

The Roman National Museum at Palazzo Massimo is hosting a superb and original exhibition called “Mostri, creature fantastiche della paura e del mito” (Monsters, fantastic creatures of fear and myth). The show brings together over 100 works from 40 museums, depicting fantastical creatures, all in a series of dark passages intended to resemble the Minotaur’s labyrinth.



Monsters. Fantastic Creatures of Fear and Myth Exhibition, Palazzo Massimo, Rome

There are griffins, chimeras, gorgons, centaurs, sirens, satyrs, harpies, sphinxes, alongside the Minotaur, Scylla and Pegasus, all represented on different types of objects: sculptures, architectural decorations, vases, frescoes and mosaics. They range from the Bronze Age to Imperial Rome.

I explored the exhibition and was spellbound by the mythical creatures I saw. Here is a selection of some of my favorite “monstrous” artefacts.



Black figure amphora showing a Chimera, 550-525 BC, Tolfate Group from southern Etruria, Monsters. Fantastic Creatures of Fear and Myth Exhibition, Palazzo Massimo, Rome

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Gorgon's head, from the Temple of Venus and Roma in Rome, 2nd century AD, Monsters. Fantastic Creatures of Fear and Myth Exhibition, Palazzo Massimo, Rome

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Painted travertine slab showing two griffins attacking a panther, 340 BC, found in tomb 58 at Andriuolo, Paestum, Monsters. Fantastic Creatures of Fear and Myth Exhibition, Palazzo

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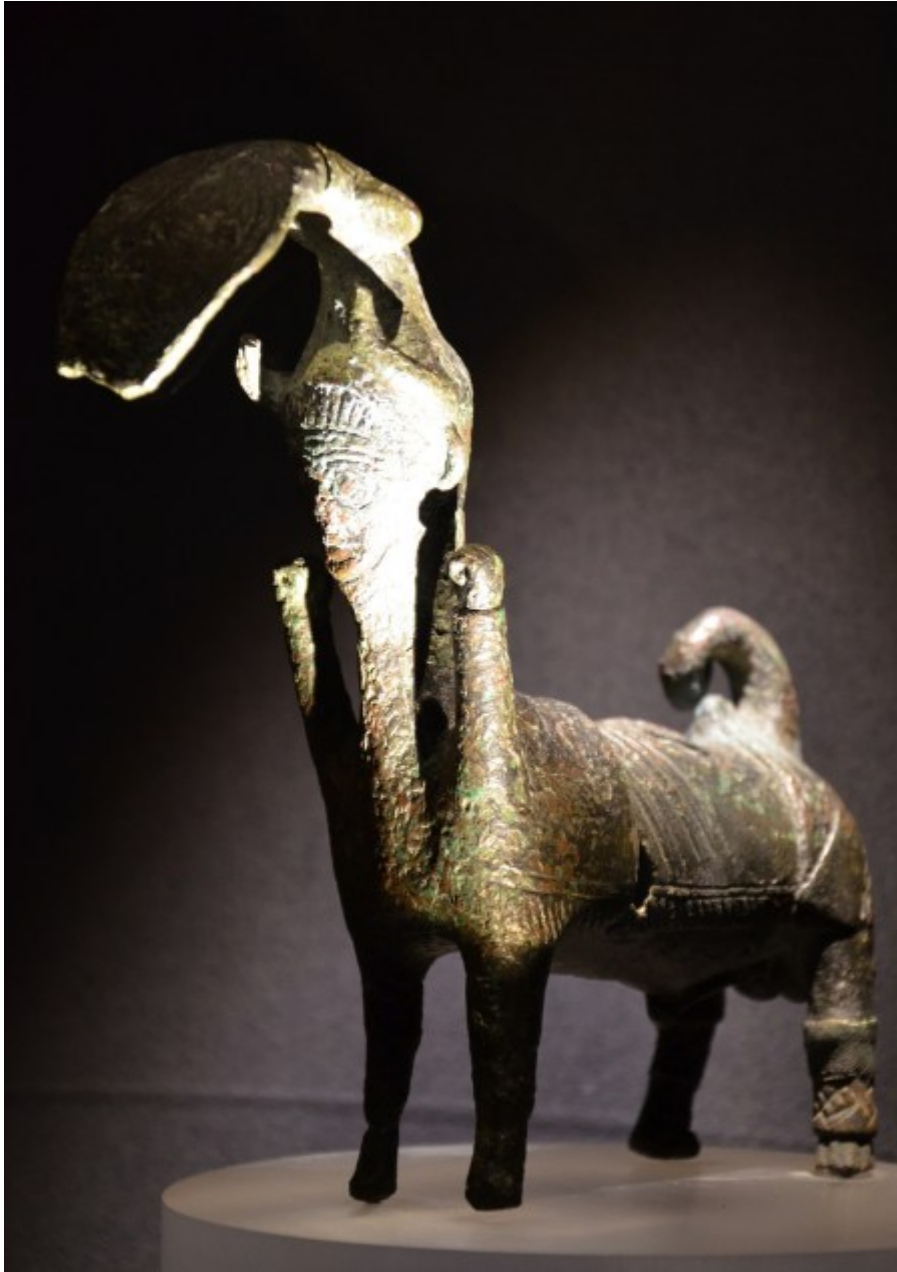
Fresco depicting a griffin attacking one of the Arimaspi (legendary Scythian), from the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii, 1st century BC, Monsters. Fantastic Creatures of Fear and Myth Exhibition, Palazzo Massimo, Rome

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Mosaic with a ketos (sea monster) found at Caulonia (Monasterace) in the Casa del Drago, 3rd century BC, Monsters. Fantastic Creatures of Fear and Myth Exhibition, Palazzo Massimo, Rome

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*Bronze statuette of a Centaur, 8th-7th century BC, Monsters.
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Marble group of a Nereid on a sea monster, from Rome, 1st century BC, Monsters. Fantastic Creatures of Fear and Myth Exhibition, Palazzo Massimo, Rome

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Terracotta acroterial statue of a Harpy/Siren, from Gabii, end of 6th century BC - beginning 5th century BC, Monsters. Fantastic Creatures of Fear and Myth Exhibition, Palazzo Massimo, Rome

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Hydria (ceramic water container) with Heracles and the Lernaean Hydra (an ancient serpent-like water monster), from Etruria, attributed to the Painter of Aquila, 530-500 BC, Monsters.

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Red-figure plate showing Bellerophon riding Pegasus and a Chimera, by the Baltimore painter, second half of the 4th century BC, Monsters. Fantastic Creatures of Fear and Myth Exhibition, Palazzo Massimo, Rome

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Terracotta statue of lion-headed man with gold and silver insets, 6th-5th century BC, from Tharros, Sardinia, Monsters. Fantastic Creatures of Fear and Myth Exhibition, Palazzo Massimo, Rome

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*Marble statue of a Minotaur, part of a group with Theseus, 1st century AD,
found in Rome in Via San Tommaso in Parione in 1895, Monsters.
Fantastic Creatures of Fear and Myth Exhibition, Palazzo
Massimo, Rome*

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This exhibition is monstrously beautiful and I would recommend anyone to go and see it. “[Monsters: Fantastic Creatures of Fear and Myth](#),” is on view at the fabulous Palazzo Massimo until June 1, 2014. Visit the museum website for more info [here](#).

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