



Jessica Gadra

Fact in Fantasy

April 24–November 9, 2025

CASTELLANI
ARTMUSEUM
OF NIAGARA UNIVERSITY

An Exhibition Curated
by Niagara University
Course AHM357IS:
Exhibiting Cultures



"I think that people tell their stories in different ways, and to me, the most appealing and beautiful way to tell a story—or human truths—is to do it visually."

Jessica Gadra



EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

Illustrator Jessica Gadra creates intricate drawings of beloved stories, transforming the written word into elaborate visual images. From the whimsical world of fairy tales to the dark depths of mythology, she channels these timeless narratives to explore and comment on human nature.

Gadra's artwork captures the joy of escaping into magical worlds full of fairies, gnomes, and other fantastical beings. In the margins of her visual fables, she hides smaller stories that support or subvert the meanings of the traditional story.

Her drawings of harsh, vengeful lines in a wizard's face and the unblinking gaze of a goddess warn viewers about unchecked desire. Gadra's depiction of animals, mortals, and gods in conversation highlight the importance of wit, cunning, and most of all—patience.

Jessica Gadra: Fact in Fantasy is a powerful reminder of the authentic emotions and experiences at the core of fairy tales, myths, and other magical stories. Through her vivid illustrations, Gadra breathes new life into ancient tales that explore our shared hopes and fears.

Image Credits: (cover, clockwise from left) *Selene and Endymion* (detail), 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper; *Väinämöinen and Otso Honey-paw* (detail), 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper; *Morrigan* (detail), 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 13.25 in. x 8.5 in.

(left) *The Twelve Princesses* (detail), 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper.

MEET THE ARTIST

Jessica Gadra is a Buffalo-based illustrator who graduated from Canisius College (1998) with a BA in English. This debut exhibition of her work celebrates her lifelong passion for storytelling and art. Her illustrations have been featured in children's books, posters, shops, and galleries.

Gadra has been a longtime participant in numerous art festivals throughout Western New York including the Allentown Art Festival, the Elmwood Art Festival, the Lewiston Art Festival, and The Roycroft Campus.

She has illustrated over a dozen books including *Top Leaf* (2017) and *Grumpius* (2022), and is currently working on a piece called *The Labors of Herculania*. This work re-imagines the Greek story, *The Trials of Hercules*, through the day-to-day accomplishments of an elderly woman navigating and overcoming hardships in modern times.

Image Credits: (right) Jessica Gadra, 2024, Courtesy of Kristen Rice Photography

(below) *The Fox and the Crow* (detail), 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 15.5 in. x 13 in.



"I often use color as the punctuation at the end of a piece, as a 'last word.' Other times, however, color functions as the gravity of the work—the flash around which a piece might be centered."

Jessica Gadra

AHM357IS: Exhibiting Cultures (Independent Study)

This course is a hands-on interdisciplinary introduction to the development of museum exhibitions and programs which feature local cultural traditions, ethnographic fieldwork, and museum-community collaborations. As part of coursework, students develop and curate an exhibition in partnership with a local Western New York artist.

Course Instructor: Edward Y. Millar

Student Curators: Desiree Chmiel and Chase Kunz

Art History with Museum Studies Program

Art History with Museum Studies is both an academic and professional program that provides students with a scholarly study of art, culture, and museums, while focusing on the area of professional museum work such as curatorship, education, collections management, museum administration, and development.

Our partnership with the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University, centrally located on the campus, is an integral part of the museum studies component and provides opportunities for museum internships and exhibition-based courses.

Exhibited Artworks

Ariel in Oak, 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 8 in. x 10.5 in.

Boxed Fairy, 2023, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 9 in. x 6.5 in.

East of the Sun, West of the Moon, 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 14 in. x 10.375 in.

The Fallen Moon, 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 12.125 in. x 10.25 in.

The Fox and the Crow, 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 15.5 in. x 13 in.

The Fox and Grapes, 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 11.625 in. x 8.25 in.

The Fox and the Rooster, 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 9.5 in. x 7 in.

Gnomes in Forest, 2023, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 11.25 in. x 6.5 in.

Gnomish Mount, 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 9.625 in. x 6.25 in.
Jack and the Beanstalk, 2023, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 12.375 in. x 8.375 in.

Jason and Medea, 2020, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 13.25 in. x 10.5 in.

Merlin Trapped in the Oak Tree, 2022, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 9 in. x 13.375 in.

Misty Mountains, 2022, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 15.375 in. x 8.5 in.

Morrigan, 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 13.25 in. x 8.5 in.

Murmuration, 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 12.25 in. x 10 in.

Old Hulda, 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 10.625 in. x 10.25 in.

Orpheus, 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 19.75 in. x 8.5 in.

The Owl Queen, 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 16.25 in. x 10.25 in.

The Queen Bee, 2024, pen and ink on paper, 7.5 in. x 11.375 in.

Scylla and Charybdis, 2023, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 15.375 in. x 10.625 in.

Selene and Endymion, 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 11.25 in. x 8.25 in.

Six Ravens, 2018, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 14 in. x 10.25 in.

Tiamat, 2023, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 11.375 in. x 12.25 in.

The Twelve Princesses, 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 9.5 in. x 14.5 in.

Ursa Major/Minor (Callisto), 2023, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 8 in. x 10.5 in.

Väinämöinen and Otso Honeypaw, 2024, pen, ink and watercolor on paper, 14.375 in. x 9 in.

All works by and courtesy of Jessica Gadra.

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**Council on
the Arts**



**CASTELLANI
ART MUSEUM**
OF NIAGARA UNIVERSITY



7 VARSITY DRIVE | NIAGARA UNIVERSITY, N.Y. 14109
716.286.8200 | castellaniartmuseum.org

Please visit our website for current hours of operation.
The Castellani Art Museum is a free admission art museum.
Donations welcome.