

# ***SLAYER***

Roxanne Jackson  
Lindsay Montgomery  
Keri Oldham

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October 29 - December 17, 2020

Essay by Paddy Johnson

Flecker Gallery  
Suffolk County Community College  
Ammerman Campus, Selden, NY

Foreword:

Flecker Gallery is thrilled to present *SLAYER*, a three-person exhibition of recent artworks by Roxanne Jackson, Lindsay Montgomery, and Keri Oldham. The exhibition includes ceramic and mixed media sculpture by Jackson, maiolica inspired pottery by Montgomery, watercolor and mixed media paintings by Oldham; each manifesting within their work a vision of women's struggle and triumph over the persistent demons of misogyny and inequality.

This is a timely exhibition, as we live through an apparent roll-back in women's progress in recent days and months and it can be easy to become disheartened. But, as critically acclaimed novelist, essayist, book editor, and college professor, Toni Morrison wrote in her 2016 article "No Place for Self-Pity, No Room for Fear" for *The Nation*: "This is precisely the time when artists go to work. There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal."

These three artists do so with zeal. Their work resonates a harmony of spirit and purpose and exudes an energy that is absolutely magical. There are shared and varied sensibilities between them, making a cohesive, exciting exhibition and collective statement of female power and aesthetic prowess. I have been looking at this work in shifting combinations for two years in planning this exhibition. It's a process through which one becomes intimately acquainted with the work and I must share that the depths of nuance, the absolute mastery of each artist's execution of their skills and ideas are stunning. This is exquisite, intricate, highly developed artwork and underlying all of it is a unified vision, built upon fearlessness and strength.

Referencing contemporary affairs, popular culture, mythology, religion, and art history, these slayers present us with inspired and compelling artworks. In her essay here, Paddy Johnson illuminates a number of these connections and provides perspective from her own lens as an esteemed NY art critic and vocal social justice advocate. She has contributed eloquent, substantial, and critical insights and has provided layers of richness and depth to the exhibition that we are so fortunate and honored to include here.

It is late October 2020, and this is an exhibition fit for the season. A season of ghouls and monsters; the trails of our chaotic present and our pandemic reality; of sacrifices, endurance, resistance, bravery, and triumph. This adversity will make us stronger. Slayers such as these will lead the way.

Matthew Neil Gehring  
Gallery Director and Exhibition Curator

Slaying the Beast: Three Perspectives on Female Power  
By Paddy Johnson

Before Christianity's worship of the patriarchy spread across Europe, most people subscribed to some form of paganism. In these earth-centered religions, people believed in multiple gods, many of which were women. A return to paganism feels vital to 2020. After four years of a president who defends his own taped statement about grabbing women "by the pussy" and revelations about convicted high-profile sex offenders like Jeffrey Epstein and Harvey Weinstein, we need a challenge to the toxic masculinity these men represent.

Enter three slayers. Assembled for work that advances a narrative of women who destroy monsters in their path, *SLAYER* brings together the work of Roxanne Jackson, Lindsay Montgomery, and Keri Oldham to present a powerful alternative to the current state of the world.

*SLAYER* reflects a resurgent wellness economy defined by self-empowerment, political resistance, and healing. They offer hope and strength in the face of adversity. This exhibition marks an early attempt to articulate the unique aesthetic that responds to this cultural movement, exemplified by three of its leading voices—Montgomery, Oldham, and Jackson. Figurative and almost ornate in its detailing, the artists in this show bravely reshape existing cultural ephemera making today's demons visible. Their truth empowers the viewer.

The painted aesthetic of Lindsay Montgomery's plates and vessels draws from artworks made during the middle ages and renaissance, a time when the seeds of misogyny took root. The subjects, though, come from the 21st-century news cycle. Authoritarians and sycophants manifest as devils, each illustrating an unsafe cultural environment for women and minorities. At times, the images drawn from as far back as the 15th century feel almost predictive.



Artemisia Gentileschi, "Judith Slaying Holofernes", 1620, oil on canvas, 39.25 x 64 inches, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy



Lindsay Montgomery, "Karens", 2020, tin-glazed earthenware, 18.5 x 13.5 x 1.5 inches (with detail)

Take "The Dance" (2015), a decorative serving plate, neutral in tone, that pictures naked women dancing in a circle while a skeleton beats his drum. The image resembles a fragment of Fra Angelico's 'The Last Judgment' and the carola of the saints, (1425-1430), a panel inspired by biblical verses that picture the separation of the blessed and the damned, sent into eternal life or infernal punishment. In the relevant fragment to Montgomery's piece, Angelico renders the good women dancing in the grass, waiting for an angel to bestow everlasting life. But if this is a riff on the Last Judgement, Montgomery's version complicates the narrative. In her piece, she creates a Danse Macabre-like scene—a dance conceived during the plague to represent the inevitability of death. The historical reference feels timely to the Coronavirus pandemic, though the pagan allusions to nature, life, and rebirth offer a slightly more uplifting vision of the world. Montgomery renders several pregnant women, along with an androgynous figure dressed in an animal costume. Three other skeletons play hunting horns.

Arguably, "The Dance" represents a more hopeful time. In 2015, the mass social upheaval that defines the Trump presidency had not yet begun. Wellness and balance still felt like a possibility. Montgomery's recent works reflect a bleaker period. In "Karens", another decorative serving plate, Montgomery removes blonde women from hell's burning pits, only to place them in a lake of ice. No mercy for white women who use their privilege to get what they want, often at the expense of others.



Frequently, Montgomery pictures Hellmouth, an entrance to hell envisioned as a gaping monster's mouth. In "The Kingdom", a ceramic vessel enveloped by a painted serpent whose open-jaw provides a window into a presiding king-like devil sitting on a throne while lesser devils do his bidding by removing the surrounding figures' tongues.

While most of the artist's work doesn't act as a literal depiction of contemporary figures and events, they also don't bother with ambiguity. Montgomery's approach feels particularly reflective of the present. As the problems we face grow in complexity, solutions can only be found using clear, strong language. The message is the message.

Whereas Montgomery often creates images of misery and suffering, Keri Oldham's watercolors picture women as slayers and warriors. In these works, women offer up monster heads on platters and tower over severed claws. They are comfortable with their power.

Take "Judith", a richly patterned watercolor that draws on the biblical story about a beautiful woman named Judith. In the scripture, she seduces and beheads the military commander Holofernes for his attacks on her town. Oldham provides a more aggressive version; Judith slays a four-legged monster with a human head and offers the skull up on a platter. In another work, "Mother, Daughter, Wife", Oldham alludes to the biblical story of Salome, who, at the behest of her mother, demanded her stepfather deliver the head of John the Baptist on a Platter.

The women in Oldham's paintings are not nice. They unapologetically use their bodies for gain and slay monsters that need slaying. They challenge male and female roles. To build this narrative, Oldham



Keri Oldham, "Mother, Daughter, Wife", 2018, watercolor on paper, 32 x 24 inches



Roxanne Jackson, "Blackhearted", 2019, ceramic, glaze, luster, faux fur, candle, necklace, rhinestones, nail stickers; 15 x 17 x 9.5 inches

not only builds on pre-existing historical figures of female power, but subverts the gendered connotations of materials rendered in her paintings. For example, the patterning used on many of these hero images evokes craft, a medium traditionally dominated by women. In "Evil Eye Warrior", a woman knight stands victorious over three slain monsters' heads, her armour a patchwork of green swatches. In "Warrior with Severed Claw", a woman wears leggings made from many different types of cloth. In these works, quilting equals strength.

Oldham's imaginary world of Kings and Queens depicts an imagined world of the past that alludes to issues in the present. "Texas Chupacabra", a goat-eating monster who crushes a virgin woman, points towards the ongoing and impending fights over women's bodies. "Demon Hyena", a horned humanoid made of demon faces suggests a crisis of morality, perhaps the only non-partisan belief left in the country.

While Oldham identifies real life demons, Roxanne Jackson's work frequently draws from real life animals that take the form of monsters. Lizard skin, gorilla paws, and furs make an appearance in Jackson's ceramic centerpieces and wall hangings, shaping their look and feel.

The work channels a late nineties-early aughts riot grrl moment that delights in fem aesthetics, kitsch, and guitar-heavy music. Even a brief glance at the ceramic centerpieces ooze femininity and power, reflecting, in part, the dominant strand of feminism at the time—women owning their sexual desire as a means of empowerment. "Black Flame", a skull nestled inside two labia-like sides of a split dragon head, offers an abstract representation of this larger cultural movement—loud, powerful and even a bit frightening. It connotes the life cycle, desire, and knowledge all at once.

Jackson adeptly balances blue-chip ceramic aesthetics with mass-produced decor. "Kraak Friend",

a devil mask split down the center and mounted on the wall, resembles a high-end assemblage of ceramic patterns sourced from Pearl River. "Lesser Evil", a monster paw ashtray painted with white and pink reptile skin, curls its fingers to show off her manicured fingernails. They're painted like the inside of a dive bar—black with rainbow-colored speckles. The work is unapologetically fun and a joy to look at.

Speaking to this quality, many of the monster paw ashtrays use a holiday-like palette. The Christmas metallics used in "Beastmaster" give a sculpture that might otherwise be morose a playful flavor. The shiny turquoise gorilla paw with an eye in its palm, a long black-lit candle for a finger, and a small removable golden skull look like ornamentation for a pop star's altar. The same can be said of "Black Hearted", a white monster paw adorned with festive gold patterning and red, pink, and black nails that suggest ritual.

Like all of the show's work, Jackson's subversion of pre-existing art and aesthetics rearticulate female empowerment. Slayers, then, serve a tangible purpose—in the face of growing misogyny within our culture, now more than ever, we need models of agency we can replicate for ourselves. The work of Montgomery, Oldham, and Jackson doesn't prescribe solutions, but instead offers something far more powerful—the belief that knowledge and creativity gives us the strength to find them ourselves.

Paddy Johnson is a New York-based art critic, blogger, curator and writer. Johnson is the founder and editor of the art blog *Art F City*. Her work has appeared in publications including *Art in America*, *Art Review*, *L Magazine*, *Time Out NY*, *the Guardian*, *Huffington Post*, and the *Daily Beast*.



Riot Grrrl no. 1, Molly Neuman and Allison Wolfe, July 1991, Photograph: Fales Library NYU / Feminist Press



Keri Oldham, "Judith", 2016, watercolor on paper, 30 x 24 inches



Keri Oldham, "Texas Chupacabra", 2018, watercolor on paper, 21 x 18 inches



Keri Oldham, "Evil Eye Warrior", 2016, watercolor, graphite, paper pulp on paper, 62 x 50 inches, (above, with detail opposite)



Keri Oldham, "Demon Hyena", 2016, watercolor on paper, 22 x 15 inches



Keri Oldham, "Yellow Wallpaper", 2016, watercolor, graphite, paper pulp on paper, 62 x 50 inches



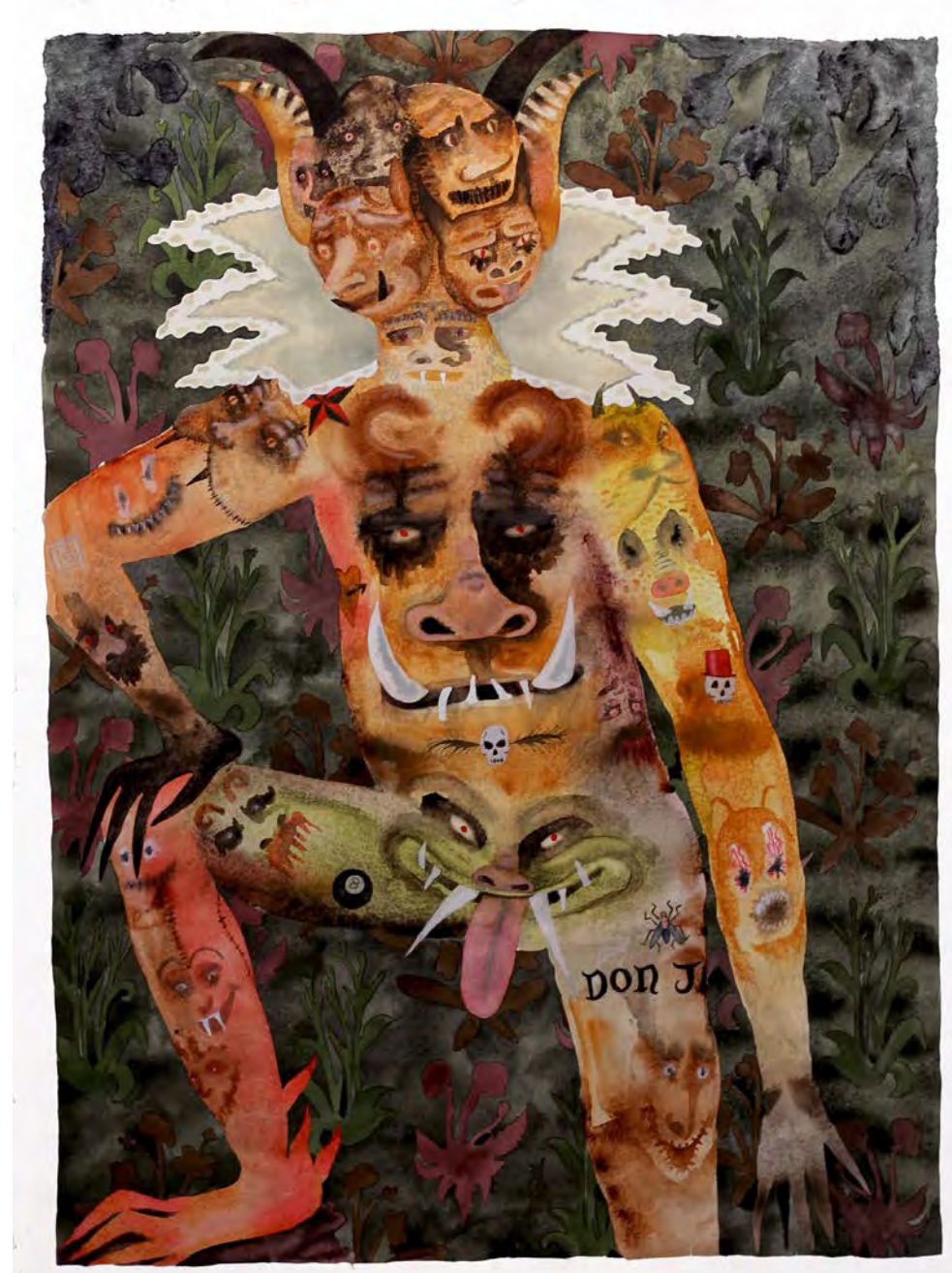


Keri Oldham, 2018, "Warrior with Severed Claw", watercolor on paper, 21 x 16 inches (opposite, with detail above)





Keri Oldham, "Night Raider", 2018, watercolor on paper, 21 x 16 inches



Keri Oldham, "Demon Legion", 2016, watercolor, graphite, paper pulp on paper, 47 x 35 inches



Lindsay Montgomery, "The Kingdom", 2020, tin-glazed earthenware, 17 x 9 inches (opposite, with details above)



Lindsay Montgomery, "The Dance Charger", 2015, tin-glazed, press-molded earthenware, painted, 25 x 11 inches  
(above with detail, opposite)



Lindsay Montgomery, "Shield Maiden Charger", 2020, tin-glazed earthenware, 16 x 16 inches (opposite, with detail above)



Lindsay Montgomery, "Slayer Albarello", 2020, tin-glazed earthenware, 12 x 9 x 5.4 inches (two views)



Lindsay Montgomery, "Happiness is a Warm Womb", 2020, tin-glazed earthenware, 12 x 8 x 1 inches, (above with detail, opposite)



Lindsay Montgomery, "Hellmouth Charger", 2016, tin glazed earthenware, 15 inches x 29 inches (above, with detail opposite)





Roxanne Jackson , "Black Flame" , 2019, ceramic, glaze, gold leaf, 23.5 x 9 x 17.5 inches  
(above, with detail opposite)



Roxanne Jackson, "Beastmaster", 2019, ceramic, faux fur, glaze, rhinestones, candle, 15 x 19 x 11 inches, (opposite, with detail above)





Roxanne Jackson, "Karma Chamillionaire", 2018, ceramic, glaze, luster, 22 x 10 x 24 inches, (above, with detail opposite)





Roxanne Jackson, "Lesser Evil", 2018, ceramic, glaze, luster, faux fur, chains, minerals, candles, 15 x 8.5 inches, (opposite, with detail above)



Roxanne Jackson, "Kraak Fiend," 2019, black clay, glaze, luster,  
11.5 x 14.5 x 8 inches, (opposite, with detail above)



Roxanne Jackson, "Sweet Tooth", 2019, ceramic, glaze, gold leaf, candle, luster, faux fur, 15 x 12 x 11 inches, (above, with detail opposite)





**Bio:**

Roxanne Jackson is a ceramic artist and mixed-media sculptor living in Brooklyn, NY. Her macabre works are black-humored investigations of the links between transformation, myth and pop-culture. Her work has been featured and reviewed in *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The LA Times*, *Juxtapoz Magazine*, *Hyperallergic*, *Forbes*, *The Huffington Post*, *Artnet*, *The Observer*, *Gothamist*, *Whitehot Magazine*, *Beautiful Decay*, *Cool Hunting* and *Ceramics Monthly*, among others. She is the recipient of residency awards at Shigaraki Ceramic Cultural Park (Japan), the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts (NE), Socrates Sculpture Park (NY), Wassaic Project (NY), PLOP (UK), Watershed Center for Ceramic Arts (ME), the Ceramic Center of Berlin (Germany), funded by a Jerome Project Grant, and the Pottery Workshop in Jingdezhen (China), funded by an NCECA fellowship. Jackson has exhibited widely, both nationally and abroad, with recent exhibitions at DUVE Berlin Gallery, (Berlin), Cob Gallery (London), Anonymous Gallery (Mexico City), Garis and Hahn (LA), Kunstraum Niederösterreich (Vienna), Mathilde Hatzenberger Gallery (Brussels) and Untitled Art Fair (Miami Beach) with Richard Heller Gallery. She has recently shown her work in New York City at venues including The Hole, Catinca Tabacaru Gallery, Ortega y Gasset Projects, Underdonk Gallery, Honey Ramka, Regina Rex, Sardine Gallery and SPRING/BREAK Art Fair. She currently has works in the exhibition “Friends and Friends of Friends” at the Schlossmuseum in Linz, Austria.

**Statement:**

My work blazes a new path to reinvent craft and disrupt historic ceramic sculpture. By approaching ceramics from many different directions, using a variety of materials and techniques, I exploit this medium, question conventional notions of beauty and find beauty in the unexpected. I aim to invent a new mythology by creating uncanny, distorted and psychedelic forms. These metamorphic “mystery objects,” escape a single unified narrative. They are created through an exploration of form, by sculpting mashup compositions, extracting traits from both highbrow and lowbrow culture and maneuvering fire and fluxed glaze. These shapeshifting sculptures evolve and unfurl, revealing gems once hidden. There are collisions of nature and fantasy, the absurd, the playful, the ironic and the grotesque.



#### Bio:

Lindsay Montgomery works across a variety of media including ceramics, painting and puppetry to create narrative videos, performances and objects. Her work is focused on creating personal mythologies that address topics and issues including death and mysticism, feminism, and evolving modes of power. She earned a BFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and received her MFA from the University of Minnesota. Her work has been exhibited in Canada and Internationally with exhibitions at The Gardiner Museum for Ceramics and The Archie Bray Foundation. She is the recipient of numerous awards including The Winifred Shantz Award for Ceramics, The Joyce Carlyle Memorial Scholarship in the Crafts Endowment, and an individual project grant from The Canada Council for the Arts. She currently lives and works in Toronto, and is represented by Galerie 3, Canada, and Galerie Lefebvre et Fils, France.

#### Statement:

My recent Neo-Istoriato series re-imagines Renaissance Italian Maiolica ceramics and Medieval manuscript illustrations to create contemporary myths and cautionary tales. My imagery and forms explore pagan rituals, feminine identity, modes of power, and encounters with the dead and supernatural, to highlight the persistent tensions with monarchy, colonialism, and capitalism that continue to perpetuate destruction and inequality today. The Istoriato, or “story painted” vessel from Renaissance Italy provides an opportunity to reclaim a device that historically propagated patriarchal classical social norms. In response, my work uses the practice of this ancient craft to subvert and re-claim characters and forms that convey alternative meanings that highlight figures on the margins of dominant culture, which I continue to expand upon as this ongoing project evolves.



**Bio:**

Originally from Dallas, Texas, Oldham has exhibited her work throughout the country, including, The Dallas Museum of Art, Kirk Hopper Fine Art in Dallas, Lazy Susan Gallery in New York, Jen Bekman Gallery in New York, Honey Ramka Gallery in Brooklyn, and The Whatcom Museum in Bellingham, Washington. She has received awards including a 2010 Fellowship with BRIC Arts in Brooklyn and residency with Central Trak in Dallas. Oldham also co-founded Field Projects, a project space and gallery in Chelsea dedicated to exhibiting emerging artists. Her work has been spotlighted and reviewed by *The New York Times*, *Design\*Sponge*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *Paper City*, *Texas Monthly*, *Arte Fuse*, *Gawker Arts*, *Bad at Sports*, *Glasstire*, *D Magazine*, *San Francisco Weekly*, *KERA Art & Seek* and others.

**Statement:**

I am a Brooklyn-based artist working in large-scale watercolor on paper. Inspired by mythology, medieval art and fantasy, my work focuses on the triumphs and trials of female identity. I'm interested in story-telling and combine symbols to depict female heroism and rites of passage for women. Tinged with horror, fear and heroism, the women in my paintings confront the foes that haunt them - both real and imagined. Armed in battle gear, headscarves, aprons, and jumpsuits, they are bloodied and strong - representing women's continued fight for success and identity in modern life.

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October 29 - December 17, 2020

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Suffolk County Community College, Ammerman Campus

533 College Road, Selden, NY 11784

<https://sunysuffolk.edu/experience-student-life/arts/art-galleries/flecker-gallery.jsp>

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Gallery Director and Curator: Matthew Neil Gehring

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