

# Bizarre fascinations

Pagan characters, Renaissance art and surgical enhancement meet in Rebecca Stevenson's sculptures



The artist in her studio at the V&A



Trumpette, 2023 (Work in progress)

Recent visitors to the V&A's Medieval and Renaissance gallery, Room 64a, might have noticed something new. In place of sculptures by Donatello, there's a giant, coral coloured head cast in wax, and a bronze swan that morphs into a botoxed face, for instance. All are works by the artist Rebecca Stevenson, the museum's Shifting Perspectives Resident.

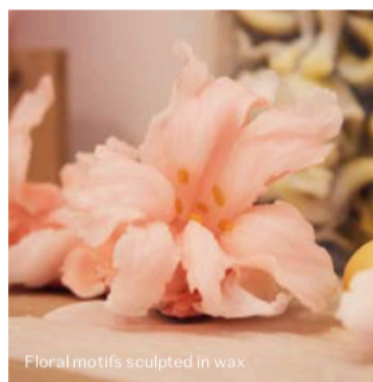
Since September, Stevenson has been responding to the exhibition *Donatello: Sculpting the Renaissance* and objects in the V&A's collection. She has developed new pieces and swapped works in progress in and out of Room 64a.

The artist found pagan iconography in medieval and early Renaissance objects particularly

inspiring, such as carved monsters or putti (the winged infants have been seen as both angelic and demonic since pre-Christianity).

Donatello, with his giants, snakes and sprite-like figures, appeals to her for his "weirdness", Stevenson says. "He's so diverse: it's not all beautiful, it's not all classical. Some of it is quite strange, especially to a contemporary viewer." Her bronze piece depicting a female face has a shell-like curve, and its features are based on a "Trumpette", a female Donald Trump supporter. For the artist, it was a way to "bring ideas of beauty and the grotesque together".

Words by Alexander Morrison



Floral motifs sculpted in wax

→ **See Stevenson's work in the Residency Studio, Learning Centre, on 17 June, and in Medieval & Renaissance, Room 64a, The Robert H. Smith Gallery until 14 July**

Photos: Andrew Kimber