Name: Madison Guy

Student Number: 2322835

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List of Illustrations:

Figure 1: Rowtons Museum (2018), *The Crying Boy*. Available at: https://rowtonsmuseum.co.uk/collection/crying-boy/ (Accessed 10th December 2025).

Figure 2: Guy, M. (2025), *Swansea Museum Devil*. [my work]

Figure 3: Pandora Pavlides (2018), *Museum*. Available at: https://pandorapavlides.wordpress.com/2018/12/29/berlin-part-1-contemporary-architecture-in-memoriam-of-wwii-daniel-libeskind-peter-eisenman/ (Accessed :10th December 2025).

Figure 4: Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum (2025). *Belongings of prisoners*. Available at: https://www.auschwitz.org/en/gallery/historical-pictures-and-documents/extermination,11.html (Accessed :11th December 2025).

Figure 5: Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum (2025). *Shoes*. Available at: https://www.auschwitz.org/en/gallery/exhibits/evidence-of-crimes,1.html (Accessed 11th December 2025).

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This essay discusses hauntology, as conceptualised by Derrida (1994), offers a valuable framework for understanding how 3D forms and objects can retain the presence of traumatic events, embodying both memory and absence. Hauntology is compared to a nostalgia for lost futures by Jacques Derrida. It is a combination of the words 'haunt', meaning a presence of something or as described in the Oxford dictionary (2025) "believed to be visited by ghosts" and 'ontology', which is the study of nature's being and is stated in the Oxford dictionary (2025) as "a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of existence". Mixing hauntology with the concept of 3D form, we can consider the idea that some objects may be considered haunted due to the energy they emit and the events that may occur in their presence. Some people report experiencing bad luck and negativity linked to objects said to be haunted, while others report feeling a shift in energy when around certain objects. Hauntology also provides a lens through which 3D form can embody the energy and presence of those who died and disasters that have happened, creating spaces that are haunted by memory and absence. 3D objects, in this context, refer to handcrafted objects of different media,

such as ceramics, glass, and metal, as well as some paintings. Object haunting is not specifically limited to art; however, it is very common for artworks to be haunted. An example of a haunted artwork is “The Crying Boy” (Fig .1) by Giovanni Bragolin. This artwork has been linked to several house fires over the years, with one of the only surviving pieces always being the painting. Whether it is an original or a copy, it has always been linked to the same ‘curse’. Two big events that are also linked to paranormal activity and haunting are the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in Poland. Where people have discussed experiences in which they feel as if there are people around them watching them. As well as Chernobyl.

Chernobyl was a nuclear power plant that experienced a meltdown and exploded in April of 1986 leaving two dead from the explosion and many other deaths as a consequence of the radioactivity caused by the explosion. Chernobyl is a different type of haunting where there are no known spirits or ghosts in the area; however, there is a haunting atmosphere in the location where the disaster occurred, and the surrounding severely impacted areas that are now able to be visited. Examining these examples suggests that haunting can exist within locations and objects.

Fig .1: *The crying boy*

Derrida created an idea of hauntology as something created by absences and the unknown in between a state of life and death. As described in ‘Spaces of Memory’ by Georgiy Kasianov (2021), there was a ‘Leninfall’ in which all Lenin monuments were removed from public spaces in Ukraine, and many were destroyed by sledgehammers

during a protest. It also mentions Pierre Nora and the idea of memory spaces being haunted. In this case, it is suggested that the areas of Ukraine that once housed these monuments now have a sense of emptiness and a haunted feeling due to their absence, the reason behind it, and the trauma it has caused within the space. This is very similar to the type of haunting associated with Chernobyl and Auschwitz, as there is a memory of the activities that happened on these sites that provides that haunting nature due to how traumatising it was for so many millions of people. While there might be a presence of previously existing entities at Auschwitz, there is also the haunting of the memory of what happened on the site.

Archaeologists have worked alongside many haunted spaces, such as voids created, gaps in areas, and unbuilt spaces. These are considered to be haunted by a memory. An example of this would be Pompeii as when they discovered the city, there were gaps within the ground that resembled ancient walls, human bodies and other things. These were discovered in the 1500s but did not get fully explored until two centuries later by archaeologists that used plaster to create casts of the gaps within the earth where people once tried to flee the volcanic eruption. According to Pallasmaa (2005) and Edensor (2005), 3D form has been vastly influenced by hauntology and how archaeologists and designers use structural systems exposed within the earth to bring forth the scars of history and they will preserve and rebuild remains of what used to be and bring them back to a state of existence and give us more information about the earths past. Pallasmaa also suggests, in the book “the eyes of the skin: architecture and the senses” (2005) that modern archaeology could provide people with a multi-sensory experience where it is more than just the sight of what has been recreated.

Hauntology within 3D form could be something along the lines of using a material to fill an empty space or a spirit embodied within a created form such as a sculpture, toy or painting. There are many examples of forms that are said to be haunted such as the devil statue that can be found at Swansea Museum seen in Fig.2 it is not just an object labelled as haunted; its affective presence and the stories surrounding it evoke a sense of lingering energy or unresolved history for viewers, which aligns with Derrida’s emphasis on the persistence of absences within material forms. as well as endless amounts of paintings and toys, there are also horror films based on items that are haunted in real life such as the Conjuring with the Annabelle doll pictured in Fig.3. As suggested by Eisenman (2008), when we link hauntology with 3D form, it is closer linked to the absence of materiality rather than filling a space. There is also a link to the atmospheric qualities of the form which give it a haunted nature. Materials also have an impact on the way things look. Using materials such as rusted metals, concrete and untreated wood within pieces gives them an aged look which can again give a more haunted and decayed look, changing the aura given off by the piece. Daniel Libeskind (1999) and Peter Eisenman (2008) used the idea of empty space and voids to create a

historical trauma. One of their most famous pieces was the Jewish Museum in Berlin where empty shafts were placed to create unease and create a negative energy within the museum to be noticed and remembered like a haunting (See Fig.3). The digital side of hauntology opens many more doors to exploration with Virtual Reality becoming a new way to explore the haunting of history using a digital recreation of a space holding stories and energies from centuries before. In the book “what is media archaeology?” by Jussi Parikka (2012), it is mentioned about the use of media and digital technologies is becoming more common to recreate historical events and locations such as bomb sites, buildings that are no longer standing or have decayed significantly beyond repair and more.

The digital recreations often experience a glitchiness that provides a realisation that actually, it is not a real thing, but it is a recreation of something we might never have experienced to this level without the use of technology. Technology has significantly advanced how we can experience the haunting of past existence and it provides a very similar energy to existing haunted places such as the Chernobyl site and the Auschwitz museum.

Fig. 2: *Swansea museum devil*

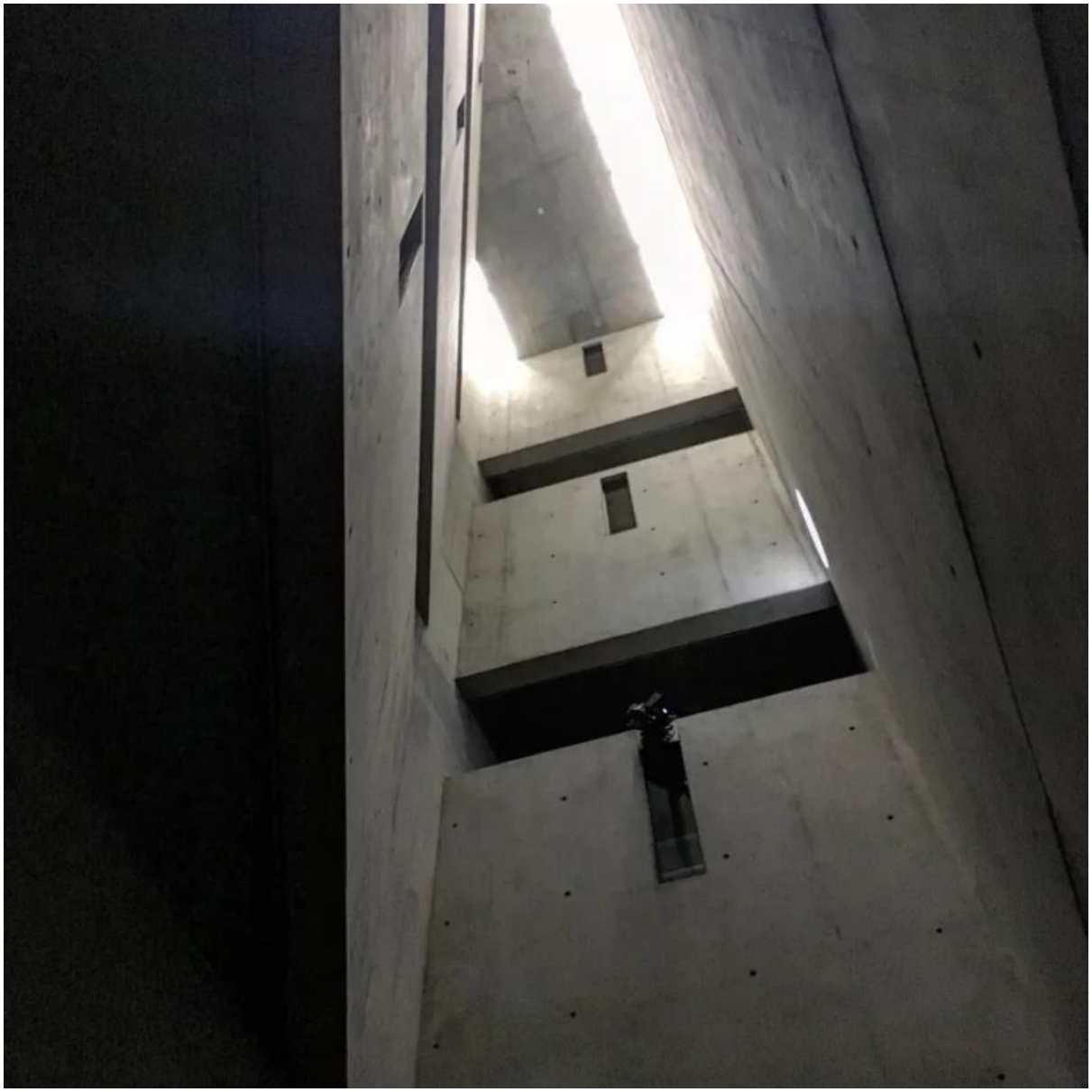


Fig. 3: M*useum*

Auschwitz Birkenau is a concentration camp based in Oświęcim, Poland. During the Second World War an estimated 1.1 million people were murdered at the Auschwitz Birkenau concentration camp alone. A lot of concerning artworks depicting the activities that took place at the concentration camp have since been created. some of these artworks show bodies, piles of clothes and other disturbing things that came from the camp (See Fig.4 and 5). Auschwitz Birkenau is considered to be haunted not only by the memory of what happened, but also by the spirits who passed in this location. There is a heavy energy within the premises of what used to be the concentration camp that a lot of people have experienced. Several artists have based their artworks on the Auschwitz concentration camp. These artworks tend to be quite dark, but they depict something that is really important and will remain in history to teach future generations about these horrible events. One of the most famous “art works” from the time of the

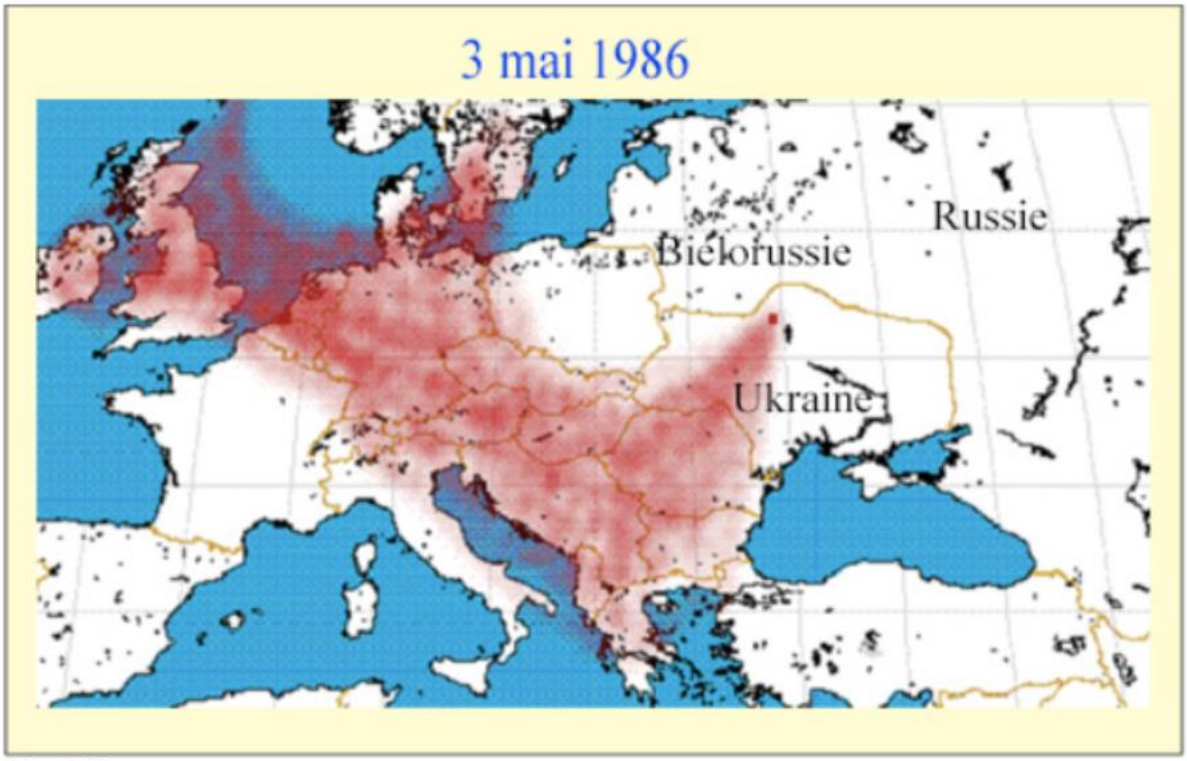
holocaust was the Anne Frank diaries. One of the only remaining diaries from that time that depicts the kind of thing that Jewish people and other targeted people were dealing with during this time. Despite the negativity going on in that time, it is well recognised that Anne Frank (2007) remained positive stating quotes such as “in spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart”. As implied in “The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning” (Young, 1993) and “The drowned and the saved” (Levi, 1988) Auschwitz is considered to be one of the best examples of how a site retains such a strong level of past presence with all of its remaining structures within the site decades later, as a memory of the terror that went on within the fences. Having the remains of the barracks, watch towers, crematoriums, electric fences and the remains of what used to be gas chambers which act as haunted forms due to their uses during the war, makes the energy within the place feel heavy. The heavy atmosphere perceived by visitors further supports the exploration of hauntology, as it demonstrates how spaces remain affected by, and continue to communicate, the events and absences inscribed within them and could be caused by a knowledge of the events or a presence of a past existence within the grounds.

Fig. 4: *Belongings of prisoners*

Fig .5: *Shoes*

Chernobyl was a nuclear disaster that occurred on the 26th of April 1986. This disaster happened after a nuclear reactor had a meltdown and exploded. The Chernobyl nuclear power plant was based near a place called Pripyat in Ukraine. This disaster left a large area uninhabitable and even to this day, some areas are still too radioactive to be able to go near. While this caused a large environmental impact, there were only two immediate deaths due to the explosion and a further 28 deaths of first responders who died from Acute Radiation Poisoning in the months following the disaster. It is said that thousands of deaths have also been caused by exposure to the radiation which led to different types of cancers. Several thousand cases of childhood thyroid cancer have been linked to the nuclear disaster in many countries including and surrounding Ukraine. There is a lack of evidence to prove, however, it is also believed long term effects of the disaster are happening all over the world due to a nuclear cloud that sent downpours of contaminated rain across various different European countries including the UK where soils were contaminated with nuclear elements for several days. Fig.6 shows the cloud of radiation going across different areas in Europe. After the initial explosion at the power plant, the fire there lasted for several days causing the high numbers of nuclear material to form within a cloud and get blown by currents to other countries. Once the fire eventually went out, the cloud started to break down. While the death tolls of this disaster were far lower than that of Auschwitz, there is still a significant energy shift within the immediately impacted areas due to them now being abandoned and uninhabitable creating a haunting nature. The haunting quality of

Chernobyl stems not from the spirits of victims, but from the abandoned landscape and the long-term, invisible effects of the disaster. This imparts a haunting atmosphere to the area, evoking feelings of loss, contamination, and the persistent consequences of human actions, which powerfully illustrates the concept of hauntology. Edensor (2005) suggests that decay is a large part of what gives the Chernobyl site its haunted aura due to the effects of the radioactivity. The area, having been uninhabitable for decades, has started to be reclaimed by nature, with plaster, concrete and other materials decaying and providing more space for the natural landscape to grow in its own way due to its new, altered chemistry after the disaster. Many artworks also came out of this disaster from music to paintings that all give off a haunted kind of aura. (See Fig.7). One artist that created eerie art works of the Chernobyl disaster was Roman Gumanyuk, a Ukrainian artist.



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A week after the accident, the fire is still raging. As the wind has turned, the new radioactive material released is heading southwest towards the Balkans and Greece, as the initial plume continues to move west. The nature of emissions has evolved, with the most radioactive very short-lived elements being less present.
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Fig .6: *Map of contamination*

Fig. 7: *Art of disaster*

When we put Auschwitz and Chernobyl side by side, we cannot necessarily see many similarities. however, within the context of hauntology and 3D form, we can see that both locations, while vastly different, have both got a haunted presence. while one only claimed a handful of lives and is not haunted by the presence of these people, it is haunted by the memories of trauma and disaster and has a different energy about it due to the fact most areas are only accessible in protective gear which is often associated with negativity an a sense of contamination, which itself gives a haunted aura of another kind. The other disaster caused the loss of over a million lives and is haunted by the memory of what happened and the spirits of those who existed within the site. Its ghosts are those of violence, injustice, and mourning (Young 1993). Huyssen (2003) implies that for designers, the comparison highlights the complexity of working with haunted sites.

Hauntology encourages restraint, humility, and a focus on material and spatial listening rather than symbolic excess. Whether dealing with genocide or disaster, designers must navigate the responsibility of representing absence without aestheticizing suffering which can be quite a challenge however art does not always mean beauty. Auschwitz and Chernobyl—despite their differences—both reveal how sites become haunted by unresolved histories and invisible forces.

In conclusion, Fisher (2014) implies that hauntology is able to offer a powerful framework for those who work with 3D form within design due to how it engages with trauma, absence and memory. Through decay, voids and atmospheric architecture, 3D modelling can embody a lingering presence of the deceased without a literal representation. Designers are met with a lot of boundaries and restrictions when it comes to working around the idea of hauntology as there must be respect towards voids and presence, the preservation of silence and avoiding sensationalism. 3D form can become a medium in which the deceased can remain present through the energy embedded within the space. As an artist, I feel that it is necessary to remain ethical

and, while telling a story of a past, remember that real people were involved and that what an artist says about an artwork is how it is represented. In cases such as Fig.4 and 5 above, they tell a story about the losses experienced at Auschwitz and the loss of identity for those in the camps. The shoes and clothes show that there were large numbers of people that used to wear them but ended up passing as a result of the camp. This could have been depicted by images of the bodies however the shoes give it a more eerie and respectful outlook while still telling the real human tragedy , trauma and story.

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