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## THE MORGAN CELEBRATES THE TWO-HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN* IN A NEW EXHIBITION

*It's Alive! Frankenstein at 200*  
October 12, 2018 to January 27, 2019

**Press Preview:** Thursday, October 11, 10:00 am -11:15 am

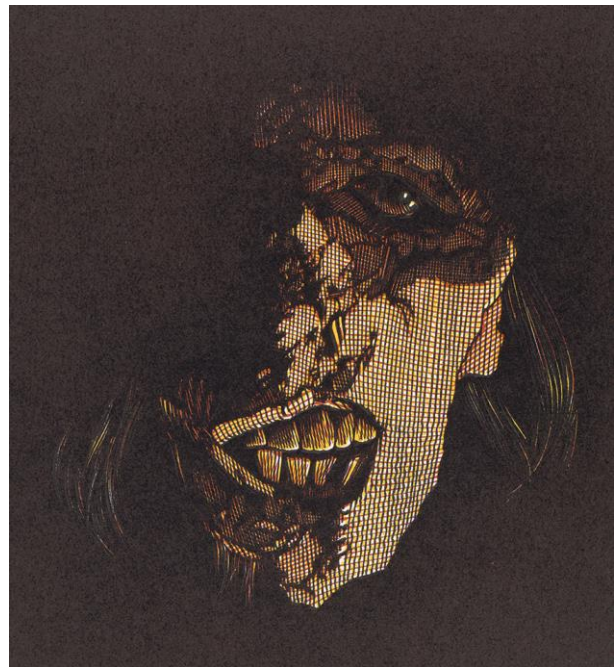
**RSVP:** [media@themorgan.org](mailto:media@themorgan.org)

**New York, NY, September 6, 2018—**

A classic of world literature, a masterpiece of horror, and a forerunner of science fiction, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley is the subject of a new exhibition at the Morgan. Organized in collaboration with the New York Public Library, *It's Alive! Frankenstein at 200* traces the origins and impact of the novel whose monster has become both a meme and a metaphor for forbidden science, unintended consequences, and ghastly combinations of the human and the inhuman. Portions of the original manuscript will be on display along with historic scientific instruments and iconic artwork such as Henry Fuseli's *Nightmare* and the definitive portrait of Mary Shelley.

The story's astonishingly versatile role in art and culture over the course of two hundred years helps explain why the monster permeates the popular imagination to this day.

Co-curated by John Bidwell, the Astor Curator and Department Head of the Morgan's Printed Books and Bindings Department, and Elizabeth Denlinger, Curator of the Carl H. Pforzheimer



Barry Moser, *No Father Had Watched My Infant Days*, illustration in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein*, West Hatfield, Mass.: Pennyroyal Press, 1983. The Morgan Library & Museum, PML 127245.6. Photography by Janny Chiu, 2017. © Pennyroyal Press.

Collection of Shelley and His Circle at The New York Public Library, this exhibition presents a diverse array of books, manuscripts, posters, prints, and paintings illustrating the long cultural tradition that shaped and was shaped by Mary Shelley's myth. A large number of these works come from both the Morgan and the New York Public Library's collections.

Only eighteen years old when she embarked on the novel, Shelley invented the archetype of the mad scientist who dares to flout the laws of nature. She created an iconic monster who spoke out against injustice and begged for sympathy while performing acts of shocking violence. The monster's fame can be attributed to the novel's theatrical and film adaptations. Comic books, film posters, publicity stills, and movie memorabilia reveal a different side to the story of *Frankenstein*, as reinterpreted in spinoffs, sequels, mashups, and parodies.

"The Morgan is in an excellent position to tell the rich story of Mary Shelley's life and of *Frankenstein's* evolution in popular culture," said director of the museum, Colin B. Bailey.

"Pierpont Morgan was fascinated by the creative process, and one of the artifacts he acquired was a first edition *Frankenstein* annotated by the author. The collection of works by the Shelleys, both at the Morgan and the New York Public Library, has only grown since then. We are very pleased to collaborate with the NYPL in presenting the full version of this extraordinary tale and how it lives on in the most resilient and timely of ways."

A copiously illustrated companion volume, *It's Alive! A Visual History of Frankenstein*, provides a vivid account of the artistic and literary legacy of the novel along with detailed descriptions of the highlights in the exhibition, while a new online curriculum offers high school teachers resources for the classroom.

### **The Exhibition**

The exhibition occupies two galleries: one documenting the life of Mary Shelley and the composition of her book, the other showing how the story evolved in the theater, cinema, and popular culture.

## The Influence of the Gothic Style and Enlightenment Science

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* sprang from both a passion for Gothic style that pervaded British culture long before the author's birth in 1797 and the influence of the discoveries of European Enlightenment science. Audiences loved the supernatural in all its formulations—ghosts, graveyards, mysterious strangers, secret warnings, lost wills, hidden pictures, and more. While novels were the primary vehicle for the Gothic, it was also popular with artists of paintings and prints, which were sometimes satirical—the Gothic was parodied as soon as it was taken seriously. The exhibition opens with the greatest horror painting of the eighteenth century, *The Nightmare*, painted in 1781 by the Swiss immigrant artist Henry Fuseli. Mary Shelley knew about this iconic image and may have used it in writing the climactic scene in *Frankenstein*.



**Left:** Henry Fuseli (1741 – 1825), *The Nightmare*, 1781, oil on canvas. Detroit Institute of Arts, Founders Society Purchase with funds from Mr. and Mrs. Bert Smokler and Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence A. Fleischman /Bridgeman Images. **Right:** Joseph Wright (1734 – 1797), *The Alchemist, in Search of the Philosopher's Stone, Discovers Phosphorus, and Prays for the Successful Conclusion of his Operation, as was the Custom of the Ancient Chymical Astrologers*, 1795, oil on canvas, Derby Museums Trust. Photography by Richard Tailby.

Shelley was also influenced by the scientific endeavors of the time. She had been born into an age of scientific and technological discovery in Britain, when institutions like the Royal Society began fostering exploration and experimentation. Across Britain spread a thriving circuit of lectures and science demonstrations for the public. A few of these experiments have become part of the Frankenstein legend. While writing the novel, Shelley had been reading Humphry Davy's *Elements of Chemical Philosophy*, and she knew about anatomical dissections, contemporary debates about the origins of life, and electrical experiments on corpses. She

lends this fascination to Victor Frankenstein, who makes a monster from corpses in his “workshop of filthy creation.”

### Mary Shelley’s Life and Conception of *Frankenstein*

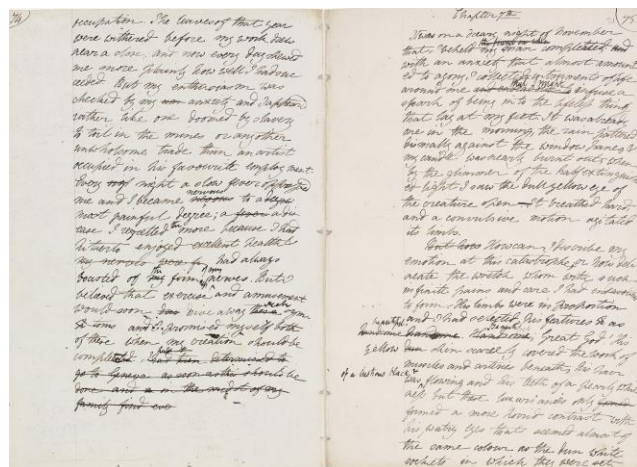
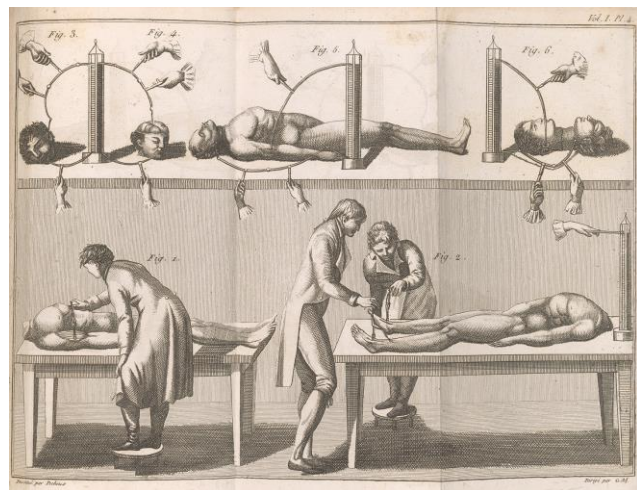
Mary Shelley grew up in a radical and intellectual milieu, the daughter of writers famous in their own time, the feminist theorist Mary Wollstonecraft and the novelist and philosopher William Godwin. After her mother died in childbirth, her father married Mary Jane Clairmont, who had children of her own, and the teenaged Mary Godwin escaped a tense family atmosphere by making long visit to friends in Scotland. When she returned in 1814, she met the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, already married and a father. They soon fell in love and eloped to Europe, the most decisive act of all their lives.

It was on a trip to Lake Geneva in 1816 accompanied by P.B. Shelley, Lord Byron, and her step-sister Claire Clairmont that Mary Godwin found the inspiration to write *Frankenstein*. During their stay, the party entertained themselves by reading aloud from a volume of Gothic tales. Byron suggested a contest to write ghost stories, and Shelley joined in energetically, looking for something “to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart.” After days of frustrated effort, the idea came to her one night after hearing P.B.

Shelley and Lord Byron discuss the origins of life and the possibility of animating a corpse by galvanic action.

“I saw – with shut eyes, but acute mental

vision – I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together.” She returned to England with the beginnings of a novel.



Top: Benoît Pecheux, plate no. 4 in Giovanni Aldini, *Essai théorique et expérimental sur le galvanisme*, Paris: De l'imprimerie de Fournier Fils, 1804. The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the Gordon N. Ray Fund, 2016; PML 196238. Photography by Janny Chiu. Bottom: Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797 – 1851) *Frankenstein*, manuscript, MS. Abinger c.56, fols. 20v – 21r, 1816 – 1817. The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



By 1817, she had finished a draft titled *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*. The book appeared in three volumes on January 1, 1818, after P. B. Shelley offered revisions and found a publisher. Luckily for posterity, most of the *Frankenstein* manuscript has survived, making it possible to see the author's original ideas, her second thoughts, and her husband's suggestions. Portions of the manuscript containing key passages in the novel will be on display at the Morgan.



**Top:** Jean-François Vilain, *Théâtre de la Porte St. Martin, Le monstre, acte premier, scène dernière*, ca. 1826, color lithograph. Département des Arts du spectacle—Bibliothèque nationale de France. **Bottom:** Carl Laemmle Presents Frankenstein: the Man who Made a Monster, lithograph poster, 1931. Collection of Stephen Fishler, comicconnect.com, Courtesy of Universal Studios Licensing LLC, © 1931 Universal Pictures Company, Inc.

Mary Shelley's personal life was punctuated by tragedy in ways strangely similar to incidents in the novel. After settling in Italy in the spring of 1818 with her husband, their children William and Clara, step-sister Claire and her daughter Allegra, the family experienced constant sorrow as first William and Clara, and then Allegra died. Their grief was only partly assuaged by the birth of another child, Percy Florence. Through their mourning and marital difficulties, Mary Shelley and her husband maintained a strenuous routine of writing and study and friendships in the English and Italian communities. In July 1822, Shelley suffered a final devastating loss: P. B. Shelley sailed with his friend Edward Williams and their cabin boy to meet their friend Leigh Hunt's family in Leghorn; on their return their boat met a sudden squall and they drowned.

### ***Frankenstein* on Stage and on Screen**

When Mary Shelley returned to England in August 1823, one of the few bright spots was Richard Brinsley Peake's melodrama *Presumption! or, the Fate of Frankenstein*: a theatrical hit, the play had made her famous. The actor Thomas Potter Cooke's performance was the key factor: over six feet tall, clad in a gray-blue leotard, his exposed skin painted the same color, with a toga on top, he moved with lyrical athleticism and made the creature both frightening and

pathetic. Mary Shelley saw one of Cooke's performances and enjoyed it greatly. Other adaptations followed: at least fifteen dramas based on the novel were produced between 1823 and 1826.

A large portion of the exhibition is dedicated to the movies, which have played an essential role in popularizing the story and shaping our pop culture image of the monster. The earliest film of *Frankenstein* was made by the Edison Studios in 1910, but it is James Whale's 1931 version that has taken such a prominent place in the popular psyche that it is now better known than the novel. The 1931 *Frankenstein* and 1935 *Bride of Frankenstein* gave us a radically reimagined version of the narrative, particularly the creation scene and Boris Karloff's performance as the monster. James Whale and his special effects technicians introduced the high-voltage lab equipment and set the scene amidst the thunder and lightning now obligatory in horror movies. The creature's violence was induced by his being tortured with fire. Karloff later said, "Over the years thousands of children wrote, expressing compassion for the great, weird creature who was so abused by its sadistic keeper that it could only respond to violence with violence. Those children saw beyond the make-up and really understood." The 1935 sequel, with Elsa Lanchester playing both Mary Shelley and the creature's bride, has also aged well. Both films create sympathy for the creature through his encounters with stupid and sadistic people, and both Karloff and Elsa Lanchester portray their characters with dignity and depth of emotion.

From the creation of the monster, to the creature's killing of a small child, to violence committed against women, adaptations of *Frankenstein* again and again have returned to some of the most disturbing but recurring scenes of human experience. Mary Shelley's unique contribution to culture is the creation of the monster. Her genius was to imagine a way to make life out of death; James Whale's genius was to imagine a way to depict it in moving images and sound.

Whale's *Frankenstein* films sparked a mass of cinematic energy. Other directors drew from it for years after with imitations and derivative films, a few just as frightening, some quite funny, none as haunting. The Morgan has borrowed a series of B-movie posters from a private collector and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to show some of the more faithful, comic, lurid, and execrable treatments of this theme

Makeup artists, perhaps, have come closer than anyone to bringing Victor Frankenstein's story to life. Jack Pierce's makeup gave the creature a new face in the 1931 film. Some highlights in

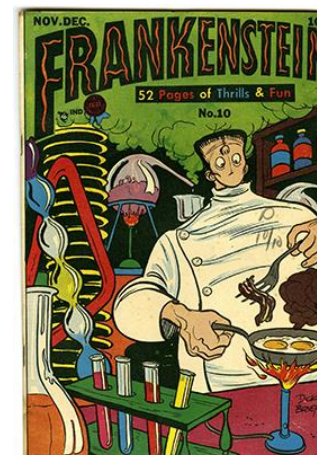
the section include the sketches and photographs of this iconic appearance along with a gruesome torso model of Robert De Niro in Kenneth Branagh's *Frankenstein*, provided by the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas, Austin.

### The Creature's Afterlife: Comic Books and Prints

The comic book as a separate slim magazine first appeared in 1933 as a promotional insert in newspapers, and *Frankenstein* has been part of this medium's history from nearly the beginning. The exhibition includes some of the most interesting examples of the story, some aimed at children and some at adults.

Surprisingly few illustrators have taken on the novel's challenge, but we present four of the best: Lynd Ward (remembered first of all as a wood engraver), Bernie Wrightson (a renowned comic book artist), Barry Moser (a celebrated book illustrator), and Pierre-Alain Bertola (a polymath Swiss artist who worked on a theatrical version of *Frankenstein*). All of them are working after, and against James Whale. All pay exquisite attention to Mary Shelley's text and its ethical implications.

The exhibition closes with Barry Moser's illustration of the Frankenstein family tomb, leaving us solidly in the tradition of Gothic art with which the show begins. Mary Shelley's creature is a Gothic nightmare, but one who takes responsibility for himself. Even as his blood boils at the injustices committed against him, he is also "torn by the bitterest remorse." Seeking quiet in death, he leaps onto his raft and is soon lost to human eyes. As mysterious and volatile in death as in life, Frankenstein's monster leaves us with more questions than answers—perhaps the decisive reason why artists have been drawn to him for the past two hundred years.



**Top:** Lynd Ward (1905 – 1985), *The Monster and Victor Frankenstein Encounter Each Other*, proof wood engravings for illustrations in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein*, New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas, 1934. Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Pennsylvania State University Libraries, Permission of Robin Ward Savage and Nanda Weedon Ward.  
**Bottom:** Dick Briefer (1915 – 1980), *Frankenstein*, no. 10, New York: Prize Comics, Nov.-Dec., 1947. From the Collection of Craig Yoe and Clizia Gussoni. © First Classics, Inc. Used with permission granted by Trajectory, Inc.

## **Publication**

*It's Alive! A Visual History of Frankenstein* delves into the artistic and literary legacy of the novel and provides detailed descriptions of the highlights in the exhibition. It introduces readers to portrayals of the creature--from his early days dancing across a stage, to Boris Karloff's lurching pathos, to the wide variety of modern-day comic book versions--and of Victor Frankenstein, from brainy college kid to bad scientist, and grounds them in historical context. In addition, it provides full introductions to Mary Shelley's life before and after the novel and to the pioneering scientific work of her day. A full chapter displays the Gothic paintings and graphic art that inspired Shelley's work. The contextual chapters will make it useful to the student and the general reader.

Author: Elizabeth Campbell Denlinger

Publisher: The Morgan Library & Museum, New York; D Giles Limited, London.

333 pages.

## **Public Programs**

### **LECTURE** **Frankenstein's Dark and Stormy Birth**

#### **Gillen D'Arcy Wood**

Mary Shelley found herself on the shores of Lake Geneva in 1816, during a "cold, wet, ungenial summer" – just one of the global climatic effects of a volcanic explosion in Indonesia. Gillen D'Arcy Wood of the Institute for Sustainability, Energy, and Environment, University of Illinois, explores that fateful summer when the writers Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Shelley, housebound by incessant rain, embarked on a ghost story contest that led to *Frankenstein*.

**Friday, October 26, 6:30 pm\***

**Tickets:** \$15; free for members and students with a valid ID.

\*The exhibition *It's Alive! Frankenstein at 200* will open at 5:30 pm for program attendees.

### **DISCUSSIONS** **Frankenstein and his Monster in Today's World**

#### **Charlie Fox and Rosalind Williams**

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* has held a place in the popular imagination for 200 years. Join us for an evening exploring two themes from the novel and their relevance to today's world. First, discover ways the monster is represented in Queer art and how its descendants find their way into contemporary culture and media with Charlie Fox, author of *This Young Monster*. Next, Rosalind Williams, Bern Dibner Professor of the History of Science and Technology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, talks about the conundrums posed in the novel—how can we exercise responsibility in a world of innovation beset by unintended consequences?

**Wednesday, November 14, 6:30 pm\***

**Tickets:** \$15; \$10 for members; and free for students with a valid ID.

\*The exhibition *It's Alive! Frankenstein at 200* will open at 5:30 pm for program attendees.

#### **Le Conversazioni: Films of My Life**

#### **Julie Mehretu and Jonathan Safran Foer**

In celebration of the relationship between art, literature, theater, and film, join MacArthur Fellow / award-winning artist Julie Mehretu and author Jonathan Safran Foer (*Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* and *Eating Animals*) in a conversation on the films that have inspired their lives and work. Moderated by Antonio Monda, Artistic Director of Le Conversazioni festival. Produced by Dazzle Communication.

**Thursday, December 6, 7 pm**

**Tickets:** \$20; \$15 for members; Free for students with a valid ID, limited availability.



**GALLERY  
TALKS**

**It's Alive! Frankenstein at 200**

**Elizabeth C. Denlinger**, Curator, Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle, New York Public Library and **John Bidwell**, Astor Curator and Department Head, Printed Books and Bindings

**Friday, November 2, 6 pm**

**Friday, December 7, 1 pm**

**Tickets:** All gallery talks and tours are free with museum admission; no tickets or reservations necessary. Please note that tours are subject to cancellation or change without notice.

**ADULT  
WORKSHOP**

**Reading Mary Shelley's Frankenstein**

Leila Walker, Research Associate, Collection of Shelley and His Circle, New York Public Library and Lecturer at Queens College, leads a reading group on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The group will explore the themes of language, intimacy, and monstrosity, as well as participate in close readings of selections from the novel. Participants will be reading from the Norton Critical Edition of the 1818 text. Advance tickets are required, as space is limited.

**Wednesday, October 17, 1–3 pm**

**Tickets:** \$45; \$35 for members.

**FILMS**

**Frankenstein & Young Frankenstein**

*Frankenstein*

Director: James Whale  
(1931, 71 minutes)

*Young Frankenstein*

Director: Mel Brooks  
(1974, 101 minutes)

First revisit the classic 1931 *Frankenstein* adaption of Mary Shelley's masterpiece starring Boris Karloff, then continue the story with Mel Brooks's 1974 comedy horror film *Young Frankenstein* featuring the grandson of the infamous scientist struggling to prove that his grandfather was not mad, even as he follows in his footsteps. Starring Gene Wilder, Madeline Kahn, and Marty Feldman.

**Sunday, October 21, 2 pm**

**Tickets:** Exhibition-related films are free with museum admission. Advance reservations for members only. Tickets are available at the Admission Desk on the day of the screening.

\*The exhibition *It's Alive! Frankenstein at 200* will open at 1 pm for program attendees.

**Bride of Frankenstein & Gods and Monsters**

*Bride of Frankenstein*

Director: James Whale  
(1935, 75 minutes)

*Gods and Monsters*

Director: Bill Condon  
(1998, 105 minutes)

Start with the masterful 1935 sequel *Bride of Frankenstein* starring Elsa Lanchester, in which the scientist is persuaded to build a mate for his creature, followed by the fictionalized story of that film's creation and the last days of its director, James Whale, in the Oscar-winning *Gods and Monsters*, starring Ian McKellen.

**Sunday, November 4, 2 pm**

**Tickets:** Exhibition-related films are free with museum admission.

Advance reservations for members only. Tickets are available at the Admission Desk on the day of the screening.

\*The exhibition *It's Alive! Frankenstein at 200* will open at 1 pm for program attendees.

**EVENT**

**Frankenreads**

The Morgan joins a global community of over 100 institutions in twenty countries to celebrate Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* with a public reading of selections from the novel on Halloween 2018.

Check back soon [here](#) to sign up as a reader for Frankenreads, limited availability.

**Wednesday, October 31, 3–5 pm**

**Tickets:** free with Museum admission.

**FAMILY  
PROGRAMS**

**Creature Collagraphs**

Inspired by the exhibition *It's Alive: Frankenstein at 200*, express your inner Dr. Frankenstein and bring to life a fictional creature of your own! Delve into this experimental process by collaging an assortment of recycled and found textures, decorative papers, and scraps to create a printing plate and relief prints. Led by Jennifer Comer, artist and Assistant Manager of School Programs.

Program consists of a thirty minute exhibition experience followed by a ninety minute art-making activity. Materials included.

**Saturday, October 20, 11 am–1 pm**

**Tickets:** \$20; \$15 for members.

Each ticket is valid for one child and up to two adults.

**Amazing Anatomy**

Take an anatomy lesson inspired by Frankenstein's creature. Participants will get a better understanding of how the muscles and tendons of their own hands work by assembling a monstrous hand with household materials. Led by Nicole Leist, Manager of Education, and Ashley Frenkel, American Museum of Natural History educator.

Program consists of a thirty minute exhibition experience followed by a ninety minute art-making activity. Materials included.

**Appropriate for ages 6-14.**

**Saturday, November 3, 11 am–1 pm**

**Tickets:** \$20; \$15 for members.

Each ticket is valid for one child and up to two adults.

**Frankenstein Around Town**

**The Museum of Modern Art presents Hammer Horror: A Frankenstein Septet**

Included in the program are *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957); *The Revenge of Frankenstein* (1958); *The Evil of Frankenstein* (1964); *Frankenstein Created Woman* (1967); *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* (1969); *The Horror of Frankenstein* (1970); *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell* (1974).

**Friday, October 12 to Thursday, October 18**

For more information, visit [moma.org/calendar/film](http://moma.org/calendar/film).

**New York Public Library presents Annual Halloween Masquerade Library After Hours**

Parade up Fifth Avenue in your Halloween best to this cerebral happy hour, replete with a costume contest, spooky special collections displays, scary 16mm films, drinks, dancing, and more.

**Friday, October 26, 7 pm**

For more information, visit [nypl.org/afterhours](http://nypl.org/afterhours).

**Organization and Sponsorship**

*It's Alive! Frankenstein at 200* is organized by the Morgan Library & Museum, New York and The New York Public Library. It is curated by John Bidwell, head of the Morgan's Printed Books and Bindings Department, and Elizabeth Denlinger, Curator of the Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle

**Morgan Stanley**

The exhibition and catalogue are also made possible with lead funding from Katharine J. Rayner, Beatrice Stern, and the William Randolph Hearst Fund for Scholarly Research and Exhibitions, generous support from the Ricciardi Family Exhibition Fund, the Caroline Morgan Macomber Fund, the Franklin Jasper Walls Lecture Fund, Martha J. Fleischman, and The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, and assistance from The Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation, Robert Dance, and Lisa Unger Baskin.

The programs of the Morgan Library & Museum are made possible with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.



**The Morgan Library & Museum**

A complex of buildings in the heart of New York City, the Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan, one of the preeminent collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today it is a museum, independent research library, music venue, architectural landmark, and historic site. A century after its founding, the Morgan maintains a unique position in the cultural life of New York City and is considered one of its greatest treasures. With the 2006 reopening of its newly renovated campus, designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano, and the 2010 refurbishment of the original library, the Morgan reaffirmed its role as an important repository for the history, art, and literature of Western civilization from 4000 B.C. to the twenty-first century.

**The Morgan Library & Museum | 225 Madison Avenue | 212.685.0008 | [themorgan.org](http://themorgan.org)**