommel van Dam](#)

Keulsepoort 1 | 5911 BX | Venlo

4 October 2025 - 22 March 2026

Opening hours: Tuesday to Sunday: 11.00 - 17.00

tickets via: [www.vanbommelvandam.nl](http://www.vanbommelvandam.nl)

Not for publication

press preview Friday 3 October 13:00 - 15:00

rsvp via: [arabella@coebergh.nl](mailto:arabella@coebergh.nl)



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