

Student Name: Sarah Davies

Student Number: 0650551

Programme of Study: Surface Pattern & Textiles Module: ADDA4023 Ways of Perceiving

Tutor Name: Julia Lockheart

Word Count: 1741

Losing Teeth

This exhibition takes you on a journey through a collection of the creative works of artists who have used their dreams, or the dreams of others to tell stories of subconscious thoughts, fears and memories. *Losing Teeth* leads you down a spiral of notable artworks, which have been the creation of the subconscious, dreaming minds of the chosen artists. It explores how dreams have the power to influence our waking life, and how they inspire artistic creation. The artworks included in the exhibition are, *"Dream of peeling quails' eggs for cure for Covid-19"* by artist and professor, Julia Lockheart; the movie *Inception*, by director Christopher Nolan; the novel *Frankenstein*, written by Mary Shelley, and the movie, *The Terminator*, by director James Cameron.

The exhibition floor plan, based on a vivid dream of my own, leads you down a stairwell of four floors (fig. 1). On each floor, there is a door to a room which holds each piece of artwork. At their core, the pieces within each room represent common experiences and rational fears dreamers may experience within waking life.



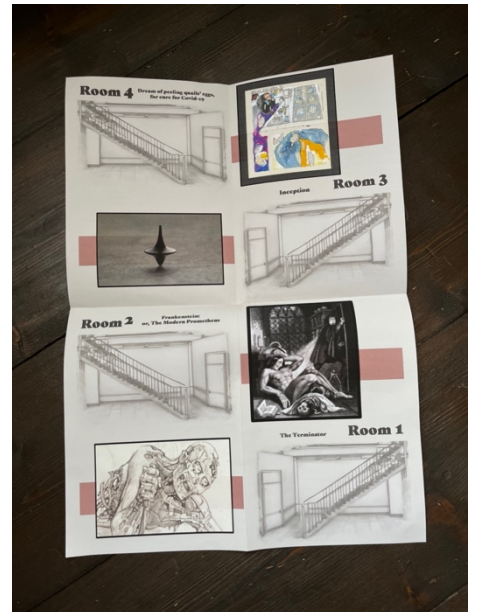
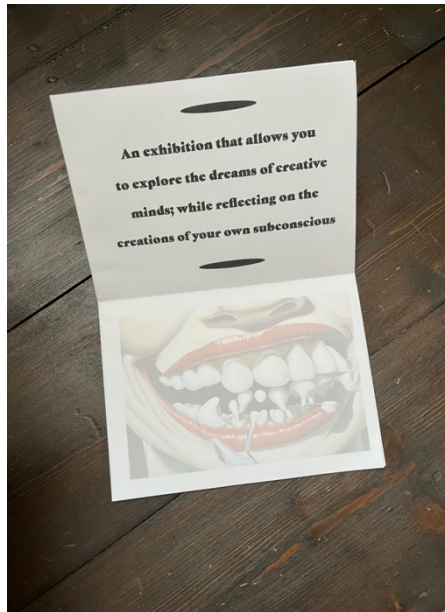


Fig 1. An AI-generated image of my own dream used to design the map and floor plan.



Fig. 2. Dream of peeling quails' eggs for cure for Covid-19, (2020).

Artwork 1

This exhibition starts on the **Fourth Floor**, in **Room 4**. As you enter the room, the painting *'Dream of peeling quails' eggs for cure for Covid-1'* (fig.2) by artist and professor Julia Lockheart, is displayed on the wall directly in front. The painting is a reaction to a dream by a clinical laboratory doctor for the National Health Service named Elaine. Throughout the room plays an audio recording of Elaine recalling her dream, which she experienced during the start of the first Lockdown (Blagrove & Lockheart, 2023). The surrounding walls have started to amass a collection of paintings by unknown artists reflecting their own dreams.

Lockheart's painting is a collaboration with Professor Mark Blagrove as part of DreamsID; an event where participants share and discuss their dreams with Blagrove, while Lockheart paints onto pages taken from the book, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, by Sigmund Freud. As part of her creative process, Lockheart picks out specific words from the pages and incorporates them into the paintings.

As with Elaine's dream, fragments of our daily interactions and experiences often make an appearance in our dreams, along with other arbitrary images; allowing the brain to "de-clutter". In his book, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud discusses how the mind utilizes defence mechanisms, like projection and symbolism, to disguise the true meaning of the dream; suggesting that our dreams are trying to tell us something by presenting it in a different context. For example, if we dream of being naked in public, it is possible that our subconscious is reflecting our feelings of shame and embarrassment that we experience in day-to-day life (Freud, 1899). Analysis of our own dreams can help us better understand our emotions and fears, so before exiting this room, the audience is given the opportunity to paint one of their own vivid dream experiences, by using the same technique as Lockheart. A selection of art mediums are provided, along with copies of pages from *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Once completed, the paintings can be placed on any empty wall space available, and all artworks will be collated at the close of the exhibition; to be used in future works.

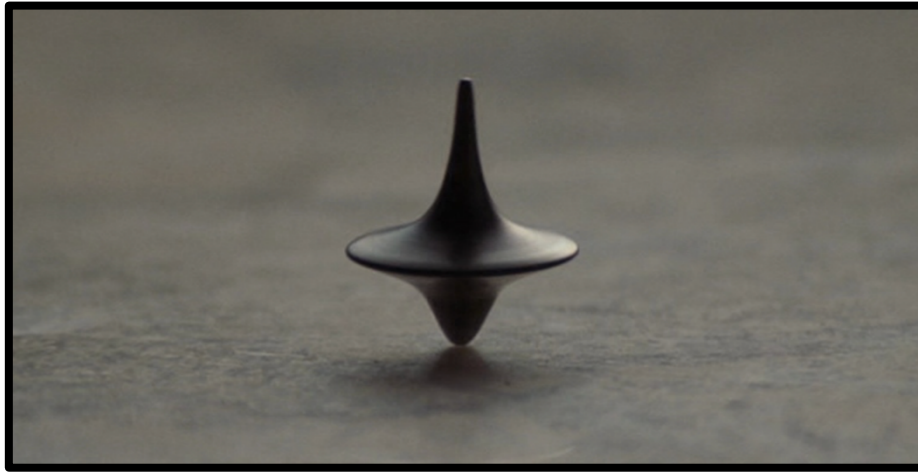


Fig.3 'Spinning Totem' scene, *Inception*, (2010)

Artwork 2

On the **Third Floor**, in **Room 3** is the 2010 film *Inception*, by director Christopher Nolan. The 'spinning totem' scene (fig.3) is playing on a repeat loop; displayed on immersive LED screens that surround the room, while thought-provoking clips from the movie interrupt it intermittently. This particular scene is at the end of the movie, and is a totem used by main character Dominic Cobb to determine if he is still within a dream. If so, the totem will continue to spin infinitely. The song *Non, Je ne regrette rien*, by Edith Piaf is used throughout the movie, to indicate that the characters need to be woken up from the dream. Suitably this song will play upon exiting the room.

Inception is a Sci-Fi thriller movie that explores the boundaries between dreams and reality. The plot centres on corporate espionage in the form of 'dream-hijacking'. A 'dream heist' team are able to infiltrate dreams to extract information from the minds of sedated targets,

while simultaneously planting ideas into their subconscious to the advantage of the targets' business opponents.

Cobb questions the power of subconscious influence, "What is the most resilient parasite? Bacteria? A virus? An intestinal worm? An idea. Resilient... highly contagious. Once an idea has taken hold of the brain it's almost impossible to eradicate. An idea that is fully formed - fully understood - that sticks; right in there somewhere" (*Inception*, 2010). Although Cobb suggests manipulation and control within a dream, the reality of an outside source implanting ideas to influence our thoughts and decisions is not a new concept. For instance, persuasive techniques and subliminal messages are frequently used by governments, the media, and religious organisations, allowing particular ideologies to develop over time¹ (Pedrini, 2018). Much like the 'targets' in the film, who believed that their thoughts and decisions were solely their own, the film's premise suggests otherwise.

Inception challenges the audience to explore the depths of their subconscious and question what is being experienced within reality, and how is it influencing the decisions we make as individuals.

¹Modern persuasion techniques, both political and commercial, were used to motivate enlistment and financial support to build a "factory of consensus". The propagandists manipulated the public, guiding their thoughts and actions according to the wishes of those in power and were therefore the forerunners of spin doctors and marketing and advertising professionals.

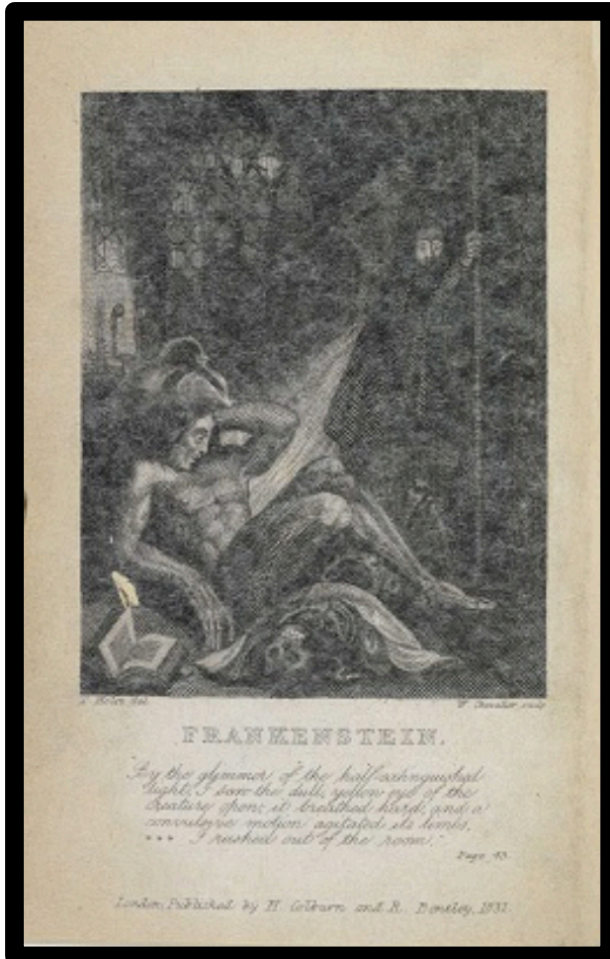


Fig.4 The earliest recorded image of the monster, an illustration featured in an 1831 edition of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

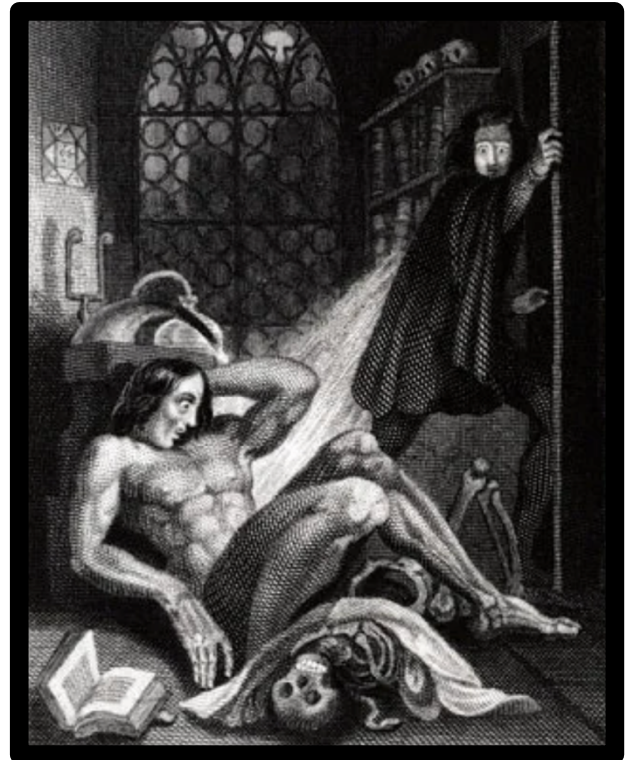


Fig. 5 A clearer image of the same illustration.

Artwork 3

On the **Second Floor**, in **Room 2** is the Victorian, gothic horror novel *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus*, by author Mary Shelley. The 1831 edition of the book is displayed within a glass case upon a plinth. However, to encourage audience interaction, large copies of pages from the book have been displayed on the walls; most noticeably, the book's original illustration (fig. 4 & 5), brought to life by Theodore von Holst; which is a more

accurate depiction of how Frankenstein's monster was described within the novel; one which was based on a nightmare that Shelley had after sharing chilling stories with friends one evening in Geneva (Latson, 2015). "I saw — with shut eyes, but acute mental vision — I saw the pale student of the unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine show signs of life and stir with an uneasy, half-vital motion..." (Shelley, 1831, cited in Latson, 2015).

However, other influences surrounding Shelley at that time may have also contributed to the story, which is now often referred to as the 'world's first science fiction novel' (van der Laan, 2010). "Mary Shelley grew up surrounded by the leading scientists, writers and politicians of the 18th Century. She took a keen interest in science, reading widely and attending lectures on the cutting-edge scientific theories of the day" (Crowson, 2023). This suggests that Shelley was acutely aware of certain scientific practices during that time, which included galvanism; a process by which electricity could 'reanimate' dead tissue (Shafer, 2018). The book's main character, Viktor Frankenstein; a single-minded, overly ambitious scientist used electricity as his final step in creating 'The Monster', only to abandon it when he could no longer control it; thus, leading to his own demise. While Frankenstein's creation is referred to as 'the monster', the real monster is Frankenstein himself; carrying out unethical practices in an attempt to 'play God'. Although Viktor Frankenstein is a fictitious character, morally grey scientists with grandiose ideas are prevalent; and Shelley's real fears were the potential implications of the unethical experimentations of her time; and ones that would occur in the future.

Above the exit door of this room, a sign reads "*Just because we can, it does not mean that we should*", which leads the audience down to the final room of the exhibition.



Fig 6. *James Cameron's initial T-800 sketch, 1981.*

Artwork 4

On the **First Floor** in **Room 1** is the 1984, Action/Sci-Fi movie, *The Terminator*, by director James Cameron. The room, which is reminiscent of the psychiatric unit that main character Sarah Connor was held in, is designed to portray a sense of emptiness; representing the lack of emotion expressed by the merciless 'Terminator'. The movie plays on a small, 80's TV set in the corner of the room; however, the key piece on display is James Cameron's initial sketch of the 'T-800', or simply referred to as the 'Terminator' (fig.6).

In a piece written to George Bass, a journalist for BFI; Cameron recalls the moment where his creation started, "The Terminator came from a dream that I had while I was sick with a fever in a cheap pensione in Rome in 1981. It was the image of a chrome skeleton emerging from a fire. When I woke up, I began sketching on the hotel stationery" (Cameron cited in Bass, 2021).

With its origins stemming from a dream, *The Terminator* presents the audience with a terrifying, unrelenting machine sent from the future; created by self-aware artificial intelligence, set to destroy the human race. As the character Kyle Reese announces, “That Terminator is out there! It can't be bargained with. It can't be reasoned with. It doesn't feel pity, or remorse, or fear. And it absolutely will not stop... ever” (*The Terminator*, 1984). With the technological advancements occurring at the time of *The Terminator*'s release; such as Personal Computers, Compact Disks and DNA fingerprinting (Alexander, 2019); Kyle Reese's statement would have been as unnerving then as it is today. The film's premise highlights a 'war against machines' in the near future. However, as we closely approach the year 2029 (the year that Kyle Reese was sent back to save Sarah Connor), our relationship with technology is not a front-line battle with cyborg soldiers, but an almost total reliance on technological devices; causing us to lose necessary skills required for us to adapt and survive as a species. This could suggest that James Cameron's dream was possibly a reflection of the world rapidly changing around him, and the fear of what may happen to the human race in the future.

It is hoped that these carefully chosen pieces awaken the power of dreams for visitors to this exhibition, as well as showing real fears that reveal themselves through dreams.

List of Figures:

Fig. 1: Davies, S. (2024). *Map and floor plan of own dream*. [artwork generated using Canva Magic Studio].

Fig. 2: Lockheart, J. (2020). *Dream of peeling quails' eggs for cure for Covid-19*. [image] Available at: (Accessed 4th May. 2024).

Fig. 3: 'Spinning Totem'. *Inception*. (2010). [image] Available at: <https://film-grab.com/2012/11/23/inception/> (Accessed 4th May. 2024).

Fig. 4: Van Holst, T. (1831). *Frankenstein*. [image] Available at: <https://romanticillustrationnetwork.com/2016/11/26/image-of-the-month-theodore-von-holst-frankenstein-1831/> (Accessed 24th April. 2024).

Fig. 5: Van Holst, T. (1831). *Frankenstein*. [image] Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/booknews/11057000/Frankenstein-exhibition-how-the-monster-changed-shape.html> (Accessed 23rd April. 2024).

Fig. 6: Cameron, J. (1981). 'Initial T-800 sketch'. [image] Available at: <https://screenrant.com/james-cameron-terminator-movie-original-idea-bad/> (Accessed 23rd April. 2024).

Bibliography:

Alexander, D. (2019). *7 Influential Inventions from the 80' That Would go on to Change the World*. [online] Available at: <https://interestingengineering.com/lists/7-influential-inventions-from-the-1980s-that-would-go-on-to-change-the-world> (Accessed 5th May. 2024).

Bass, G. (2021). *The Terminator came to me in a dream: a new interview with James Cameron*. [online] Available at: <https://www.bfi.org.uk/interviews/terminator-james-cameron> (Accessed 18th April).

Blagrove, M. and Lockheart, J. (2023). *The Science and Art of Dreaming*. Oxon: Routledge, pp. 172-173.

Crowson, K. (2023). *The Science Behind Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. [online] Available at: <https://blog.sciencemuseum.org.uk/the-science-behind-mary-shelleys-frankenstein/> (Accessed 6th May).

Freud, S. (1999 [1900]) *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Oxford: Oxford university Press.

Inception. (2010). [Film]. Directed by Christopher Nolan. United States: Warner Bros.

Latson, J. (2015). *Did a Real-Life Alchemist Inspire Frankenstein?* [online]. Available at: <https://time.com/3648440/mary-shelley-frankenstein-history/> (Accessed 3rd May).

Pedrin, P. (2018) *Propaganda, Persuasion and the Great War*. 1st ed. Oxfordshire: Routledge.

The Terminator. (1984). [Film]. Directed by James Cameron. United States: Orion Pictures.

Shafer, A. (2018). *Why Frankenstein matters*. [online]. Available at:
<https://stanmed.stanford.edu/why-issues-raised-in-frankenstein-still-matter-200-years-later/>
(Accessed 3rd May).

Van der Laan, J.M. (2010). *Frankenstein as Science Fiction and Fact*. [online]. Available at:
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0270467610373822> (Accessed on 2nd May).