

MAH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Images available upon request.

SANTA CRUZ MAH ANNOUNCES ***Werewolf Hunters, Jungle Queens, and Space Commandos:*** ***The Lost Worlds of Women Comic Artists*** **October 13, 2023–January 21, 2024**



IMAGE CREDITS (FROM LEFT): HULK ILLUSTRATION BY MARIE SEVERIN; COMICS ARTWORK BY MARIE SEVERIN, FROM SUB-MARINER 21, MARVEL, JAN 1970; COVER ARTWORK BY LILY RENEE, FROM THE RANGERS COMICS 23, JUN 1945, ALL COURTESY OF THE JIM GUNDERSON COLLECTION.

SANTA CRUZ, CA (September 12, 2023) — The Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History (MAH) is pleased to announce ***Werewolf Hunters, Jungle Queens, and Space Commandos: The Lost Worlds of Women Comic Artists***, an exhibition on pioneering women comic book artists at the MAH from **October 13, 2023–January 21, 2024**.

Beginning with the 1940s, this exhibition explores how American women comics artists used monsters to explore the histories and futures of the US as its racial, gendered, and national politics shifted throughout the 20th century. The show is guest curated by **Renée Fox and Michael Chemers** of the **UC Santa Cruz Center for Monsters Studies** and features a variety of materials from the comics collection of **Jim Gunderson**.

This exhibition examines the role that monsters play in the development of women's comics art across the 20th century. As the market for comic books boomed in the 1940s, talented women artists with formal training in the fine arts and illustration joined the comics industry and began to make their mark on this male-dominated sphere. Working within the often gendered and racially biased conventions of the comics medium, artists like **Lily Renee, Fran Hopper, Marcia Snyder, and Jill Elgin** pushed against the industry's confining frames (both literal and figurative), creating aliens, unexpected octopuses, hybrid beasts, and other monstrous bogeymen that laid the groundwork for women to make—and be—monsters throughout the mainstream comics of the 20th century.

“This exhibition provides a rare opportunity to see the amazing work of 20th- and 21st-century women comics artists gathered in one place, and to recognize the huge contribution these artists have made to the development of comic book monsters across the last 80 years,” say Fox and Chemers.

Werewolf Hunters, Jungle Queens, and Space Commandos: The Lost Worlds of Women Comic Artists is presented in partnership with the UC Santa Cruz Center for Monster Studies and is supported in part by The Humanities Institute at UC Santa Cruz.

The opening of the MAH’s exhibition coincides with the launch of the **2023 Festival of Monsters**, presented by Center for Monster Studies from **October 13-15, 2023**. The festival explores the ways monsters and tropes of monstrosity both preserve and resist forms of social and cultural injustice. The festival includes a free public day at the MAH and a paid academic conference, with performances, readings, and presentations from monster-makers.

On Friday, October 13, the festival begin with a full day of public events at the MAH, including a panel with Black Nerds Create, a talk with the creators of Theater of Terror, a reading by author Addie Tsai (*Unwieldy Creatures*), a Q&A and mask display by locally-owned Trick or Treat Studios, a keynote by Mallory O’Meara (*The Lady from the Black Lagoon*), and the opening of the MAH’s exhibition. All of the Friday events are free to the public, with the exception of the exhibit. Admission is \$10, \$8 for students/teachers/veterans and can be purchased upon museum entry.

Sponsors for the 2023 Festival of Monsters include the Arts Research Institute of UC Santa Cruz, UC Santa Cruz Arts Division, The Humanities Institute at UC Santa Cruz, Porter College, the UC Santa Cruz Foundation Board and private donors. Additional support provided by Bookshop Santa Cruz and Trick or Treat Studios. The 2023 Festival of Monsters is part of National Arts and Humanities Month.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR MONSTER STUDIES

The UC Santa Cruz Center for Monster Studies is a scholarly center devoted to investigating the many definitions of monsters and monstrosity throughout history and culture. The only institution of its kind in the world, the interdisciplinary Center is a growing hub for research, creative work, and teaching that posits monsters as a unique site for analyzing geopolitics, popular culture, scientific discovery, technology, and understandings of the human. More information can be found at <https://monsterstudies.ucsc.edu>.

ABOUT THE MAH

The MAH is a thriving community gathering place that offers a full slate of art and history exhibitions, visual and performing artworks, public festivals, education and outreach programs, and cultural celebrations in collaboration with its many partners. It maintains a permanent collection of regionally significant art and artifacts, a research library, a historical archive, and historic sites including the Evergreen Cemetery, Octagon Building, and Davenport Jail. It is also home to Abbott Square, a vibrant public plaza on the museum’s doorstep that offers food, social events, and year-round creative happenings.

###

Media Contact:

Robb Woulfe
Executive Director
(831) 429-1964 x 7018
robb@santacruzmah.org

Jen Mahal
Associate Director, UC Santa Cruz Center for Monster Studies
(917) 690-5743
jenmahal@gmail.com