

Tulane photographer pens magical mermaid children's book

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today@tulane.edu



Inspired by a co-worker who enjoys painting mermaids, Tulane photographer Sally Asher created *The Mermaids of New Orleans*, an underwater world where Mardi Gras floats really float. (Photo by Sally Asher)

The Mermaids of New Orleans is a new children's book that answers a nautical question: If people across the country have different traditions and celebrations in their cities and communities, why wouldn't it be the same for mermaids?

Written by Tulane Photographer Sally Asher, who was inspired by her co-worker Taryn Pusateri's mermaid paintings (@nola.mermaid), Asher created an underwater culture in the Mississippi River, that centers on music, food, architecture and distinct traditions.

"New Orleans mermaids dance to music of bass bands, eat roeballs — the mermaid version of sno-balls, live in houses where you can throw a trident from the front of the house to the back without touching a wall, and have their own parades in which their floats really float," said Asher.

The book was published by the University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press and was illustrated by local artist Melissa Vandiver.

[*The Mermaids of New Orleans*](#) tells the story of the mermaids who live in the Mississippi River and their one day on land — Mardi Gras.

"I wanted to write something that children and adults would enjoy and to spark children's imagination," Asher said. "I also want them to see themselves in the fantasy."

The book features countless "Easter eggs" that discerning New Orleanians will recognize including local icons such as Big Freedia, Margaret Orr, Leah Chase, Poppy Tooker, Peggy Scott Laborde, Yvonne LaFleur and Trixie Minx. It also features cameos from Tulane staff.

Asher is at work on her next book, *The Mermaids of Seattle*, and plans on writing a whole series, "Mermaids of the City," featuring the unique cultures and citizens of communities on the coasts, lakes and rivers across the country.

The public is invited to attend the official book release party on Nov.15 at Seven Three Distilling (301 N. Claiborne Ave.) from 5:30-8:30 p.m. with artist Melissa Vandiver.