Antikenmuseum Basel
und Sammlung Ludwig

animalistic! Animals and hybrid creatures in Antiquity

19 September 2021 to 19 June 2022

Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig

Sphinx, Roman marble copy based on a Greek original, around 450 BC, Rome © Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig, Photo Ruedi Habegger

Our new special exhibition “animalistic! Animals and hybrid creatures in Antiquity” invites you to delve into a world of wild animals and terrifying hybrid creatures that have fired our imaginations since the beginning of time. You will learn about the status of animals that in ancient civilisations were both a source of subsistence and a threat, against which humans had to protect themselves. This ambivalent relationship was reflected not just in religious beliefs, where animals were often represented as companions to the gods, but also in a variety of animal depictions.

The core part of the exhibition is dedicated to the best-known hybrid creatures and monsters, like the centaurs, griffins, the sphinx and the chimera. These hybrid creatures originated in Egypt and the Middle East. In Greek culture, they became a symbol of a strange, dangerous and chaotic world, against which civilisation had to struggle to prevail. Heroes of civilisation such as Heracles and Theseus often took up this challenge. They appeared in numerous myths as representatives of the human world and of normality, confronting dangerous monsters and fighting them with courage, strength and also cunning. The final part of the exhibition is devoted to the eternal struggle between good and evil and explores the significance of such struggles in the belief systems of ancient civilisations.

Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig
St. Alban-Graben 5
4010 Basel
www.antikenmuseumbasel.ch