

Msc Media Arts & Imaging

3D Computer Animation

Christopher Lawton

ID: 090013270

Programme of Study Draft 201

Study Title: The Uncanny in Narrative Arts

Rationale:

This study will focus upon exploring the phenomenon of the Uncanny, and its relationship to contemporary culture and my personal artistic practice. My intention is to develop my artistic voice through exploration of my field of interest; the theoretic Uncanny, and the Uncanny Valley.

Proving elusive, the Uncanny phenomenon means different things to different people. To Freud, it was the return of the repressed¹ bringing with it the return of things that were once, and should have remained, hidden. To Jentsch, it was the depths of intellectual uncertainty². Royle³ regarded the Uncanny as uncertainty of identity and experience, wherein the individual does not know for certain about the reality of their surroundings or themselves.

The Uncanny phenomenon can cause a range of feelings and sensations in different people, depending upon the individual's individual experiences and sense of identity, and by the nature of the individual Uncanny phenomenon. The feelings can range from the heights of laughter, amusement, joy and elation (potentially reaching into the sublime and religious ecstasy) to the depths of horror, despair, loneliness, disconnection and madness.

1 Freud, S. 1919 (in Freud, S. 2003).

2 Jentsch, E. 1906 (in Jentsch, E. 1997).

3 Royle, N. 2003.

One aspect of the Uncanny which has heavy implications for contemporary culture, especially film-making, animation, computer games and advertising, is the Uncanny Valley. The phrase, coined by Masahiro Mori⁴, has its origins in the intellectual uncertainty aspect discussed by Jentsch. In essence, the Uncanny Valley is an effect wherein the more realistic an automata, avatar, 3d character, etc. becomes in appearance, the more disturbing and frightening an effect they can have on an audience. This disturbance is greatly enhanced if the source of the effect is in motion. Humans made to look like robots, dolls etc. can also have this effect.

The Uncanny Valley effect often has a negative impact, which detracts from an artistic work. However, there are artists whom use this area in order to create a desired effect upon their audience. For example, Winkler + Noah created the Puppet Show project: <http://puppet-show.net/project.html>

A lot of the work published on the field of the Uncanny is psychoanalytic, or theory based upon the analysis of works created by artists, authors or film makers. This study seeks to explore not only the Uncanny as it is found in artistic works, and the nature of the Uncanny as it is debated by psychologists, scientists, and scholars. This study seeks to explore how the Uncanny can be utilized in the creation of artworks.

The Uncanny is the blurring of external and internal reality, an area of beliefs, superstitions, and primal forces. The Uncanny is uncertainty. It is a void ripe for exploration.

4 Mori, M. 1970.

Aims:

- To explore the Uncanny as found in contemporary art.
- To explore the Freudian Uncanny Tropes, and how they can be implemented in artworks:
 - Inanimate objects mistaken as animate
 - Animate objects behaving as if inanimate or mechanical
 - Being blinded
 - The double
 - Coincidences or repetitions
 - Being buried alive
 - Some all-controlling evil genius
 - Confusions between reality and imagination
 - Cannibalism
- To develop an understanding of how the Uncanny, and the Uncanny Valley, can be utilized by a creative in the process of creating expressive artworks.
- To discover how the aforementioned topics influence my work as an artist.

Objectives:

- Research the Uncanny (das Unheimlich), and the Uncanny Valley, both as a psychological phenomena and as an artistic device.
- Research the Uncanny as part of the creative process.
- Reflect upon how the aforementioned research and reflection impacts upon my work as an artist.

Research Methodology:

Practice Lead Research

The focus of this research is to explore both the Uncanny phenomenon and its relationship to narrative arts. Specifically, its relationship to my own work and the development of my artistic voice. As this is the case, practice based research will form the primary focus of my work. Secondary research, of the theory, artistic interpretation of others, scientific research etc. will still form a large part of my research, especially for the Pg Report and the Msc Dissertation.

Reflective Journal

The Reflective Journal will provide a space wherein I can reflect upon my works as I finish them. This will enable me to drive my work forward, and learn from my experiences. Using this Journal, I will be able to ensure that I remain focused, and that my work all contributes towards me reaching the correct outcomes for the Msc Projects and Dissertation.

Exploratory Experimental Work

These experiments will allow me to try out ideas (both theoretical and technical), and to explore the Uncanny as I relate to it. The intention of these experiments is to guide my focus in order to explore how the Uncanny is a part of my artistic voice and identity. Practice lead research will ensure that my final outcomes are both as striking and impacting as possible, and that I can fully explore the possibilities of my artistic practice.

Msc Projects

The goal of Semester two is to end up with ideas locked in place for the main Msc Projects, which will be undertaken in Semester Three alongside the Msc Dissertation. The primary project will focus upon 3d Computer Animation for a screen based outcome. The secondary project will focus upon the creation of 3d graphics for a projected installation.

Msc Project Diaries

Work on the two Msc Projects will be recorded on a frequent basis documenting their creation as the work progresses. This documentation will feature theoretical and technical research, alongside progress shots and information about the technical and artistic execution of the projects.

Expected Outcomes:

- Masters Report
 - An exploration into the Uncanny in narrative arts.
- Reflective Journal + Exploratory Experimental Work
- Msc Project 01
 - 3d Computer Animation for a screen based outcome, influenced by the research conducted over the year.
 - Msc Project 01 Diary
- Msc Project 02
 - 3d Computer graphics for a projected installation outcome, influenced by the research conducted over the year.
 - Msc Project 02 Diary

Schedule:

Due to recent illness, the schedule for Semester Three is still under construction. However, the intent is to split the workload equally between the two projects and the dissertation.

The Primary project will take centre stage to begin with, alongside the Dissertation. At this point, part of the Dissertation research will be into the technical execution of the Secondary project. This will include examining the space available, and planning the secondary project's execution.

Once work is well under way on the primary project, attention will be switched to focus more on the projection work, creating assets for the installation. Also, in this time, experimental work will begin on projecting into the available spaces. Once the space and projection have been locked into place, the setup of assets for rendering will begin.

My intent is to render a lot of the work on the University render farm if I can gain access over the summer, whilst working at home on the assets required for later rendering. Further information about the schedule will be available soon.

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