

Artist Celia Eberle Explores The Mythology of Love

By Jeremy Hallock



Celia Eberle, *Hero*, 2016

Guided by a belief that anything not backed by science or hard math is mythology, Dallas multimedia artist Celia Eberle explores love in her latest solo show. The Mythology of Love references music, poetry, movies, animals and the love goddess herself.

Eberle's work is well known throughout Texas, but increasingly on the national level as well. She is a recent recipient of the \$25,000 2015 Painters & Sculptors Grant from the Joan Mitchell Foundation.

"I have this expanded concept of mythology," Eberle says. "It includes philosophy, history, religion. Anything we tell ourselves as an attempt to explain, that to me is a myth."

A recurring theme here seems to be duality. The largest work, "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes," shares its name not only with Bobby Vee's 1962 hit song, but also a Victorian love poem. The poem is about love and the song is about infidelity, a part of love. There are no less than 58 raku clay bats crafted with a

Japanese ceramic technique for a sense of Asian history.

They cover two walls of the gallery and may seem spooky, but that depends on your disposition. Eberle is quick to point out that bats may have a creepy connotation in the West, but in Japan they are good omens. Then again, when it comes to love, bats could be a more reasonable expectation than butterflies. Eberle has a wickedly playful sense of humor in this work that is irresistible.



The Night Has A Thousand Eyes (detail)



Artist, Celia Eberle

“I’m just trying to get to those hidden aspects of ourselves that we don’t really understand or ignore,” says Eberle. Inspired by authors like Kafka, Camus and Baudelaire, her goal is to make her work with that same power to transport the viewer with a revelation or insight.

There are three large ceramic perfume bottles; their heads even come off. “Sexy Beast” has a dog’s head, bringing a faithful love to mind. But then again its title references an intense film about crime and infidelity. “Love Machine” references the title of a happy '70s song. But with the head of a female robot that reminds the viewer both of the science fiction classic, Metropolis, as well

as more recent films like *Ex Machina*, it represents artificial love. “Love Me Two Times” obviously took its title from a song by The Doors, but it’s a two-headed cat. This is about obsessions with anything distorted or freakish.

“We embrace things that are probably suffering,” Eberle says. “But we think of them as adorable. We want to keep them and keep them alive.” Two-headed kittens, for example. “Hero” is perhaps the most straightforward piece, a pale white ceramic horse with no wings. The wooden music box mechanism plays “Are You Lonesome Tonight?”

“Altar” is a particularly somber piece with a fragile subject: a white ceramic sacrificial lamb lying on its side with heart-shaped perfume bottles sticking out of its neck. Marriage is a sacrament, and sometimes love requires sacrifice. It’s an extreme display. Perfume has been displayed in all sorts of bizarre ways in department stores, but none required a sacrifice.

There are also two music boxes. “Secret Ceremony” has painted branches, glass flowers and a snowflake obsidian moon. It takes its name from a film starring a love goddess, Elizabeth Taylor. The American story is about a mother and daughter, but the original British version is about lesbians. This is about hidden aspects of desire. Below the surface there are stalactites of a cave.

Eberle used her art to inspect love not only because it’s a central theme of life, but also because she wasn’t seeing enough of it in the world. The Paris attacks occurred while she was working on the show and “Where’s the love?” was a question often repeated. Supporters of the terrorists who don’t believe in forgiveness because they are not Christians also struck her. “Forgiveness is love,” Eberle says. “It’s the same thing.”

The *Mythology of Love* opens with a reception at 6 p.m. Saturday and runs through February 13 at Cris Worley Fine Arts, 1845 Levee St., Suite. 110.