



Ruth Reese

Metamorphosis

Presented by Teen Museum Studies

For the 2023 Teen Museum Studies program, high school participants were guided through a competitive application review process and selected St. Louis-based artist Ruth Reese to present a new exhibition of works at CAM. Reese is a sculptor with over 20 years of experience teaching and making art. She uses clay and repurposed materials to create imaginative, hand-made pieces that further her connection with the earth. Through her work she explores the idea of metamorphosis by combining humans, animals, and plants into single forms. Reese's sculptures take inspiration from Greco-Roman mythology and personal experiences, which she uses to express the importance of transformation and how one must view change as integral to life.

The works in this exhibition are inspired by Greek deities such as Nyx, Gaia, and Daphne, whose stories of hardship, triumph, and transformation reflect and embody the process of metamorphosis. For example, in Ovid's epic poem *Metamorphoses*, Daphne is transformed into a laurel tree to escape the pursuit of Apollo, who was shot by Cupid's arrow and forced to fall in love with the first person he saw. After her transformation, Apollo develops an affinity for the laurel tree, adorning himself with its leaves and adopting it as his personal symbol. In Reese's depiction, Daphne is shown mid-transformation as she evolves into her hybrid new form.



Ruth Reese, *Leaving her human form, Daphne became the soft humming of bees*, 2018. Stoneware, paint, glaze. Photo courtesy Tim Gebauer.



Ruth Reese, *"All that remained of Daphne was her shining loveliness" (Ovid)*, 2014. Porcelain, paint, wire, glaze. Collection of Bill Perman and Deborah Krause. Photo courtesy Patricia Sheppard.

In times of adversity, life can feel as if it is slowing down and change is impossible. By combining these disparate ideas, Reese symbolically shows how evolution can happen in a short span of time. This creates a space for the youth of our society to know and believe that there is an opportunity for inspiration and growth.

As an uncertain future looms ahead, our world has an increasing focus on rigidity and sameness. Reese strives to show through her elaborate sculptures and fantastical figures that embracing change is crucial in order to thrive. In order to ensure a just world for everyone, change is essential, and Reese equips the viewer with the tools and insights needed to make that metamorphosis possible.

Ruth Reese (she/her) is a St. Louis-based artist, sculptor, and ceramicist. She holds a BA in English from Loyola University and an MFA from Washington University. In her work, Reese uses the richness of porcelain, black stoneware, and red earthenware to explore themes of mythology, death, grace, and the ever-changing nature of identity. Exhibiting nationally, her work has been a part of Visions in Clay, Red Heat, and NCECA. Her work has been shown at the Evansville Museum in Evansville, Indiana; Racine Art Museum in Racine, Wisconsin; and the San Angelo Museum of Fine Art in San Angelo, Texas. She completed her most recent Artist in Residence program at Craft Alliance in St. Louis, where she also founded REESE Gallery in 2014. Her artistic endeavors were acknowledged with the Regional Arts Commission Artists Fellowship Grant in 2016. Currently, she teaches art at the Montessori Adolescent Program in St. Louis.

Teen Museum Studies is a summer intensive internship that engages high school students in direct exposure to museum careers, develops collaboration and critical thinking skills, and offers the chance to select and work with a St. Louis-based artist to organize an exhibition that premieres at CAM in September. This immersive program provides avenues for artistic engagement beyond studio practice and hands-on experience working with artists, museum staff, and creative peers.

Ruth Reese: Metamorphosis is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Caelen Brown, Corinne Farrill, Anthony Holmes, Maline Jackson-Austell, Fern Kanak, Finn Kanak, Ivy Kanak, Salem Lambert, Cozette Mothershead, Ava Swan, Mars Vance, Frankie Williams, and Jacob Williams, with support from Brandon Barr, Teen and Adult Programs Manager.

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Related Programs

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Artist Talk: Ruth Reese

Saturday, October 21, 3:00–4:00 pm



Ruth Reese. Photo courtesy the artist.



Audio Tour

Visit camstl.org/audio to hear directly from our Learning and Engagement team and TMS participants Corinne Farrill, Maline Jackson-Austell, and Salem Lambert.

Digital Guide

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