Hunkidoree Resort

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Hunkidoree Resort opened in the summer of 1960 as a middle-class leisure resort for an often-marginalized community: monsters. Monsters including the likes of vampires, lagoon creatures, mummies and other figures appearing in Cold War era films, which served as personifications of American anxiety over nuclear annihilation, this project seeks to reimagine mid-century illustrated posters with unexpected monstrous figures in leisure settings.

The Hunkidoree Resort project consists of nine screen-printed posters in three series of three: three cocktail posters, three gig posters, and three travel posters, as well as a logo and brochure that includes a map of the resort grounds, inspired by theme park maps. The overall palette of the Hunkidoree Resort was inspired by the pastel colors of soda float advertisements published in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Four colors of French Paper 100 cover stock were used for printing the posters: Memo Orange Kraft-tone, Ledger Green Kraft-tone, Manila Yellow Kraft-tone, and Starch Rain Speckletone. These paper types and colors were chosen for their adherence to the chosen palette as well as their texture, with small “flecks and shives” of different pulps from the recycled paper which have been used in its manufacture since 1955 (French Paper Utility Guide, 2020). The illustrations were constructed using brush pen lines, large blocks of color and screen tones.

Above
The largest posters, the travel posters, measure 18 inches wide by 24 inches tall and use two transparent colors that create an additional color when layered and allow some of the paper’s texture to come through. The first poster, printed on Starch Rain Speckletone—a pale blue color—layers transparent yellow and a transparent warm blue. It features a zombie wearing swim trunks and swinging on a rope from the top center towards the left, where the Hunkidoree Resort logo sits in a large yellow circle. Below, other resort patrons relax in inner tubes on a river that crosses the width of the poster with the resort slogan, “Where the dead come alive!” Following the form of the river, which splits the poster, lurks a lagoon monster similar to the one from Creature from the Black Lagoon, but who is wearing a bikini and diving underwater near giant clams. The second travel poster is printed on Ledger Green Kraft-tone and uses high chroma warm purple and transparent green mint inks. The poster is divided into thirds and a single, female figure sits on a bed that crosses the three sections. The surroundings and figures change in each third in an effort to highlight the different available accommodations. The left is a “standard” room with a familiar bed, window and lamp, and a hairy figure with a tail. At center is an “aquatic” room with water below the bed, fishing float lighting and a lagoon creature. And on the right is the “nocturnal” accommodation with a vampiric figure, rocky cave walls and an opening to the night sky with bats and a large moon-like circle containing the Hunkidoree Resort logo. The last of the travel posters, printed on Manila Yellow Kraft-tone with transparent teal and magenta inks, features a mummy and an invisible woman enjoying cocktails in a hot tub at the bottom half of the poster. At center, behind the couple, are other resort patrons sitting at fire pits and listening to a musical act on a stage constructed from a giant clamshell set into the ridge wall across the river. At the top is the top of the ridge with the silhouette of a howling coyote and the slogan.

The gig posters and cocktail posters, intended to be posted with the resort grounds are smaller, measuring 12 inches by 16 inches, and use a mix of opaque and transparent colors ranging from four to six colors per design. The gig posters feature different fictional acts: The Lakeland Surfers, The Chamborladas and Spider Moss. The cocktail posters are based on actual cocktails and show different monsters, wearing sunglasses and enjoying their drinks: a vampire enjoying a Vampire’s Fang, a zombie drinking a zombie, and a lagoon creature drinking a mai tai.
Above
Hunkidoree Resort travel poster - River.

Left
Movie still from Creature from the Black Lagoon (1954).
Illustration has a short timeline compared to fine art. Its role as a means of disseminating ideas to consumers can be traced back to the 1860s, when engravings of Civil War illustrations in newspapers were so popular as to contribute to the rise of mass print culture and putting periodicals in front of more readers than ever before (Lukasik 18). As newspapers and magazines became increasingly affordable for the average family due to the industrialization of printing in the 1850s, a new age of widespread literacy and mass consumption of mass printed materials was born (Schneirov 65). Reading was already a tool to unite households and assert moral correctness, for example, the practice of reading the family Bible (49). Therefore the leap to using mass-produced magazines and their advertisements, including publicly displayed posters and eventually film beginning in the early 20th century, to encourage consumers to elevate their status in society via recommended products and services, was a short one.

Industrialization had created a population that sought entertainment outside of the home and so began the rise of amusement parks the likes of Coney Island in Brooklyn, New York and Long Beach Pike in Long Beach, California (Avila 107).

Due to their affordability, anyone could visit these centers of entertainment and escape. Soon they became associated with less desirable, often immigrant populations from the nearby urban centers of New York and Los Angeles, respectively. Walt Disney, having grown up in a small, Midwestern town, was deeply suspicious of “urban mass culture and its immoral influences” (Avila 115) and used his own longing for his memories of childhood extensively when designing Disneyland to create a homogeneous, uncomplicated world that emphasized social order of his own design (Avila 120).

It is well known that Disneyland was conceived as a celebration of America’s past and as a paean to progress, or as Walt Disney put it: ‘the older generation can recapture the nostalgia of days gone by, and the younger generation can savour the challenge of the future’ (in Mosley, 1985: 221) (Bryman 31).

Disneyland achieved an air of nostalgia through a variety of themed lands, the most personal to Disney being the one at the entrance, Main Street U.S.A., which was modeled on an idealized version of his own hometown of Marceline, Missouri as he experienced it as a young child, circa 1910. There was also Frontierland, hearkening back to the days of Coney Island in Brooklyn, New York and Long Beach Pike in Long Beach, California.
Above

Kick up your heels and relax in your choice of...

standard, aquatic, or nocturnal accomodations.
the great Westward expansion full of cowboys and Indian themes, Tomorrowland, that looked towards the future, and Fantasyland, which used characters created for Disney animated features. But capturing the naivety of childhood, or at least what Disney could recall of his childhood experience, was the driving force behind the original design of Disneyland.

It’s impossible to discuss the original design of Disneyland without understanding how nostalgia functions psychologically. Linda Hutcheon explains that the “...aesthetics of nostalgia might... be less a matter of simple memory than of complex projection; the invocation of a partial idealized history merges with a dissatisfaction with the present. And it can do so with great force” (quoted in Muller, 749). Just as monster movies has often addressed social anxieties about outside (social or political) influences, nostalgia has the power to “appeal to both conservative and radical imaginations...[it can be seen to] accompany the distortions intrinsic to the interaction of memory and desire in our recollections of the past” (Muller 748). As pointed out by Avila “These [Disneyland] representations of social order offered some relief from the dissonance of urban modernity and afforded postwar Americans a comforting distraction from the many uncertainties and anxieties of the day” (Avila 120). However, another form of popular entertainment chose to embrace the anxieties of the time in order to entertain through fear of the unknown.

Disneyland had opened its gates during a golden period of cult horror movies. Many of these films would later be dubbed “creature features” thanks to a film package of the same name that played on local TV stations across the U.S. in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. The magazine Famous Monsters of Filmland, first published in 1958, enjoyed surprising success as another horror film package called “Shock Theater” released by film production company, Screen Gems, had become widely popular the year before, featuring 52 pre-1948 classic horror movies from Universal Studios. A year later in 1958, Screen Gems would release “Son of Shock” to include films from Columbia to the lineup as well. Originally intended to be a single publication, Famous Monsters of Filmland ended up running 191 issues over 25 years due to its popularity. There have been several revivals since, including one that launched in 2008. Famous Monsters of Filmland and “Shock Theater” both relied on reproducing existing films and introducing the monstrous antagonists to new audiences, who have devoured the content.

Among the most popular creatures and films featured in these runs was one called Creature from the Black Lagoon. Like many of these creature-focused movies, the film begins with a curious discovery by scientists who then dive deeper into unexplored territory from which chaos then ensues. This particular creature is discovered by scientists on an expedition...
Above

Left
Cover for the first issue of Famous Monsters of Filmland (1958).
along the Amazon River where a fossilized claw is uncovered. After persuading his boss and financer to fund a trip to the discovery location, ichthyologist Dr. David Reed and his girlfriend/colleague, Kay, as well as other scientists and crew, return to the original camp only to discover the assistants left behind have been so brutally killed, they attribute the deaths to jaguars. After new excavations turn up nothing, they decide to follow the water to the “Black Lagoon,” whose lore says all those who enter never return.

The creature becomes interested in Kay as she swims in the river and lagoon but goes unnoticed until another claw, this time fresh, is found in the boat’s drag lines. The remainder of the movie sees the expedition crew capture the creature in a cage, the creature injure or kill several members of the crew, and Kay kidnapped by the creature before her ultimate rescue, when the creature is shot repeatedly before sinking deep in the lagoon waters, presumably dead.

Despite the expedition’s scientific goal of learning more about the world that they have entered, the Western explorers take little care to preserve the natural environment. While the audience is made to sympathize with the scientists and crew because of a shared existence as humans, accustomed to living comfortably in civilization, they are shown to be intruders in a foreign land long inhabited by the creature. They even dub its home “Black Lagoon” in attempt to mark its unfamiliarity—as something nefarious whose defeat they obsessively pursue. This use of monsters as metaphor for bigger anxieties is succinctly explained by communications professor and critic Victoria O’Donnell who wrote, “Science fiction films tended to merge the fear of a Communist takeover with the fear of annihilation, particularly in the form of invasion from outside forces.”

A pointed example of Cold War anxieties can be found in Rod Serling’s Twilight Zone episode, “The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street,” (CBS, March 4, 1960) where a white, suburban, middle-class street turns on itself following a strange
shadow that passes overhead and unusual power fluctuations. As the neighbors gather on the sidewalks to see if others also lost power to their homes, a young boy, Tommy, shares a story he read about alien invasions that resulted in similarly strange changes in electrical equipment. The sudden darkness and deprivation of modern conveniences leads the neighbors of Maple Street to start searching for something or someone to blame, turning the differences between neighbors into evidence of their alien identity. By the end of the episode, neighbors have turned against neighbors, rocks have been thrown through windows, and one person who leaves at the beginning of the episode to investigate the power outage is shot dead on his return by increasingly paranoid Maple Street residents. While the final shot reveals that aliens were indeed the source of the power going out, Serling’s closing speech identifies people as the actual monsters:

The tools of conquest do not necessarily come with bombs and explosions and fallout. There are weapons that are simply thoughts, attitudes, prejudices...to be found only in the minds of men. For the record, prejudices can kill...and suspicion can destroy...and a thoughtless, frightened search for a scapegoat has a fallout all of its own....” (Serling)
The Grounds

What is there to do?
- Go diving in the giant clam beds.
- Float the Hunkidoree River.
- Enjoy a concert at The Clamshell featuring a variety of today's popular monsters of music.
- Lounge by the pool.
- Drink cocktails by the fire pits with that special someone.
- Request a picnic lunch along the river bank.
- Have a plate of gnosh brought to you by our tomb service bats.
The Clamshell

Giant clam beds

Aquatic accommodations

Fire pits

River drop-in

Standard accommodations

What is there to do?
• Go diving in the giant clam beds.
• Float the Hunkidoree River.
• Enjoy a concert at The Clamshell featuring a variety of today’s popular monsters of music.
• Lounge by the pool.
• Drink cocktails by the fire pits with that special someone.
• Request a picnic lunch along the river bank.
• Have a plate of gnosh brought to you by our tomb service bats.
Even earlier movie monsters like Japanese director Ishiro Honda’s Godzilla, produced and distributed by Toho Studios in 1954 -- just nine years after U.S. Armed Forces dropped atomic bombs over the island country -- was an unnaturally large creature that physically towered over the tallest buildings in Japan at the time and is undeniably a product of the nuclear anxiety.

Following a hydrogen bomb test in 1954, Japanese fishermen were sickened by radioactive poisoning despite being over eighty-five miles from the test area. Such effects of radioactive fallout were not released to the public by the government organization, the Atomic Energy Commission. It was not until the publication of scientific reports detailing the hazards of exposure to fallout were the public made aware of the potential for severe and long term harm to people, and other biological forms.

“Panic over the negative effects of radiation provided fodder for many science fiction films.

Small insects mutated into huge monsters, people became impossibly large or incredibly small, and creatures long extinct came to life.

Scientists in the films were often to blame for experiments that resulted in dreadful changes. Alternatively, atomic explosions released extinct
Above

Left
Movie still from Godzilla (1954).
creatures from icecaps or underwater caves, or radiation from the explosions caused the mutation of harmless creatures into terrifying monsters.” (O’Donnell)

“Monsters are always a mixture of plausible fears and unconscious fears,” says Leo Braudy, author of “Haunted: On Ghosts, Witches, Vampires, Zombies and Other Monsters of the Natural and Supernatural Worlds.” “Monster films, and horror as a genre in particular, derive from and help shape more unconscious and inchoate fears in its audience” (McDowell).

That is to say,

the monsters that audiences fear the most are manifestations of their own fears of other humans, and, “The potential for catharsis in watching a monster movie, the feeling that all is finally right with the world, comes less from the defeat of the monster than from the tying up of the plot of the movie,” Braudy says. “More than any other film form, the horror movie generates sequels. Why? Because the monster, which in a sense comes from inside us as much from outside, can never finally be defeated.” (McDowell)
Left
Considerable time has passed since the monster movies of the 1940s, 50s, and 60s have scared audiences out of their seats. There are numerous television shows and films released over the past 60 years featuring monsters in unexpected contemporary domestic settings. The pop culture phenomenon, CBS’s The Munsters (1964, produced by Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher), included Frankenstein’s monster as the father with the mother is reminiscent of Valerie Hobson’s portrayal of the bride of Frankenstein, with pale skin and a streak of white in her dark hair, a vampiric grandfather and werewolf son with a pet dragon and an inexplicably “normal” human teenage cousin, Marilyn. The family lives in an average neighborhood, and according to Al Lewis, who played the role of Grandpa, in an interview with Daily Variety,

“philosophically, the format is that in spite of the way people look to you physically, underneath there is a heart of gold.”

Above
Can you find a way to link these ideas back to earlier ones in your summary of the genre?
More recently, there has been a series of films, beginning with Sony’s animated feature, Hotel Transylvania (2012), that peek into Dracula’s upscale hotel catering to monsters hidden in the mountains of Transylvania away from the local villages. The first film in the franchise focused on Dracula’s daughter Mavis and is a mostly a coming-of-age story as she wrestles with longing to have new experiences though the world outside of the hotel is dangerous for monsters. Then a human boy, Johnny, stumbles upon the hotel and becomes Mavis’ love interest. The second film tells the story of the hotel opening up to humans in addition to monsters and the third and last film sees the cast go on travel to the sea to vacation on a cruise ship.

Hunkidoree Resort combines the nostalgia sought in the creation of Disneyland and the monstrous characters that still appear in pop culture today by utilizing several of the tenets of Disneyfication, most obviously, theming. “Theming accomplished at least two things” ... “First, it established coherence to the various rides and attractions in Disneyland and the environments in which they were located. Secondly, in the design of rides and attractions, the accent was placed on their theming rather than on the thrill factor, which was the emphasis in traditional amusement parks.” (Bryman 32) The fictitious resort, however, is decidedly void of the “thrills” one would expect in an amusement park, the focus instead being on leisure.

The theme of leisure is accomplished with playful advertising and marketing for the resort with the inclusion of several series of posters, brochures, and of course, a deceptively cute logo. Its presentation is reminiscent of booths advertising exotic destinations and all-inclusive packages. Anybody that has encountered a salesman touting the benefits of a timeshare will recognize the idealized
Above
Hunkidoree Resort cocktail poster - Zombie.

Left
Cover image for Sony’s animated feature, Hotel Transylvania (2012).
images of diving into crystal clear waters, lazily passing the time outdoors in sunshine with modern amenities at their fingertips and accommodations that cater to their individual needs.

In developing this series, I have also taken inspiration from colorful period advertisements, particularly soda floats advertisements, for palette inspiration. Copy and even the name deploys puns for added layer of playfulness. Considering printing technologies in 1960 made the use of full color still too costly for most businesses, the poster designs have been broken down into color separations for reproducing the images as screen printed ephemera.

Hunkidoree Resort combines the nostalgic idea of the mid-20th century as an often-idealized period, despite the pervasive anxiety of complete annihilation. It's impossible to establish a setting in 1960 America where monsters are real and all they want to relax is a heated pool while sipping on cocktails without engaging in the willful suspension of disbelief. No, monsters did not go to resorts in the 1960s (at least as far as anyone can prove!) and they aren't going to be suddenly nuked by incoming warheads, as would have been not only possible but historically plausible. Instead, this project encourages the mind to consider what would such creatures do in such a setting? What would that look like? How does leisure play into our own daily life and can we rally escape our anxieties?

What if the unexpected wasn’t scary but fun?
Above
Bibliography


Above
Hunkidoree Resort cocktail poster - Vampire’s Fang, 12”x16” screen print on French Paper (2021).
This book was created at Washington University in St. Louis, in the MFA Illustration and Visual Culture program in the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts, in the spring of 2021.

The body text is set in Hatch, designed by Mark Caneso. The title text is set in Hatch Regular, designed by Mark Caneso. The book was designed and typeset by Stephanie Gobby, based on a page design by Ben Kiel. Text editing by D.B. Dowd, John Hendrix, Audra Hubbell, and Heidi Kolk. Production and binding was completed by Advertisers Printing, St. Louis, Missouri. This book is printed on Cougar and 100lb text.