

What is your initial reaction to this creature? If you saw a beast like this in real life, would you run and scream? Why? Is it being violent? Do you see any blood? limbs torn from victims? No, so what reason would you have to be afraid? Perhaps the creature's sharp teeth and unusual limbs? But cats have sharp teeth and bare them when startled. So who's to say this creature wouldn't enjoy chasing a laser dot or curling up next to you after a long day? What really makes a monster?

Throughout my life, I have always been fascinated by what makes people afraid and what most would quickly dismiss as being creepy or unusual without giving it any deeper thought. So I hoped to incorporate that into this illustration by depicting a creature most would initially dismiss as frightening but doesn't actually portray any signs of violence.

What makes this artwork truly distinctive is my unconventional technique, a coil tattoo machine modified to hold a ballpoint pen cartridge instead of a needle. I find the ink delivery system for tattoos a fascinating medium and wanted to see if I could engineer a pen and ink system that would allow for the unique dot shading technique from the mechanized pen.

Given my process for creating monsters, this creature looks nothing like my initial idea. The initial composition was different, with a muntjac deer skull instead of being humanoid. The creature's head was also initially in profile. However, it maintained the same long body and general curvature of the body. But ultimately, I wanted the creature to be addressing the viewer.

I hope for the viewer to sit with their reactions and notice where that may come from within themselves and to take this as an opportunity to question their automatic concepts of reaction and judgment. Where else in our lives might we reflexively judge without thought based on initial appearance? And where else might we be wrong?

## THE CREATURE

Dylan W. (he/they)

Bend, Oregon