

Title: Ways of Perceiving - Curate an Exhibition

Student Number: 2501803

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Lecturer's name: Donna Williams

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My exhibition UNEASE explores how artists use the uncanny to create feelings of fear and discomfort in the viewer. Instead of showing fear in an obvious or literal way, the works I have chosen focus on familiar subjects such as the human body and everyday spaces, but they are altered in a way that they appear strange or unsettling. This approach reflects how fear can come from subtle changes rather than direct imagery, making the viewer question what they are looking at in a gallery. This idea connects to Sigmund Freud's concept of the uncanny, which he describes as, "The 'uncanny' is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar." (Freud, 1919, p. 1-2). This suggests that something can feel both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time, creating a sense of unease. This feeling is often linked to uncertainty, where the viewer recognises an object or figure but also feels that

something is not quite right. The exhibition brings work together from different time periods, including artists such as Francisco Goya, Salvador Dalí, and Francis Bacon, to show how the idea has developed over time. Earlier works present fear in a more direct way, while later ones explore distortion, repetition, and the breakdown of the human form. By presenting these works together, this idea aims to highlight how subtle distortion can be more effective in creating a sense of fear than direct or graphic imagery. It also is encouraging the viewers to reflect on their own reactions and anxieties, showing that fear is not always about what is visible but that it can exist in moments of uncertainty and recognition.



Figure 1: Les Espaces d'Abraxas, Noisy-le-Grand (Daniel Libeskind, 2025)

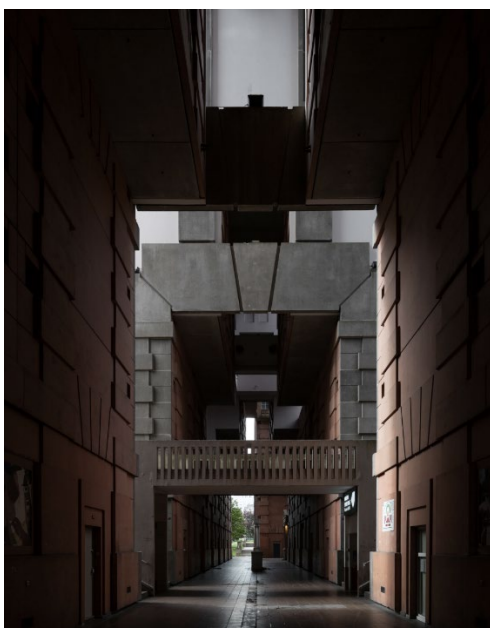


Figure 2: Les Espaces d'Abraxas, Noisy-le-Grand (Daniel Annekov, 2025)

The exhibition itself would be held in Les Espaces d'Abraxas, as its architecture reflects themes of the uncanny in my eyes. The spaces appear familiar at first, as it is designed as a residential complex, but it also feels a tad bit strange and unsettling. The combination of older, classical elements with the more modern concrete structures creates a confusing visual effect where it is difficult to place the building into a specific era or style. This makes the environment feel slightly unnatural. The scale of the buildings also feels disproportionate, with large open spaces and high structures that can make the viewer feel small or even out of place. In some areas the layout and the symmetry may seem too perfect which adds to the discomfort. Because of this, the environment can feel almost dreamlike or like something out of a fever dream. Using this location would support the idea of the uncanny, as it takes something familiar, such as housing, and presents it in a way that might feel subtly wrong. This would help create a more immersive experience where the setting itself contributes to the overall feeling of unease.

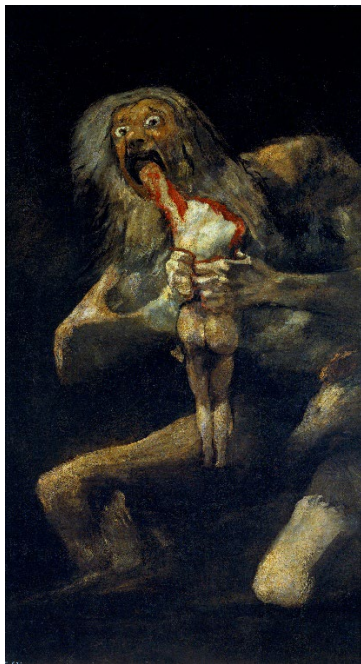


Figure 3: Saturn Devouring His Son (Francisco Goya, 1820-1823)

One of the works I included in the exhibition is *Saturn Devouring His Son* by Francisco Goya, created as part of his so called “Black Paintings”. These were produced during a period of isolation and illness which is reflected in the dark and disturbing imagery. Goya used loose brushwork and strong contrasts in the painting to create a chaotic and

unsettling effect. I decided to choose this work because it represents fear in a direct way, but it still has an uncanny quality as Saturn's expression and unnatural form make him appear almost inhuman. This helps introduce the theme before moving into more subtle forms of discomfort.

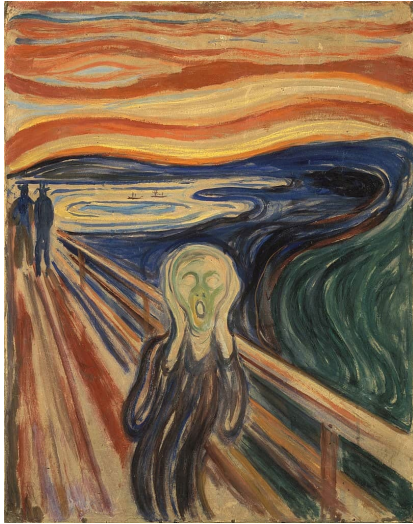


Figure 4: The Scream (Edvard Munch, 1893)

Another artwork included in the exhibition is *The Scream* by Edvard Munch. Created in the late 19th century, the painting reflects his interest in anxiety and human emotion, influenced by his own experiences. The composition uses flowing lines and distorted forms, a difference from the first artwork included, and these make the figure and the surrounding landscape appear to merge. The intense colours and exaggerated expression create a strong sense of psychological discomfort rather than any sort of physical fear. I chose this artwork because it shifts the focus from external violence to internal anxiety, linking the uncanny through the way the human figure becomes unfamiliar and unstable.



Figure 5: The Face of War (Salvador Dalí, 1940)

Another work I included in the exhibition is *The Face of War* by Salvador Dalí, one of the most famous surrealism painters. Created after the Spanish Civil War, the painting reflects the psychological impact of conflict rather than showing the intense violence directly. The central face is repeated within itself, smaller faces filling both the eyes and the mouth which helps to create a disturbing, endless effect. Dalí used detailed realism combined with a surreal repetition to make the image feel unnatural and unsettling. I chose this work because I felt like it explores fear through distortion and repetition, linking closely to the uncanny by presenting a familiar human face in a way that it begins to feel impossible and deeply uncomfortable.



Figure 6: Golconda (René Magritte, 1953)

The next piece I decided to include is *Golconda* by René Magritte. The painting shows repeated figures of men in black suits floating in a city-like space which at first may appear normal, but it quickly becomes strange. Magritte uses repetition and careful

composition to create a sense of order, but it feels a bit unnatural and unsettling. The identical figures and lack of clear movement make the scene feel frozen and artificial. I chose it because it creates an eerie atmosphere without showing anything directly frightening. This helps to link it to the uncanny by making an everyday scene feel unfamiliar.



Figure 7: La Poupée (Hans Bellmer, 1930s)



Figure 8: La Poupée (Hans Bellmer, 1930s)

The next work included is a selection of photographs from *La Poupée* by Hans Bellmer. They were created in the 1930s, the series of photographs presents doll-like figures that resemble the human body, but they are distorted and rearranged. By including two images the repeated manipulation of limbs and body parts become more noticeable, showing off how the form is continuously altered. He used photography and physical construction to create figures that are both familiar, human-like, and unnatural looking.

I chose them because they strongly reflect the uncanny as the human body is made strange, creating discomfort and making the viewer question what they are seeing.



Figure 9: Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X (Francis Bacon, 1953)



Figure 10: Painting (Francis Bacon, 1946)

The last two paintings I included in the exhibition are *Painting* and *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* by Francis Bacon. Created in the mid-20th century these paintings reflect post-war anxiety and focus on the human condition. Bacon uses distorted forms, blurred features and harsh colours to create figures that appear unstable, as he stated in an interview “I want to distort the thing far beyond the appearance, but in the distortion to bring it back to a recording of the appearance...” (1987). By including two works the repeated use of the human figure shows how it is

altered and dehumanised consistently. I included these paintings because they present the body in a way that feels both natural and disturbing, strongly linking to the uncanny and creating an intense final impression for the viewer.

The works I chose for the exhibition are connected through their exploration of fear becoming more psychological and distorted over time. Earlier works, such as those by Francisco Goya and Edvard Munch, present fear in a more direct way, while later artists like Salvador Dalí and René Magritte begin to make familiar subjects feel strange through repetition and surreal imagery. This developed further in the work of Hans Bellmer and Francis Bacon, where the human body is in focus and becomes distorted, creating a stronger sense of the uncanny.

Within Les Espaces d'Abraxas, the exhibition could be arranged so that the visitors move through different sections of the housing, with each section representing a different stage of fear. More open areas could possibly be where the earlier work is displayed while narrower corridors and enclosed sections could be used for the more unsettling imagery. As visitors move through the buildings the works would become more intense and disorienting, using the scale and layout of the brutalist architecture to increase discomfort. This would help create a gradual shift from recognisable imagery to more distorted forms, as said by Ernst Jentsch "Intellectual uncertainty is the essential factor in the production of the uncanny." (Jentsch, 1906).

In conclusion, the exhibition explores how the sense of fear can be created through the uncanny, also using a range of different works that shift from direct imagery to more subtle versions of twisted forms. Overall, it encourages viewers to reflect on how fear can exist not just in what we see but in how we recognise it. By placing these works within a carefully considered environment, the exhibition also shows how space and atmosphere can influence emotional responses. As the visitors would move through the exhibition the gradual change in imagery and intensity would allow them to become more aware of their own reactions. This could create a more personal experience as everyone might feel differently as they look at the pieces, where feelings of discomfort may develop slowly rather than suddenly. In this way, UNEASE not only presents fear visually but also allows it to be felt through the overall experience.

Bibliography:

Freud, S. (1919) *The "Uncanny"*. 1st edn. Imago, Bd. V.

Sylvester, D. (1987) *Interviews with Francis Bacon*. London: Thames & Hudson.

Jentsch, E. (1906) *On the Psychology of the Uncanny*.

Images in order:

Figure 1: Daniel Annekov (2025) *Les Espaces d'Abraxas, Noisy-le-Grand*. Available at: <https://www.behance.net/gallery/223247973/Les-Espaces-dAbraxas-Noisy-le-Grand-RBofill> (Accessed: 27 April 2026).

Figure 2: Daniel Annekov (2025) *Les Espaces d'Abraxas, Noisy-le-Grand*. Available at: <https://www.behance.net/gallery/223247973/Les-Espaces-dAbraxas-Noisy-le-Grand-RBofill> (Accessed: 27 April 2026).

Figure 3: Goya, F. (1820-1823) *Saturn Devouring His Son*. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saturn_Devouring_His_Son (Accessed: 26 April 2026).

Figure 4: Munch, E. (1893) *The Scream*. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Scream (Accessed: 26 April 2026).

Figure 5: Dalí, S. (1940) *The Face of War*. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Face_of_War (Accessed: 26 April 2026).

Figure 6: Magritte, R. (1953) *Golconda*. Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golconda_\(Magritte\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golconda_(Magritte)) (Accessed: 27 April 2026).

Figure 7: Bellmer, H. (1930s) *La Poupée*. Available at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/265312> (Accessed: 27 April 2026).

Figure 8: Bellmer, H. (1930s) *La Poupée*. Available at: <https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/objects/la-poup%C3%A9e-0> (Accessed: 27 April 2026).

Figure 9: Bacon, F. (1953) *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X*. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Study_after_Vel%C3%A1zquez%27s_Portrait_of_Pope_Innocent_X (Accessed: 27 April 2026).

Figure 10: Bacon, F. (1946) *Painting*. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Painting_1946 (Accessed: 27 April 2026).

