Making Fantastic Creatures with Dots and Doodles

There are many ways to create fantastic creatures, and none of them are difficult! Today and next week, we will feature a couple of different techniques. Below are two examples from the Middle Ages. Notice how the artists added fun details like quirky legs, tails, spikes and horns.

Here are a few real animals that look like fantasy inventions:

Saiga Antelope

Jerboa

Left: Glaucus Atlanticus (a kind of slug)

Right: Thorny Devil

(images from Business Insider and Honest to Paws)
Dots-and-Doodles Fantasy Creatures

The fantastic animals at left were created using a technique called Dots and Doodles (taught by Susan Horsey, upper school art teacher at the Country School in Easton). Making random dots with watercolor and adding doodles with pen involves chance and experimentation and lets artists take advantage of happy accidents. A great way to approach art-making in general!

Supplies:

- Smooth watercolor paper
- water cup
- brush
- watercolors
- paper towel
- thin black pen

Procedure: Dip your brush in the water and create several oval and circle shapes on your paper (see detail at left). Make sure you space them out somewhat, as each one will become a creature. You may want to create a larger oval and a smaller one next to each other so that one can be the body and one can be the head, but this is not necessary. Your water ovals may be hard to see at first, but you will color them in right away before they get a chance to dry.

Dip your brush in a color and mix until it is nice and soupy. Touch the tip of your brush gently to one or more of your wet ovals and the color will run through them, but it won’t run past them! Rinse your brush thoroughly and repeat with a new color. You may wish to choose colors in the same color family to keep your colors vibrant. If you mix complements (red & green; blue & orange; yellow & purple) you will get brown tones. It’s fun to watch your colors swirl together. Allow to dry. This may take awhile if you have deep puddles. Don’t blot. Be patient.

Once your colors are dry, you are ready to add fun details such as legs, tails, snouts, beaks, crests, wings, fins etc. with your pen. Be creative! You can look at some of the pictures on the next page for anatomical information or inspiration, but try to invent your own creatures.
Images: barkingroyalty.com, sportdiver.com, Rush Shippen Huidekoper, John James Audubon, Johann Christof Merck, and Casa di Paquius Proculus (Pompeii)