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NATURAL HISTORY OF HORROR
AT THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY

On View October 10, 2019 – April 19, 2020



Los Angeles, October 10, 2019 - The **Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County (NHMLAC)** will present the exhibition ***Natural History of Horror***, on view at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (NHM) in Exposition Park from **October 10, 2019** through **April 19, 2020**. NHM’s homegrown Hollywood exhibition links science, history, and the art of movie making by exploring scientific discoveries—from early experiments in animal electricity to the excavation of King Tut’s tomb—that inspired some of cinema’s most iconic monsters. Featuring seventeen objects from NHM’s collection and four of Universal Pictures’ iconic monster movies: *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, *The Mummy*, and *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, visitors will discover the scientific inspiration for each of these classic monsters through rare movie props, film footage, hands on interactives, and specimens.

“Los Angeles is universally known as the entertainment capital of the world, and we are excited to have the opportunity to partner with Universal to highlight beloved movie monsters and showcase our own Moving Image collection, along with scientific artifacts and specimens from our collections that illustrate the inspiration for these iconic cinema monsters,” said Dr. Lori Bettison-Varga, NHMLAC President and Director. “Visitors will have the opportunity to explore the origins of the monsters that inspire horror films to this day, and at the same time, get up close to rarely-seen objects from our outstanding Hollywood collection—just in time for Halloween.”

The exhibition presents scientific discoveries and unexplained illnesses that inspired the horror stories and movies that led to the creation of some of cinema’s most popular 19th and 20th century monsters.

Visitors will be swept up in harrowing true stories and original objects that bring their favorite scary movies off the screen and into reality. The exhibition also showcases NHMLAC's extensive Moving Image collection, which can be further explored in the permanent exhibition about L.A. history, *Becoming Los Angeles*.

"Universal is thrilled to be a part of this one-of-a-kind exhibition," said Holly Goline, Universal Film Executive. "It made sense that our classic monsters would be shown alongside the scientific artifacts from NHM's collections, as they give background on the science that inspired their creation. These iconic monsters have such an enduring legacy across generations of fans, so having them be part of this exhibition at a museum we all know and love gives guests the opportunity to see these stories come to life in a new way."

The Creature's costume from *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, released in 1954, was designed by Milicent Patrick, who was inspired by real animals, both living and long extinct. She looked at reptiles, amphibians, fish, and at illustrations of life in the Devonian period—roughly 400 million years ago. Alongside the iconic movie poster, NHM will display silicone copies of the full body suit and original mask from the collection of Micheline Pitt. Also on view will be a fossilized coelacanth, a fish with unusual limb-like fins that look ready to crawl from the ocean onto solid ground, that was once believed to be the ancestor of all land animals. The Creature that Patrick designed reflects this imagined link between land and sea.

Doctor Frankenstein's quest to reanimate the dead was based in part on the work of Luigi Galvani—a real 19th-century scientist. When *Frankenstein* was released in 1931, many censors thought that the monster movie was far too graphic. Some scenes were cut and others were shortened, including one where Frankenstein's monster—restrained by shackles, which are now in NHM's collection and part of the exhibition—is taunted and tormented by Doctor Frankenstein's assistant. These objects from NHM's L.A. history collection are paired with specimens and scientific instruments that show how early experiments with electricity informed Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the film based on her novel.

Although vampire legends existed for centuries before Bram Stoker published his 1897 novel *Dracula*, scientists believe that deadly diseases from this era may have inspired the vampire myth we know today. During cholera epidemics in the 1830s, victims with cholera were buried within hours of death – sometimes even before they died – to prevent the disease from spreading. Fears of being buried alive and the dead returning to life crept into popular culture and are referenced in the 1931 film adaptation of the novel. The exhibition demonstrates these connections through artwork and illustrations from the 1830s paired with film stills and a prop bat from the film displayed with bat and wolf skull specimens from NHMLAC's collection. *Dracula* was one of the first horror films with sound. In the exhibition, an interactive Foley table display invites visitors to explore the sounds of horror and the techniques that early Foley artists used to create them.

Visitors will also have an opportunity to view the wrappings from the 1932 movie *The Mummy*, worn by actor Boris Karloff, as he brought the character to life on screen. It took eight hours to apply his makeup: layers of fuller's earth (a clay mixture), cotton soaked in the chemical collodion, and 150 feet of bandages. The film was inspired by the discovery of King Tutankhamun's tomb, which was opened by archaeologists in 1922 after lying untouched for over 3,000 years. Wrappings and other objects found in Egyptian tombs will help tell the real story behind the discoveries that gave rise to the idea of the mummy's curse in popular culture.

Additional exciting anecdotes are explained throughout the exhibition with relics and props from the original films. All of the exhibition's content will be available in both English and Spanish.

Godzilla: A Living Atomic Bomb will also be on display from October 16, 2019 through April 19, 2019 on the second floor of NHM. The case focuses on the real-life nuclear tests carried out on Bikini Atoll that inspired the monster.

Entry to *Natural History of Horror* is free with NHM General Admission.

Programming

Fright Nights: The Science Behind Scary Movies

5:30 pm-9pm

In celebration of *Natural History of Horror*, NHM invites the public to join evening explorations of the classic Universal Pictures horror films that inspired the exhibition, along with discussions about the ways scientific discoveries have stirred fear and inspired creativity through the ages.

Each evening includes access to the exhibition, a film screening, special performance, light snacks, and cash bar.

- **Friday, October 11, 2019:** Bite Into This with *Dracula*
- **Friday, February 14, 2020:** Unrequited Love with the *Creature from the Black Lagoon*
- **Thursday, March 26, 2020:** Monster Fears with *Frankenstein*
- **Friday, April 10, 2020:** All Wrapped Up with *The Mummy*

SCHEDULE

5:30 pm: Guest exploration

6:30 pm: Special performance

7 pm: Film Screening with introductory remarks

Admission: Members: \$12.00, Non-Members: \$15.00. For the most up to date information, visit nhm.org/horror.

Visitor Information

Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90007

www.nhm.org

Group Visits

Groups of 10 or more people receive discounted rates on Museum admission. Group tickets available now by calling 213.763.3218 or by emailing groupsales@nhm.org for reservations and more information.

Membership

Tickets to the exhibition are free for NHM members. To become a member, visit

nhm.org/membership.

About the Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County

The Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County (NHMLAC) includes the Natural History Museum in Exposition Park (NHM), La Brea Tar Pits in mid-Wilshire, and the William S. Hart Museum in Newhall. They operate under the collective vision to inspire wonder, discovery, and responsibility for our natural and cultural worlds. The museums hold one of the world's most extensive and valuable collections of natural and cultural history—more than 35 million objects. Using these collections for groundbreaking research, the museums also incorporate them into on-and offsite nature and culture exploration in L.A. neighborhoods, and a slate of community science programs – creating a natural history museum experience that explores the past, but increasingly addresses the present and future. Learn more at nhm.org.

Image credits (Left to Right)

Movie still from *Creature from the Black Lagoon*. Courtesy of Universal Studios Licensing LLC.

Dracula (Carlos Villarías) and Eva (Lupita Tovar) in Spanish *Dracula*. Courtesy of Universal Studios Licensing LLC.