



the Columbia  
Museum of **ART**

**It's Alive!**

**Classic Horror and Sci-Fi Art  
from the Kirk Hammett Collection**

February 15 – May 17, 2020

Best known as lead guitarist of the famed rock band Metallica, Kirk Hammett is also an obsessive collector of visually arresting horror and sci-fi film art and has dedicated the last three decades to creating one of the world's most important collections.

*It's Alive!* featured more than 100 pieces of graphic art, many hailing back to the days of Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi, that have seeped into the public imagination and reflected society's deepest fears and anxieties for nearly a century. Not only do these objects explore the power of graphic art in its own right, they have inspired Hammett's work throughout his artistic career. Organized by the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.



# Curatorial Overview

*It's Alive! Classic Horror and Sci-Fi Art from the Kirk Hammett Collection* was an opportunity to expand the idea of “what is art?” for CMA audiences. As a special exhibition with broad popular appeal, *It's Alive!* deepened the conversation around poster art as ephemera. This is an art form that was first hand-painted, and then mechanically reproduced and displayed in movie houses all over the world. Its emotional impact was part of its design, and the ways of achieving it shifted in interesting ways from the 1930s all the way up to the 1980s. The exhibition was also an opportunity to talk about historical events that led to the creation of monstrous, alien, or scientifically mutated horror themes in films.

The main partner in this exhibition was the Peabody Essex Museum (PEM) in Salem, Massachusetts, which curated the original exhibition for their own museum and created the catalogue for the tour. Kirk Hammett, as collector, also had a say in the final design approval of the exhibition. The CMA's Exhibition Designer and Chief Preparator provided a successful installation with some of the most impactful wall colors and lighting of any recent exhibition. When Kirk Hammett visited, he was so impressed he wanted to know the wall color names for his own use and was incredibly pleased with the lighting. The Chief Curator worked out the layout according to the themes provided and navigated the fact that there were over 130 total objects. CMA staff thoughtfully homed in on some areas of interpretation, particularly the “She”-themed area that addressed the depiction of women in horror films. Staff members rewrote didactics to better reflect the museum's mission and values.





*It's Alive!* physically spread further into the museum than most exhibitions. The Salon, a large room adjacent to the special exhibition galleries, was used for even more artwork. This area also contained interactives and a guitar display. The Theater became transformed into the Kirk Hammett Guitar Experience, and SES generously offered to help stage the area with concert-style trussing here, as well as in the Salon.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic and necessary safety measures, the exhibition was on view to the public for the first month of its planned three-month run. It opened to members on February 14, and the museum closed on March 16. In that first month, however, the CMA saw visitors respond to effective marketing and come in immediately to see the exhibition. It felt like the CMA was successfully meeting the goal of attracting new audiences, because suddenly our guests looked outwardly different from those who attended the exhibition just previous, *Van Gogh and His Inspirations*. These visitors were dramatically younger, edgier in their expressive ways of dressing, and seemed to be coming specifically to see this exhibition with its graphic, cinematic, and heavy metal connections. It was exciting to see all the energy building around the exhibition, and continue virtually with our many engaging Museum from Home exhibition tours and programs.

# Program and Event Highlights

## **Members' Opening Party for *It's Alive!***

**Friday, February 14**

Daniel Finamore, curator at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, discussed themes found in the subjects of *It's Alive!*—the evolution of poster styles and production, what they were intended to communicate, how they appeal to us on a psychological and neuroscientific level, and what that has meant for Kirk Hammett. Entertainment was provided by the Columbia Arts Academy.

- Total Attendance: 667

## **Sounds of Silence Film Series**

**Thursday, February 20**

**Thursday, March 12**

**Thursday, May 14 (virtual)**

In celebration of *It's Alive!*, the CMA partnered with the Nickelodeon Theatre and Wired Music to present a unique silent film experience. Evenings began at the CMA with guided tours of *It's Alive!* and continued at The Nick for screenings of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *Nosferatu* with musical accompaniment of original works by George Fetner and other Wired Music musicians.

- Total Attendance and Views: 217

## **An Evening with Kirk Hammett**

**Wednesday, March 4**

Collector Kirk Hammett discussed *It's Alive!* and the inspiration behind his acquisitions with fellow horror and sci-fi enthusiast and local collector Robin Hood Dial. A special backstage experience included a meet and greet with Kirk Hammett before the talk, premier seating for the event, and unique *It's Alive!* swag.

- Total Attendance: 346

## **Free First Thursday on Main at the CMA**

**Thursday, March 5**

On the first Thursday of each month, the CMA remains open until 8:00 p.m. and offers free admission for the entire day. Evening hours include additional programs such as tours and art activities. For *It's Alive!*, participants headed into the studios to create their own fanzine inspired by works in the show.

- Total Attendance: 405

## **Creature Feature with Kirk Hammett**

**Thursday, March 5**

In celebration of *It's Alive!*, the CMA partnered with the Nickelodeon Theatre and Kirk Hammett himself to give visitors a film night they're not likely to forget. Hammett introduced one of his favorite films, *Lifeforce* (1985).

- Total Attendance: 130 (sold out)

## **CMA Gala: Silver Scream Soiree**

**Saturday, March 7**

Gala attendees were transported to a world of vintage glamour and the mysteriously unexpected at the CMA for a black-tie fundraising gala inspired by the works of *It's Alive!*. The Gala is the CMA's largest fundraiser of the year and raises significant funds to support the museum's award-winning arts education and community enrichment programs. Kirk Hammett himself performed at the Gala and the very guitar he played was auctioned off to a lucky winner! Presenting Sponsor: Jim Hudson Lexus.

- Total Attendance: 862

## **ArtBreak with Jessica Fairey**

**Wednesday, March 11 (in-person and virtual)**

Genetic counselor Jessica Fairey led a discussion on the current world of human genetics and how dreams of genetically modified creatures spawned decades of influence in films like *Swamp Thing*, *Frankenstein*, and *The Shape of Water*. ArtBreak is a program that looks at art through a different lens. Each session features a speaker who gives insight into their worldview by sharing their interpretation of works of art at the CMA.

- Total Attendance and Views: 206

**Heavy Metal and Horror Lecture  
with Jeremy Polley  
Sunday, April 12 (virtual)**

Heavy metal has been linked to the horror movies since its inception due to a considerable overlap of thematic material. Jeremy Polley, Music Coordinator at South Carolina State University, presented a discussion on some of the watershed moments of the horror/heavy metal connection, starting with Black Sabbath's connections to a B horror film theater in the late 1960s through modern horror and the works of Rob Zombie, with stops through the heady (and bloody!) 1980s.

- Total Views: 87

**ArtBreak: The Rise and Fall of American  
Horror Comics**

**Tuesday, April 14 (virtual)**

UofSC librarian David Shay explored the rise of the American horror comic book in the post-war society of the late 1940s, its evolution from existing media like film and radio, the resulting moral panic that led to industry self-censorship, and the effective end of the genre by the late 1950s.

- Total Views: 228

**Friday Night Fright**

**Friday, April 17 (virtual)**

In honor of *It's Alive!*, horror/sci-fi enthusiast and local collector Robin Hood Dial hosted a virtual film screening of George Romero's 1968 masterpiece *Night of the Living Dead* followed by a Q&A session.

- Total Views: 75

**Children of the Night:  
How Americans Learned to Love Horror  
Sunday, April 19 (virtual)**

The sheer number of vampires, unquiet spirits, and zombies that shamble around in pop culture makes it difficult to believe there was a time when many Americans saw horror as literally un-American. W. Scott Poole explained how World War I and figures like Bela Lugosi, Lon Chaney, and Boris Karloff created the first golden age of horror in the 1930s and '40s, as seen in *It's Alive!*.

- Total Views: 125

***It's Alive!* Virtual Tour  
Wednesday, April 29 (virtual)**

After the museum closed, the CMA made the decision to offer a virtual tour through Facebook Live as a way to offer a tour experience to those who were not able to see the exhibition in-person. The tour video was viewed more than 4,200 times, both live and following the recording. Perhaps even more exciting was the interaction made possible by a live broadcast on social media. Participants answered questions and made comments in real time, engaging with the objects and demonstrating their understanding of themes explained throughout the tour.

- Total Views: 4,200



# School and Educator Programs

## Evening for Educators

Wednesday, February 12

Evening for Educators is designed for educators to network and learn about arts integration while also earning professional renewal credit. Each program includes a talk by a curator, artist, or expert, along with a chance to preview the exhibition as well as try out the studio lesson plan firsthand. At this installment, Nate Puza from the Half & Half, designer of the newly minted Columbia flag, discussed design theory in his own work as well as the history of lithography and the printmaking process.

- Total Attendance: 70

## Student Meet and Greet with Kirk Hammett

Saturday, March 7

Metallica's legendary and lead guitarist, Kirk Hammett, met with area students from The Columbia Arts Academy, Dreher High School's guitar program, and Girls Rock Columbia to discuss his love of sci-fi/horror movies and art and how it has shaped his creativity and path with music.

- Total Attendance: 50

## School Tours

Some 78 students came to the museum as part of tours from three different schools across Richland, Newberry, and Lancaster counties. After the museum closed and in-person school tours were no longer possible, CMA Education and Engagement staff worked to create lesson plans that could be adapted for use by teachers in their virtual classrooms, made available on the CMA website and publicized through emails and social media posts.



# The Kirk Hammett Guitar Experience

Visitors got their shredding skills on in the one-of-a-kind guitar experience as part of *It's Alive!: Classic Horror and Sci-Fi Art from the Kirk Hammett Collection*. Participants rocked out on two limited edition ESP guitars customized with art selected personally by Hammett. Guitars were raffled off to two lucky winners after the exhibition closed.

- Total Attendance: 300

Kirk Hammett Guitar Experience Sponsors

**LIVE NATION**



**ESP**

**Dunlop**

**SES**



# By the Numbers

- Online visitation for CMA *It's Alive!* webpages: **311,547**
- *It's Alive!* catalogues sold: 216
- Limited-edition Funko Pops sold: 936
- Student memberships: 711 (highest ever!)

Total attendance for this exhibition was **6,547**

- Total youth served for this exhibition: 898
- Attendance of programs and events during this exhibition: 3,107
- Total attendance for Public Admission and Group/School Tours: 3,440
  - 82.8% came from outside the City of Columbia
  - 67.3% came from outside Richland County
  - 19.7% came from outside of South Carolina
  - 37.6% traveled 50 miles or more to visit
  - Public Admission and Group/School Tours visitors came from:
    - 39 of South Carolina's 46 counties
    - 40 out of 50 states as well as D.C. and U.S. military bases

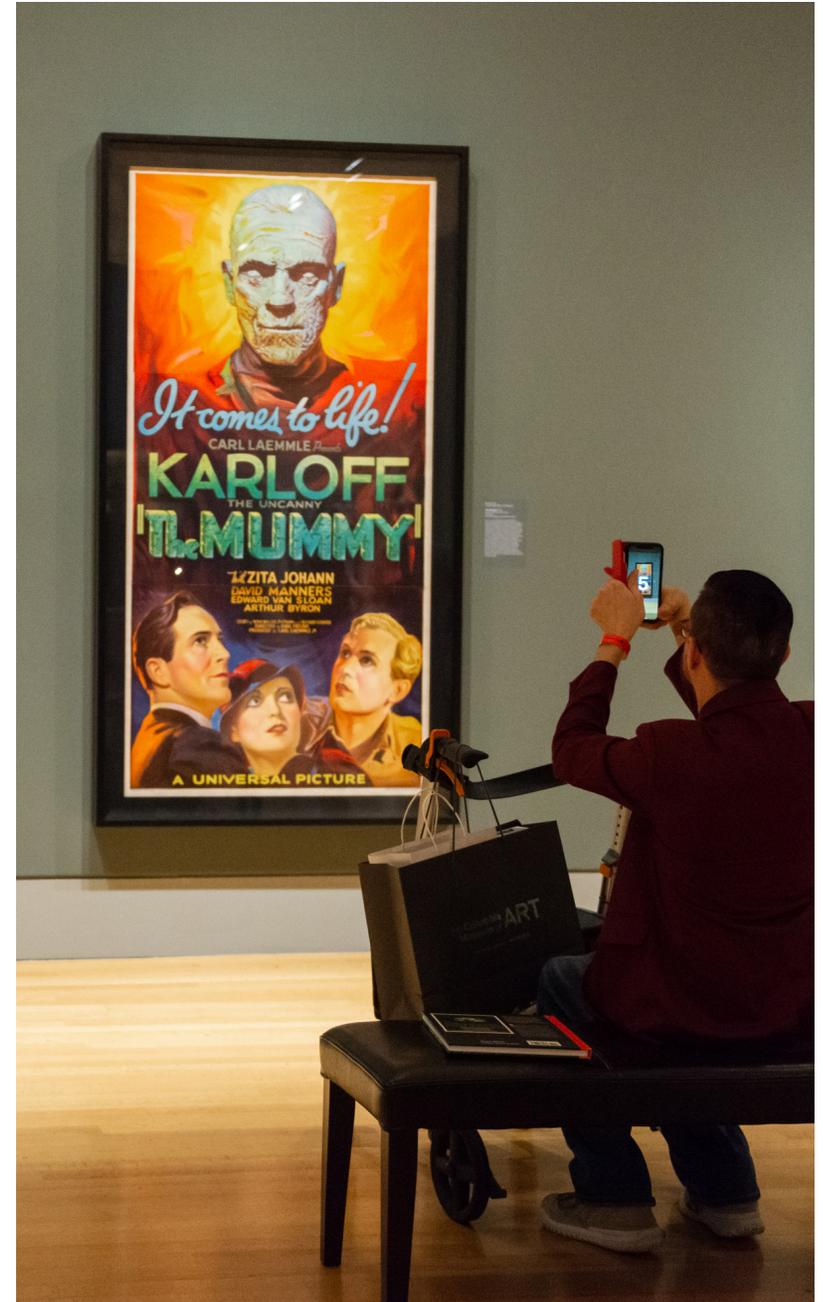
Top 5 States:

- South Carolina – 2,764
- North Carolina – 130
- Georgia – 102
- Virginia – 47
- California – 36

Top 5 SC Cities:

- Columbia – 975
- Lexington – 426
- West Columbia – 300
- Irmo – 139
- Elgin – 112

11 international visitors from France, Norway, Spain, and the United Kingdom.



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Organized by the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.

