

KRISTINE & COLIN POOLE

ARTIST VS ARTIST

kristinepoole.com // colinpoole.com

Who creates mythology? A simple question, but without any simple answer. By definition mythology cannot be traced to any single person – any myth must have its origin lost in time and have become part of the collective consciousness of a people. Attribution implies authorship, so while writers and artists innumerable have used the themes of mythologies to inspire their work, their origins must perforce remain shrouded by the mists of time.

As avid students of myth across countries and cultures, the unconscionably talented husband and wife artistic duo Colin and Kristine Poole intertwine these varying disparate fables and legends in their works. The development of mythology is an evolutionary process, grown and mutated by the inaccuracies of storytelling. A glimpse of one of Colin and Kristine's sculptures in a wooded glade may then become the seed of a new legend when passed on from viewer to eager listener, from parent to child.

So given this you may imagine that these two artists are intensely serious people, studious and fixated on their work, and in thinking this you would not be wrong. But that is not the whole, or even the most important part of the story of Colin and Kristine Poole. Theirs is a relationship filled with humanity and humour, a sparking of creative passions leading to art that will astonish, amaze and perhaps, give rise to a mythology of its own.

Introduction by Richard Purssey

BEGINNINGS

COLIN: Where do we start?

KRISTINE: I was thinking "Artist vs. Artist."

COLIN: Bit like a gladiator match. That's alright - I'll be "shirts," you can be "skins."

KRISTINE: um, okay. I don't know what that means though.

COLIN: Y'know, when you're playing a ball game.

KRISTINE: ... ahhh, I see. You sexy! *(laughs)* You always say that the worst place for anyone is between you and me.

COLIN: Well, we've been "no hesitations" from the beginning.

KRISTINE: Kinda that way in everything – remember when a couple of artists came to visit and said they were going "full Poole" in their lives?

COLIN: Yeah, we're like, what's "full Poole"?

KRISTINE: And they say, "You know, no TV, no couch, no living room, just art – all art, all the time."

COLIN: Perfect! Art-life immersion – joining the Poole Party.

KRISTINE: I was pretty happy to join the Poole Party.

COLIN: It all started when I asked you to Tango.





KRISTINE: I said "yes, but don't be offended if I laugh." Then you said, "I'll be offended if you don't." Within 30 seconds, you made me giggle.

COLIN: And that giggle made me think "is this who I think it is?"

KRISTINE: We talked so much in the first few minutes of knowing each other it seemed like I'd already known you a lifetime – but then I had to run.

COLIN: I came to find you the next day.

KRISTINE: It was so amazing. You walked up and said, "I believe we have an unfinished conversation. Might I entice you to the rest of it?"

COLIN: ... and that conversation never ends. There isn't ever enough time in the day to talk about all the things we want to share. When we go to sleep, I always wish for just a few more moments.

KRISTINE: ... and I wake up in the morning bubbling over with things to tell you because we haven't talked in hours.

COLIN: Maybe you're bubbling over after you've had your coffee - before the caffeine hits, you're in a coma and I get to hold court. Then there are the times I'm literally dragging you out of bed by your heels so you wake in the middle of a giggle fit, but you still need your coffee.

ON COLLABORATIONS

KRISTINE: I think our collaboration was a natural development of these ongoing conversations.

COLIN: Plus our passion for art and each other.

KRISTINE: When we got together, your career kinda came

full circle, right? You had a degree with a focus in sculpture, but you'd been mostly a painter for decades when we met.

COLIN: ... and then you came here with what? Like a thousand pounds of clay? Inspiration in a box, okay, a whole bunch of boxes.

KRISTINE: *(laughs)* Yeah! That's about right. I came home one day and there you are wrestling with this giant giraffe head you'd sculpted and you were trying to make it balance on this skinny little curving giraffe neck.

COLIN: I said, "You think you can give me a hand with this?" And you said "I don't think clay likes to do that, baby."

KRISTINE: But sure enough, clay did like doing that, and we were off and running.

COLIN: Before you, I'd always been solitary in my creative space. The delicate dance with the Muse is something to be nurtured and protected. Then there are the myriad decisions one makes in bringing a creation to life and the last thing I wanted was somebody to influence that balance.

KRISTINE: I know what you mean, but everything about us was so natural. The trust between us, our talents, skills and vision blended so perfectly. When a sculpture is in that "ugly teenage phase", I love that we can push it across the table and say, "here-you deal with it."

COLIN: Collaborations between artists are sometimes talked about like a "Clash of the Titans."

KRISTINE: We're more like two kids building a sand castle, I go "I was thinking, what if we ...?"

COLIN: "Yeah, And then we could!"

KRISTINE: "Yes!!! And then let's!"

COLIN: Then KABOOM! Enthusiasm Explosion! That giddy excitement still delights me.

"I LOVE THAT WE EACH HAVE OUR OWN BODIES OF WORK THAT FEED INTO THE WORK WE SHARE"



KRISTINE: What we make together is a part of both of us. I love that we each have our own bodies of work that feed into the work we share.

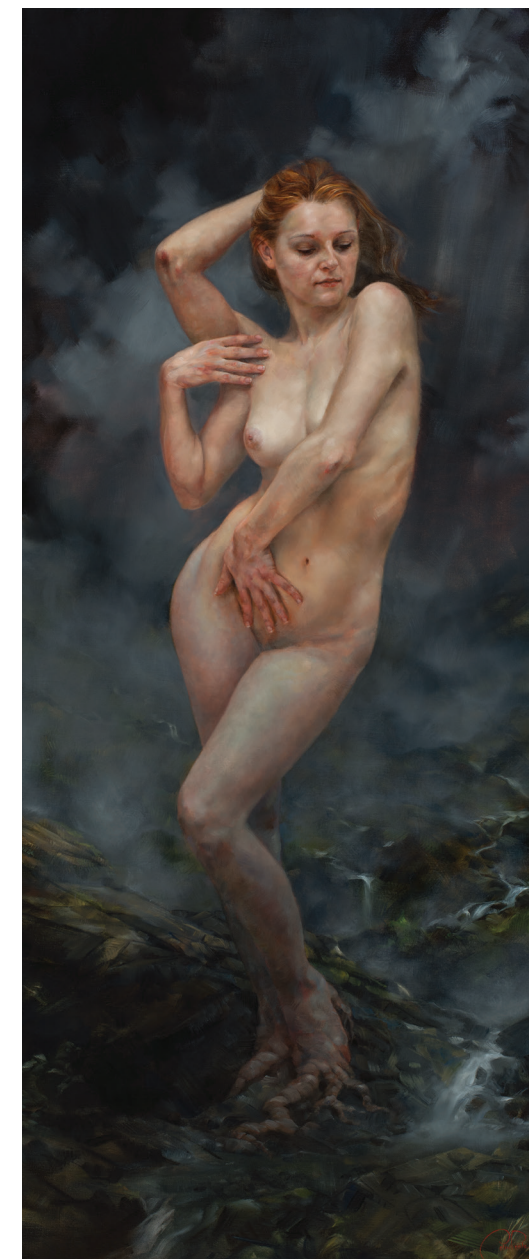
COLIN: We get asked all the time, "who does what?" and of course I usually say, "I do all the cool stuff"

KRISTINE: *(laughs)* You would. The real answer is we both do everything - it's not like I'm the nostril expert and you're the earlobe guy.

COLIN: I think it clarifies things for people when we distinguish between the equal 50/50 collaborations and creations where one of us is the principal, taking the lead conceptually and physically with the other helping on smaller parts of the process.

KRISTINE: Like when you help with the surfaces on my pieces. Your sculptural style is so intuitive – you have such a natural feel for clay, leaving all those beautiful tool marks and textures. I always smooth things out, maybe because I so often inscribe text on pieces.

COLIN: *The Chimaera Series* was a good blend – you did the human body all smooth and I did the animal head with lots of texture, but then continued the



texture through all the transitional elements and into the body, so it has a cohesive feel as though it was all from the same hand.

KRISTINE: That's important – that it not look disparate. I think it's cool that I get to have your innate sculptural textural awesomeness on some of my pieces!

COLIN: *(laughs)* Textural awesomeness, love the sound of that. Ironic that in some of my recent sculptures I have been smoothing a bit more obviously your nefarious influences.

KRISTINE: *(laughs)* Clearly.

COLIN: It's a phenomenal experience when we're literally sculpting on opposite sides of the same piece at the same time.

KRISTINE: Yeah – so incredible! It makes me laugh when you say, "quit wiggling it so much!" when you're doing all those little details. One of my favorite collaborations so far has been the *Ktisis*. You've been into mythology since you were a kid and we both adore Carrier-Belleuse. Remember the first time we saw his *Mary, Queen of Scots* in San Francisco?



previous spread
Colin - *Daphne*, 2014
Oil on wood, 24" x 36"

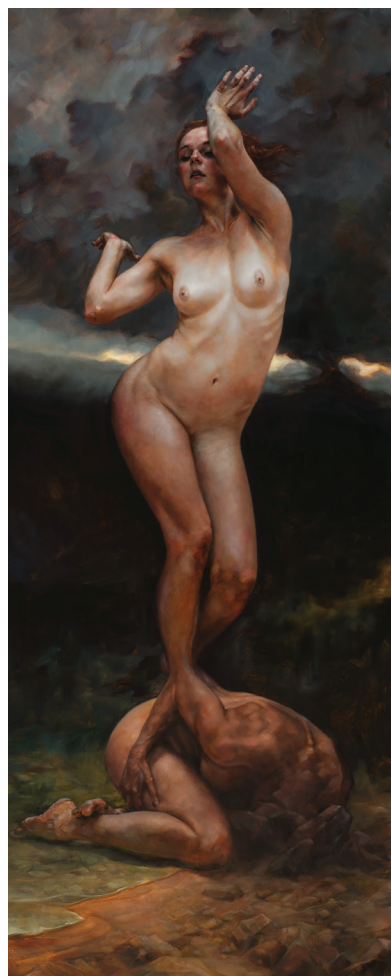
opposite page, left
Kristine - *Equiina*, 2018
Fired clay with sterling silver, 18" x 9" x 6"

opposite page, right
Kristine - *Inner Tête-à-Tête*, 2015
Fired clay, life-sized 26" x 39" x 34"

left
Colin - *Born of the Valley of Mist*, 2016
Oil on linen, 60" x 26"

top right
Colin - *The Wind in the Waves*, 2018
Bronze, 22" x 12" x 8"

bottom right
Colin - *Qilin*, 2012
Lacquered fired clay, 22.5" x 18" x 15"



COLIN: Blown away! Talk about embellishment.

KRISTINE: I love ornamentation, but that was a whole new stratosphere. When we got home, I got a model in and started working on my own portrait bust. I was so excited about her! I told you, "I cannot wait for you to work on this sculpture – she talks to you the whole time."

COLIN: So when you were delivering a sculpture to a museum in the midwest, I jumped in. I'd been inspired by the mythology I'd known all my life, the silversmithing and metal work we'd studied at the Wallace Collection and the ceiling of the Uffizi – the designs flowed out so naturally. You called me and asked how it was going.

KRISTINE: You told me, so delighted, "Great! I've changed the nipples into noses and one has a tongue lolling out of its mouth!"

COLIN: ... nothing but silence on the line, uh oh.

KRISTINE: Yeah, I'm sitting there like, I am totally not picturing this, it was a long drive home after that. Then, when I saw what you'd done, I loved it so much. The designs told the story of the muse – it completed her.

COLIN: I revel in the ambiguity of the adornment – is the relief design clothing, armor or part of her? It both obscures and emphasizes the forms of her body.

ABOUT NUDITY IN ART

KRISTINE: Isn't the human body stunningly beautiful?

COLIN: I find the unclad form is the most engaging and challenging thing to render in painting or sculpture, endlessly captivating ... (laughs) and you still get to be "skins".

KRISTINE: Stick a nude in the middle of a room and anyone who walks by will have some kind of thought about it. We can't ignore the human body – we all have so many opinions about it. Our reactions are instant, visceral and so powerful. But people can have a bit of weirdness when it comes to nudity in art.

COLIN: It's a strange world we live in where people seem to be comfortable with graphic violence on an epic scale and yet an unclad female nipple can send them into paroxysms of freak out.

KRISTINE: I've had a lot of conversations with people, but still don't get it. The human body is so amazing – all its shapes and forms are fascinating. It's so hard for me to understand why people might get worked up about something so incredible.



COLIN: I usually forget that much of what we do are nudes.

KRISTINE: We did that workshop once for a bunch of kids. Afterwards, they all swarmed into the gallery. After examining Hot Diggety Dog (a nude Anubis sculpture) for a bit, one little girl runs over to her friend, grabs her hand and says, "Come see this."

COLIN: We're like, okay, here we go.

KRISTINE: And the girl runs up to the sculpture, points at it and says with great excitement, "Look! He has a dog head!"

COLIN: Yep. Nudity, not the takeaway.

ON CHALLENGES

KRISTINE: What do you find challenging?

COLIN: Challenging? There is little about the artist's life that's easy – our relationship, that's easy. I love this life and it's, well, it is intense. I talk about balance as if it's something I'm working on, but I'm not. I feel the weight of how much there is to do and am profoundly aware of the passing of time. How much can I create before there is no more time and I have no idea how much is left – a few years? a few weeks? a day or two? Artists often say, "I just want to be in my studio and create." Well yeah, that's the fantasy we all want but there's an immense Sisyphean mountain of support detritus that needs to be attended to in order to carve out the moments when we can create, a whole bushel full of extraneous things that have little to do with creativity itself.

KRISTINE: The unending cue of "need-to-do's" before we can get to the "want-to-do's."

COLIN: We pour everything into this. It's all, it feels like it's all important. I'm not sure how to describe the intensity of the days because it's not as though I'm doing a marathon on my hands and knees over broken glass - it's not that kind of intensity - but there's been an escalating demand around the amount of time I devote to art and art - related things. I want to give people an idea of what my world is and has been for a very long time - sometimes it seems I've been running on exhaustion and fumes for decades on end.

Once I tried to take a few minutes to sit with a cup of tea in the garden and it was wonderful, but then I could no longer figure out how to squeeze it into my day and it dropped off. I miss sleeping till sunrise, riding a bike down the mountain, just having some leisure time, a day off. It's hard to imagine that actually taking an evening off is a really unusual and delightful event. That said, when we travel, we drop out of sight and either wash up on a Greek Isle or we're savouring museums, which we also do from when they open in the morning to when they kick us out at night. It delights me that we do this hand in hand because we share that passion and focus.

opposite page, top
Colin - *Born of the Elements*, 2015
Oil on linen, 60" x 26"

opposite page, bottom
Colin - *Born of the Elements II*, 2015
Oil on linen, 60" x 26"

top left
Kristine - *Wordcage*, 2015
Fired clay, life-sized 40"x 18"x 23"

bottom left
Kristine - *Spinner of Dreams*, 2019
Fired clay, metal, caseins, 16"x 13"x 10"

right
Kristine - *Daskala: The Allegory of Mentorship*, 2016
Fired clay, 25"x 17"x 18"



KRISTINE: It's rejuvenating and reinvigorating.

COLIN: It's just the day-to-day trying to find a balance between painting, sculpture, writing, doing the things that bring me joy, and all the business/life stuff. Lately, on top of the everything else, I've been even more focused on the mythology I'm writing - it interlaces with the paintings and sculptures - one inspires the other. As I write the stories, I myself find out what happens – I am driven to bring that forth. Otherwise it will just be scratches on a paper in a box somewhere that someone tosses out. That thought terrifies me.

KRISTINE: Absolutely. I'm petrified by the words, "how we spend our days is how we spend our lives." I do think we're pretty great about jumping into the fray when one of us goes into desperation mode trying to get something done, but yeah, how do you do it all in one lifetime?

COLIN: And you?

KRISTINE: I think my "Artist vs. Artist" is more me against myself – my screamin' demon chorus of self-doubt doing their "ground and pound" in my mind. I can get completely derailed.

COLIN: Those times are rough on both of us. You are the most logical person I know. You can literally out-logic anyone, but when you're swiveting like that, everything you say is completely illogical.

KRISTINE: It's like germs of the mind. When I'm exhausted, my resistance is down. Like a cold – we're



exposed to germs all the time, but it's only when we're weaker that we actually get sick. In that mind space, if enough "no's" or perceived failures stack up, it feels like I'm getting my teeth kicked in and I go into the swivet. But you, you don't ever give up on me – I don't know how you do that.

COLIN: You can be fiercely hard on yourself.

KRISTINE: I'm more likely to focus on the gap between where I am and where I want to be than how far I might have come. I suppose I do ride myself pretty hard. Sometimes I have to do a little weeding of the mind fields. Eventually I can ask myself, "what's good about this?" Well, if I'm not in this show, I can do other things I've wanted to do and so on. It seems that when one door of opportunity slams shut in your face, it usually jars a few more open.

FOOD FIIIIIIIGHT!

COLIN: What do you think is something about me that people would be surprised to know?

KRISTINE: Hmm, that you're really sensitive - you kind of look like a tough guy but you get teary-eyed over beautiful things, art, a song, theater.

COLIN: ... you.

KRISTINE: You're sweet. I think it shows up in your work. You focus on the beautiful things in life.

COLIN: I imagine it would surprise people that you will be almost the last, if not the very last person to realize how talented you really are.

KRISTINE: That's such a beautiful thing to say – I love you. And, as usual, you're probably right. What do you think people would be surprised to learn about us?

COLIN: That it's actually pretty much exactly how we say it is. We really spend most every moment of every day together. Married on a Greek island eleven years ago and we're still doing the newlyweds thing.

KRISTINE: We really don't fight.

COLIN: Okay, it's not like we have cherubs floating around us, not really into



opposite page
Colin - *Peregrinatio*, 2013
Oil on linen, 66"x 38"

this page
Kristine - *They Said Abigail Was a Witch*, 2015
Fired clay with stains, life-sized 30"x 35" x 23"

"YOU'RE SWEET, I THINK IT SHOWS IN YOUR WORK, YOU FOCUS ON THE BEAUTIFUL THINGS"

cherubs, but if we did, they would be painted by Bouguereau. *(laughs)*

KRISTINE: I guess the real question might be how is it that we don't fight, I know I can be pretty frustrating and difficult.

COLIN: Really?

KRISTINE: Yeah, I probably should have told you that earlier.

COLIN: Oh, I've seen you in action as "Quill Woman" – Yeee-ikes! I am so glad that's never directed at me. Yes, you may have your challenges, but you are so much bigger than those. It's my job to always remind you of that.

KRISTINE: You're the hero of my life – and I don't care what anyone thinks about me saying that. You help me stay on my path. You have so much space for me to be, me and for that, among other things, I am devoted to you. It creates this cycle of kindness – the more gentle you are with me, the more I want to be kind to you. I couldn't bear doing something that hurt you.

COLIN: It's kind of self-serving in a way – sort of like pissing off the chef might not be in your best interest.

KRISTINE: We are passionate regarding just about everything, but for us, passion has nothing to do with being hot - tempered. One time we finally got tired of the absurdity of people telling us we had "to learn how to fight to be happy." Whaaaat???

COLIN: So we went out and got that big ol' watermelon and had a massive food fight-done.

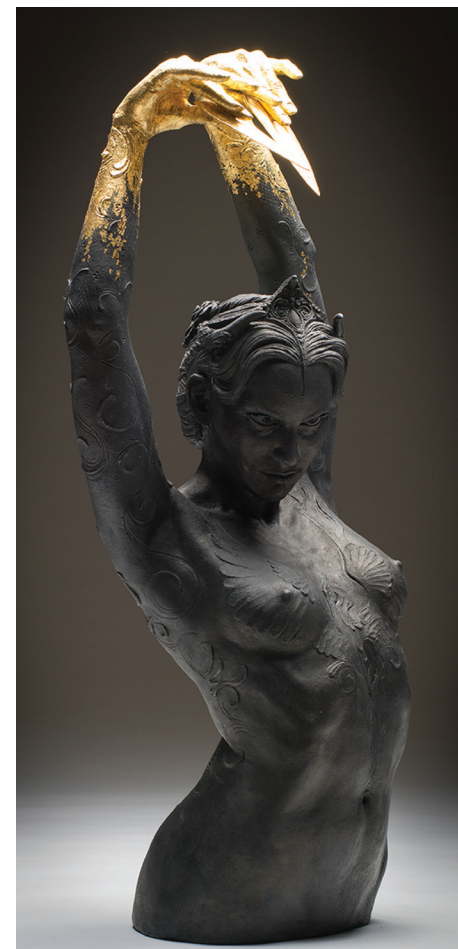
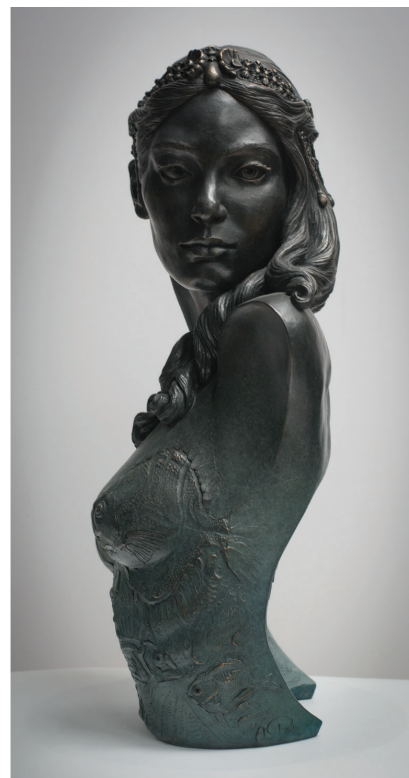
KRISTINE: Yeah – really done with that one. Check it off the list.

WE'RE WORKING OUT

KRISTINE: You've taught me about a lot of things, like working out.

COLIN: Needed a lifting buddy. And it's a bit of insurance for a lifestyle where everything is big, heavy and fragile.

KRISTINE: It's a great metaphor for creativity, easier to understand in a realm that's physical rather than the creative mental arena, but it's kind of the same.



Lift what's in front of you, period. You can sit there thinking about it as long as you like, but that's not going to make it any easier – the weight doesn't get any lighter with you looking at it.

COLIN: Most of the time we say "I can't" when what we really mean is "I don't want to" or "I don't feel like it." It's like your sculpting or drawing skills – you have to do it to get stronger.

KRISTINE: Do it or don't, no one else is going to do it for you.

COLIN: Are you going all Yoda on me? Yeah, you sit there thinking, "Maybe my friends can lift it for me and I'll watch" is that what weight watching is all about?

IN COMPETITION

KRISTINE: Hey! Congrats! You just got into another one – you're rock-in' it out with the shows this year.

COLIN: Really? Are you proud of me?

KRISTINE: Of course I am, you're freakin' talented.

COLIN: Do you think we compete with each other? I don't actually think of myself competing with anyone – it's not that kind of thing.

KRISTINE: Hmmmm... mainly, I think we challenge each other to bring it on. If you have a success, how can that not be good for me too?

COLIN: Everything is tied together - your collectors also buy my work and vice versa. Any exposure one of us gets reflects on us both.

KRISTINE: *(laughs)* Yeah – people don't even know who we are when they see one of us without the other – alone, we are seriously incognito. We've kind of become one being in a way.

SYNCHRONICITY

COLIN: One being huh? But one of us is way cuter.

KRISTINE: What do you think about twin flames?

COLIN: Well, I like to think there's something more to our being together than random chance.

KRISTINE: After we first met, I checked out your website and saw that *Ascension* painting. I knew I'd seen it before. I emailed and asked if you were sure we'd never met.

COLIN: I said "I am quite certain we've never met – I would've remembered."

KRISTINE: But I was certain I knew that painting. So I started going through my old sketchbooks. BINGO! I'd ripped the page out of ART-News, stuck it in my book. Underneath your painting, I wrote about the ideal man I wanted to meet.

COLIN: Unbelievable. When I showed you the original page, it had my name, a Santa Fe telephone number, an 800 number AND my address.

KRISTINE: And I cut them all off – ugh.

COLIN: We could've met ten years earlier!

KRISTINE: Yeah, my guardian angel was probably like, "AAAARRRRR-RGH!!! I'm gonna kill her!"

COLIN: Yeah, mine tried to drown me a few times.

KRISTINE: I'd have missed you. Where do we go now?

COLIN: As always, love – off to stroll the fields of our imaginations.



opposite page, top right
Kristine - *Call of the Muse*, 2015
Fired clay, 24"x 20"x 17.5"

opposite page, bottom left
Kristine - *Oneira: Muse of Dreams*, 2017
Bronze, 23"x 14.5"x 9"

opposite page, bottom right
Kristine - *Despoena: Muse of Challenges*, 2017
Fired clay with 22K gold leaf, 31"x 13"x 9"

right
Colin - *Born of Root and Stone, The Highlands*, 2016
Oil on linen, 60"x 26"