What Makes a Monster?: Home

The new exhibition What Makes a Monster? explores how human have long found wonder in the strange and macabre, from mythical creatures to the real world freak show artists, microscopic pathogens, and monstrous criminals.

Curators: Tyson Gaskill and Anne-Marie Maxwell
Body Scrub digital display: Kurosh ValaNejad
Exhibition concept: Margaret Wertheim
Exhibition design: Silvina Niepomnischez
Construction expertise: Michael Maxwell
Special thanks for advice and loans of monstrous material: Al Guerrero, Al Ridenour, Danny Roebuck, Billy T. Smith, and Casey Wong
What Makes a Monster?: Satellite Exhibitions at the USC Libraries

The new exhibition What Makes a Monster? explores how human have long found wonder in the strange and macabre, from mythical creatures to the real world freak show artists, microscopic pathogens, and monstrous criminals.


Exhibition items on display include materials from the USC Libraries Special Collections, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives and the USC Cinema Library.

Over the centuries, artists around the world have incorporated monstrous imagery inspired by religion, folklore, myths, legends, and their imaginations. Thanks to technical advances in the field, Renaissance painters such as Hieronymous Bosch, DiericBouts, Pieter Breugel, and Caravaggio were able to create realistic scenes out of the most hellish of visions.

Influenced by the Romantic Movement of the late 1700s–early 1800s, artists like Caspar David Friedrich, Henry Fusell, and Francisco Goya—and later, Max Ernst—explored the boundary between light and dark, life and death, dreams and wakefulness. Artists today such as Douglas Gordon, Wangechi Mutu, and USC's own Charlie White continue to work within our collective fascination with demons, internal and external.
Throughout most of medical history, people with unexplainable pathologies (whether real or imagined) have been called monsters. Here we explore various physiological and psychological conditions deemed “monstrous” in the past and how over time physicians grew to have a greater understanding and acceptance of human variation.

Clinique photographique de l'Hôpital Saint Louis by Alfred Hardy (Paris: Chamerot et Lauvereyns, 1888)

The unfortunate woman seen here suffers from pemphigus foliacus, an autoimmune disease in which the epidermis and mucous membranes are attacked, causing disfiguring blisters and scaly lesions. This book was one of the first to use photography to show the horrifying effects of dermatological diseases.

De Monstris by Fortunio Liceti (Amsterdam: Andreae Frisi, 1685) and De la Nature, des Causes, des Différences des Monstres d’après Fortunio Liceti translated by François Houssay (Paris: Hippocrate, 1937)

A wide variety of conditions, both real and fanciful, are juxtaposed in this early pathology work. The original 1665 publication included a number of depictions of imaginary creatures—such as a pig with a human head and an animal with human legs coming out of its rear end, with the author speculating that these creatures were the product of bestiality. However, it also illustrates a number of obscure real world conditions like conjoined twins, as shown in this 1937 French translation.

De Conceptu et Generatione Hominis by Jacob Rüff (New York: Medicina Rara, early 1700s [facsimile of 1587 work])

The early modern era was rife with superstitions and saw a number of publications featuring “monstrous” creatures. Rüff’s work even placed them in specific regions—the bovine-human hybrid on the left was said to come from Saxony. Another creature has a human body but the head of an elephant.

Études biologiques sur les géants by Pierre Émile Launois (Paris: Masson, 1904)

Not all so-called monsters were feared. The 8’ 2” giant Hugo, pictured here at the age of 25, was the object of great fascination at the Paris Exhibition of 1900 and other contemporary events. Launois suspected the cause of Hugo’s gigantism was a pituitary disorder called acromegaly.


These images and case study descriptions describe what was then-called “cretinism,” a condition characterized by exceptionally small stature coupled with developmental disabilities (now known to be caused by congenital hypothyroidism). The doctor uses what we would now deem entirely inappropriate language to describe the patient and her father, “a somewhat squat ugly Irishman.”


As doctors studied pathology and disease they came to understand how infectious diseases could lead to monstrous disfigurement of patients. These colored illustrations show the effects of chickenpox and smallpox, two scarring diseases now effectively managed or eradicated, thanks to modern vaccination.

Leprosy, in Its Clinical and Pathological Aspects by Gerhard Armauer Hansen and Carl Loefft (Bristol: John Wright, 1895)

Throughout history sufferers of leprosy (also called Hansen’s Disease, named after the author of this work) were routinely shunned by society due to the disfiguring effects of the disease and the fear of contagion. Antibiotics first introduced in the 1940s, and reinforced in the 1960s, have largely controlled outbreaks, although leper colonies still exist in many parts of the developing world.


Here we see syphilitic lip chancre both in the illustration and in a three-dimensional wax moulage. Moulages were sculptures made predominantly in the nineteenth century to mimic dermatologic conditions for medical teaching purposes. Here a contemporary artist has created a wax moulage after the style of its nineteenth-century predecessors.


Babies born with congenital syphilis, if they survived, often grew to be severely disfigured and mentally challenged as they aged, like the patient shown here. Over decades the infection can damage the brain, causing dementia and altered behavior among other symptoms, a
condition known as neurosyphilis.

_The Physiognomy of Mental Diseases_ by Sir Alexander Morison (London, 1843)

Physiognomy was the pseudoscience that held one’s character could be determined through facial expressions. This book shows faces in the throes of various kinds of mental distress (such as nymphomania and melancholy) along with the faces of “cured” patients. Here we see a 47-year-old man prone to violent mania and an accompanying image reproduced from a later page of the same man “in his sane state.” The man allegedly had already killed one person in a manic rage.

_The Criminal_ by Havelock Ellis (London: Scott, 1890)

In this pseudoscientific attempt to predict criminal behavior, Ellis offers nonsensical charts like the one displayed, claiming to show how parental age affects whether your child will be a murderer, sex offender, thief, or generally insane. Around the turn of the twentieth century numerous half-baked scientific disciplines attempted to predict human behavior through anatomy or other circumstances present at birth.

_The Illustrated Self-instructor in Phrenology and Physiology_ by Orson Fowler and Lorenzo Fowler (New York: Fowlers and Wells, 1855) and replica phrenological bust

Phrenology, a pseudoscientific attempt to judge one’s personality by the shape of the skull, enjoyed nearly one hundred years of popularity before being discredited in the twentieth century. This book includes a personal reading by Orson Fowler, one of the best-known phrenologists of all time. He described the book’s owner, one J. S. Wilcox, as a “man of talents” who ought “to study all the natural sciences.” This bust shows the different areas of the skull and the traits that corresponded with its prominent or recessive parts.

_Phrenology, in Connexion with the Study of Physiognomy_ by Johann Gaspar Spurzheim (London: Treuttel, Wurtz, and Richter, 1826)

Here phrenologist Spurzheim attempts to explain one of history’s purported monsters, the Roman Emperor Caracalla, as having “the most ignoble configurations of a head which it is possible to conceive.” He goes on to describe how the shape of the emperor’s head accurately predicted his legendary cruelty and vulgarity since “the whole tendency of his mind is towards brutal pleasures.”

_Physiognomy and Expression_ by Paolo Mantegazza (London: W. Scott, 1890)

These tree charts use aesthetic differences to draw clear distinctions among races. These kinds of images would later feed into the eugenicist movement that led to the atrocities of World War II, among other horrors.

_Mongolism: A Study of the Physical and Mental Characteristics of Mongolian Imbeciles_ by Kate Brousseau (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1928)

The language used in this book appears mind-bogglingly insensitive to modern ears. It begins: “The material presented in this work is based upon personal experience with Mongolian imbeciles and other types of defectives during a period of more than ten years, and additional valuable information has been obtained from a questionnaire submitted to workers in various institutions for the feeble-minded and to physicians who have made clinical observations on Mongols.” Only recently have those with intellectual and developmental disabilities been described with sensitivity rather than ghostly terminology.

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**Science & Engineering Library**

While the word monster is used liberally to describe that which humanity at large fears, misunderstands, or finds repulsive, the world of science often recognizes such things as objects of investigation, as elements of an ordered system of knowledge. Atomic power, black holes, deep-sea fishes, parasitic insects, vampire bats, and viruses may frighten—owing to appearance, effect, or both—but in the context of scientific inquiry and description, their monstrous characteristics become explainable, if no less wondrous, phenomena.

**Exhibition Items on display:**

- Jewel wasp emerging from a cockroach, from _Zombie Makers: True Stories of Nature’s Undead_ (Minneapolis: Millbrook Press, 2013)
- Paintings of Fate and Black Holes by Paul Laffoley, from _The End is Near: Visions of Apocalypse, Millennium, and Utopia_ (Los Angeles: Dilettante Press, 1998)
- Vampire bats, from Johnson’s _Natural History_ (Ann Arbor: W.B. Stickney, 1881)
- Sculptures of viruses by USC student Justin Finiliar
- Comic book adaptations of _The Black Hole_ (Disney, 1979)
- Map of Lake Monsters of America, by _Atlas Obscura_ (2013)
- Deepsea fish, from top to bottom: Anglerfish, Fangtooth, and Goblin Shark

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**Von KleinSmid Center Library for International and Public Affairs**

**Political Fiends**
Maneater from Lord Beaverbrook. *Spirit of the Soviet Union* (Great Britain: Love & Malcomson, 1942)
Gerhard Langemayer, *Bild als Waffe* (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1984)
*Harpie Monstre Amphibie vivante*, 1784
*The French Bugaboo* *Frightening the Royal Commanders*, 1794 hand colored etching by Isaac Cruikshank

**Beseiged by Barbarians**
Mark Bryant, *World War I in Cartoons* (London: Grub Street, 2006)
*Socialism Throttling the Country*, 1909
*Beware of The Serpent*, 1929
*Liberators*, 1944 by *Harald Damslieth*, a Norwegian who worked for the SS in occupied Norway.

**Atrocities, Massacres, and War Crimes**
*Armenian Genocide* in Jonathan Vankin’s *The Big Book of Bad* (New York: Paradox Press, 1998)

**Fe Fi Fo Fum**
*Gargantua: The Pilgrims are Eaten in Salad* by Gustave Dore in *The Grotesque Factor* (San Agustin: Museo Picasso Malaga, 2002)
“The trouble, my friends, with socialism is that it would destroy initiative” Puck, volume 86, January, 1910
“To begin with, ‘I’ll paint the town red” by Grant E. Hamilton, The Judge volume 7, January, 1885
Micah Ian Wright, *You Back the Attack! We’ll Bomb Who We Want! Remixed Propaganda* (Ontario: Hushion House, 2003)

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**USC Cinema Library**
Film still from *Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923)
Film still from the movie *Freaks* (1932)
Film still from *Night of the Living Dead* (1968)
Film still from *The Mummy* (1932)
Press book for *King Kong* (1933)
Promotional brochure for *Night of the Living Dead* (1968)
Promotional brochure for *The Wolfman* (1941)
Script for *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1934)

A wide selection of materials from the USC Libraries Special Collections is on view in the Doheny Library Treasure Room


"Wasp Woman" from *Crab Monsters, Teenage Cavemen, and Candy-Stripe Nurses* (New York: Abrams, 2013)

*Rouben Mamoulian's Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* (New York: Universe Books, 1975)


**USC Special Collections**

A wide selection of materials from the USC Libraries Special Collections is on view in the Doheny Library Treasure Room

Ultre Aldrovandi, *Monstrorum Historia* (Bologna, 1642)

Ultre Aldrovandi, *De Piscibus* (Bologna: Nicolas Tebaldini, 1638)

*Astounding Science Fiction*, vol. 61, no. 3 (May 1958)


*Das III Reich in der Karikatur* (Prague: Stop-Verlag, 1934)

*Demonographia* (Seattle: Trident Books, 1999)

Pierre Denys de Montfort, *Histoire naturelle* (1901)

Gustave Doré, *Dante's Inferno* (New York: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., 1866)

Max Ernst, *Une semaine de bonté* (New York: Dover, 1976)


Konrad Gesner, *Historia Animalium* (Zurich, 1551–1587)


Homer, *His Odysseys Translated* (London, 1865)


*Le Sifflet*, vol. 27 (July 26, 1872)

Fortunio Liceti, *De monstrorum caussis* (Padua, 1634)

*Malleus Maleficarum* (London: Pushkin Press, 1951)

Ambar Past, *Portable Mayan altar with hex books in Tzotzil and English, 2007*

*Pictorial History of the American Circus* (1957)


*Martin Schongauer* (Munich: Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, 1991)

Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (London, 1818)

Side Show (New York: Amjons, 1975)


"The Divine Insect," from *The Extermination of Evil* (1927 facsimile of a 12th century scroll)

*Warheafft* (Munich: Adam Berg, 1588)

**ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the USC Libraries**

Those who argue homosexuality has “destructive physical, emotional, and spiritual consequences have long demonized the LGBTQ community. The mid-20th Century medicalization of homosexuality and the salacious nature of the cover art for some pulp fiction, conspired to produce negative imagery and stereotypes, which literally demonized lesbians, transgendered people and gays. This particular volume is an egregious example of that unfortunate trend, which would now be considered reprehensible.
The Demon Dyke (San Diego: Corinth Publications, 1968)

Demon magazines, nos. 1–4 (1984)
What Makes a Monster?: Books

The new exhibition What Makes a Monster? explores how human have long found wonder in the strange and macabre, from mythical creatures to the real world freak show artists, microscopic pathogens, and monstrous criminals.

Beasts of Myth and Legend

- **Demonic Divine by Robert N. Linrothe and Marylin M. Rhee**
  - Call Number: N8193.H56 D46 2004
  - ISBN: 1932476083
  - Publication Date: 2004-05-01

- **Ghosts and Spirits from the Tikotin Museum of Japanese Art by Jon Borensztajn**
  - Call Number: N7354 .G56 2012
  - ISBN: 978087281809
  - Publication Date: 2013-08-15

- **Golem by David Wisniewski**
  - Call Number: BM531 .W67 1996
  - ISBN: 0395726182
  - Publication Date: 1996-10-18

- **Atomic: the first war of physics and the secret history of the atomic bomb, 1939-49 by Baggott, J. E.**
  - Call Number: QC773 .E24 2009
  - ISBN: 9781848310445

It Came From Beyond

- **Alien Vault: the definitive story of the making of the film**
  - ISBN: 9781845138673

- **Alien Creatures by Siegel, Richard.**
  - ISBN: 089188501X
  - Publication Date: 1999-08-01

- **Science Fiction Classics by James Ackerman**
  - Call Number: PS6468.S3 S273 1999x
  - ISBN: 1575000407
  - Publication Date: 1999-08-01

- **Science Fiction, Alien Encounters, and the Ethics of Posthumanism by Elana Gomel**
  - Call Number: PN3433.5 .G63 2014
  - ISBN: 9781137367624
  - Publication Date: 2014-06-24

They Only Come Out at Night

- **Gorey Posters by Edward Gorey**
  - Call Number: PS3513.O614 G64
  - ISBN: 0810921790
  - Publication Date: 1979-01-01

- **Creatures of the Night by Gregory L. Reece**
  - Call Number: BF1531 .R44 2012
  - ISBN: 9781848853850
  - Publication Date: 2012-05-08

- **Transylvanian Vampires by Adriana Groza**
  - Call Number: GR830.V3 G76 2014
  - ISBN: 9780786477029
  - Publication Date: 2012-04-26

- **Open Graves, Open Minds by Hughes George; Sam George (Editor); Bill Hughes (Editor)**
  - Call Number: PN56.V3 O64 2013
  - ISBN: 9780719089411
  - Publication Date: 2013-12-17
### It Came From Beyond

**Alien Vault: the definitive story of the making of the film**  
ISBN: 9781845138673

**Alien Creatures by Siegel, Richard.**  
Call Number: PN1995.9.S26 55  
ISBN: 089188501X  
Publication Date: 1978

**Science Fiction Classics by James Ackerman**  
Call Number: PS648.85 5 52 73 1999x  
ISBN: 1575000407  
Publication Date: 1999-08-01

**Science Fiction, Alien Encounters, and the Ethics of Posthumanism by Elana Gomez**  
Call Number: PN3433.5. 5 G683 2014  
ISBN: 9781137367624  
Publication Date: 2014-06-24

### Monsters in Fantasy

**Fairy Tales, Monsters, and the Genetic Imagination by Mark W. Scala (Editor)**  
Call Number: N8217.F28 F53 2012  
ISBN: 9780826518149  
Publication Date: 2012-02-24

**Gothic Nightmares by Martin Myrone; Christopher Frayling (Contribution by); Mervyn Heard (Contribution by)**  
Call Number: ND467.5.G68 M97 2006  
ISBN: 1854375822  
Publication Date: 2006-04-01

**Here Be Dragons - A Fantastic Bestiary by Ariane Delacampagne; Christian Delacampagne**  
Call Number: N7745.A5 D4313 2003  
ISBN: 069111689X  
Publication Date: 2003-10-12

**Magical Tales by Diane Purkiss (Editor); Carolyne Larrington (Editor)**  
Call Number: PN56.M95 M34 2013  
ISBN: 9781851242841  
Publication Date: 2013-06-01

### They Only Come Out at Night

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What Makes a Monster?: Video & Film Clips

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WHAT MAKES A MONSTER?

Tuesday, November 18, 2014, 4 p.m.
Friends of the USC Libraries Lecture Hall
Doheny Memorial Library 240

Reception to follow.
Admission is free. Reservations required.
RSVP at visionsandvoices.usc.edu

From vampires and werewolves to Resident Evil and The Walking Dead, we have long taken delight in the strange and monstrous. But do monsters mean the same thing in every culture? And what do they tell us about our own humanity? Game designer LEONARD BOYARSKY (Diablo III, Fallout), USC professor and multimedia artist CHARLIE WHITE and USC professor and folklore scholar TORK THOMPSON will discuss these questions and more in a provocative conversation moderated by science writer and Institute for Figuring co-founder MARGARET WERTHEIM. Don't miss this fascinating look at monstrous beasts, both modern and mythical.


For more information, please visit our website or contact us at visionsandvoices@usc.edu or 213.740.0483.

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