

## Horror art exhibit reflects past social views and idealisms

Ash Comire

Grotesque creatures.

Over-sexualized women.

Fear.

A collection of authentic, iconic horror and science fiction all depicting these concepts were the main attraction of Kirk Hammett's appropriately titled "*It's Alive*" at the Columbia Museum of Art.

Yes, *the* Kirk Hammett of influential rock band Metallica had provided the artwork for this exhibit. His collection of horror movie memorabilia takes those who pay the \$10 admission back in time to the era of the Great Depression, when horror was not meant to disturb and vomit-induce like today's measly cash grabs.

A plethora of vivid hand-drawn masterpieces meant to intrigue the audiences of the 1930s and 1940s brought a brightness and action to the grim, beastly antagonists of each iconic film, characterizing them in such a way that the movie itself does not even need to be seen. Haunting reds and greys for the infamous *Frankenstein* invoked enough fear to remind me of when I was six-years-old, hiding my face in my dad's shoulder at the sight of monsters on film.

It was a trip down memory lane for the horror movie fanatic in me contrasted with gorgeous and vintage art that pleased my hipster aesthetic.

I made sure to stop at every poster, smiling as names like Karloff and Fonda appeared on posters of movies I grew up watching with my dad and my brother. The older posters of the collection, those whose cast almost always included Karloff, had very distinct, artistic lines, flowing effortlessly to create a colorful rendering of the film's main social commentary, while

the newer ones experimented with photo editing, showcasing the shifting form of art within the theatrical world.

For *Godzilla*, the sickening greens and yellows contrasted to reveal it's warning about nuclear warfare. The surge of alien themed antagonists and mutated creatures after 1945 reflected the worldwide fear of the atom bomb. Posters like *Rosemary's Baby* were more female centric and soft, emphasizing the more progressive views those films would reveal about women through their use of horror and fear. These details made the viewing experience more intriguing, as I squinted and leaned in close to catch all the intricacies, colors, and figures hiding secret messages of the society they were developed in.

The concept of the damsel in distress, ensnared by the monster, in perilous danger, or holding on tightly to the hero in scandalous clothing is a grim reminder of how women were viewed before our modern age that seemed to pervade every poster and collector's item until the 1960s. I must admit that these artists were nothing less than intelligent, and often showed these women looking out at the viewer of the poster, making me feel as if *I* must be the one to save them as I walked by them. This marketing tactic influencing men to come see a horror film is subliminal, but I appreciate it's presence within the art of the posters throughout the exhibit as much as I enjoy watching the trope slowly fade away as posters become younger in age.

I was not alone in my endeavor through the exhibit, even though I would have enjoyed it slightly more if I had the freedom to geek out completely in public with no one to judge me. There were some reminiscing about when they first saw the movies depicted in the posters, reflecting on how horror has evolved from something enjoyable to something perturbed and purposefully frightening with no other reason other than money. There were younger viewers snapping photos, themselves silently interested in the past presented before them. It was a

delightful atmosphere for such an oddly intriguing exhibit, as movie fanatics and casual viewers all appreciated the art before them respectfully.

The collection itself as a whole is not meant to be some grand masterpiece to be featured in a prestigious museum, no, it is an enjoyable, family friendly portal through film history. It's goal is to focus on a genre that is meant to send a powerful, often controversial message to its viewers while simultaneously showcasing what others forget is art from an age not too far removed from our own, and it does so brilliantly. The colors that stimulate those in the exhibit and the props that sat in glass cases for viewers to admire add to the worthwhile experience of viewing the past from a different yet sensible lense.

*"It's Alive"* is a collection that showcases some of the downfalls of humanity as well as the growth of our society, and is framed simple enough for even a child to understand the importance of the horror genre. The \$10 admission is well worth the trip to the Columbia Museum of Art for families, avid movie goers, history buffs, or even just someone looking for an interesting outing to partake in.



*Tribal Tribune* staff writer **Alli Ryan** admires a poster from the 1930s film *Frankenstein*, taking a photo due to her interest in the color scheme.