

Introduction

Fabio Camilletti

Two years after *Hauntings I: Narrating the Uncanny*, published by *Image [&] Narrative* in 2010, this monographic issue completes and integrates a dissemination process begun as early as 2009 with the interdisciplinary workshop *Phantasmata: Techniques of the Uncanny*, held at the Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry. By gathering scholars who, from different cultural and scientific backgrounds, had variously employed the notion of the ‘Uncanny’ in their research works, *Phantasmata* demonstrated how the ‘Uncanny’ had increasingly become a powerful tool for interpretation in contemporary theory. Indeed, the past years have witnessed an unprecedented and widespread presence of the Uncanny in and outside the humanities, often beyond traditionally established readings of this concept, including Freud’s renowned one of 1919. Doubtlessly, this will prelude to a fresh reflection on the ‘Uncanny’ in the twenty-first century, whose contours are still unpredictable in many respects. From this angle, Anneleen Masschelein’s exhaustive contribution on the Uncanny as *The Unconcept* (2011), whose main thesis was precisely presented in the course of *Phantasmata* as a keynote lecture, can be read as a symbolic landmark: while being reconstructed, the genealogy of the (un)concept of the Uncanny – from Jentsch to contemporary theory – is implicitly crystallised, thus paving the ground for new elaborations, re-conceptualisations and re-writings.

Whereas *Hauntings I* focused on the Uncanny as an aesthetic experience grounded in tension, inviting to new forms of display and narration, *Hauntings II* chooses as its objects two deeply interconnected aspects of uncanniness. On the one hand, the notion of ‘figures’ relies in the acknowledgment of the visual aspect of the Uncanny, as a remnant of a pre-verbal and unconscious dimension that language cannot fully express, and which takes hence the shape of an undecidable, visual object. On the other, the expression ‘twilight zones’ invites new reflection on the Uncanny as a liminal experience, precisely grounded in a peculiar feeling of undecidability between a set of binary oppositions: rational/irrational, conscious/unconscious, ontogenetic/phylogenetic, familiar/unfamiliar, enjoyment/fear.

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