

The Monster Gallery

This... facility? Collection? Installation? ...is set in a quiet town in a reasonably peaceful region of the world where nothing much ever happens and there are quite a lot people dedicated to making sure that nothing much *will* ever happen, either. The design and presentation of the outer facade has had more money spent on it than the Manhattan Project, albeit not adjusted for inflation: every angle and every facet is designed to make the average human being see what he most subconsciously expects to see. This can actually be done, particularly if you have access to the classified psychological and neurological research studies: it's just extremely expensive.

Assuming one notices the place, realizes that the business occupying the building is a front for more clandestine activities, then makes it past the security station and down the stairs into the basement: what will he find, there? Basically, a collection of artist's workstations. Each station consists of a painting on canvas of a different monstrous figure, plus a clutter of magical and mundane artist's supplies and tools. No less than three and no more than five artists are in the room at any given time, and the ones working there at any given time give off the impression

that they are trying to finish an almost impossibly difficult job in as little a time as possible before they make an inevitable mistake.

Which is fair, because that's what the artists are doing. Monsters are, you see, real. And fortunately soulless: 'fortunately' because that means that they're even more vulnerable to art-based magic than normal people are. Take a photo of a human, capture bit of a human's soul. Take a photo of a monster, capture its ability to define itself, Then take the photo to the Gallery, where the finest portraitists in the world will paint or draw an elaborate magical trap to lock that monster's archetype down into a form that men can counter and destroy. Only you have to keep painting or drawing: because while monsters lack souls they still have minds, and they will constantly try to slowly shift themselves into a form that will free them from the Gallery's control.

As you can imagine, it's a stressful - if somewhat slow-motion - job. Which is why nobody has to do it for more than five years, which is about how long the average artist can safely draw Monsters for the Gallery without suffering permanent damage. At the end of that time, the artists are paid off, sworn to secrecy, and receive a cost-of-living subsidy for the rest of their (hopefully long)

lives. Because there are two things that you absolutely don't want in this business: mad artists used to working with magical artifacts, and the vengeful shades of *murdered* ones...

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