

Lions, tigers and bears... step aside. If you're looking for something that will truly make you say "oh my!" come and take our dragons tour.



KING SCULPTURE COURT

*Just over the rocky hillside is where we'll find our first beast, in the painting Cadmus and the Dragon.*

The young prince Cadmus was sent by his parents to find his missing sister, Europa, and though he searched far and wide, he could not find her. Discouraged, he founded the city of Thebes. While there, Cadmus discovered that a fearsome dragon was guarding the city's only water well. He put together a team of men to slay the beast in its lair, but it killed most of his soldiers (seen scattered on the ground).

Cadmus slayed the dragon by himself and sowed the soldier's teeth in the ground, which grew into a race of warriors that populated Thebes.

WILLARD-NEWELL GALLERY

*What's more frightening than a dragon? Why, a half-serpent, half-child of course!*

The daughters of Cecrops, the King of Attica, were handed a basket by the goddess Athena, and told not to open it. The basket contained the baby Erichthonius, son of Vulcan and Gaia, whose legs were in the form of snakes. Curiosity got the better of the sisters, and they opened the basket and saw the deformed child. Some say they were so horrified at the sight they threw themselves from a nearby cliff.





KING SCULPTURE COURT

*Not all dragons are bad-tempered—this is certainly the case with our Coiling Dragon.*

While Japanese dragons can be fearsome and powerful creatures, they are also considered to be just and benevolent, bringing wealth and good fortune to those who see them. They also serve as water deities in Japan and are associated with rainfall and bodies of water. Fittingly, the coiling dragon here served as a fountain out in the museum's courtyard for a number of years. For its original function, an incense basin rested on a stylized plume of water spouting from the dragon's mouth.

NORD GALLERY

*Need to escape from a dragon? Saint Margaret might be a good person to ask for help.*

Saint Margaret was tortured and sent to a dungeon for her Christian faith. While there, the devil appeared to her in the form of a dragon. He tried to tempt her but she resisted, made the sign of the Cross toward him and he disappeared. Later when she was released from the dungeon, the devil appeared as a dragon again, but this time he swallowed her whole. In the belly of the beast, she made her escape using a cross she carried with her to cut through its stomach.



CURRENTLY NOT ON VIEW

*Although, technically, these are not giant serpents, they are probably close cousins of dragons*

An epic tale relates the story of the priest Laocoön who found himself caught in the middle of the Trojan war. The Greeks, with the help of their patron goddess, Athena, hatched a clever plan to attack the city of Troy. Instead of marching troops up to the city walls, they sent one man with an enormous wooden horse. Inside of the horse were men ready to spring out and fight once inside the city walls. The Greeks offered it to the Trojans as a gift. Laocoön suspected something foul, and told the Trojans they should not accept the gift. The goddess Athena, angry that her plan might be ruined, blinded him and sent serpents to strangle his two sons.

