

Cyclops or triceratops?

Classic Rock: The Mythology of Geology at Boonshoft

By JENNIFER HANAUER LUMPKIN



Associate Curator Jill Krieg-Accrocco handles artifacts for the *Classic Rock: The Mythology of Geology* exhibit at the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery

Let's say you're wandering around Earth two or three thousand years ago and have no access to IFLScience, haven't seen "Jurassic Park" and assume you'll fall to your death if you mosey too close to the horizon. Now let's say you come across a colossal femur bone that clearly belonged to a creature who would consider you a light snack. Who the frack had that belonged to?!

In an age before scientific disciplines took hold and sorted out some hitherto mysteries for us, someone had some explaining to do. More often than not, those fantastical explanations that resulted from our curious human minds became the stuff of legend and myth. Now through Aug. 23 at the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery, you can explore these ancient myths and their modern explanations as the Dayton Society of Natural History presents *Classic Rock: The Mythology of Geology*.

"We really wanted to do a geology exhibit, but I wanted to do something not typical," says Associate Curator of Anthropology Jill Krieg-Accrocco, whose undergraduate degree was in classical art and literature. "So, I drew from those classes I had as an undergrad about classic myths, this idea that as ancient people were observing the natural world, they didn't have the kind of scientific knowledge that we have today. How did they explain it?"

Well, Zeus's temper got the credit for lightning, Demeter helped us humans get on this whole farming jag and Poseidon kept us navigating the water. The antics of these gods and goddesses shaped our universe and left their marks everywhere. Why is this bit of quartz over here pink, you ask? Because Adonis and Aphrodite nicked themselves and got a little blood on it, of course. Not buying it? Be sure to pick up a gallery guide, which contains ample elucidations for the scientific mind.

"The exhibit really focuses on what people used to believe prior to the scientific revolution and then what we know today and comparing those stories side by side," Krieg-Accrocco says.

"There are pieces from the anthropology collection that come in and help tell the story," says Director of Marketing and Public Relations Kristy Creel. "There's pottery, there's items from the biology collection—all pulled together and curated to tell the story."

Locally curated, I might add. And nearly all exclusively from Boonshoft's collection, with the exception of a few pieces borrowed from the Dayton Art Institute to flesh out examples from classic Greece and Rome. But many of the most striking pieces, like the mammoth and mastodon molars, were donated to the museum.

"The cyclops in particular is connected very heavily to the woolly mammoth," Krieg-Accrocco says. "Because the nasal cavity kind of looks like a large eye, they thought that was the skull of the cyclops."

But the exhibit isn't all rocks and monsters. A stage in the corner along with costumes and truncated scripts provide children the opportunity

"If you look at classical Greek architecture, we have this idea that everything is stark white," Krieg-Accrocco says. "That's because over time, being out in the elements, all the colors have faded. In antiquity, most of these things were very elaborately painted, and people are shocked when they see reproductions painted to how they actually looked... You have to think about a time, too, prior to electricity. People used a lot of bright colors to make things more bright and light in front of candlelight."

Krieg-Accrocco hopes the learning experience doesn't stop once you leave Boonshoft.

"You take the gallery guide home," Krieg-Accrocco says, "you read it with your kids and then you say, 'Let's go visit a cave!'"

Classic Rock: The Mythology of Geology will be on display in the Frazee Gallery at the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery until Aug. 23. The museum is located at 2600 DeWeese Pkwy. in Dayton and open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Saturday, and 12 p.m.-5 p.m. Sunday. General admission is \$10 for children ages 3-16, \$11 for seniors age 60 and up, \$13 for adults and free for members and children under 3. To learn more about the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery and to find out how to become a member, visit boonshoftmuseum.org.

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to act out the ancient myths, and a screen in the center of the room plays Jim Henson's "The Storyteller: Greek Myths."

"You could spend 20 minutes in this gallery or you could spend four hours," Krieg-Accrocco says. "It depends on how finely you want to look at everything."

It would not be difficult to spend every bit of four hours wandering the Frazee Gallery, located on the second floor of Boonshoft near the climbing tower and tree house. The space is calm and inviting, complemented by the lilting orchestral covers of Black Sabbath and Fleetwood Mac drifting through the speakers—another clever play on "classic rock." Walking in, you're struck immediately by the warm glow of the brightly painted walls.



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