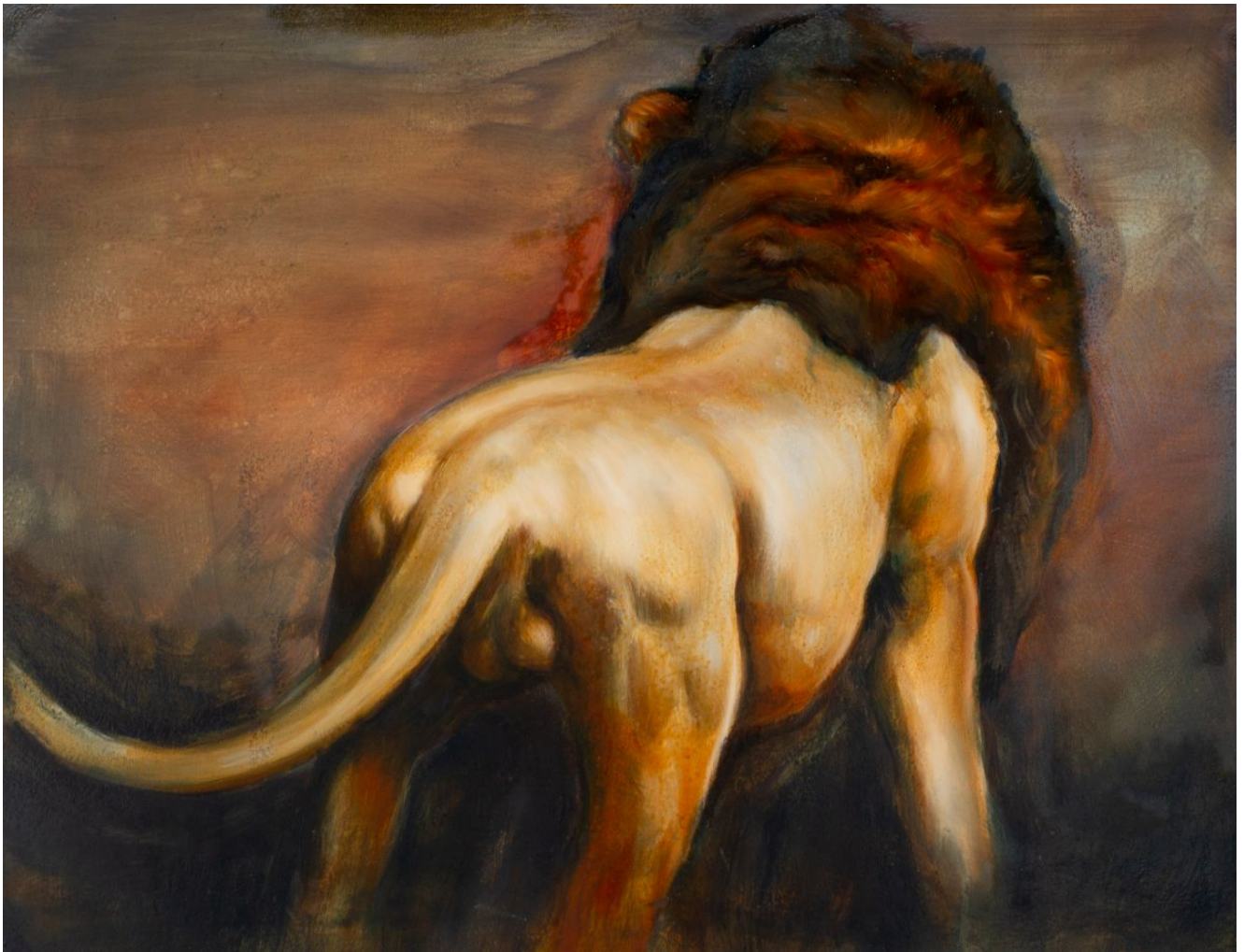




Nemean Lion

R 18,000.00



Mythology has played an important role in the formation of cultures. These stories, spoken in a masculine voice or written by a masculine hand, served to inscribe patriarchal values in the structure of civilizations, the influence of which is still present today. The character of the hero (a staple of classical mythology, quintessentially male and always the protagonist of the story) was a potent force for inculcating ideas of male superiority. Heroes epitomise those espoused values of patriarchal society — strength, dominance, and a proclivity for violence — and can be seen as

archetypes for toxic male gender roles today. These figures, made so large through centuries of retelling, offer a target for a critique of hegemonic patriarchy.

Excluding the hero himself, I have focused instead on the non-human characters – the beasts and monsters which are typically cast as antagonists, to be slain by the righteous male hero. In fact, they are not even given the honour of that role. These creatures are merely obstacles to be destroyed by the male protagonist. “Their job is to be in the way, to be overcome” (Haraway, 2016:39), acting as props for his character development. Such stories, in which nature is denied agency and presented as something to be conquered, seem ironic in the present time in which so much is vulnerable to disturbed climate conditions.

The decision to omit the representation of the hero in my project is an attempt to subvert the dominant representation of myths in the western art canon, shifting attention away from the pervasive male, human figure.

As we have been taught by millennia of anthropocentric myths, monsters are dangerous, a threat to civilised society and something to be eradicated. As a means of reinforcing normative (and indeed heteronormative) binaries, those who do not fit into socially acceptable categories have been made into monsters and subjected to persecution and violence. As a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, this analogy resonates with me. It reflects the treatment “both historical and current” of queer people, even in a supposedly ‘progressive’ society such as South Africa. Within this project, I attempt to subvert the typically negative associations between queerness and monstrosity by celebrating the monster.

The mythical creatures in this body of work provide an apt metaphor for the animal species threatened by the exploits of global capitalism. Beyond this ecological allegory, though, they can also be seen as symbolic of all those beings (human and otherwise) who experience an oppressed, fugitive existence.

Medium	Oil on Canvas
Location	Cape Town, South Africa
Height	61.00 cm
Width	76.00 cm
Artist	Gabriele Jacobs
Year	2025

