

Kramer Hegenbarth
Flowering in the Dark
February 3 - March 3, 2024

According to the Society for the Advancement of Terms of Venerly, a league of scholars dating to the 15th century that are dedicated to the scholarship of "nouns of assembly," e.g. a pride of lions, a blur of impressionists, etc., there have been just two controversies involving the naming of collective nouns. The first, concerning geese, was settled rather quickly and politely when it was unanimously determined that a group waddling around on the ground would be called a gaggle, yet that same group together in flight would be a flock. Problem solved. The second disagreement, a lasting one at that, has led to the only recorded schism amongst society members, and this feud involves Kramer Hegenbarth's enigmatic *rock monsters*.

As with most disputes, the discord is polemic. But this isn't your standard status quo/originalists/traditionalists versus reformists/modernists/neo-somethings-or-other. Instead, this quarrel is between the atomistics and the holistics. The atomistics, a definitive bunch of staid specificists are staunchly committed to the lovely term a *flowering* of rock monsters. Conjured after a long communing with the creatures, they feel this expression conveys the elegant potential hidden within them. Beautiful and poetic, this poignant expression embraces a blooming of the inanimate, the seeming incompatibility of stone and stems, or as they would call it, the eukaryotalithic. They see life where none is likely to be found.

On the other side of the dispute, is a rogue element within the Society that prides itself on both comprehensive consideration and being able to drink until dawn. Never satisfied by what they saw in the atomistics' overly simplified, limiting classification, they sought a more expansive and inclusive categorization for these polymorphic creatures. And, as happened during most of their late nights of revelry, they coined a term that they thought would encompass the complexity and diversity of the genus rock monster. Its usage, they boisterously argued, includes all variations of tails, teeth and tongues, mono- and multi-oral cavities, dispositions and temperaments, relationships to zoology, mycology and chromatology, and other distinguishing traits such as horns and thorns, bricks, buds, diamonds, and hoops. For this raucous band of the Society, a collection of rock monsters must be known as a *party*.

Now, maybe this is all made up. Or some of it. That's what the imagination is for. Rock monsters are made up, too. Wildly imaginative, invented with mud, the clay hand-pressed, pushed and mushed, rolled and twisted, fired, glazed with every color available on the spectrum and fired again. With their faces and eyes and appendages of all sorts, you can surmise them coming from the domain of Eukarya, cellular organisms, or of the Animal kingdom, with consciousness, personality, and purpose. I don't know which side of the atomistics-holistics kerfuffle Kramer Hegenbarth falls upon, but if I had to guess, he wouldn't take a side at all. As the creator of rock monsters, while he may be flattered by all the fuss, he certainly wouldn't want anyone to argue there is any difference between a blooming and a celebration. And maybe there isn't, that maybe a flowering and a party are but birds of a feather. Like the geese before them, they are *gaggle* and *flock*, together.

Kramer Hegenbarth is a multidisciplinary artist who works with the Interact Center for Visual and Performing Arts. Hegenbarth has worked with Interact since 2017, and has presented work in exhibitions throughout Minnesota, including at Interact Gallery, Gamut Gallery, and the Minnesota Museum of American Art. In addition to his visual art practice, Hegenbarth is also an active member of Interact's performing arts cast.

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