Tentacles of Learning

Octopuses have many interesting features, among them: nine brains, including a central one; eight muscular, prehensile limbs, each with a "mind" or brain of its own; three blue-blooded hearts; a funnel to swim and steer; pulsating veins to maintain pressure; bulging, but human-like eyes; adaptive skin for camouflage; and an impressive ink sack to ward off predators. Exceptionally curious, highly intelligent, and constantly shape shifting, cephalopods have existed for over 300 million years; constitute some 300 species; and are known inspiration to science, art, and education.

*Tentacles of Learning* explores the wonder of these ancient, complex creatures, from their evolution before the Age of the Dinosaur, to their fascinating life in oceans today. We hope you will be drawn to the octopus, a metaphor for the way we adapt to our environment and grow through human experience and education, formal and informal. It is such a flexible transformation that nourishes individual and collective consciousness—deeper awareness of our internal and external existence in the world as we know, feel, or grasp it.

This book display complements the art exhibition, *As I Am*, by 2023 Myers awardee Kendal O’Leary, currently on display in the Offit Gallery, located on the third floor of Gottesman Libraries. Included are select books about the artistic process and perspectives on printmaking.

At Everett Cafe, you'll find a new book collection every few weeks that relates to current events, education, or learning environments.
Monarchs of the Sea: The Extraordinary 500-Million-Year History of Cephalopods

Danna Staaf

“The inventors of swimming, cephs presided over the sea for millions of years. But when fish evolved jaws, cephs had to step up their game (or end up on the menu). Some evolved defensive spines. Others abandoned their shells entirely, opening the floodgates for a tidal wave of innovation: masterful camouflage, fin-supplemented jet propulsion, and intelligence we’ve yet to fully measure.”
“Enter celebrated photographer David Littschwager, who has spent decades developing specialized portraiture techniques to capture these creatures’ pulsating bioluminescence, translucent bodies, and ethereal movements. This luminous collection showcases 200 of Liittschwager’s most revealing photographs, paired with penetrating essays that explain how a creature without a brain or without bones perceives the world.”
The visually arresting and often misunderstood octopus has long captured popular imagination. With an alien appearance and an uncanny intellect, this exceptional sea creature has inspired fear in famous lore and legends—from the giant octopus attack in 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea to Ursula the sea witch in The Little Mermaid. Yet its true nature is more wondrous still. After decades of research, the authors reveal a sensitive, curious, and playful animal with remarkable intelligence, an ability to defend itself with camouflage and jet propulsion, an intricate nervous system, and advanced problem-solving abilities.
Many Things Under a Rock: The Mysteries of Octopuses

David Scheel

“Octopuses are complex, emotional, and cognitive beings; even as Scheel unearths explanations for the key mysteries that have driven his work, he turns up many more things of wonder that lurk underneath. This is the story of what we have learned and what we are still learning about the natural history and wondrous lives of these animals with whom we share our blue planet.”
Octopus!: The Most Mysterious Creature in the Sea

Katherine Harmon Courage

“Katherine Harmon Courage dives into the mystifying underwater world of the octopus and reports on her research around the world. She reveals, for instance, that the oldest known octopus lived before the first dinosaurs; that two thirds of an octopus’s brain capacity is spread throughout its arms, meaning each literally has a mind of its own; and that it can change colors within milliseconds to camouflage itself, yet appears to be colorblind.”
“Although mammals and birds are widely regarded as the smartest creatures on earth, it has lately become clear that a very distant branch of the tree of life has also sprouted higher intelligence: the octopus. In captivity, octopuses have been known to identify individual human keepers, raid neighboring tanks for food, turn off lightbulbs by spouting jets of water, plug drains, and make daring escapes. How is it that a creature with such gifts evolved through an evolutionary lineage so radically distant from our own? What does it mean that evolution built minds not once but at least twice? The octopus is the closest we will come to meeting an intelligent alien. What can we learn from the encounter?”
The Soul of an Octopus: A Surprising Exploration into the Wonder of Consciousness

Sy Montgomery

“Scientists have only recently accepted the intelligence of dogs, birds, and chimpanzees but now are watching octopuses solve problems and are trying to decipher the meaning of the animal’s color-changing techniques. With her “joyful passion for these intelligent and fascinating creatures” (Library Journal Editors’ Spring Pick), Montgomery chronicles the growing appreciation of this mollusk as she tells a unique love story. By turns funny, entertaining, touching, and profound, The Soul of an Octopus reveals what octopuses can teach us about the meeting of two very different minds.”
First published in 1904, under the German title Kunstformen der Natur, this unique collection of plates holds a lasting influence in both the art and science worlds. Ernst Haeckel’s detailed illustrations serve as a visual encyclopaedia for his pioneering research and anatomical discoveries. Working in both pencil and watercolour paint, he preserved the complex forms, patterns, and structures of the organisms he discovered. Featuring intricate depictions of various land and sea life, this volume serves a scientific purpose while boasting exceptional aesthetic beauty.
Behold the Octopus!

Suzanne Slade

“This nonfiction picture book from an award-winning team reveals the fascinating features of the glorious octopus, such as lights that attract prey, legs that walk on land, and the ability to change color and shape to match their surroundings and even masquerade as other animals.”
“In the heart-wrenching stories that make up this unforgettable book, we swim alongside Ross as he grows from skeptic to student of the underwater wild. And in the revelatory marine science behind the stunning photos, we learn how to track sea hares, cuttlefish, and limpets, and we witness strange new behaviors never before documented in marine biology.”
Framing Education As Art: The Octopus Has a Good Day

Jessica Hoffman Davis

“Champions the arts as essential to the K–12 educative process. Exploring apparently oppositional approaches to the arts and their role in education, it provides both an overview of arts learning in and out of school as well as a set of “artful” lenses through which to regard non-arts teaching and learning. With strong implications for practice, the work celebrates inquiry and multiple perspectives as it explores a range of reflections on art, artistry, artists, art education, and the methods and results of arts-related educational research.”
The Octopus Museum

Brenda Shaughnessy

“In these pages, we see that what was once a generalized fear for our children is now hyperreasonable, specific, and multiple: school shootings, nuclear attack, loss of health care, a polluted planet. As Shaughnessy conjures our potential future, she movingly (and often with humor) envisions an age where cephalopods might rule over humankind, a fate she suggests we may just deserve after destroying their oceans. These heartbreaking, terrified poems are the battle cry of a woman who is fighting for the survival of the world she loves, and a stirring exhibition of who we are as a civilization.”
Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene

Donna Haraway

“The Chthulucene, Haraway explains, requires sym-poiesis, or making-with, rather than auto-poiesis, or self-making. Learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying together on a damaged earth will prove more conducive to the kind of thinking that would provide the means to building more livable futures.”
Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature

Donna Haraway

“Throughout this book, Haraway analyzes accounts, narratives, and stories of the creation of nature, living organisms, and cyborgs. At once a social reality and a science fiction, the cyborg—a hybrid of organism and machine—represents transgressed boundaries and intense fusions of the nature/culture split. By providing an escape from rigid dualisms, the cyborg exists in a post-gender world, and as such holds immense possibilities for modern feminists.”
Mirror, Mirror: A History of the Human Love Affair with Reflection

Mark Prendergast

“... is the fascinating story of the mirror’s invention, refinement, and use in an astonishing range of human activities—from the fantastic mirrored rooms that wealthy Romans created for their orgies to the mirror’s key role in the use and understanding of light.”
There is something about a shapeshifter—a person who can transform into an animal—that captures our imagination: that causes us to want to howl at the moon, or flit through the night like a bat. Werewolves, vampires, demons, and other weird creatures appeal to our animal nature, our “dark side,” our desire to break free of the bonds of society and proper behavior. Real or imaginary, shapeshifters lurk deep in our psyches and remain formidable cultural icons. The myths, magic, and meaning surrounding shapeshifters are brought vividly to life in John B. Kachuba’s compelling and original cultural history.
“The fascination with monotype and monoprint never diminishes, thanks to the primal thrill of making a mark, combined with suspense and surprise as paper is lifted from a press. Recent prints from more than 70 top artists across the US demonstrate what monotypes and monoprints offer to artists and the broader world of art, while Kernan, a professional printmaker, provides a view from the studio.”
Perspectives on Contemporary Printmaking: Critical Writing Since 1986

Ruth Pelzer-Montada

“Presents thirty-two texts on contemporary prints and printmaking written from the mid-1980s to the present by authors from across the world. The texts range from history and criticism to creative writing. More than a general survey, they provide a critical topography of artistic printmaking during the period.”