



## Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* Re-animated

Thursday, April 4, 2019

Alumni Park

University of Southern California

### ABOUT THE EVENT

- In celebration of the 200th anniversary of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, an immersive multimedia and live performance event will transform Alumni Park into an environment full of spine-tingling sights, sounds, and smells.
- The event reimagines and re-animates Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* through music, dance, theatre, animation, interactive media, art and design, and architecture, with digital projection mapping and interactive stations designed by USC students, faculty, alum Yo-Yo Lin, and artist Akiko Yamashita.
- The exhibit *The Miscreation of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* is on view in the Treasure Room in Doheny Memorial Library from April 3 to August 16, 2019.

### MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797–1851) authored the now-classic Gothic horror novel and feminist text *Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus*. She started writing *Frankenstein* when she was eighteen years old and published it anonymously in 1818.

Shelley was the daughter of the feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft (author of *Vindication of the Rights of Women*) and the radical political philosopher William Godwin (*An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*), and the wife of the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. Her mother died when Mary was an infant, but Mary Wollstonecraft's belief in the importance of educating women informed her daughter's life: even as a child, the younger Mary was encouraged to develop her intellectual abilities.

At the age of seventeen, Mary ran away with the famous Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (who was older and already married). The two had a rich literary and intellectual relationship, and also, soon, a child, who died before she was two weeks old. Mary began writing *Frankenstein* when she was pregnant with a second child, and finished it while pregnant with a third. Both of these children also died before Mary gave birth to a fourth and her only surviving child. Mary Shelley's life was full of death, including her husband, Percy, whom she married in 1816 (after his first wife committed suicide) and who died in 1822; the mother she had lost as an infant; her half-sister; and three of her own children.

In addition to *Frankenstein*, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley wrote essays, short stories, travelogues, biographies, and several other novels. She

also edited her husband's poems, co-edited a journal with him, and published his work after his death. She lived unconventionally in a milieu of radical thinkers and Romantic artists (including Lord Byron), and established herself as a serious writer, editor, and thinker who made a profound impact on English literature both in her own time and ever since.

### FRANKENSTEIN

In the summer of 1816, Mary and Percy joined the poet Lord Byron and his friend, a writer and physician named John Polidori, near Geneva, Switzerland. It was an unusually stormy summer, and the weather kept the group indoors, entertaining each other with ghost stories and discussing recent scientific discoveries. At some point, Lord Byron challenged each of the writers to write a terrifying ghost story. Mary struggled at first to find a story idea, and was eventually inspired by a dream in which she saw "a pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out . . ." (from Mary Shelley's introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*).

The story inspired by that dream became the enduring masterpiece *Frankenstein*, in which a scientist named Victor Frankenstein brings to life a creature he has made out of disparate body parts. Despite its formal difficulty, it is one of the most commonly taught literary texts, and its influence extends well beyond those who have actually read the book. As the *New York Times* points out, "Even people who have never cracked the novel know the story." This is due in part to numerous adaptations. *Frankenstein* was first produced on the stage in 1823, and there have been at least 170 homages to the story on the screen, including the famous 1931 film starring Boris Karloff. There is even a recent comic, *Destroyer* by Victor LaValle, that brings the Frankenstein story to the age of Black Lives Matter.

*Frankenstein* is quite variously interpreted, from 1970s feminist critiques that argue the book established the origins of science fiction through a uniquely "female gothic" perspective to contemporary readings of the story "as a cautionary tale for Silicon Valley technologists" (*The New Yorker*). Even at the time it was published, *Frankenstein* was interpreted as both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary. This is partly attributable to the novel's highly complex structure of stories nested within stories—the "view" or philosophy of the book seems to shift depending on which character is telling the story.

## DIGITAL PROJECTION MAPPING

Projection mapping, or video mapping, is the display of an image on a non-flat or non-white surface. That is, instead of projecting onto a screen, video is projected onto two- and three-dimensional objects. An entire building or plaza of buildings, for example, can be visually transformed with optical illusions and moving images that add dimensions or create narratives and even what feels like an entirely new environment. Projection mapping is done using specialized software that maps the corners of the video onto the surfaces of the objects.

Disneyland's Haunted Mansion, which opened in 1969, is one of the first known examples of creating a dynamic environment by projecting onto 3-D objects; in the Haunted Mansion, singers were filmed on 16mm film, which was then projected onto busts to make it appear as if the sculptures were alive and singing. Today, digital projection mapping is used in advertising, by EDM (electronic dance music) DJs, and as part of all kinds of art, from guerrilla to avant-garde. It is often used to create immersive and/or interactive environments.

## AKIKO YAMASHITA

Akiko Yamashita is an L.A.-based Japanese artist best known for projection mapping and light installations. Her artworks explore visual illusions with a prism-inspired full spectrum of colors. She works as a design director at VT Pro Design, a full-service creative design studio with a focus on the latest technology and techniques. She is a former professional dancer, and a self-taught projection-mapping artist. She started the projection-mapping collective Mapjacks.

## YO-YO LIN

Yo-Yo Lin is a media artist who creates audiovisual installation experiences and explores the possibilities of the animated medium in the context of emerging technologies. She uses intelligent projection/lighting, digital and hand-drawn media, interactive objects, and lush sound design to create meditative "memoryscapes." Her work often evaluates human perception and connection as a vehicle for self-knowledge. A first-generation immigrant with Taiwanese parents, Yo-Yo often draws from childhood memories and borrows iconography from her Tao Buddhist religion. She has shown new-media works at art galleries (Human Resources, Lincoln Center, La Corte Contemporánea), music festivals (Coachella, Panorama, Steez Day), film festivals (New York Film Festival, SXSW, Los Angeles Pacific Asian Film Festival), and public-art venues. Born and raised in Los Angeles, Yo-Yo is a USC alum who now lives and works in New York City.

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Reflect on some of the core questions *Frankenstein* asks us to consider: What is a human being? What is a monster? Can—or should—a person "play god"? Must a scientist be ethical? Who decides what is ethical science, and how? What are the causes, and the effects, of loneliness?
- How do you think Mary Shelley's life informed *Frankenstein*?
- Mary Shelley was an abolitionist. How do you think this informed *Frankenstein*?
- One of the signature aspects of the novel *Frankenstein* is how its very form encourages the reader's sympathy to shift from one character to another, ultimately empathizing with the "monster." Do you think the immersive, interactive experience of this event also facilitates a shifting of identification with different characters or experiences?

## VOCABULARY CORNER

**Gothic:** In literature, "Gothic" refers primarily to the Gothic novels popular in English literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which are characterized by a tone of mystery and terror. These novels are called Gothic because they took inspiration from medieval Gothic architecture, and were often set in Gothic castles or monasteries. Gothic fiction frequently contains an element of the Romanticism of the era, creating a certain pleasure in the horror.

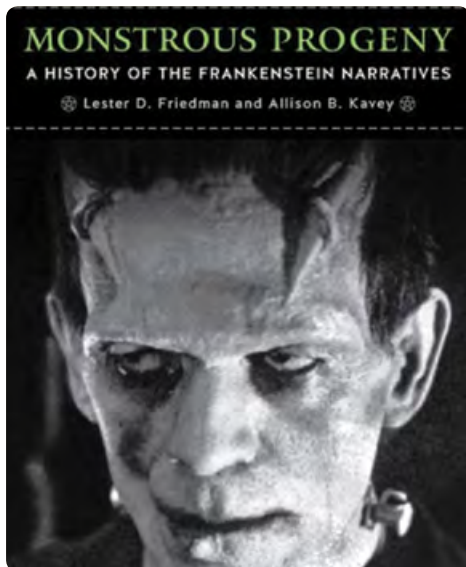
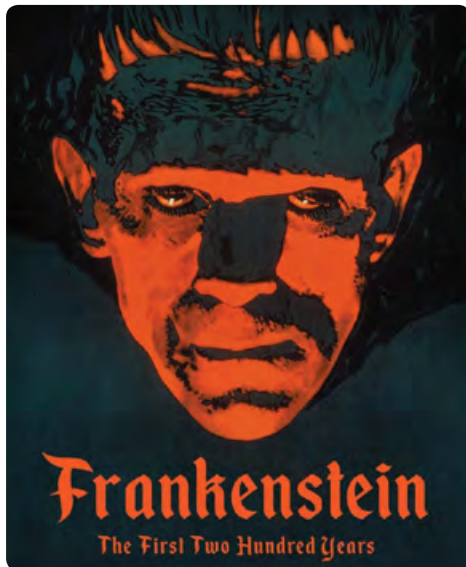
**immersion:** Immersive art or entertainment is intended to be a creation in which the participant loses themselves in the experience. Thus, it is often interactive, multimedia, and multisensory—a complete environment in which a viewer/participant is immersed. The rise in immersive art and entertainment has coincided with the rise of the Internet, which has established interactivity (as opposed to passive consumption of art or information) as the norm.

**multimedia:** Content that uses more than one medium, such as art that combines video, text, music, and live performance.

**Re-animation:** In science fiction, "re-animation" refers to the bringing-to-life, or coming-to-life, of the putatively dead. *Frankenstein*, in which a creature composed of stitched-together body parts comes alive, is a classic example—immortalized in pop culture with the scream "It's alive!" from the 1931 film version.



Mary Shelley



## IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- Projection Mapping Central  
projection-mapping.org
- Mapjacks  
mapjacks.org
- Yo-Yo Lin  
yoyolin.com
- Akiko Yamashita  
akikoyamashita.com

## DISCOVER MORE AT USC LIBRARIES

**MARJE SCHUETZE-COBURN** of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about Mary Shelley and the legacy of her revolutionary novel *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus*. Items listed below with a campus library location and call number can be borrowed or used in the library. Titles without a call number are electronic resources (e-books) that can be accessed using the link provided or through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at [libraries.usc.edu](http://libraries.usc.edu)

### VISIT THE EXHIBIT:

“The Miscreation of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*”

**TREASURE ROOM, DOHENY MEMORIAL LIBRARY**

**April 3, 2019, through August 16, 2019**

Celebrating the bicentennial anniversary of *Frankenstein*’s publication, this exhibit will include illustrated versions of the novel, several representations of the many creations, re-creations, and mis-creations of *Frankenstein*’s creature that followed the original, and examples of scientific and literary works that inspired Mary Shelley.

## READ *FRANKENSTEIN*

Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft. *Frankenstein; Or, the Modern Prometheus*. New York: Open Road Media Integrated Media, 2014. Online.

[ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/socal/detail.action?docID=1799658](http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/socal/detail.action?docID=1799658)

Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft et al. *The New Annotated Frankenstein*. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017. Print.

**DOHENY MEMORIAL LIBRARY: PR5397 .F7 2017**

## LEARN MORE ABOUT *FRANKENSTEIN*

### BOOKS

Denlinger, Elizabeth Campbell, and Colin B. Bailey. *It’s Alive!: A Visual History of Frankenstein*. New York: The Morgan Library Museum, 2018. Print.

**DOHENY MEMORIAL LIBRARY: PR5397.F73 D46 2018**

Finn, Ed, David Guston, and Jason Scott Robert. *Frankenstein*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2017. Online.

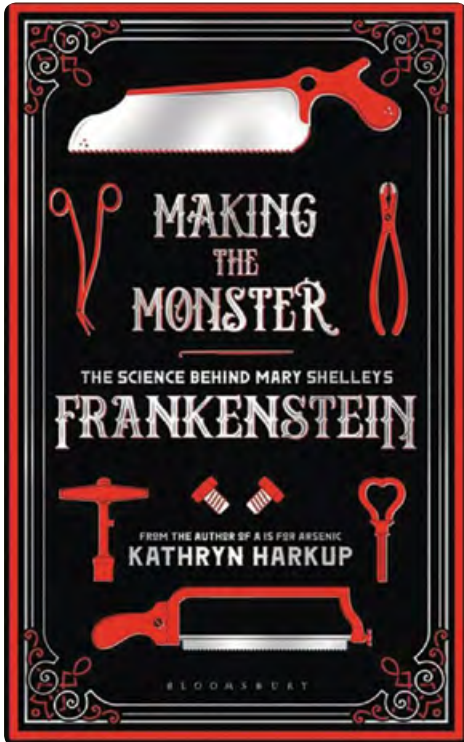
[www.oopen.org/search?identifier=628778](http://www.oopen.org/search?identifier=628778)

Frayling, Christopher. *Frankenstein: the First Two Hundred Years*. London, UK: Reel Art Press, an imprint of Rare Art Press Ltd, 2017. Print.

**CINEMATIC ARTS LIBRARY: PR5397.F73 F783 2017**

Friedman, Lester D., and Allison Kavey. *Monstrous Progeny: A History of the Frankenstein Narratives*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2016. Print.

**CINEMATIC ARTS LIBRARY: PR5397.F73 F785 2016**



Harkup, Kathryn. *Making the Monster: The Science Behind Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. London : Bloomsbury Sigma, 2018. Ebook.

[ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/socal/detail.action?docID=5242456](https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/socal/detail.action?docID=5242456)

Hay, Daisy. *The Making of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2019. Print.

**DOHENY MEMORIAL LIBRARY: PR5397.F73 H39 2019**

Perkowitz, Sidney, and Eddy von Mueller. *Frankenstein: How a Monster Became an Icon: The Science and Enduring Allure of Mary Shelley's Creation*. New York: Pegasus Books, 2018. Print.

**DOHENY MEMORIAL LIBRARY: PR5397.F73 F72 2018**

#### ARTICLES

Lepore, Jill. "The Strange and Twisted Life of *Frankenstein*: After Two Hundred Years, are We Ready for the Truth about Mary Shelley's Novel?" *New Yorker*, February 12, 2018 and February 19, 2018.

Schuessler, Jennifer. "Frankenstein at 200: Mary Shelley's Creation is the Rare Story to Pass from Literature into Common Myth Inspiring a Seemingly Endless Stream of Adaptation." *New York Times (Online)*, Oct. 25, 2018. ProQuest

#### FILMS

*The Bride of Frankenstein*. DVD. Directed by James Whales. 1935. Universal City, CA: Universal Studios, 1999.

**CINEMATIC ARTS LIBRARY: VIDEOS CINVID DVD 802**

*Frankenstein [the Man Who Made a Monster]*. DVD. Directed by James Whales. 1931. Restored version. Universal City, CA: Universal Studios Home Video, 1999.

**CINEMATIC ARTS LIBRARY: VIDEOS CINVID DVD 227**

#### DATABASE

Project Muse

This database contains scholarly books and journals across the humanities and social sciences drawing from content created by the most esteemed university presses and scholarly societies from around the world.

