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Eric Croes  
*The Gods Must Be Crazy*  
Richard Heller Gallery  
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by Jody Zellen



Towering more than six-feet high, three large glazed ceramic totems confront viewers who enter the gallery space. These works—*Fakir's Foot*, *Philosof's Foot* and *Fantomas' Foot*, (all 2021-22)—by Brussels based sculptor Eric Croes, function as the introduction to his exhibition “The Gods Must Be Crazy”. Each vertical column is constructed in the spirit of an Exquisite Corpse drawing combining eight to ten colorfully glazed objects ranging from candles, plants, animals, and books to head-shaped vessels with mask-like features. The base of each sculpture is a sturdy, thick, flat disk upon which sits a cartoon-like depiction of an oversized foot purportedly belonging to the namesake of the sculpture—*Fakir*, *Philosof* or *Fantomas*.

In *Fantomas' Foot*, Croes has stacked a foot covered in a white athletic sock, a coiled pot embedded with the face of a man who has a rope coming out of his nose that wraps around the upper portion of his face, a hollowed out red die, a green stem with leaves, a white puckered sphere like an oversized golf-ball, a brownish, mask-like head with closed eyes and an open mouth; and a bright blue head with tears running from its oval, carved out eyes. The sculpture is topped with an old-fashioned orange candle holder and a white candle that features a bright yellow flame. The other totems combine seemingly unrelated objects that begin to tell a story alluding to the protective nature of these Gods.

While the totems hold court in the front gallery, smaller, more human scaled, gargoyle sculptures fill the back space. Each work is an amalgam of hands, animals and faces that become a figure. These creatures sit atop low stools with bony white legs beneath various colored bases. They beg to be seen from all sides and the way they are displayed—centered in the gallery on low white pedestals—allows for this. It seems evident that Croes is having a blast constructing these sculptures, inserting personal, as well as universal symbols into his Frankenstein forms.

On the backside of the *Vesta's Hand*, the artist has created a face with holes for eyes, red circles for cheeks, and a small mouth with a protruding pink tongue. The top of the head merges

with clunky, albeit realistically rendered fingers with translucent blue fingernails. The tail of a green snake wraps from one side of the hand to the other. Here, the fingertips are small mask-like faces with outstretched tongues and empty eyes and the thumb is both a spout and a skull. Each hand is likewise an inventive combination of faces and functions.

By titling the exhibition *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, Croes creates a playful irony. If the Gods are crazy, they can be, or do, anything. This allows him to make figures with qualities that relate to both actual and invented Gods. Drawing from folklore, mythology, and history, as well as his imagination. Croes manifests a menagerie of figures with a range of personalities and expressions. Whether the starting point is hands or feet, Croes' sculptures surprise and delight, providing viewers with challenging imagery to decipher and savor.

<https://artillerymag.com/eric-croes/>