

Experimenting with absurdity AND Uncanniness  
ALL the Unseen  
familiarities in the URBAN Spaces



Experimenting with absurdity and uncanniness -- all the unseen familiarities in  
the urban spaces

Benben Li

This exegesis is submitted to Auckland University of Technology  
in partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Art & Design

2023

School of Art & Design



## Abstract

*Experimenting with absurdity and uncanniness -- all the unseen familiarities in the urban spaces* is a practice-based research project that engages with the familiar yet strange feeling of living in the urban area and how I, as a digital illustrator, creatively respond to urban uncanniness through research design.

This research is carried out through a subjective action-reflection process to explore the way illustrated animations and experimental animation installation potentially communicate urban uncanniness in relation to everyday life. The research practice comprises a range of moving image-based approaches, it includes sketches, digital illustration, and drifting, all of which are informed by the guideline of Autoethnography, Heuristic inquiry and Walking Methodology. The creative outcome of this research project, *The Uncanny City*, is a projection installation comprising three looping animations. It aims to shape our experiences of daily life, as it presents a series of unpredictable social experiences.

This practice-oriented research project has been guided by the belief that experimenting with the uncanny may evoke curiosity about our world in strange ways. It helps us to rethink the world around us via a more imaginative lens. These contemplations can emotionally connect dwellers to the urban environments that make up our experiences of living in a city.

The questions that initiated the project and activated experimentation with animation and drawing materials are formulated into the following propositions: (1) How might the experimental animation communicate the urban uncanniness through illustrated-animation design? (2) Can experimental animation potentially lead the audience to reconsider their perceptions of urban spaces?

This research project has contextually explored the notion of the uncanny as it relates to this research project from three different perspectives: psychological terminology, sociological themes, and aesthetic expressions. The contextual review of knowledge has shaped the researcher's understanding of the uncanny and its relevance to the design-based choices that, as the researcher, I made through my practice-based investigations. In addition, this research explores three critical contexts that contributed to my thinking and making, including the visual

metaphor of architecture, the storytelling strategies of experimental animation, and the video projection installation. These contexts involve different approaches that help to shape the notion of the uncanny and communicate it via animation into a more innovative and immersive sensory experience. By exploring artist-theorists who have engaged in challenging practices in these three contexts, this research has reached some creative conclusions. They focus on the potential of experimental animation and projection installations to create the meditative and empathic aspects of the uncanny. My review of the influential aesthetic expressions of the uncanny informed the vital decisions I made while I created *The Uncanny City*.

Experimenting with the uncanny helped the researcher to fundamentally understand and explore the researcher's complex feelings of awe and unease about urban life, and it helps the audience to think differently about the city, the world and our lives. Through the uncanny perspectives of the cityscape in my work, I seek to inform my viewers further about the uncanny aspects of city life that we often overlook or are usually too pre-occupied to think about and help us see more clearly what is happening around us.

**Keywords:**

Uncanny, urbanisation, urban spaces, experimental animation, subjective, self-narrative, digital illustration, video installation

## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <i>Experimenting with absurdity and uncanniness -- all the unseen familiarities in the urban spaces</i> |    |
| Abstract.....   | 3  |
| Table of Contents.....  | 5  |
| List of Figures.....  | 7  |
| Attestation of Authorship.....  | 9  |
| <b>Introduction</b> .....   | 10 |
| <b>Chapter One - Contextual Review of Knowledge</b> .....   | 14 |
| Introduction.....   | 14 |
| The psychological origin of the uncanny.....  | 15 |
| The Uncanny in Urban Spaces.....  | 16 |
| Conclusion of Urban Uncanny.....  | 17 |
| Psychogeography – feeling as an essence of living in the city.....                                      | 18 |
| Literary and artistic representation of psychogeography.....  | 19 |
| The Situationist Sublime and the Architectural Uncanny.....   | 20 |
| Giovanni Battista Piranesi – <i>Carceri d'Invenzione (The Imaginary Prison)</i> .....                   | 21 |
| The Uncanny Valley.....   | 23 |
| Conclusion.....   | 23 |
| <b>Chapter Two – Contextual Review of Practice</b> .....  | 25 |
| The Visual Metaphor of the Architecture.....  | 25 |
| Conclusion.....   | 27 |
| Tabaimo – The self-narrative and metaphorical expression of the experimental animation...28             |    |
| Conclusion.....   | 30 |
| <i>Tango (1981)</i> - Zbigniew Rybczyński: Circular Narrative.....                                      | 32 |
| <i>Feeling My Way</i> – Jonathan Hodgson.....   | 34 |
| Genius Loci – Adrien Merigeau.....  | 36 |
| Conclusion on Genius Loci.....  | 37 |
| Video Installation – a spatial narrative for the animation.....   | 38 |
| <i>Extremities (Smooth, Smooth) 1999</i> – Pipilotti.....   | 38 |
| Video projection installation – the immersive experience.....   | 40 |
| <b>Chapter Three – Methods</b> .....  | 43 |
| Introduction.....   | 43 |
| Autoethnography: the knowing and informing process through self-narrative.....                          | 43 |
| Heuristic – self-exploration and reflective dialogue.....   | 46 |
| Walking methodology – walking, sensing, knowing.....  | 47 |
| Making methods.....   | 49 |
| Drifting – spiritually travelling through the city.....   | 49 |
| Drawing – as a visual representation of the invisible.....  | 50 |
| Observational sketching.....  | 51 |
| Mind mapping.....   | 54 |
| Digital drawing as a convenient and efficient digital tool.....   | 56 |
| Storyboarding for animation – understanding narrative through visual imagery.....                       | 57 |
| Independent illustrator and animator.....   | 58 |
| <b>Chapter Four – The Documentation of Practice</b> .....   | 60 |
| Introduction.....   | 60 |
| Drifting in the city – the uncanny experience of a night walk.....                                      | 60 |
| Instant observational sketches – participatory method and thinking method.....                          | 67 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Drawing as a method of thinking.....   | 70 |
| What is uncanny to me?.....  | 72 |
| Structure of the scene.....  | 74 |
| The Dreamlike Feeling.....   | 76 |
| The visual metaphor -Anthropomorphism.....   | 80 |
| Design for the storyline: metaphorical, non-linear, non-narrative modes of expression..... | 82 |
| Using After Effects for animation composition and rendering.....                           | 84 |
| Video Installation – The immersive spatial narrative.....                                  | 86 |
| <b>Conclusion</b> .....  | 89 |
| Bibliography.....  | 91 |

## List of Figures

- Fig 1.1. Benben Li. *The Uncanny Neighbourhood*, 2021, Digital Illustration, Auckland
- Fig 1.2. Benben Li. *The Bookstore*, 2021, Digital Illustration, Auckland
- Fig 1.3. Constant Anton Nieuwenhuys. *New Babylon* (Collage of Sector Models). 1969. [https://www.moma.org/media/W1siZiIsIjQ0Mzc5MCJdLFsicCIImNvbnZlcnQiLCItcXVhbG10eSA5MCAtcM\\_VzaXplIDIwMDB4MTQ0MFx1MDAzZSJdXQ.jpg?sha=1e4cbb9e728944a2](https://www.moma.org/media/W1siZiIsIjQ0Mzc5MCJdLFsicCIImNvbnZlcnQiLCItcXVhbG10eSA5MCAtcM_VzaXplIDIwMDB4MTQ0MFx1MDAzZSJdXQ.jpg?sha=1e4cbb9e728944a2)
- Fig 1.4. Constant Anton Nieuwenhuys. *New Babylon* (Collage of Sector Models). 1971. <https://m.media-amazon.com/images/I/61SwKSpfA1L.jpg>
- Fig 1.5. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Le Carceri d'Invenzione, plate VII: The Drawbridge*, etching print, Retrieved from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Giovanni\\_Battista\\_Piranesi\\_-\\_Le\\_Carceri\\_d%27Invenzione\\_-\\_Second\\_Edition\\_-\\_1761\\_-\\_07\\_-\\_The\\_Drawbridge.jpg&oldid=295628800](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Giovanni_Battista_Piranesi_-_Le_Carceri_d%27Invenzione_-_Second_Edition_-_1761_-_07_-_The_Drawbridge.jpg&oldid=295628800)
- Fig 2.1. Robert Lawson. *Sketch for "The House of Usher"*. 1957. <https://media.freelibrary.org/assets/digital/items/rlaw01239/images/large.jpg>
- Fig 2.2. Tabaimo. *Haunted House*. Film Still. 2003. Retrieved from: [https://www.mca.com.au/files/uploads/images/00041\\_2.jpg](https://www.mca.com.au/files/uploads/images/00041_2.jpg)
- Fig 2.3. Tabaimo. *Haunted House*. Film Still. 2003. Retrieved from: <https://medias.fondationcartier.com/fondation/images/artwork-images/COL-TAB-2275.jpg>
- Fig 2.4. Tabaimo. *Dolefullhouse*. Film Still. 2007. Retrieved from: [https://www.mca.com.au/files/uploads/images/TABAIMO\\_dolefullhouse\\_image1\\_1.jpg](https://www.mca.com.au/files/uploads/images/TABAIMO_dolefullhouse_image1_1.jpg)
- Figure 2.5. Benben Li. *Shot: The Flat – Still Frame*, 2022, digital animation, Auckland
- Fig 2.6. Benben Li. *Shot: Alienation – Still Frame*, 2022, digital animation, Auckland
- Fig 2.7. Zbigniew Rybczyński, *Tango*, 1981, film still, Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/90339479>
- Fig 2.8. Jonathan Hodgson. *Feeling My Way*. Film Still. 1997. Retrieved from: <https://vimeo.com/32255983>
- Fig 2.9. Jonathan Hodgson. *Feeling My Way*. Film Still. 1997. Retrieved from: <https://vimeo.com/32255983>
- Fig 2.10. Adrien Merigeau. *Genius Loci*. 2020. Film still. Retrieved from: <https://vimeo.com/538338925>
- Fig 2.11. Adrien Merigeau. *Genius Loci*. 2020. Film still. Retrieved from: <https://vimeo.com/538338925>
- Fig 2.12. Pipilotti Rist. *Extremities (Smooth, Smooth)*. 1999. 3-channel video and audio installation. Photo taken by Benben Li. 2021.
- Fig 2.13. Yiyun Kang.  *Casting. 2016*. Video mapping installation. Screenshot from: <https://youtu.be/iNSX0c4DUz0>
- Fig 2.14. Yiyun Kang.  *Casting. 2016*. Video mapping installation. Screenshot from: <https://youtu.be/iNSX0c4DUz0>
- Fig 3.1. Benben Li. *Visualise Methodology in a Mind Mapping – Autoethnology*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland
- Fig 3.2. Benben Li. *Visualise Methodology in a Mind Mapping – Heuristic*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland
- Fig 3.3. Benben Li. *Digital Sketch - Meditation on the flyover*, 2021, Digital Illustration, Auckland
- Fig 3.4. Benben Li. *Illustrative Diary - The Tree on Cook Island*, 2021, Digital Illustration, Auckland
- Fig 3.5. Benben Li. *Sketches Documentation – Santa*, 2022, digital illustration, Auckland
- Fig 3.6. Benben Li. *Observational Sketching – A Night Walk*, 2022, Digital Sketches, Auckland
- Fig 3.7. Benben Li. *Mind Mapping - The Concepts of Drawing*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland
- Fig 3.8. Benben Li. *Visualise Brainstorming in a Mind Mapping – The Design Concepts of Balcony*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland
- Fig 3.9. Benben Li. *Illustrative Diary - Night Party in the Supermarket*, 2021, Digital Illustration, Auckland
- Fig 3.10. Benben Li. *Storyboard Documentation – Notes*, 2022, Photography, Auckland
- Fig 4.1. Benben Li. *Digital documentation of Drifting – 4 AM*, 2022, Photography, Auckland Central
- Fig 4.2. Benben Li. *Digital documentation of Drifting - Vertical View*, 2022, Photography, Auckland Central
- Fig 4.3. Benben Li. *Digital documentation of Drifting – Sleepless*, 2022, Photography, Auckland
- Fig 4.4. Benben Li. *Digital documentation of Drifting – Ocean Inn*, 2022, Photography, Auckland
- Fig 4.5. Benben Li. *Digital documentation of Drifting – Ghost Fire*, 2022, Photography, Auckland
- Fig 4.6. Benben Li. *Digital documentation of Drifting – Untitled*, 2022, Photography, Auckland
- Fig 4.7. Benben Li. *Sketches Documentation- Apartments*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland
- Fig 4.8. Benben Li. *Sketches Documentation – Apartments*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland
- Fig 4.9. Benben Li. *Sketches Documentation – The Abandoned Church*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland
- Fig 4.10. Benben Li. *Sketches Documentation – Midnight*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland
- Fig 4.11. Benben Li. *Sketches Documentation – Drifting*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland
- Fig 4.12. Benben Li. *Scene Test - Mirage*, 2022, Digital Animation, Auckland
- Fig 4.13. Benben Li. *Shot: Dreamcore – Still Frame*, 2023, Digital Animation, Auckland

Fig 4.14. Benben Li. *Scene Design – The Uncanny City*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland  
Fig 4.15. Benben Li. *Digital Draft – Scene Structure Design*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland  
Fig 4.16. Benben Li. *Shot: Sleepwalking in the City – Still Frame*, 2023, Digital Animation, Auckland  
Fig 4.17. Benben Li. *Shot: Occupied - Still Frame*, 2023, Digital Animation, Auckland  
Fig 4.18. Benben Li. *Model Sheet – The Head*, 2022, Digital Workbook, Auckland  
Fig 4.19. Benben Li. *Model Sheet – Design for the Head*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland  
Fig 4.20. Benben Li. *Shot: The Invisible Soul of the City – Still Frame*, 2022, Digital Animation, Auckland  
Fig 4.21. Benben Li. *Shot: Gaze – Still Frame*, 2022, Digital Animation, Auckland  
Fig 4.22. Benben Li. *Shot: Extraneous – Still Frame*, 2022, Digital Animation, Auckland  
Fig 4.23. Benben Li. *Shot: Commercial Street – Still Frame*, 2022, Digital Animation, Auckland  
Fig 4.24. Benben Li. *Shot: Alienation – Still Frame*, 2022, Digital Animation, Auckland  
Fig 4.25. Benben Li. *Animating: Adjusting the Movement Paths*, 2022, Digital Animation, Auckland  
Fig 4.26. Benben Li. *Animating: Adjusting the Camera*, 2022, Digital Animation, Auckland  
Fig 4.27. Benben Li. *Shot: Documentation of Studio Practice - The Uncanny City projected in the WE Studio*, 2022, Photography, AUT University, Auckland  
Fig 4.28. Benben Li. *Shot: Documentation of the final exhibition and examination - The Uncanny City projected in the WM 201 Exam Room*, 2023, Photography, AUT University, Auckland

## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

**Signed:**

**Date:18/01/2023**

## Introduction

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, I heard people around me exclaim that our city seems to have changed. The city or how we live has changed, making it impossible to see our city the same way as before. In the complexity of such changes, we have developed a mixed feeling of familiarity and strangeness with urban life or a sense of uncanny, as we call it. Although a sense of this uncanny has been, to some extent, enhanced by the epidemic, it has always been one of the essential features of the urban spaces that has been with us. Nevertheless, the uncanny is frequently overlooked, quickly overshadowed by the more pronounced and accessible familiarity in our lives.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, in this research project, I challenged myself to initiate the viewers and present them with a more imaginative cityscape, repressed by ordinary life, by communicating a sense of the uncanny in the cityscape. Through a series of design-based creative practices, I ask the audience to walk out of their habits and familiarity they gain from ordinary life to see into the mysterious essence of the urban space.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the perception of urban uncanniness is somewhat personal, as it is linked to everyone's experiences and circumstances. Therefore, in the context of the current state of society and my personal experience exploring the city, this research developed a collective exploration of the significance and aesthetic expression of a sense of urban uncanny.

*Experimenting absurdity and uncanniness -- all the unseen familiarities in the urban spaces* is a practice-based research project where I explored the familiar but strange feeling of living in

---

<sup>1</sup> The uncanny nature of the city was created along with the rapid urban development that resulted from urbanisation and became an essential feature of the urban spaces. The city offers us a sense of familiarity while at the same time constantly subverting it. Urbanisation has moved cities towards "increasingly organised, managed, visible and calculated systems of relationships" (Lucy Huskinson, 2016) while making urban life increasingly complex and unpredictable. On the one hand, the city is our home, providing a sense of familiarity and security. On the other hand, the complexity and diverse nature of the city add to the unpredictability of our daily life while increasing the sense of alienation and uneasiness between people and people and between people and the urban environment.

<sup>2</sup> "An uncanny experience provides us with a wake-up call to other possibilities that are latent within, and other perspectives and orientations to life. The uncanny enables us to traverse boundaries of all that is supposedly "normal" to realms that are otherwise hidden and apparently strange, and in the process revealing to us a more imaginative city scape. The uncanny provides us with a new perspective that allows us to survey critically our preconceptions of the city and its impact on us as urban subjects" (Lucy Huskinson, 2016).

the urban area and how I, as a digital illustrator, can creatively respond to urban uncanniness through research design. As an international student, my research in the urban uncanny originated from my own mysterious sensory experience exploring the urban architecture and cityscapes of a foreign country. The creative outcome of this research project, *The Uncanny City*, is a moving image installation consisting of two experimental looping animations. *The Uncanny City* created a virtual cityscape full of uncanny objects and my visual metaphors for urbanisation.

In this research project, my sense of urban uncanniness arose from establishing a familiarity with the urban area where I lived and disrupting that familiarity.<sup>3</sup> The nature of my exploration of the urban experience in this research project is divided into three parts. By interrogating my unique experience of living in a foreign country, I demonstrate how the city brought me a sense of the uncanny. I want to clarify why/how a sense of the uncanny is challenging, meaningful and transformative. I sought to respond to the impact of the city and urbanisation on individuals in a productive and transformative way by symbolically visualising the uncanny in the city.

The questioning that initiated the project and activated experimentation with animation and drawing materials was formulated into the following propositions: (1) How might the experimental animation communicate the urban uncanniness through 2D experimental animation design? (2) Can experimental animation lead the audience to reconsider their perceptions of urban spaces?

This thesis is developed into four chapters. Chapter One contextually reviews the concept of the uncanny and its relationship to urbanisation as a comprehensive introduction to the social context of this research project. This chapter also reviews Situationism and Psychogeography, as these concepts have theoretically supported this research by using architecture as the visual

---

<sup>3</sup> In this research project, the sense of familiarity and strangeness came from my experience of everyday life in a city that was distinctly different from my hometown in terms of its geography and physiography, including urban planning, architecture, weather, and the lifestyle and rhythms of the people there. I went from feeling like a total stranger to the city at first - a strange life, a strange language, a strange social community - to gradually adapting and integrating into this life. With much effort, I began to feel familiar with the city. Moreover, with the expansion of the metro and the city's transformation, as well as the urban depression and recovery brought about by the outbreak of COVID-19, I developed a sense of unfamiliarity with the city again. This strangeness brought about by the changes in the city was different from the feeling I had upon my arrival in an unfamiliar city; it was a feeling of alienation that was based on my sense of familiarity with a city; it is a process in which familiarity is built up - overturned - and built again, a feeling of familiarity and strangeness intermingled. This sense of the uncanny was a challenge and a pleasure; it changed my perspective on the city by seeing all its alterations and the unusual details as part of its unique charm.

metaphor for urban uncanniness. In this section, I explain how the uncanny, the central idea of this research project, has elevated from a personal experience to a socially valuable perception of urbanisation. Situationism has guided this research to focus on feeling and expressing the uncontrollability and unpredictability of urban life as an incubator for a sense of the uncanny. Psychogeography provides a new way of portraying the uncanny during the research, focusing on moving from urban space to architecture.<sup>4</sup> This inquiry led me to seek other artists who were making the uncanny emerge naturally by creating the architectural sublime, this informed my thinking as I made crucial decisions in the creative practice process.

Chapter Two contextually reviews the influence of drawing and experimental animation on my project. Reviewing the films of Jonathan Hodgson, Zbigniew Rybczyński, tabaimo, and Adrien Merigeau informed the narrative approach of my research and the production methods in terms of self-narrative, contemplative and reflective expression. This led to the medium of experimental animation, as it effectively visualised my imagination of the uncanny feelings I felt through poetic, non-linear and metaphorical storytelling.<sup>5</sup> Drawing is a way of informing and thinking in this research. I use it to express the uncanny perspectives of the city from my personal experience and to preserve my inspiration that ebbed and flowed. The artists Hiroshi Nagai and Giovanni Battista Piranesi provided insights into the metaphorical potential of the figure of architecture. Their insights informed my creative practice in terms of using the sublime in architecture as a metaphor for the uncanny and urbanisation.

In Chapter Three, I outline my research methodologies, that include Autoethnography, Heuristics and the Walking Methodology. The methodological framework has informed this research to apply a series of subjective, reflective, and self-initiated approaches based on self-narratives. These methods and methodologies demonstrate how I creatively perceived and visualised urban uncanniness from the perspective of urban architecture and urban life scenarios. In this chapter, I introduce the creative action I employed to reach my findings and to achieve my research aims. This includes drifting which is my approach to gain inspiration through experiencing the urban area as well as observation and sketching and writing. I use

---

<sup>4</sup> Because the definition of urban space is so broad, and the term uncanny itself is so vague and abstract, I was initially confused about how to communicate the sense of the urban uncanny to audiences precisely and effectively. Psychogeography has inspired me to construct a sense of the sublime and visual metaphor through architecture.

<sup>5</sup> In my animation practice, I avoided retracing my memories along a timeline, and instead, I reimagined my fragmented memories. In *The Uncanny City*, I have exaggerated and distorted everyday objects and characters, even reconfiguring body parts and situating these features within entirely unrelated events to create a surreal and uncanny world.

drifting to document my inspiration for digital illustration as a tool for the construction of the narrative and the visual elements in my animation. Experimental animation allows me to break through the physical world's limitations to reveal the invisible feelings I experienced while exploring the city to satisfy my curiosity as an international student in the foreign city landscape.

Chapter Four is a practice documentation for this study, encapsulating the creative action that unfolded throughout the project. In this chapter, I detail how I explicitly applied each method within the project, including the crucial decisions I made within each method.

At the end, as a conclusion to this research, I consider the knowledge I have gained from my creative practice. As I reflect on the impact this project has had on me as researcher and illustrator-animator, I imagine the potential for the uncanny to flourish in animation.

## Chapter One - Contextual Review of Knowledge

### Introduction

This research project has contextually explored the notion of the uncanny as it relates to this research project from three different perspectives that include psychological terminology, sociological themes, and aesthetic expressions. The contextual review of knowledge has helped to shape the researcher's understanding of the uncanny and its relevance to the design-based choices that, as researcher, I chose through my practice-based investigations. My review of the influential aesthetic expressions of the uncanny informed the vital decisions I made while I created *The Uncanny City*.

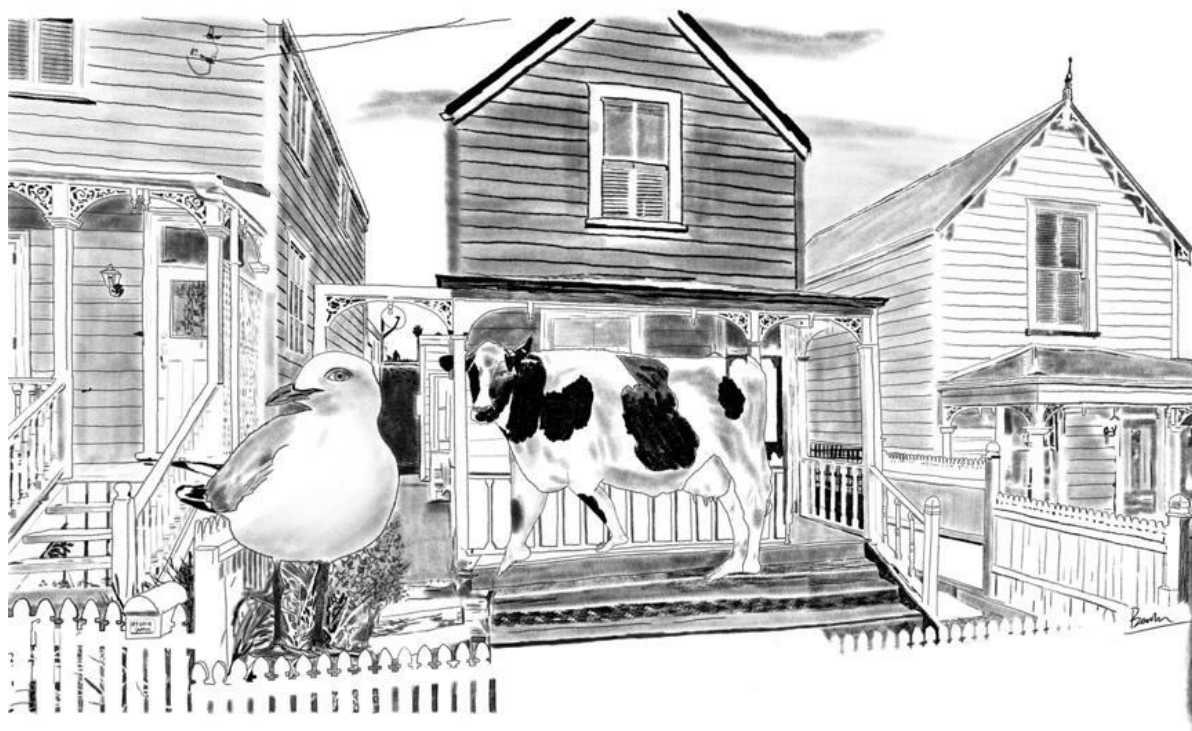


Fig 1.1. Benben Li. *The Uncanny Neighbourhood*, 2021, Digital Illustration, Auckland

## The psychological origins of the uncanny

We have all probably experienced a time or a moment in our urban lives during which we experienced a sense of the uncanny. It is as if we experience déjà vu, a moment of serendipity where we feel a strange familiarity. We may be surprised or even amazed by it. I began to wonder why the city made me feel this way.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, I started this research project by exploring the nature of the uncanny, how it is constructed and how it develops as a psychological symptom and social experience.

For Sigmund Freud, uncanny is a feeling that is strange yet familiar, unexpected but worthy.<sup>7</sup> Jo Collins and J. Jervis defined uncanny as a frightening feeling that disrupts one's sense of preconceptions and familiarity with the physical world without being recognised.<sup>8</sup> The sense of familiarity triggered by the uncanny comes from the memories that have been forgotten deep within us.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the attitude, condition, facet or visible feature of strangeness comes from the outside, it makes us imagine and perceive something that seems unreal.<sup>10</sup> According to Lucy Huskinson, uncanniness can be interpreted as a double perspective of understanding and perceiving scenarios, scenes or incidents in one's everyday experience, which "presents itself as two contrasting perspectives that co-exist [as] one and the same thing."<sup>11</sup> From this perspective, my understanding of a sense of the uncanny in the uncanny city aligns with Lucy Huskinson's "double perspectives" view. The term *uncanny* in this study emphasises how city dwellers comprehend and perceive the mysterious aspects of the city rather than just looking at their strange appearance.

---

<sup>6</sup> I have had this feeling many times. Walking alone in the streets, I can feel that the city I am in seems to have an unbelievably mysterious force that draws me in and engulfs my soul.

<sup>7</sup> Freud, Sigmund. *The uncanny*. Penguin, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Collins, Jo, and John Jervis. "Document: 'On the Psychology of the Uncanny' (1906): Ernst Jentsch." In *Uncanny Modernity*, pp. 216-228. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Freud, Sigmund. *The uncanny*. Penguin, 2003.

<sup>10</sup> According to Sigmund Freud, a sense of the uncanny arises if we cannot distinguish between reality and imagination. Susan Piedmont-Palladino, in her research on the sense of the uncanny in drawing, has also mentioned the overlap between the real and the designed (i.e., fictional) creates the Uncanny Valley.

<sup>11</sup> Huskinson, Lucy, ed. *The urban uncanny: A collection of interdisciplinary studies*. Routledge, 2016, 3.

In *The Uncanny City*, the uncanny is defined as a “creative insight” based on interpreting the cities’ very nature, the unsettling and uncompromising state encourages us to break free from the stereotype and the orthodoxy that shackles our infinite imagination.<sup>12</sup>

## **The Uncanny in Urban Spaces**

Following my investigation into the nature of the uncanny, I looked at the intrinsic connection between the uncanny and urban space. Lucy Huskinson identifies the city with its “double nature” and explains that it can be perceived as “repulsion and attraction.”<sup>13</sup> Huskinson mentioned the mismatch between the citizens’ expectations of the city and their experience of urban life, leading to the alienated and uncanny experience of living in the city.<sup>14</sup> This notion is supported by Guy Debord and Asger Jorn, who noted that “urbanisation renders alienation tactile.”<sup>15</sup> Like Freud’s articulation of the uncanny, Adam Phillips argues that the urban uncanny is easily obscured by ordinary life as a hidden aspect of the city.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, because of this, it is also precious, as it helps us to break free from the constraints of our preconceptions of our city while stimulating our imagination.<sup>17</sup> The discoveries I made during this research helped me understand the uncanny as a way to empathise with the nature of the

---

<sup>12</sup> Lucy Huskinson noted, “in our everyday experiences, we inevitably prioritise all that is familiar, ‘normal’, comfortable, and stable.” From my perspective, the familiarity accompanied by “habit” brought by urban grid planning and daily commuting gives people the ability to accomplish something readily. However, the numbness, a side effect of “habit”, cannot be ignored. Since unconscious routines and habits occupy most of our everyday life, we can barely recall any details, we forget what is essential in our daily life except for the busyness over time.

<sup>13</sup> Huskinson, Lucy, ed. *The urban uncanny: A collection of interdisciplinary studies*. Routledge, 2016, 3.

<sup>14</sup> In her study of the city, Lucy Huskinson points out that as urbanisation progresses, cities move toward a high degree of planning and management. At the same time as cities become increasingly complex and variable, it leads to an unpredictable and uncontrollable urban life. Huskinson then draws the crucial conclusion that the conflict that exists between the two. This leads to the “psychological alienation and dissociation of residents” which is characteristic of modernity and a source of the sense of the uncanny.

<sup>15</sup> Debord, Guy, and Asger Jorn. *Mémoires: structures portantes d’Asger Jorn; suivi de Origine des détournements*. Éditions Allia, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Phillips, Adams. Speaking on the ‘*The uncanny*’, BBC Radio 4 feature broadcast: 28 June; prod. Simon Hollis, Brook Lapping Productions Limited, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> “An uncanny experience gives us a wake-up call to other possibilities that are latent within and other perspectives and orientations to life. The uncanny enables us to traverse [the] boundaries of all that is supposedly ‘normal’ to realms that are otherwise hidden and strange and, in the process, reveal to us a more imaginative cityscape. The uncanny provides us with a new perspective that allows us to survey our preconceptions of the city and its impact on us as urban subjects critically.” (Lucy Huskinson, 2016)

city, particularly its repressed aspects, and to reflect critically on the impact of urbanisation on its inhabitants.



Fig 1.2. Benben Li. *The Bookstore*, 2021, Digital Illustration, Auckland

## Conclusion of Urban Uncanny

Through the contextual exploration of the uncanny, I realised the importance of understanding and communicating my sense of urban uncanniness. I observed this along with my mixed feelings of awe and unease brought about by living in the city. I perceived the urban uncanniness brought by the city and the city subjects is a significant part of urban life. By reviewing the uncanny context in terms of psychology, I became aware of its potential and it helped me understand and respond to the ever-changing urban space as a mode that informed my practice.

My research practice aspires to convey a sense of the uncanny in the artefacts to initiate viewers to think about the strangeness in the familiar. Through the illustrated animations, I ask the

audience to walk out of their comfort zone, and their everyday motions, to recognise the uncanny sensations in the cityscape that will be revealed.<sup>18</sup> In my research, uncanny sensations are reframed in a more motivated and self-initiated landscape, as this changes the research project's intent. I challenged myself as a researcher to invite the viewer to engage with the uncanny experience through animation to reconnect with this feeling. The sense of strangeness moves from a pop-up feeling to a dream-like experience walking through the city I purposefully created in my animation. The viewers are placed in an explorative, subjective and poetic framework that I organised, where they can leave all their concerns and skepticism behind and explore it intensively.

### **Psychogeography – ‘feeling’ as an essence of living in the city.**

Creative practitioners can express their views on the social environment in a subjective and storytelling way to provoke thoughts by those in the audience. As part of the contextual inquiries, I have sought artist-theorists who have successfully engaged with the mysterious aesthetics of the city, such as Daniel Defoe, Peter Ackroyd, Constant Nieuwenhuys and Giovanni Battista Piranesi, who frame the project from historical perspectives.

Psychogeography emerged from the Situationism movement as a mode of freeing the practitioners from the constraints of rationality and planning.<sup>19</sup> Practitioners of Psychogeography believe the perception of the city with its mysterious aspects is precisely the essence of life.<sup>20</sup> This position aligns with Freud's theories on the uncanny. I observed that urban environments are fertile places to contemplate the diversity in the city. It has always

---

<sup>18</sup> The German roots of “uncanny” *un-heim* mean “not to go home”. Putting *un-heim* into the context of the word uncanny today, it more or less means something outside of a comfort zone, echoing Freud's work on the social implications of the word uncanny. Habit and familiarity make us settled, make us lazy to change, and limit our desire to explore and be innovative. It puts the city insidiously in control of us in return.

<sup>19</sup> Influenced by Dadaism and Surrealism, the situationists are radical; they “hankered after the 'pioneer spirit' of modernism” as they are committed to a critical analysis of the existing social system while taking action over the city. The Situationists believed that capitalist society had become a threat to the well-being of humankind, and they rejected the “spectacle” created by capitalism. At the same time, they challenged a range of ideologies that underpin capitalism, such as the modern rationalism movement raised by contemporary rationalism, who believed that “the problems of the real world can be solved by reason” and “the collective interest take priority over individual interest”. (Sadler Simon, 1999)

<sup>20</sup> Coverley, Merlin. *Psychogeography*. Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2006.

appeared to me to look different at different times.<sup>21</sup> According to psychogeography, the cityscape can be understood as a physical, imaginary, and cultural combination.<sup>22</sup> I understand it as the multi-layered diversity of the city, which allows me to express the city's mystery more implicitly and symbolically.

## **Literary and artistic representation of psychogeography**

The unpredictability of the city, as its mysterious essence, is expressed deeper in the psychogeographic literature and in artwork. It is interpreted and expressed on a more spiritual level than merely the geographical richness of the city. For example, Daniel Defoe reimagines London as an unknowable labyrinth full of strangeness and danger in his novels *Journal of the Plague Year*, based on his observations and feelings of a plague-ridden London in 1665. It set the tone for later psychogeographical paintings of the city. It was a symbolic and metaphorical expression.<sup>23</sup> After him, Peter Ackroyd poetically fictionalised London as a living organism with its rhythms and growth, suggesting the city as an ever-changing multiplicity of combinations.<sup>24</sup>

Situationist artists reveal the city's mystery by creating surrealist architecture. Constant Nieuwenhuys designed the *New Babylon* as a huge surreal city constructed by numerous movable blocks, which Constant refers to as a "Hyper-architecture".<sup>25</sup> In order to embody the idea of Situationism, Constant has designed numerous blocks with different social functions in this virtual city. Most of these blocks have a circuitous, labyrinthine and meandering structure, reflecting Constant's concern for the intimate relationship between humankind and physical

---

<sup>21</sup> Combining the psychogeographic view of the urban landscape, I define the city as a living organism with its rhythm. Sometimes it is lively; sometimes, it is cold; it is constantly changing. One of the fascinating things about the city is that I could never understand it in all its details. As I look more deeply into the city, I find more and more of its mysterious aspects.

<sup>22</sup> According to Jill Dobson, the physical landscape represents a "concretisation of cultural values"; the imagined landscape stands for the "landscape as conceived of and understood by individuals within a group"; and the experienced landscape is that "encountered through the embodied practices of daily life". (Jill Dobson 2016)

<sup>23</sup> Bastian, Frank. "Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* reconsidered." *The Review of English Studies* 16, no. 62 (1965): 151-173.

<sup>24</sup> Tso, Ann. *The Literary Psychogeography of London: Otherworlds of Alan Moore, Peter Ackroyd, and Iain Sinclair*. Springer Nature, 2020.

<sup>25</sup> In *New Babylon*, each block covers an area of approximately 5 to 10 hectares. Each block has a different social function and character. The yellow block, for example, is used for entertainment. Some blocks are specifically designed for specific situations.

space, as well as his expression of the uncertainty, unpredictability and irregularity of everyday life.<sup>26</sup> Referencing Constant's work, I designed my uncanny city as a metropolis with a rich density of buildings. From my perspective this image of the metropolis is referenced by my hometown and my memories of the city based on my study abroad experience.

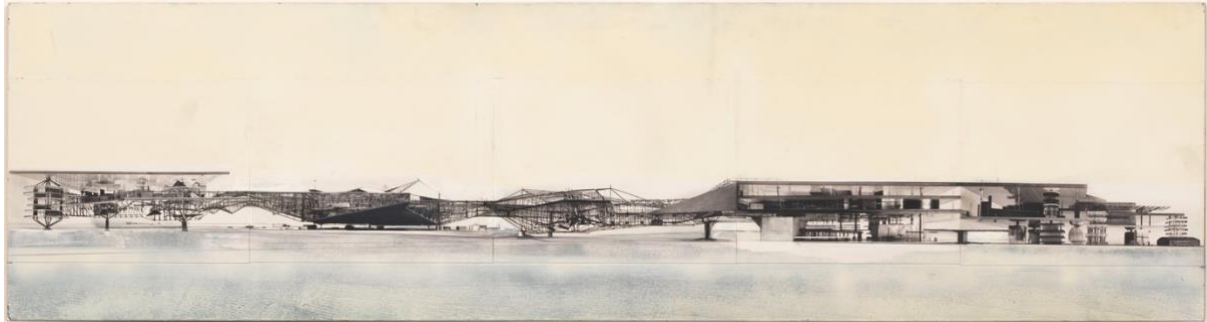


Fig 1.3. Constant Anton Nieuwenhuys. *New Babylon* (Collage of Sector Models). 1969.  
<https://www.moma.org/media/W1siZiIsIjQ0Mzc5MCJdLFsicCIImNvbnZlcnQiLCItcXVhbG10eSA5MCAtcmlVzaXplIDIwMDB4MTQ0MFx1MDAzZSjdXQ.jpg?sha=1e4cbb9e728944a2>

## The Situationist Sublime and the Architectural Uncanny

The situationist city was a constant play of contrasts between confined and open spaces, darkness and illumination, circulation, and isolation.

Sadler Simon

In addition to the functional value of the architecture, which makes it an iconic feature of the modern city, I seek to discover the aesthetic aspects of the architecture in a more intelligent way. By reviewing the Situationists' interpretation of architecture and its application in artistic expression, I discovered the potential of architectural drawing in terms of metaphor and reverie.

---

<sup>26</sup> The vertical structure of *New Babylon* extends the surface space, allowing people to build spaces according to their imagination. The architectural design of *New Babylon* shows Constant's vision of a future society full of uncertainty, freedom, and creativity in the painting shown below.

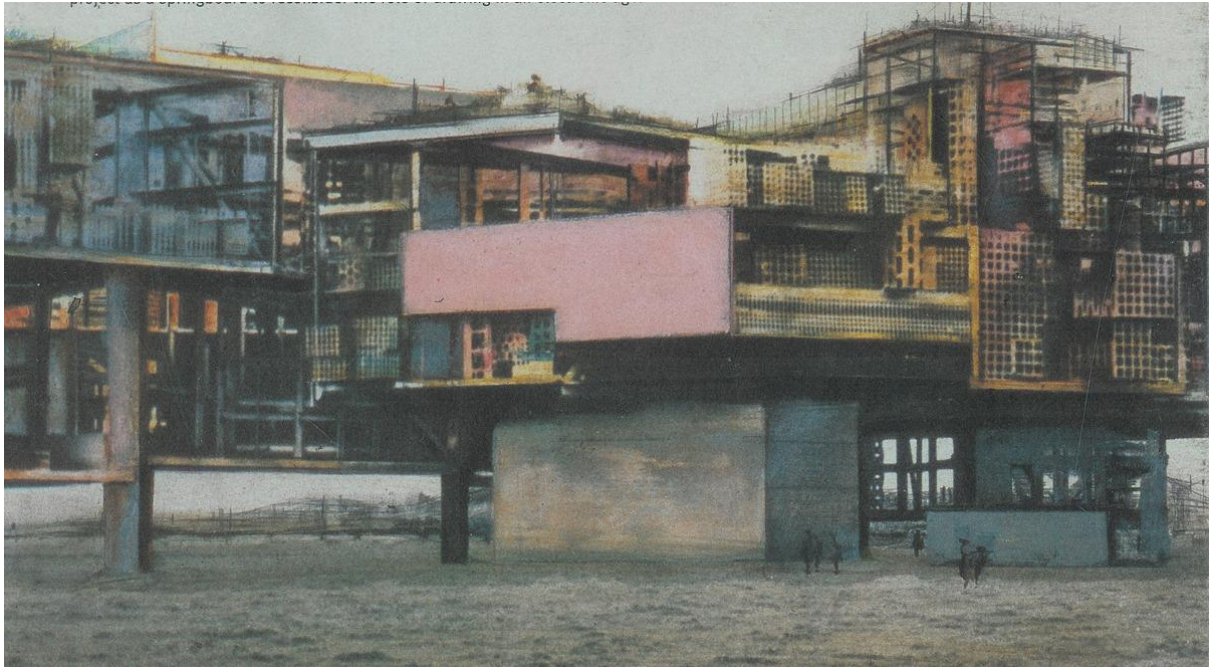


Fig 1.4. Constant Anton Nieuwenhuys. *New Babylon (Collage of Sector Models)*. 1971. <https://m.media-amazon.com/images/I/61SwKSpfA1L.jpg>

For the Situationists, the sublime in nature and architecture was the stimulus for a sense of situation and reverie and an ever-present theme in Situationist art.<sup>27</sup> The Situationists are concerned with architecture and aesthetics, particularly “the relationship between the modernist aesthetic and the restructuring of society” as they called the ‘psychogeography in architecture’.<sup>28</sup> They have a complex mix of awe as well as a critique of the city, which they visualise through creating virtual cities in their artistic activities. By reviewing the artwork based on the theme of the Situationist city, it is evident that they imply an allusion to the existing human condition and the artist's attitude to the social questions that exist, as well as a utopian fantasy of the ideal city from the perspective of the Situationists.

### **Giovanni Battista Piranesi – *Carceri d'Invenzione (The Imaginary Prison)***

For Giovanni Battista Piranesi, the sense of eeriness and majesty he expresses in this work derives primarily from the dark side of the psychogeographic sublime: a sense of horror arising

---

<sup>27</sup> For situationists, the diversity of architecture has a psychogeographic appeal. Ivan Chtcheglov once noted that “architecture is the simplest means of articulating time and space.” Asger Jorn argued that “architecture is always the ultimate realisation of a mental and artistic evolution”.

<sup>28</sup> Sadler, Simon. *The situationist city*. MIT press, 1999, 49.

from the serenity of the large scale, the distant past and the obsolete, which is reflected in the complex architectural structure of the picture and the strong contrasts of conflict it implies.<sup>29</sup> For example, the conflict between enclosure and infinity in the picture, the masonry is linked to the thick, closed atmosphere of the dungeon, the massive vaults of stone and the dim light from more vaults and walls beyond the picture, as if the dungeon never ends.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the majestic and shocking effect of the numerous torture devices, suspension bridges and massive vaults and sections in the scenes contrasts dramatically with the illusory feel of the images, which, as mentioned, exemplify the interplay of the soft and hard elements in Situationist art.

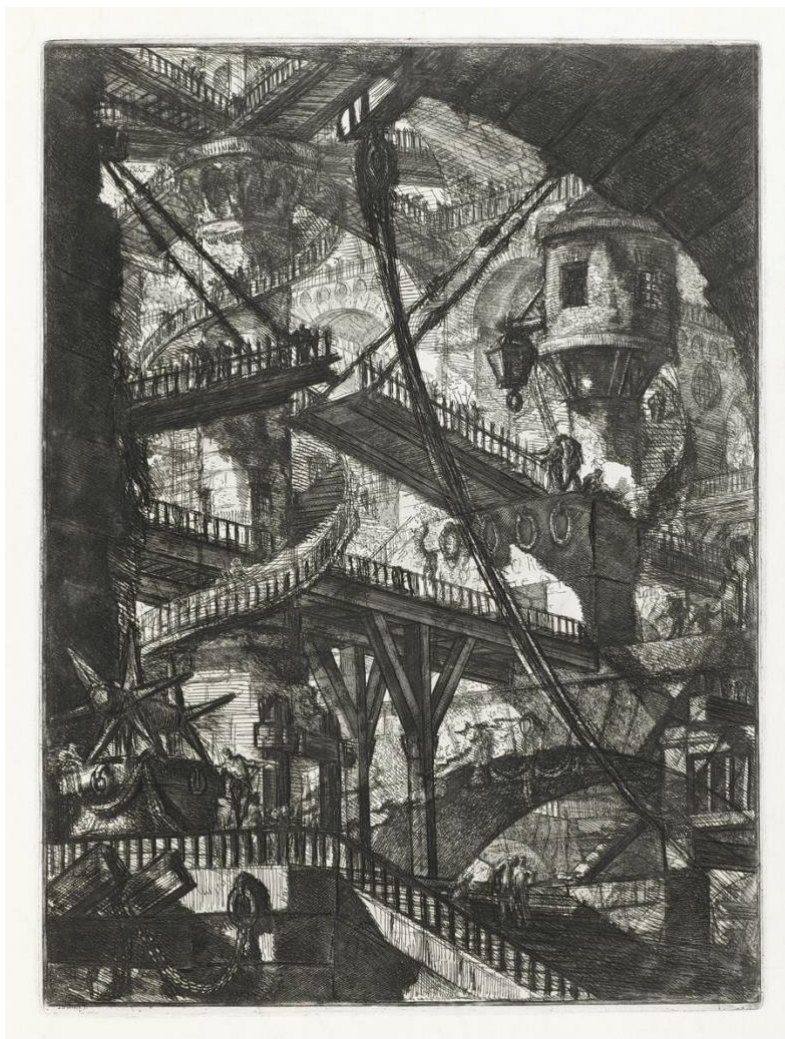


Fig 1.5. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Le Carceri d'Invenzione*, plate VII: *The Drawbridge*, etching print, Retrieved from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Giovanni\\_Battista\\_Piranesi\\_-\\_Le\\_Carceri\\_d%27Invenzione\\_-\\_Second\\_Edition\\_-\\_1761\\_-\\_07\\_-\\_The\\_Drawbridge.jpg&oldid=295628800](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Giovanni_Battista_Piranesi_-_Le_Carceri_d%27Invenzione_-_Second_Edition_-_1761_-_07_-_The_Drawbridge.jpg&oldid=295628800).

<sup>29</sup> Frampton, Kenneth. *Modern Architecture: A Critical History (World of Art)*. Thames & Hudson, 2020.

<sup>30</sup> Roncato, Sergio. "Piranesi and the Infinite Prisons." *Spatial Vision* 21, no. 1-2 (2008): 3-18.

## The Uncanny Valley

Robotist Masahiro Mori first introduced the concept of the Uncanny Valley based on research looking into human responses to robots. His findings suggest that humanoid objects that do not precisely resemble actual human beings elicit a sense of that which is uncanny or strangely familiar to the observer.<sup>31</sup> Mori's research reveals the potential of the anthropomorphic quality of non-human objects in creating a sense of the uncanny. To reflect on this research, I consider the idea that if the city takes on human characteristics and behavioural patterns, it may evoke a sense of the uncanny in the viewer. In this research, my anthropomorphic imagining of the city is concretely expressed in my creation of the city as a living being, ecosystem or environment with sensory and behavioural patterns, as explicitly discussed in Chapter Four. In this way, I assign anthropomorphic qualities to the city I created to convey a sense of the uncanny. Picturing an anthropomorphic city is also a way for this research to reveal the mutually influential nature of the city and its inhabitants, responding to the review of psychogeography.<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusion

My approach to the design practice is to challenge the use of animation as a tool to reframe the city we live in. Strange scenes from ordinary lives appear as crucial elements in my animated work, visually expressing uncanny sensations through the practice. The “uncanny” in my animation is not meant to allude to the unpredictability of urban life or to tell the viewer that, look, we live in a world with a peculiar structure, even though my work might seem to be inexplicable. Therefore, *The Uncanny City* aims at shaping our experiences of daily life, presenting a series of unpredictable social experiences. Experimenting with the uncanny helped me, as researcher, to fundamentally understand and explore my complex feelings of awe and unease about urban life. It also helped the audience to think differently about the city, the world and our lives. Through the uncanny perspectives of the cityscape in my work, I seek to inform

---

<sup>31</sup>Mori, Masahiro. “The uncanny valley: the original essay by Masahiro Mori.” *IEEE Spectrum* (1970).

<sup>32</sup> I have attempted to visualise the relationship between the city and its inhabitants in my animations. I created an alienated city in *The Uncanny City*: not only are the inhabitants adapting to, shaping, framing, constructing, and sensing their experience of the city, the city is also silently directing, observing and manipulating the humans. I use anthropomorphic imagery in my animations, such as the giant organs to portray the city as a living entity.

viewers further about the uncanny aspects of city life that we often overlook to help see what is happening more clearly. Uncanny encounters might evoke curiosity about our world in strange ways, and help us to see the world around us as we view it via a different imaginative lens. Perhaps based on their experience, through their contemplations, insight and awareness, dwellers will connect emotionally to their urban environment.

## Chapter Two – Contextual Review of Practice

To situate the uncanny city in the realm of practice, this chapter reviews a range of creative works that influenced my decision-making in terms of animation and visual installation design. By exploring three critical contexts that relate to this research practice: the visual metaphor of architecture, the storytelling strategies of experimental animation, and the video projection installation, the focus is on the potential of experimental animation and projection installations to create the meditative and empathic aspects of the uncanny.

These different approaches help to define and shape the communication of the uncanny via animation into a more innovative and immersive sensory experience. In my creative production drawing on artists' and participants' communication of the uncanny informs my research practice by way of visual metaphors and narrative strategies, as such, I share my imaginative perspective on the urban environment with the audience.

### The Visual Metaphor of the Architecture

I know not how it was - but with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit.

- Edgar Allan Poe

A house is a home, a place where human beings live, it is a haven that gives a sense of familiarity and security. Nevertheless, this familiarity can be shattered by accidental yet unavoidable factors. For Anthony Vidler, the feature of the house in Edgar Allan Poe's fiction *The Fall of the House of Usher* evokes "shadowy fancies" in the viewer, such as the eerie house's tendency to conjure up images of potential danger and doom.<sup>33</sup> Vidler argues that it is not the extremely bizarre exterior or the obvious details of the house itself that brings the reader

---

<sup>33</sup> Edgar Allan Poe makes numerous anthropomorphic descriptions of the house, such as the hollow, eye-like windows. But looking objectively at every construction and piece of furniture in the room, they are all sufficiently normal.

a sense of the uncanny, it is its overall atmosphere.<sup>34</sup><sup>35</sup> Moreover, Vidler states that the uncanny feeling of a haunting-like house comes from the preconceptions that the house's functional features bring to people. This is in stark contrast to the eerie atmosphere of the house. From my perspective, architecture has the power to convey a sense of eeriness and majesty. Architecture is a place imbued with a sense of humanity, a product of human civilisation, a space for human activity, a habitat, and a refuge for humans.<sup>36</sup> Once the human aura dissipates and the sense of familiarity and security is broken, then a sense of the uncanny that architecture brings with it follows, along with a sense of the familiar and the unfamiliar.<sup>37</sup>

Architecture constitutes a scenario of majesty for the Situationists. They defined it as the architectural sublime and it was the main source of inspiration for the ideal city in Situationist art. Since the Situationists believed that the city nurtured the freedom and imagination of mankind, they expressed their admiration for urban civilisation by portraying the architectural sublime in their work.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> In Poe's description, the house looks normal on the outside, with no apparent horror, which leaves plenty of room for the reader to imagine.

<sup>35</sup> Vidler, Anthony. "The Architecture of the Uncanny: The Unhomely Houses of the Romantic Sublime." *Assemblage* 3, no. 3 (1987): 7-29.

<sup>36</sup> Mallett, Shelley. "Understanding home: a critical review of the literature." *The sociological review* 52, no. 1 (2004): 62-89.

<sup>37</sup> Anthony Vidler argues that the image of the house provides a particularly favoured site for "uncanny disturbances". On the surface, the house assumes the function of family life, family history and nostalgia, playing the role of the last and most intimate refuge of private comfort, which contrasts with the "alien spirit-invading horror" of the haunted house, thus giving the audience a sense of the uncanny.

<sup>38</sup> Sadler, Simon. *The Situationist City*. MIT Press, 1999, 75.

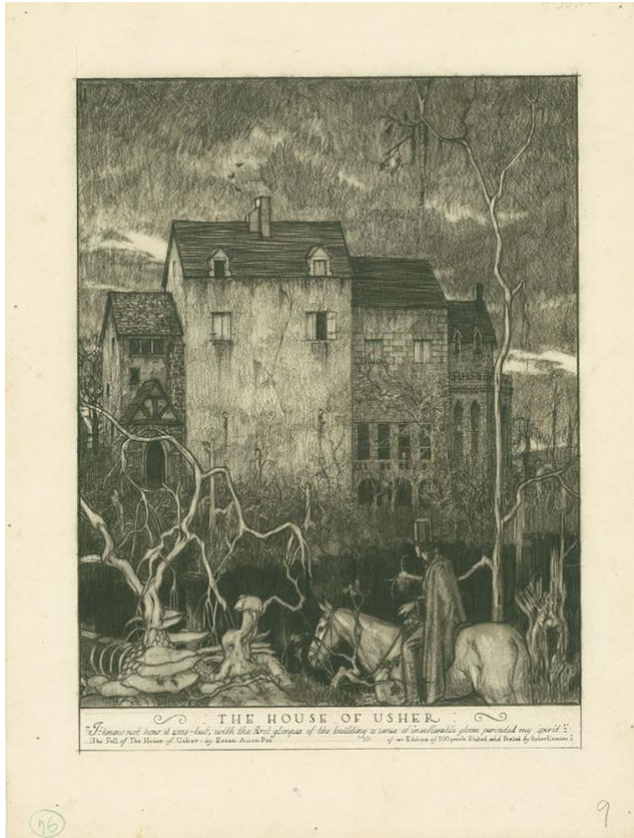


Fig 2.1. Robert Lawson. *Sketch for “The House of Usher”*. 1957.  
<https://media.freelibrary.org/assets/digital/items/rlaw01239/images/large.jpg>

## Conclusion

The investigation of the figure of the house in the literature and artwork has informed this research of the potential of the house to trigger an uncanny atmosphere in the animation. In my animation, I applied the figure of alienated architecture as a symbolic expression of my feeling about the urban landscape that it is mysterious. This led to the emergence of the alienated house as a critical visual element in the creative practice in my research, that is inspired by the familiar architecture in my everyday life. In addition, I have drawn on Edgar Allan Poe’s depiction of the house in the animation, which incorporates anthropomorphic imagery into the design of the buildings. As analysed in the Chapter One, human-like beings give the viewer a sense of the uncanny. The dense architecture in my animation is how I allude to the changes that urbanisation has made to our living environment and in my animation, to initiate, prompt and inspire the viewers to rethink the urban environment where they reside.

## **Tabaimo – the self-narrative and metaphorical expression of the experimental animation**

I am trying to affect the visitor's imagination by showing aspects of the unseen or unconscious. I try to push their imagination, to make it take flight.

--Tabaimo

*Haunted House* responds to the experimental animation in terms of its unconventional narrative and metaphorical expression, and presents the viewer with an imaginary absurd and disturbing world. The unconventional storytelling of the experimental animation can be characterised as non-objective, non-narrative and non-linear, providing the animator the freedom to express his or her imagination, personal emotions and fragmentary memories in the animation.<sup>39</sup> In *Haunted House*, different rooms in the same scene have completely unrelated storylines. In particular the arrangement of the scene is based on Tabaimo's memories of her hometown city. While looking at the city through the train's window, she used to wonder what might be happening in the houses. Behind each window is a parallel world apart from each other. It seems like each window has its own secret stories to tell.<sup>40</sup> The uncertainty that comes with this unconventional narrative of *Haunted House* allows the audience to interpret it freely in their understanding of the animation. In this way, the film creates an extraordinarily robust and powerful interaction with the audience.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Harris, Miriam, Lilly Husbands, and Paul Taverham. *Experimental Animation*. Routledge, 2019, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Tabaimo has described a similar sensation while looking from a train onto myriad apartment windows as they flash past, each with its own secret life and stories to tell. In a 2009 interview, she commented: "These windows all sit side by side, but behind each one of them exists a completely different world, and on the other side of the wall that separates them, an unthinkable tragedy may be unfolding" (Tabaimo, 2009).

<sup>41</sup> Harris, Miriam, Lilly Husbands, and Paul Taverham. *Experimental Animation*. Routledge, 2019.



Fig 2.2. Tabaimo. *Haunted House*. Film Still. 2003. Retrieved from: [https://www.mca.com.au/files/uploads/images/00041\\_2.jpg](https://www.mca.com.au/files/uploads/images/00041_2.jpg)



Fig 2.3. Tabaimo. *Haunted House*. Film Still. 2003. Retrieved from: <https://medias.fondationcartier.com/fondation/images/artwork-images/COL-TAB-2275.jpg>

Like Edgar Allan Poe and the Situationist artists, Tabaimo uses the uncanny atmosphere of architecture in her work to stimulate the viewer's imagination. In the *Haunted House*, Tabaimo expresses her imagination of the city through her creation of the figure of an alienated house, that is inspired from her childhood memories at the time she visited a haunted house with her family. She recalled the horror she felt before entering the haunted house as it was far more potent than the reality of the interior. Tabaimo understands that the mysterious force of the

house itself goes far beyond the sensory impact of the traumatic images of the house's reality.<sup>42</sup> The spooky ambience of a house can stimulate the viewer's curiosity about the interior of the house and what is going to happen next. In addition, the giant figures can frequently be seen in *Haunted House* and in other Tabaimo films. They appear surreal since they are out of proportion to reality. In this way the audience experiences a strong sense of the uncanny.



Fig 2.4. Tabaimo. *Dolefullhouse*. Film Still. 2007. Retrieved from: [https://www.mca.com.au/files/uploads/images/TABAIMO\\_dolefullhouse\\_image1\\_1.jpg](https://www.mca.com.au/files/uploads/images/TABAIMO_dolefullhouse_image1_1.jpg)

## Conclusion

Through the contextual investigation of *Haunted House*, I realised the potential of experimental animation in its capacity to help artists communicate their own unique experiences and imagination in a poetic and meditative way. Experimental animation allows me to show my inner chaotic memories of the city, they are interspersed with my subconscious and my imagination.<sup>43</sup> In order to map the narrative strategies and visual language of experimental animation, I created many life scenes in the uncanny city, they are reassembled in a non-narrative and non-linear way. For example, while a baby is slowly dying, the neighbour next

---

<sup>42</sup> *Haunted House* takes its title from the funfair attraction of the same name, and has its origins in a childhood outing by the artist with her father and sister to a local amusement park. They did not go into the haunted house attraction there, deepening its mystery and the potential for horror inside. The artist remembers a signboard outside inviting visitors to imagine what might be happening within. Revisiting the park sometime later and entering the house, she was inevitably disappointed and said, 'The power of my imagination, incited by the sign, was enough to give birth to traumatising imagery' (*Haunted House*, artist's statement, in op.cit., Foundation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, p 36).

<sup>43</sup> In the experimental animation, "the editing together of things not ordinarily seen to be in a relationship produces associations that border on narrative, albeit in an extremely condensed form (Miriam Harris, 2019).

door is having an orgy. These absurd scenes of life are placed in a vast, moving vertical shot. This arrangement expresses my feelings about high-rise buildings and the city's dense population in response to my childhood memories living in a high-rise flat.

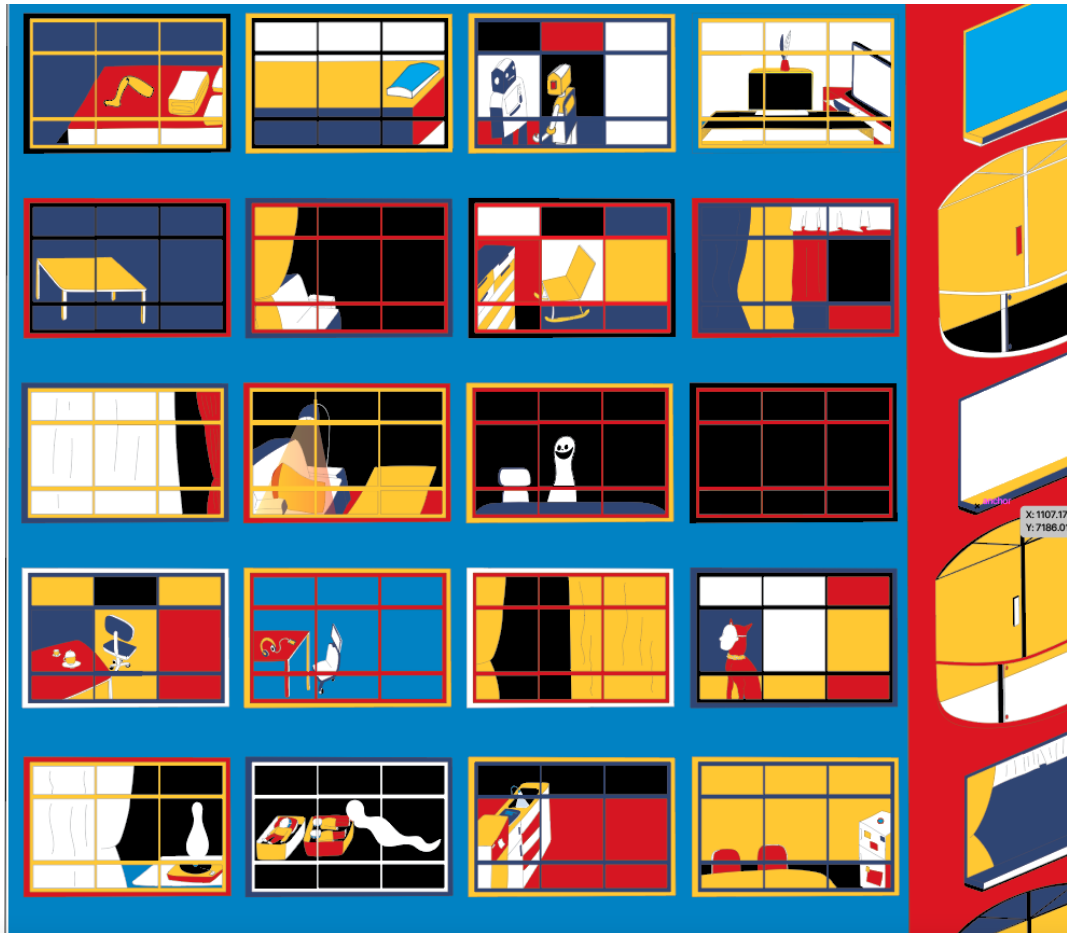


Figure 2.5. Benben Li. *Shot: The Flat – Still Frame*, 2022, digital animation, Auckland

Moreover, Taibaimo's animated installation inspired me in terms of the visual expressions of uncanny perspectives and surrealism. It informed my critical consideration about the current problems of human existence and social inclusion to show viewers the different dimensions of the world while reinterpreting the world around us.<sup>44</sup> To reflect on the metaphorical strategy, I used a distorted anti-realistic proportional structure to enhance the mysterious atmosphere of the images. Also, in my animation, gigantic human figures are frequently seen. At the same

---

<sup>44</sup> The experimental animation has empowered itself with greater tension and sensory impact by rewriting or twisting the original appearance of things. Thus, I can express my infinite imagination and creativity so the audience can view it from different angles and unique world perspectives.

time, this is the process of my research, exploring the macrocosm from a micro perspective, which alludes to human's over-control of the world in civilisation's development.<sup>45</sup>



Fig 2.6. Benben Li. *Shot: Alienation – Still Frame*, 2022, digital animation, Auckland

### ***Tango (1981)*- Zbigniew Rybczyński: Circular Narrative**

*Tango* is a classic example of an experimental animated non-linear narrative. The story revolves around the interior of a building. Through a quirky circular narrative, in an eight-minute animation, the director crafted 36 strangely irrelevant characters in the same room. Each character has a unique pattern of behaviour and constantly cycles through their movements. As the film progresses, the room gets increasingly crowded, the scenes become chaotic.<sup>46</sup> The director portrays a chilling sense of alienation and disassociation from this storytelling

---

<sup>45</sup> Experimental animation tends to resist the reduction of facts to the viewer through illustrative imagery. Paul Wells argues that experimental animation redefines things by constructing imagery and alienation.

<sup>46</sup> Such a circular narrative arrangement in *Tango* does not make the audience feel dull or confused. Paul Wells states that by watching experimental animation the audience can interpret the animation according to their terms. This enables the viewer to interpret the animation in their terms, or in terms predetermined by the artist, rather than through familiar formal narrative strategies.

arrangement.<sup>47</sup> This disconnection between the animated characters is also evident in Tabaimo's installation.



Fig 2.7. Zbigniew Rybczyński, *Tango*, 1981, film still, Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/90339479>

*Tango*'s circular and non-linear narrative expresses the animator's metaphor for society and humanity in a contemplative way. It influenced my consideration of the narrative strategies for my animation. Referring to *Tango*, I constructed my animated film as an infinite loop of two and a half minutes comprised of moving images. In this animation, I demonstrate a large and complex circumscribed virtual city. I made no connection between the different character elements and objects to express the metaphor of the uncontrollable nature of the city. Through the careful construction of such a circular narrative, my animation aims to attract the viewers' curiosity. The obscure theme and ambiguous purpose provides an imagination space for the audience.

---

<sup>47</sup> In my opinion, one of the most remarkable and stimulating aspects of the film is the lack of interaction and intersection between the characters. Even though they are in the same room, there is an invisible barrier between the people, as if they are in different dimensions.

## ***Feeling My Way* - Jonathan Hodgson**

*Feeling My Way* is a multi-media experimental animation that combines handheld filming and illustrates moving images. In this animation, Jonathan Hodgson presents a first-person view of the people, animals and various incidental events he encounters on his way to work, and his imagination and associations along the way that are conveyed by the clean, symbolic illustrations and handwritten type. Hodgson creatively explores the relationship between the individual, the unconscious self and the environment in the urban landscape.<sup>48</sup>

*Feeling My Way* demonstrates the potential of animation to visualise the self, the subconscious and imagination, such as, the human subconscious. The moving shots and scenes give the viewer a sense of immersion. As Paul Wells suggests, animation has become a “vehicle by which inarticulable emotions and experiences may be expressed.”<sup>49</sup> The animation “is a hard copy of mental memory, expressed not only in how the animator's background influences the appearance of the final work but also in the core meaning of the expression”.<sup>50</sup>

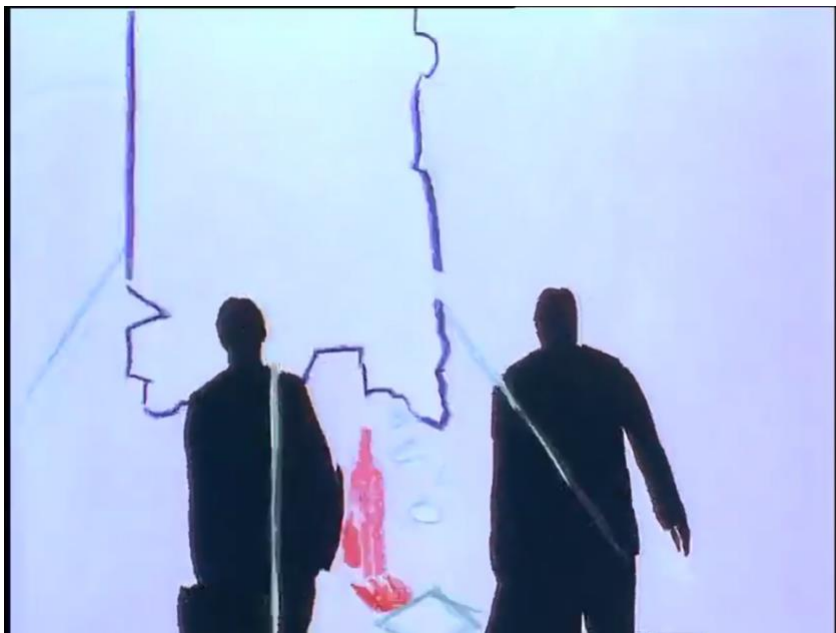


Fig 2.8. Jonathan Hodgson. *Feeling My Way*. Film Still. 1997. Retrieved from: <https://vimeo.com/32255983>

---

<sup>48</sup> Hodgson interspersed and covered many street scenes in his film, as well as sketches of his imagination and subconscious objects or inner monologues in handwritten letters.

<sup>49</sup> Wells, Paul. *Understanding animation*. Routledge, 2013, 184.

<sup>50</sup> Wells, Paul, Quinn, Joanna, and Mills, Les. *Drawing for Animation*. Basics Animation; 3. Lausanne; Worthing: AVA Academia, 2008, 26.

In my research practice, I challenge myself to animate my imagination and association with my everyday experiences. Using my imagination allows me to revisit the details of my life and interpret them into rich scenes via animation. I created many of my visualised memories of the city, such as my recall of living in the city. Some of my memories are inaccurate or vague and are interspersed with my imagined vision. My memory and imagination made up my sense of the city.

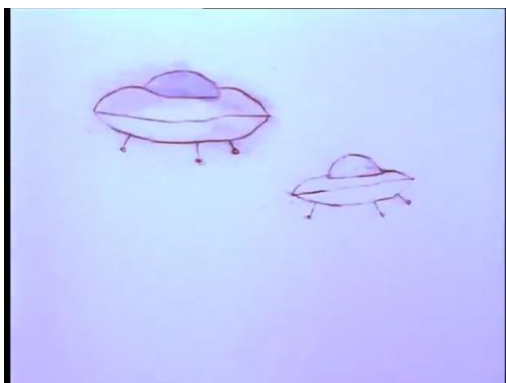
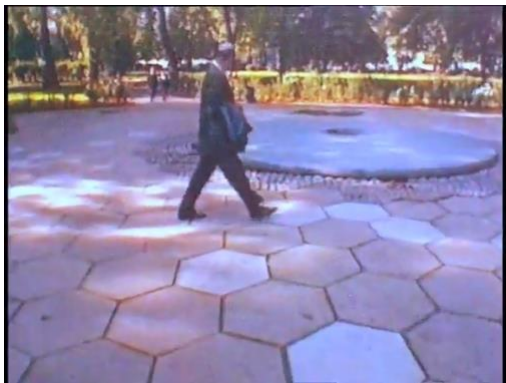


Fig 2.9. Jonathan Hodgson. *Feeling My Way*. Film Still. 1997. Retrieved from: <https://vimeo.com/32255983>

## *Genius Loci* - Adrien Merigeau

“...all around me, I find chaos. It’s always there. It just changes in scale. You can’t stop it. You can only watch it. Listen to it. It transforms things. People, ideas. It’s a movement. It’s alive. Like some sort of guide. ... What’s that crap? It’s wrecking my head! Just kidding. Look. It gave me chills.”

- *Genius Loci*

*Genius Loci* is a masterpiece that is revelatory in terms of my understanding and artistic expression of the urban uncanny. It is about Reine, the main character’s uncanny experience. In this film, Reine’s imagination drives the storyline forward. As she lost herself in the city, she contemplated, found herself, got lost again, struggled and broke down.



Fig 2.10. Adrien Merigeau. *Genius Loci*. 2020. Film still. Retrieved from: <https://vimeo.com/538338925>

The urban landscape is full of detail, it acts as a vital thread in terms of the atmosphere in the film, and it presents a strong visual contrast.<sup>51</sup> On the one hand, the film’s decaying urban

---

<sup>51</sup> The metaphorical and poetic visual expression of this film caught my attention. The artist has created intense and varied contrasts in this film through numerous geometric patterns and colours. For example, the contrast between light and dark, tranquillity and madness, static and dynamic. This intense conflict and unease bring the viewer into the film's narrative productively and naturally.

environment symbolises the traumatic urban life. On the other hand, the film’s shifting symbolic illustrations present the viewer with a vibrant urban landscape, a kind of “constant flow state” in the city. In this way it reveals the mystery and a sense of the uncanny in urban life. This shifting energy is conveyed through Reine’s psychedelic subconscious, it invites the audience to think about the mysterious side of the city that often goes unnoticed in ordinary life.<sup>52</sup> From my perspective, the flowing state of city dwellers is the focus at the centre in this film, it is similar to psychogeographical reverie. This contemplation and meditation on everyday life allows us to affectively recall and associate the details of our daily experiences.



Fig 2.11. Adrien Merigeau. *Genius Loci*. 2020. Film still. Retrieved from: <https://vimeo.com/538338925>

## Conclusion on *Genius Loci*

One of the intriguing aspects of her inspiration the director mentioned is that she did not intend for the film to be doctrinaire or preachy. Instead, she stays away from clear directions and narratives. By showing specific scenes from her life in the film, she appeals to audiences with

---

<sup>52</sup> Adrien Merigeau, the director of this film, explains in an interview the inspiration for the film. She sees this animation as a depiction of a person and her spirit, as a metaphor for the poetry and inspiration of her friends and her. At the same time she sees this sentimental recollection of life through imagination as a way of dealing with personal trauma.

similar experiences.<sup>53</sup> The director's approach informed this research on experimental animation and it provides knowledge about a sensation that originates from the researcher's social context.<sup>54</sup> *Genius loci* aligns with my research in its call to use the sensitive, poetic language of animation to convey a sense of the uncanny and to initiate the viewer's contemplation of the mysterious aspect of the city. Since a sense of the uncanny is a concept that lacks physicality, it requires keen observation and a reflection of my social environment. I use everything in the urban environment, including some of life's unintended discoveries as I connect the dots. As a result, using my wild imagination in my animation, this research encourages viewers to think about their urban environment via a more creative lens.

## **Video installation - a spatial narrative for the animation**

*The Uncanny City* is a projection-based, moving image installation. During my installation exhibition, I invited viewers to physically enter my work, considering the setting of the screened event. The interaction between my animation and the individual viewer forms the most crucial part of this installation practice.<sup>55</sup>

### ***Extremities (Smooth, Smooth) 1999- Pipilotti***

*Extremities (Smooth, Smooth)* is a video installation I visited in 2021 at Auckland Art Gallery's contemporary art exhibition *All That Was Solid Melts*. It consists of three separate projectors that transport the viewer into a world of sexuality with percussive images of the human body. I sat on the sofa in the middle of the dark room. The three projected scenes of *Extremities*

---

<sup>53</sup>Adrien Merigeau defines the film as a sensitive and poetic non-narrative expression. In her view, conventional narrative structures lack openness and sensitivity. Therefore she spent about three years adding and removing ideas while she started sketching until the film felt tight and fluid from start to finish. In a way similar to composing, she didn't want to definitively explain anything, but rather let the audience feel a presence on the screen throughout the film, like a raft floating down a river.

<sup>54</sup> Julian Klein, a composer and director, states in one of his reports on artistic research states that the knowledge gained in artistic research is a kind of "felt knowledge". Artistic knowledge must be acquired through sensory and emotional perception, precisely through artistic experience, from which it cannot be separated.

<sup>55</sup> Kaye, Nick. *Multi-Media: Video - Installation - Performance*. Florence: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007. Accessed November 8, 2022. ProQuest eBook Central.

appeared in a non-linear and non-narrative mode.<sup>56</sup> While they are temporarily isolated from the outside world, the projection in the dark room gives the viewers a powerful sense of immersion as they are invited into a narrative space crafted by the animator.

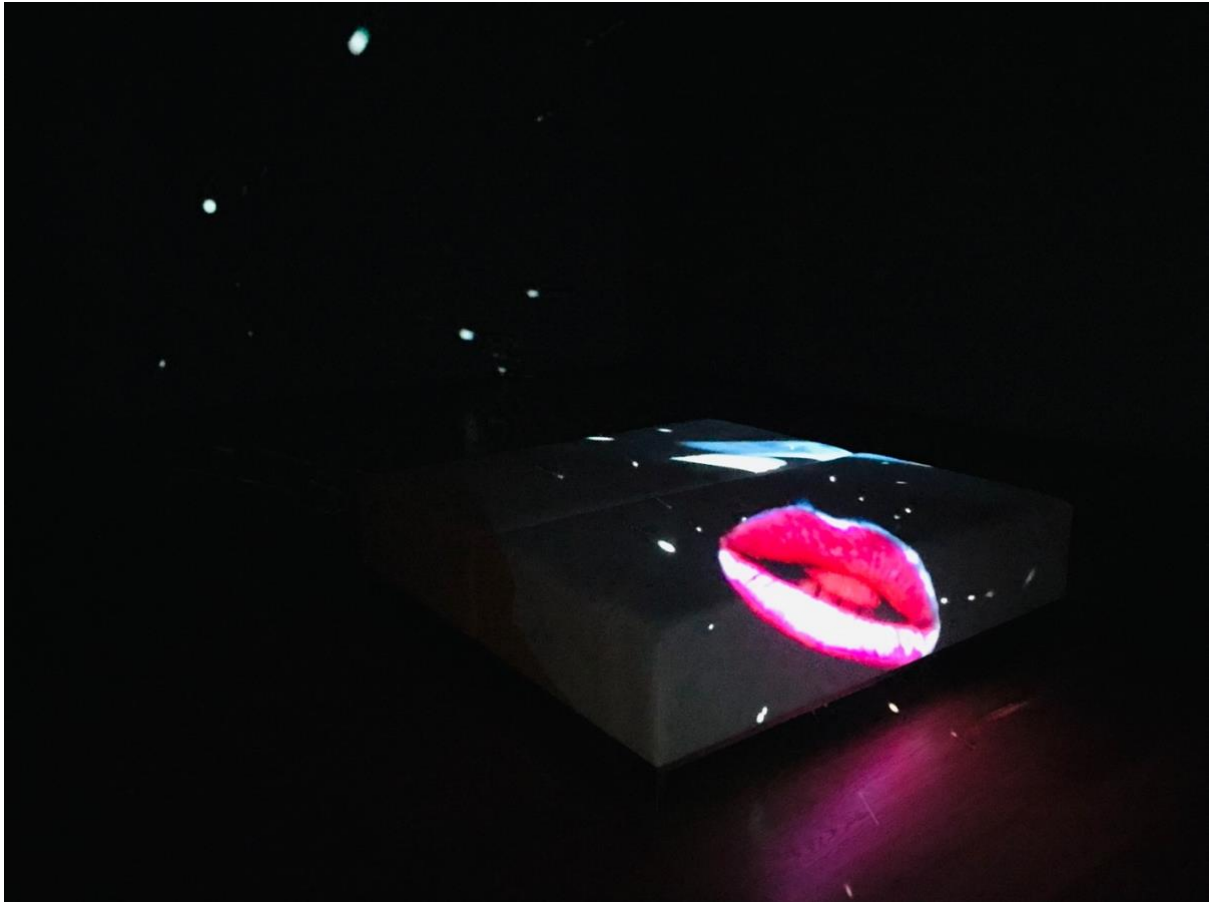


Fig 2.12. Pipilotti Rist. *Extremities (Smooth, Smooth)*. 1999. 3-channel video and audio installation. Photo taken by Benben Li. 2021.

In addition to experimental animation, non-linearity is a common storytelling strategy in video installations. For example, in *Extremities*, time delays are introduced, and the pre-recorded video material is multiplied, overlapped, or crossed. In this way, the video installation confuses the viewer's notion of linear events so time and space, virtual and real, become blurred. In this way the viewer experiences a sense of the uncanny.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> While I was watching this installation, I could not anticipate where the next moving image would appear. I had to be ready to be attacked by sudden impressions. I felt a hint of oppression and teasing, and more than that, I was amazed as enormous human organs were projected on my body or my feet.

<sup>57</sup> "(Video installation artists) sought to bring the viewer directly into the video image by creating installations that utilised closed-circuit cameras alongside live television and pre-recorded sequences. This mix of points of view and temporalities implicated the viewer in time and space". (John G. Hanhardt, 2008).

## Video projection installation – the immersive experience

The video installation in this research is based on projection mapping. It consists of three key components: the projection surface, the space, and the projected content (*The Uncanny City*).<sup>58</sup> Through projection, the uncanny city is transformed from a screen narrative to a spatial narrative. The animated content communicates a sense of the uncanny. The spatial narrative of the animation also speaks to the audience about the uncanny.

The strength of projection lies in its extreme flexibility in terms of the location. In addition to traditional white screens, the building surfaces, walls, and objects can all be used as projection surfaces. While they are setting up the projection artists will often experiment with the interaction of space, position, and light.<sup>59</sup>



Fig 2.13. Yiyun Kang. *Casting*. 2016. Video mapping installation. Screenshot from: <https://youtu.be/iNSX0c4DUz0>

---

<sup>58</sup> Imperiale, Alicia. "Seminal space: Getting under the digital skin." *Re: Skin* (2006): 265-292.

<sup>59</sup> Nofal, Eslam, Stevens, Robin, Coomans, Thomas, and Vande Moere, Andrew. "Communicating the Spatiotemporal Transformation of Architectural Heritage via an In-situ Projection Mapping Installation." *Digital Applications in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage* 11 (2018): E00083.

During the set-up process, the artist must consider whether the projected image and the projection medium will integrate. In *Casting*, for example, the creator Yiyun Kang uses video mapping to project the video onto the surfaces of three ancient Roman-style casts, where the 3D animated projections blend with the architectural surfaces. To enhance the projection, the artist used two projectors side by side.<sup>60</sup> While testing the projections, I considered different projection surfaces, such as physical shape and form or specific material properties (such as, size, shape, texture, colour, weight) to compare the effects of the different projection mediums on viewer engagement. In the chapter Documentation of Research Practice, I logged my testing process. By superimposing virtual space onto real space, I transformed my animation installation into a temporally enhanced space to create a sense of the uncanny through virtual reality. I understand this experimentation with the projection that considers different media as interactive projection mapping, aims to ensure my animation is a more immersive experience for the viewer.



Fig 2.14. Yiyun Kang. *Casting*. 2016. Video mapping installation. Screenshot from: <https://youtu.be/iNSX0c4DUz0>

---

<sup>60</sup> Kang, Yiyun. “CASTING : Site-Specific Projection Mapping Installation.” *Leonardo (Oxford)* 51, no. 4 (2018): 399-404.

At the same time, the effect of projection is inevitably influenced by the environment and the medium on which it is projected.<sup>61</sup> While testing my projections in the studio, I considered ambient light, projection distance, resolution, frame size, brightness and contrast and the lens. All these factors may affect the visual effect of the projection. I continually tuned these influences to be sure the projected image was as screen realistic as possible.

---

<sup>61</sup> Hanhardt, John G. "From Screen to Gallery: Cinema, Video, and Installation Art Practices." *American Art* 22, no. 2 (2008): 2-8.

## Chapter Three – Methods

### Introduction

Aiming to design an imaginative lens that reinterprets the urban environment, by combining a static along with a dynamic narrative and a spatial experimentation, this practice-based research project uses illustrated animation and projection installation. Through the subtle movement of visual elements, the production process explores the aesthetic potential of transforming a static narrative (illustration) into a dynamic narrative (experimental animation). This chapter outlines the methods I applied to achieve my research aims. This chapter also addresses the research questions and methodological framework of my research project.

The production of the uncanny city utilises a variety of methods that were identified during a review of the established methodologies. Together, these approaches reveal how the researcher achieves a collective influence in real-life social contexts and real-life experiences through an iterative creative practice and self-reflection. The methods I chose guided the critical decisions I made that helped me achieve my research aims throughout the creative process. The methods I chose are explored in action in Chapter Four (*Documentation of Practice*).

### **Autoethnography: the knowing and informing process through self-narrative.**

*The Uncanny City* is a research project initiated by my subjective experience as a researcher. Autoethnography provides the methodological framework for this research to understand and communicate my insider experience of the urban uncanny through self-narrative and storytelling.<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, autoethnography navigates research practices, extending the existing cultural and practical knowledge through self-reflection based on a contextual enquiry

---

<sup>62</sup> According to Jacqueline Allen Collinson, a Lincoln University auto-ethnographer and professor, the autoethnographic researcher's insider knowledge refers to the practical knowledge gained by the researcher through direct and meticulous engagement with the subject of the research, which provides a more profound insight than the outsider knowledge gained through research without direct experience of the subject.

in the research field, enabling research projects to communicate with audiences more profoundly and effectively.<sup>63</sup>

As I discussed in Chapter One, my interest in the mysterious aesthetics of the urban environment and my personal experience of living in the city initiated the creative practice and the discussion in this research project.<sup>64</sup> In this research project the nature of my exploration of the urban experience in this research project is divided into three parts:

- By interrogating my unique experience of living in a foreign country, I demonstrate how the city brought me a sense of the uncanny.
- I aim to clarify why/how a sense of the uncanny is challenging, vital and transformative.
- I seek to respond to the impact of the city and urbanisation on individuals in a productive and transformative way by symbolically visualising the uncanny in the city.

Autoethnography has informed this research project to apply a series of creative and reflective observations and research based on self-narratives, I explore this in action in the *Documentation of Practice*. In regard to Drifting, I observed and experienced urban life by wandering around the city as a means of sensing and experiencing the dynamics of the urban environment. In terms of Sketching, it is a tool of thinking and informing, I use it to record my observations and inspirations. As a tool and means of expression I use Digital illustration to convey how I understand my uncanny feeling living in the city. This eventually translated into my associations based on viewing urban architecture and various life scenarios.

Autoethnography requires the researcher to uncover general patterns and universal values in the field of research through contextual investigation to reach broader audiences in the field. Autoethnography guided me to search for theoretical partners that support the social significance and aesthetic potential of a sense of the uncanny, involving the concerns and

---

<sup>63</sup> Adams, Tony E., Stacy Linn Holman Jones, and Carolyn Ellis. *Autoethnography*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

<sup>64</sup> Autoethnography has guided this research project to use my perception and imagination of the city I live in as a vital source for uncovering a sense of the uncanny in urban spaces.

practices of this project.<sup>65</sup> Through extensive contextual explorations on a range of participators-theorists and artists, as discussed in Chapters One and Two, the researcher seeks to dialogically interact between the pre-existing knowledge of my research topic and the new information that emerged by connecting with the research content on a profoundly relational and experiential level.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, autoethnography informed the aesthetic strategies of this research practice, as investigated in detail in Chapter Three. Autoethnography led me to pay particular attention to the way visual metaphors in different animations convey a sense of the uncanny to the viewer, as well as the differences between various narrative styles and thinking about how to create my unique visual languages. All of this influenced my decision-making in the production process.

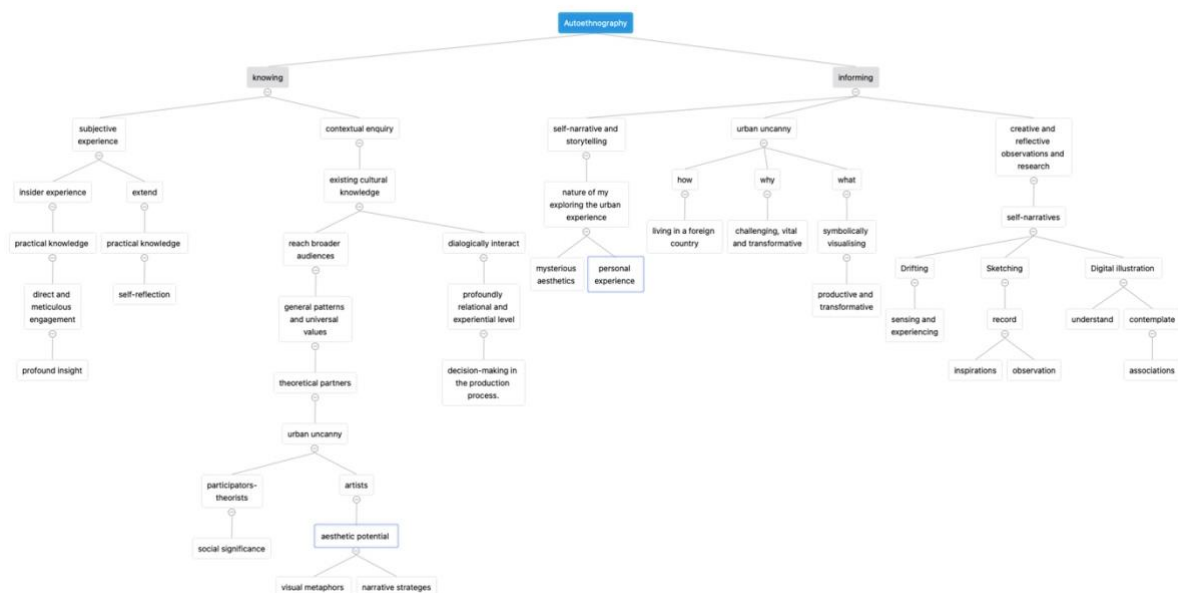


Fig 3.1. Benben Li. *Visualise Methodology in a Mind Mapping – Autoethnology*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland

<sup>65</sup>Autoethnography provides the theoretical and practical framework for this research by locating my uncanny experience of living in the city in a broader cultural and social context, which aims to contribute to and extend the existing knowledge and research on the perspectives of the uncanny through self-narrative and creative approaches.

<sup>66</sup> In this research project, autoethnography has enabled me to build connections between the storyteller (me) and the audience through subjective, reflective and critical thinking. The contextual reviews of practitioner-theorists and artists provide space for potential critical reflection and served to shape the creative practice of this research.

## Heuristic – self-exploration and reflective dialogue

In heuristic research, the researcher's autobiographical connection to the research topic and the desire to explore it is central to supporting and driving the research.<sup>67</sup> For the researcher, the significance of heuristic research lies in achieving "self-understanding" and "self-growth."<sup>68</sup> The heuristic focus requires my direct and honest experience of the research topic and a deep insight based on personal intuition in the field of research.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, in this research project, heuristics framed a series of motive and self-initiated methods that consist of sensational interpretation and symbolic communication, such as drifting, observation and sketches, as detailed in Chapter Four. These research methods challenged me as researcher and independent animator to rely on my experience and intuition while I was dealing with critical decisions in my creative production.<sup>70</sup> Both autoethnography and heuristics underscore the importance of the researcher's subjective experience in driving the research process. Self-awareness lies in self-inquiry: this has to do with the nature and purpose of my inquiry in the field of practice as an illustrator-animator.<sup>71</sup>

The heuristic guides this project through action-reflection to identify issues that arise in research practice and to modify my practice and ideas based on self-inquiry and self-assessment, working on creating practical knowledge.<sup>72</sup> During the research practice, I repeatedly asked myself several critical questions, so I could stay true to my aims.

- What is it - What is this animation about? What is its core idea? What do I want to tell the audience through this animation?
- What does it look like? - What is the visual style of my animation? What feeling can I convey to the audience through this visual style?

---

<sup>67</sup> In this research project, the autobiographical connection is defined as my direct and honest experience of the research topic and a deep insight based on personal intuition in the field of research.

<sup>68</sup> Moustakas, Clark. *Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications*. Sage Publications, 1990, 4.

<sup>69</sup> Mihalache, Gabriela. "Heuristic inquiry: Differentiated from descriptive phenomenology and aligned with transpersonal research methods." *The Humanistic Psychologist* 47, no. 2 (2019): 136.

<sup>70</sup> Sultan, Nevine. *Heuristic inquiry: Researching human experience holistically*. Sage Publications, 2018.

<sup>71</sup> The heuristic inquiry helps me to discover and understand my unique voice as an illustrator-animator and to deliver my most delicate and complex feelings about living in the urban environment through creative practice.

<sup>72</sup> Heuristic inquiry "engages in self-searching and reflexive self-dialoguing" (Nevine Sultan, 2019), shaping my ability to solve research problems independently through self-reflection and intuition. In heuristic research, I continually revise my research practice through an iterative process of reflection and testing.

- What is it made of in terms of the essential visual elements, particularly the visual symbols and metaphors, and what does my animation contain to convey a sense of the uncanny to the viewer?
- What is the storyline of this animation project? This includes the frame rate and duration.

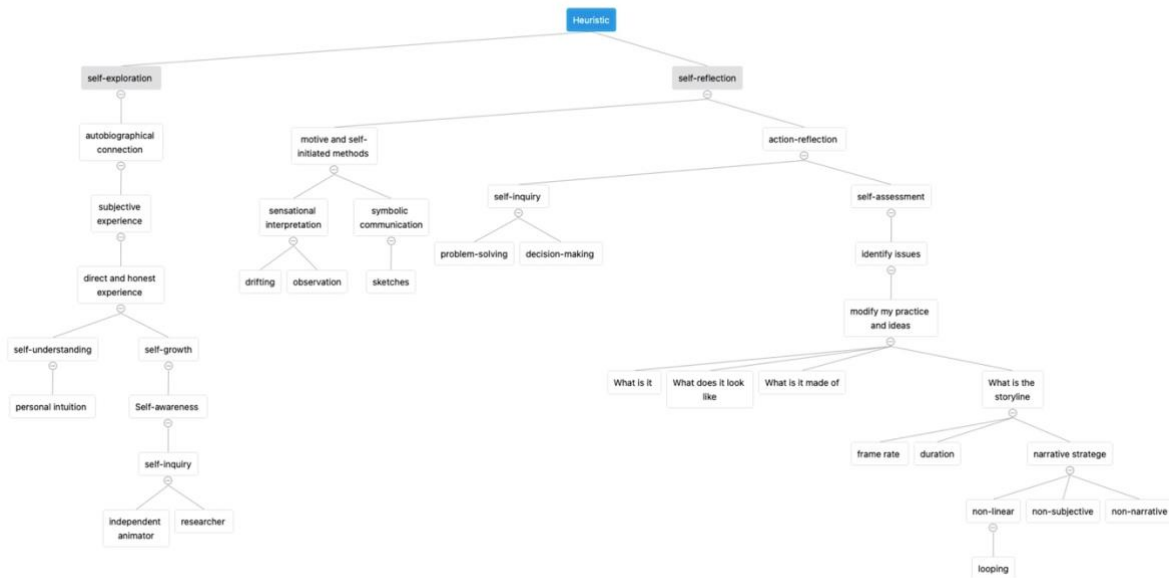


Fig 3.2. Benben Li. *Visualise Methodology in a Mind Mapping – Heuristic*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland

With these questions in mind, I worked on my sketches, resolved through self-exploration and reflective dialogue as I repeatedly mapped out my practice. Therefore, the decision-making in the animation production process is carried out via self-reflection and problem-solving to create the knowledge of practice in the animation practice.

### **Walking methodology – walking, sensing, knowing**

*Walking* as both method and methodology informed the theoretical orientations of the research-creation walking events in this research. As a bodily methodology, the walking methodology informs this research project that explores the influence of the urban environment on me (as a city dweller) through physical movement and sensory perception, focusing on the researcher’s

mystical experience of living in the city.<sup>73</sup> The walking methodology aims to situate the underlying mystical aesthetics of the city through walking in the urban environment and places them in the creation of animations.<sup>74</sup>

The walking methodology guides this research by drifting through urban spaces to see and feel the city. In this research, drifting aims at thinking about and feeling the city through random walks, mainly carried out visually.<sup>75</sup> Informed by the walking methodology, this research uses “walking-sensing-knowing” as a primary investigative process.<sup>76</sup> I conducted sensory investigations in various places in the city, which required me to use all of my physical senses - sight, smell, hearing and touch - to experience the city.<sup>77</sup> The walking method is known in walking methodology as spatial practice - a way of constructing lived experience, perceiving the mystery in urban space and assigning social significance to it.<sup>78</sup> The walking methodology is a form of participation in a society that is formed by environmental perception and dynamic experience in animation design. It helped me integrate the ecological elements that informed my perception of being part of the world that is more complex, and it inspired me so I could take in that complexity.

---

<sup>73</sup> The walking methodology informed this research about navigating the critical contexts of “*place, sensory inquiry, embodiment, and rhythm*” and how they play an essential part in the relationship between the researcher and geography (Elaine Stratford, 2021).

<sup>74</sup> Stratford, Elaine, Gordon Waitt, and Theresa Harada. “A relational approach to walking: Methodology, metalanguage, and power relations.” *Geographical Research* 59, no. 1 (2021): 91-105.

<sup>75</sup> Debord, Guy. “Theory of the Dérive.” *Internationale situationniste* 2 (1958): 62-66.

<sup>76</sup> Referring to Stephanie Springgay, walking methodology evokes sensory and affective investigations, prioritising corporeal and material practices.

<sup>77</sup> Sensory studies consist of methods that foreground smell, touch, and sound, which have prioritised the senses in research. (Stephanie Springgay, 2018)

<sup>78</sup> Springgay, Stephanie, and Taylor & Francis. *Walking Methodologies in a More-than-human World: WalkingLab*. Routledge Advances in Research Methods; 24. 2018, 3.

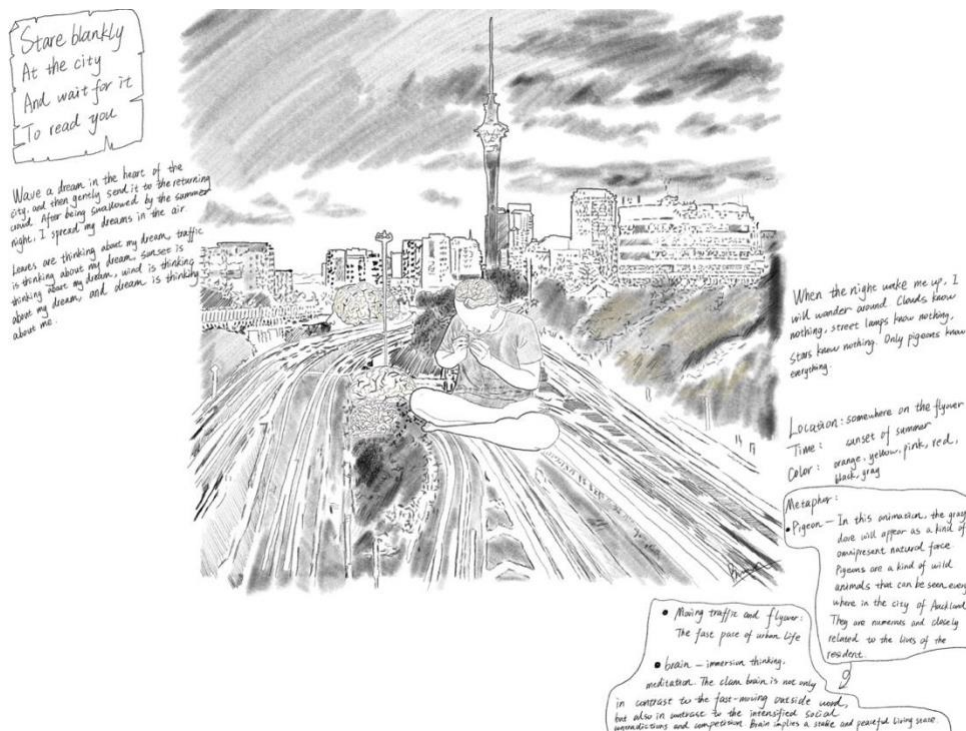


Fig 3.3. Benben Li. *Digital Sketch - Meditation on the flyover*, 2021, Digital Illustration, Auckland

## Making methods

This section discusses the research methods involved in animation production, such as drifting and drawing. In addition, this chapter introduces drifting as a research method for the sensory and walking perception of urban environments that are influenced by walking methodology. Production methods include logging inspiration, fantasy, and contemplation in animation through drawing. The practice of drawing provides the main inspiration for developing visual elements, metaphors, and narratives in animation.

## Drifting – spiritually travelling through the city

In this research project, drifting is a research method that involves a multi-sensory approach to perception. It is applied as perceiving the city's attraction in an aimless and unplanned way,

combining physical walking and spiritual travelling. Situationists believe that through drifting, one can proactively understand and reflect on the cities where we live.<sup>79</sup>

The drifting method informed this research using a poetic and meditative method of perceiving mystery in the city. In my research practice, I applied drift primarily to gather material and generate inspiration for the uncanny perspectives of the city. While creating the experimental animation, I searched for unique spectatorial and narrative strategies. During the pre-production process of my animation, I experienced urban life in depth - the hidden side of the hustle and bustle - and embedded it in the visual puns of the animation.<sup>80</sup>

## **Drawing – as a visual representation of the invisible**

In this research project, drawing underpins the thought process that goes into the creative practice process, it is applied as a versatile research method.<sup>81</sup> Drawing allows me, as the researcher, to understand the visible world, my unique voice as an illustrator, and who I am.<sup>82</sup> The drawing method involves the practice of sketching and digital illustration, which are eventually formalised into several images that became key to the scenes of *The Uncanny City*.

Drawing is involved in every step of the animation process in my research project, this includes the storyboards, scenes, and the character/visual elements. The drawing method is applied as a physical record of my recognition perception of urban space and a procedural action to register and develop my deliberative process.<sup>83</sup> I record my inspiration through drawing and evaluate and revise my ideas in a constant process of self-reflection and contemplation to contribute to the narrative.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Sadler, Simon. *The Situationist City*. Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1998.

<sup>80</sup> As Reyner Banham states in his book, drift creates an opportunity for the city dweller to embrace the city. Although it is not necessarily comfortable and efficient, it is enjoyable. Banham argues that drifting aims to help city dwellers move away from repetitive commuting and capitalist rationalism and experience the city's attractiveness in a spontaneous, slow-paced way.

<sup>81</sup> The animator Malmier states that drawing is the basis of all creative practice. Computer animation or hand-drawn animation cannot be produced without drawing.

<sup>82</sup> Duff, Leo, and Phil Sawdon, eds. *Drawing: the purpose*. Intellect Books, 2008.

<sup>83</sup> Wells, Paul, Quinn, Joanna, and Mills, Les. *Drawing for Animation*. Basics Animation; 3. Lausanne; Worthing: AVA Academia, 2008, 100.

<sup>84</sup> As a way of thinking and self-reflection, drawing requires me to leave the sketch after I have made it, meditate on it, come to a conclusion, and then return to the sketch for reinterpretation and reorientation.

Paul Wells considers drawing a shortcut to animation using symbolic expression and visual language to communicate visual elements, images and the artist's ideas and concepts and to enable the communication of some specific idea or the choice of form by the artist in an exaggerated, dramatic form. In my research practice, drawing animation focuses on the communication of emotions and ideas, it draws on the construction of the narrative and visual elements. In Chapter Four, I unpack the key visual elements in the animation and how they are constructed through drawing and communicate the underlying ideas of this research project.



Fig 3.4. Benben Li. *Illustrative Diary - The Tree on Cook Island*, 2021, Digital Illustration, Auckland

## Observational sketching

I started with my pre-production animation process with observational sketching, this provides a means of demonstrating my ideas and observations for the pre-production of the animation for this project.<sup>85</sup> I used the sketchbook as a visual resource to inform my work, including mind mapping, observational sketching, and prototyping.

---

<sup>85</sup> Wells, Paul, Quinn, Joanna, and Mills, Les. *Drawing for Animation*. Basics Animation; 3. Lausanne; Worthing: AVA Academia, 2008, 103.

In this research project, observational sketching as a research method reveals my aesthetic judgment of drawing objects. In an academic work on the potential of sketching as a research tool for the social sciences, Sue Heath and Lynne Chapman present a view of observational sketching, which links to the practical intent of this research on observational sketching: observational sketching is a participatory method of thinking about drawing because it does not require an accurate reproduction of that which is seen. Observational sketching requires artists to be able to pay attention to minor details, such as that which particularly appeals to them, rather than giving equal attention to everything that is seen.<sup>86</sup> Julia Midgley makes a similar argument about the drawing process, which supports my sketching practice. She argues that drawing can be cursory because it usually offers only a partial and often a tentative representation of that which is being observed. Drawing is characterised by editing extraneous details so the artist can focus on the core of that which is being depicted.

In response to the above theories, I used sketching in this research to present my insightful reflections on the urban environment. During my sketching process, I avoided representing the original objects. I concentrated on drawing the vital details of the scenes that made me sense something mysterious while I was improvising based on my ideas and inspirations. In this way, sketching helped me gain a more efficient insight into those moments in life that inspired me.<sup>87</sup> By drawing the essential details of the subject, I observed and noted my thoughts and context at the time, and I reviewed my inspiration and ideas while I was formally working.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> Heath, Sue, Lynne Chapman, and The Morgan Centre Sketchers. "Observational sketching as method." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 21, no. 6 (2018): 713-728.

<sup>87</sup> Midgley, Julia. "Drawing lives-reportage at work." *Studies in Material Thinking*, (4). Retrieved 5 (2011).

<sup>88</sup> While sketching, I would take notes on the context of the work by the side, such as the atmosphere, the weather and some of my immediate thoughts, detailed in Chapter Four.



Fig 3.5. Benben Li. *Observational Sketching – Santa*, 2022, Digital Sketches, Auckland



Fig 3.6. Benben Li. *Observational Sketching – A Night Walk*, 2022, Digital Sketches, Auckland

## Mind mapping

The next step is the reflection on my sketches. By reviewing my sketches, I sought to reinterpret and reposition them in search of the potential to develop them into my digital illustrations.<sup>89</sup> The reflection in the drawing process aims to uncover the underlying mystical aesthetics of those I perceived in the urban landscape, which I further developed into the initial inspiration for the uncanny in my creative process.<sup>90</sup> While reflecting, I used mind mapping to arrange my associations and imagination that might have flashed by. Mind mapping helped me filter and integrate ideas that might be useful for creating animations, such as inspiration from sketches, this helped me demonstrate my thinking process in a more structured way.

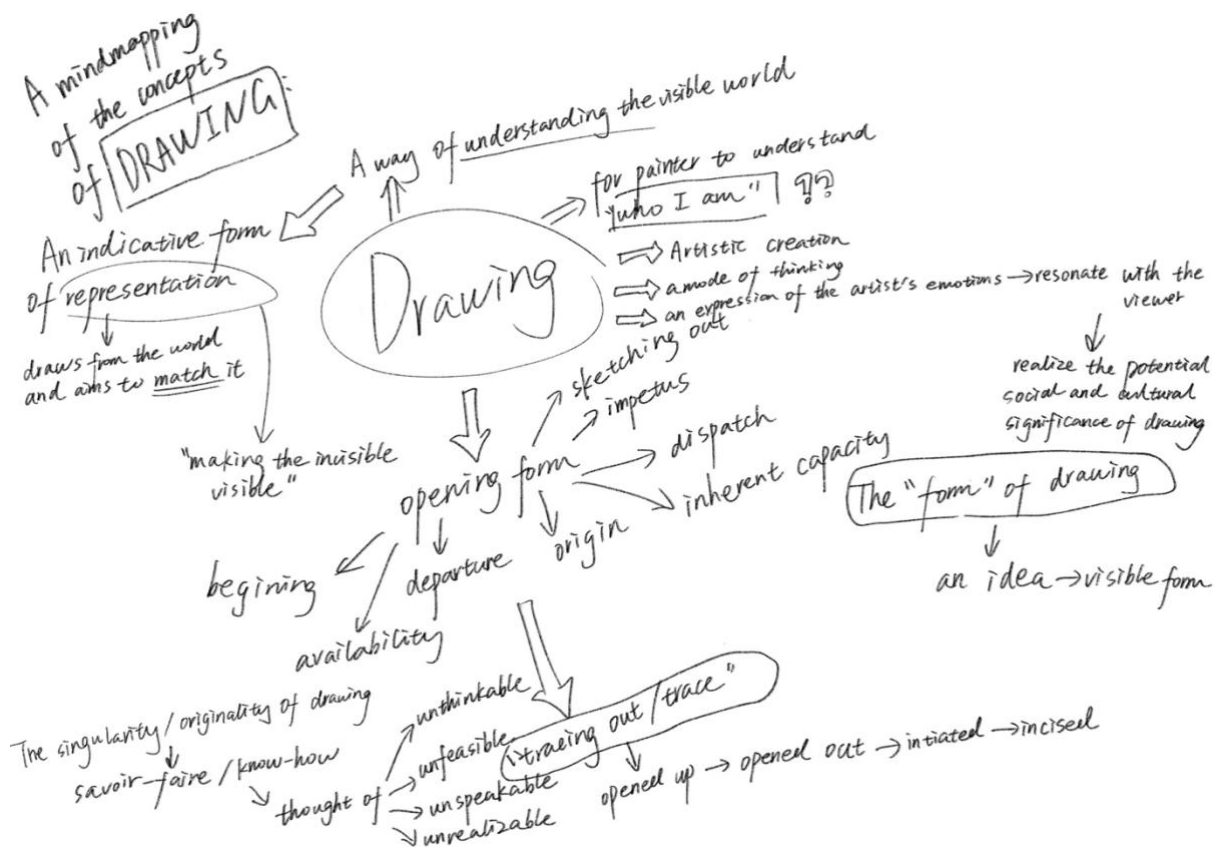


Fig 3.7. Benben Li. *Mind Mapping - The Concepts of Drawing*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>90</sup> Paul Wells points out that personal memories are essential to create art and serve as a ready-made prompt for visual expression. For the artist, memories are frequently associated with attractive or practical material already expressed in other images.

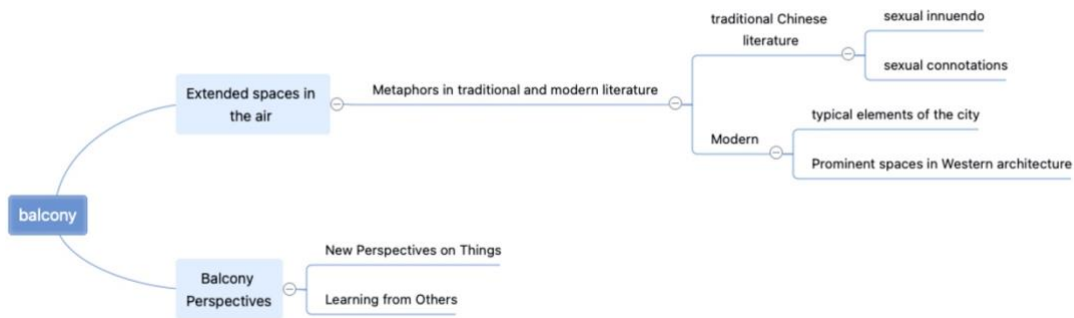


Fig 3.8. Benben Li. *Visualise Brainstorming in a Mind Mapping – The Design Concepts of Balcony*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland

## Digital drawing as a convenient and efficient digital tool

As an information tool, digital drawing helped me understand and communicate my pre-production ideas for animation in a flexible and adaptable way.<sup>91</sup> Digital drawing is also a thinking tool, a way to test and adapt my ideas through reflection and self-dialogue. Digital drawing is vital as a versatile and accessible tool at different stages of the animation process.

The production of digital illustrations is organised around three components: scene design, storyboards, and character (visual elements) design. Drawing scenes involves the design of “background, layout and choreography”.<sup>92</sup> I created many illustrated scenes in adobe illustrator and then evaluated and tested their performance in terms of the narrative.<sup>93</sup> The design of the storyboards is another essential part of the pre-production of the animation, it aims to build the image sequences of the animation. I designed different storylines in the sketchbook. After that, I changed and rearranged the running order of the storyboards through reflection to communicate the narrative more effectively. Character design involves constructing and

<sup>91</sup> The digital drawing software on my digital device provided me with a variety of tools to meet different needs when drawing. At the same time, the memory space on my computer allowed me to keep much of my practice sessions and record the production process for later organisation and review.

<sup>92</sup> Wells, Paul, Joanna. Quinn, and Les. Mills. *Drawing for Animation*. Lausanne: AVA Academia, 2008.

<sup>93</sup> I designed the illustrated scenes as a macrocosm with a variety of creatures and scenes of life. These buildings and scenes of life, partly based on my memories recorded during the sketching process and partly from my imagination, are interwoven to form a city in my mind that does not exist.

developing the critical visual elements in the animation, it aims to create visual metaphors for the animation. In the *Documentation of Practice*, I described in detail how each critical visual metaphor works to communicate a sense of the uncanny in my animation.

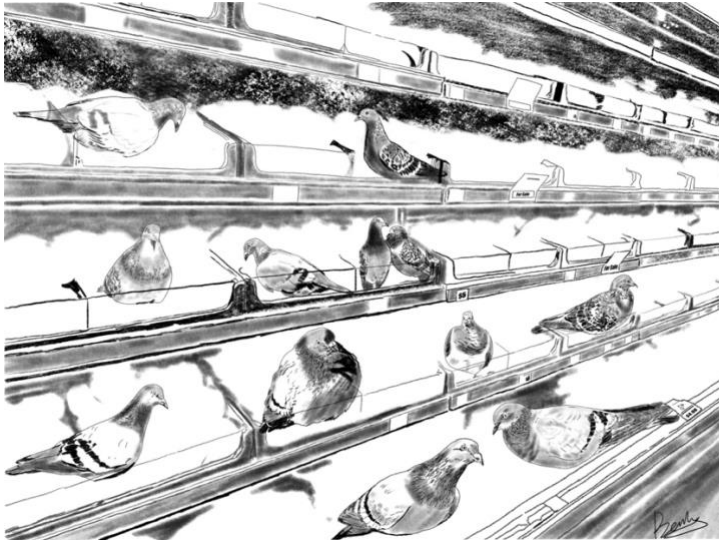


Fig 3.9. Benben Li. *Illustrative Diary - Night Party in the Supermarket*, 2021, Digital Illustration, Auckland

## **Storyboarding for animation - understanding narrative through visual imagery**

In this research project, I designed and tested vital elements of the animation through the construction of storyboards, which served as drafts for the animation design that allowed me to rework, refine and modify my concepts and ideas. I constructed the storyboards with various digital tools that made them as convenient as possible for me to create, such as pads and digital drawing boards. The digital tools help me complete my drawings efficiently and quickly.<sup>94</sup> I created my storyboards in two steps: firstly, I created many sketches using thin and rapid line compositions based on observational drawing incorporating my initial ideas for uncanny scenes. I then built on this by drawing again with detailed digital illustrations, refining the initial ideas into precise and detailed illustrations that I will apply to the construction of the animated scenes. As the only member of the crew producing the animation, the simplified storyboarding helped

---

<sup>94</sup> According to storyboard artist and theorist Sergio Paez, storyboards are a tool to help animators shorthand information rapidly, by creating a complete image in the shortest possible time using a range of drawing tools as necessary.

me test the ideas efficiently. By doing so, I attempted to place the animated elements in their context most straightforwardly and satisfactorily as possible to make the storyline flow smoothly and tightly.

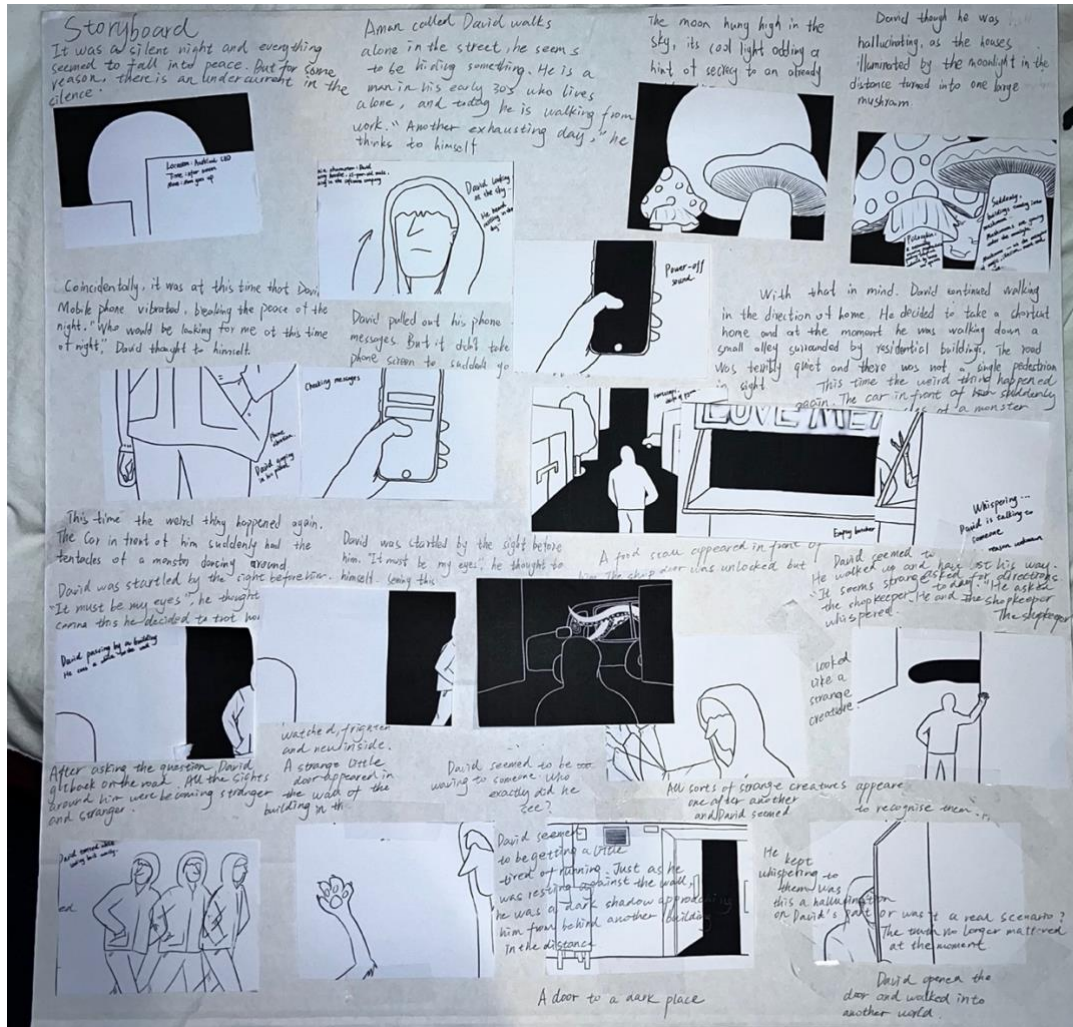


Fig 3.10. Benben Li. *Storyboard Documentation – Notes*, 2022, Photography, Auckland

## Independent illustrator and animator

Working independently on scenes, visual elements, storyboards, and renderings as a solo animator can be daunting. Therefore, another focus of this research in the animation process has to do with how to efficiently communicate my point of view on the urban uncanny. Therefore, rather than traditional forms of animation, this research uses experimental animation to convey the ideas in this study, as it moves away from the cumbersome and rigid narrative

constraints of traditional animation and gives the animator a more permissive medium for self-narrative.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Two, I responded to the narrative strategies of experimental animation and visual installations, in terms of their ability to communicate with the audience through metaphorical and contemplative means. This informs this research in exploring viable ways of communicating with the audience by virtue of creating a range of unique visual metaphors and narrative strategies to deliver independent and engaging animated works within the limited time frame of the project.

---

<sup>95</sup> In view of my research, experimental animation places more emphasis on imagery and the feeling it gives to the viewer. The word experimental gives the genre a contemplative and avant-garde quality that challenges the dominant and traditional, yet also an abstract and obscure character, as the non-mainstream often requires it to be more contextualised so the audience can understand it.

## Chapter Four – The Documentation of Practice

### Introduction

This chapter includes a discussion of the creative practice documentation. It addresses the application of the personal narrative and research methods in the animation production. The animation production aims to communicate the researcher's understanding of urbanisation and the cityscape's uncanniness using poetic and symbolic expression. This helps to guide the audience to associate it with their own experiences. The research practice initiates communication between the researcher's unique experience of the urban landscape and the viewer so the viewer begins to rethink their city.

*The Uncanny City* aims to create an immersive experience through illustrative animation and projection installation. At the same time, through the narrative strategies and visual metaphors constructed in the animation, this project explores the contemplative and poetic language that seeks to connect affectively with the audience. The production of the animated short film is developed into three steps: pre-production (observation, scenes and storyboard design), visual element/character design and rendering. However, given the constraints of an individual working independently on an animation, the rendering process remains at a fundamental stage. Therefore, the animation practice for this research is a challenging attempt, as it relates to a solo animator engaging experimentally with the aesthetic potential of the uncanny.

### Drifting in the city – the uncanny experience of a night walk

As analysed in Chapter Three, the drifting method has allowed me to use all my senses to observe the cityscape in depth. The walking methodology and heuristics have reframed drifting as an experimental approach, gaining practical knowledge by intuition and tangible experience.<sup>96</sup> In this research, the process of drifting can be concretely expressed as an uncanny

---

<sup>96</sup> The term experimental is employed here because experimentation indicates a method of enquiry that is not fixed and subject to success or failure or a process of trial and error. The experimental approach, therefore, emphasises

experience and I am fascinated by the uncontrollable nature of the city. In this process, I developed a strong sense of attraction to the city, and I experienced a sense of déjà vu that occurs as an overwhelming experience, intermingled with feelings of awe, unease, surprise and curiosity about the city where I live that I can never fully comprehend. The exploratory practice of drifting, unconstrained by rules, has constituted an essential part of the development of my embryonic thought, as my imagination is free in the process. I have experienced numerous moments where I was drifting. I felt inspired and a sense of reverie prevailed that resembled a picture that was already in front of me.<sup>97</sup>

---

the feelings and experiences gained in the practice process, they play a crucial role in formulating creative inspiration.

<sup>97</sup> I have wandered through the city at different times, exploring every street. I let my intuition and my feet lead the way. I enjoyed the uncontrollable feeling of being in the city as it brings me surprises. Sometimes I get lost because two different streets feel familiar or if a street that I have not been on for a long time reveals itself in a new way due to urban renewal.



Fig 4.1. Benben Li. *Digital documentation of Drifting – 4 AM*, 2022, Photography, Auckland Central

Working with the drifting method, I carried on sightseeing and wandering in the city during the early stages of the research practice. In this process, I took photos and notes on my phone to document what I saw and heard, and I wrote down my imagination and flashes of

inspiration.<sup>98</sup> In the process, I explored various parts of the city, including a few corners few people have ventured into.<sup>99</sup> Each drift usually took a day, allowing me to observe the city at different times. I used my senses of hearing, sight, smell, and touch to perceive the city. Through drifting, I discovered that the city has a rhythm of its own - its sounds, temperatures, and even air circulation and smells changed subtly and continuously, it varied depending upon the time of day.<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> In my research project, sketching is applied as a learning method, which stems from observing and reflecting on the physical world.

<sup>99</sup> The places I drifted in the city include cinemas, hospitals, children's parks, supermarkets, bus stops, train stations, bookstores, residential areas, and car parks, to lesser-known areas, such as morgues, undertakers, cemeteries, brothels, abandoned warehouses, and churches that are in the process of being demolished.

<sup>100</sup> At the peak of the commute, the city was bustling and lively. The scent of burning petrol and perfume mingle in the air. In the evening, the city's rhythm changes from warm to a slow, warm beat. The afterglow of the city has not yet dissipated. The sunset reflects the people returning home. Seagulls squawk and flutter off into the distance.



Fig 4.2. Benben Li. *Digital documentation of Drifting - Vertical View*, 2022, Photography, Auckland Central



Fig 4.3. Benben Li. *Digital documentation of Drifting – Sleepless*, 2022, Photography, Auckland



Fig 4.4. Benben Li. *Digital documentation of Drifting – Ocean Inn*, 2022, Photography, Auckland



Fig 4.5. Benben Li. *Digital documentation of Drifting – Ghost Fire*, 2022, Photography, Auckland



Fig 4.6. Benben Li. *Digital documentation of Drifting – Untitled*, 2022, Photography, Auckland

### **Instant observational sketches - participatory method and thinking tool**

My research practice begins with observational sketches including a fieldwork diary and a tool for thinking of the urban environment.<sup>101</sup> I sketched the buildings and street scenes while drifting in the city using my iPad with the drawing software Procreate.<sup>102</sup> This process has shown the researcher's contextual reflection of the psychogeography and the house metaphor, as discussed in Chapters One and Two. I intentionally seek the buildings and the sites that give me a sense of the sublime, or scenes of life with an uncanny atmosphere.

I use a sketchbook to record and reflect on the way a building affects me and how I feel about different buildings in an urban environment.<sup>103</sup> These figures of buildings acted as triggers for the audience to recall their memories of living in the city in my animation. While sketching a building, I would take notes about the environmental conditions and log my immediate thoughts simultaneously so I could review my notes later.

---

<sup>101</sup> I wanted to know how architects generally designed the structure of their houses, including balconies, beams and roofs generally and how they looked, how windows were designed and how they were spaced. Even though each building follows a particular design pattern, they are all different.

<sup>102</sup> Procreate offers me a wide range of brushes and different resolutions. Thanks to digital technology, it is possible to have a large studio with a great variety of drawing tools on a miniature touchscreen monitor.

<sup>103</sup> I have used sketches to record many buildings that frequently appear in my daily life, including office buildings in the city centre, flats on both sides of a commercial street, supermarkets, cinemas, hospitals, and shopping malls.

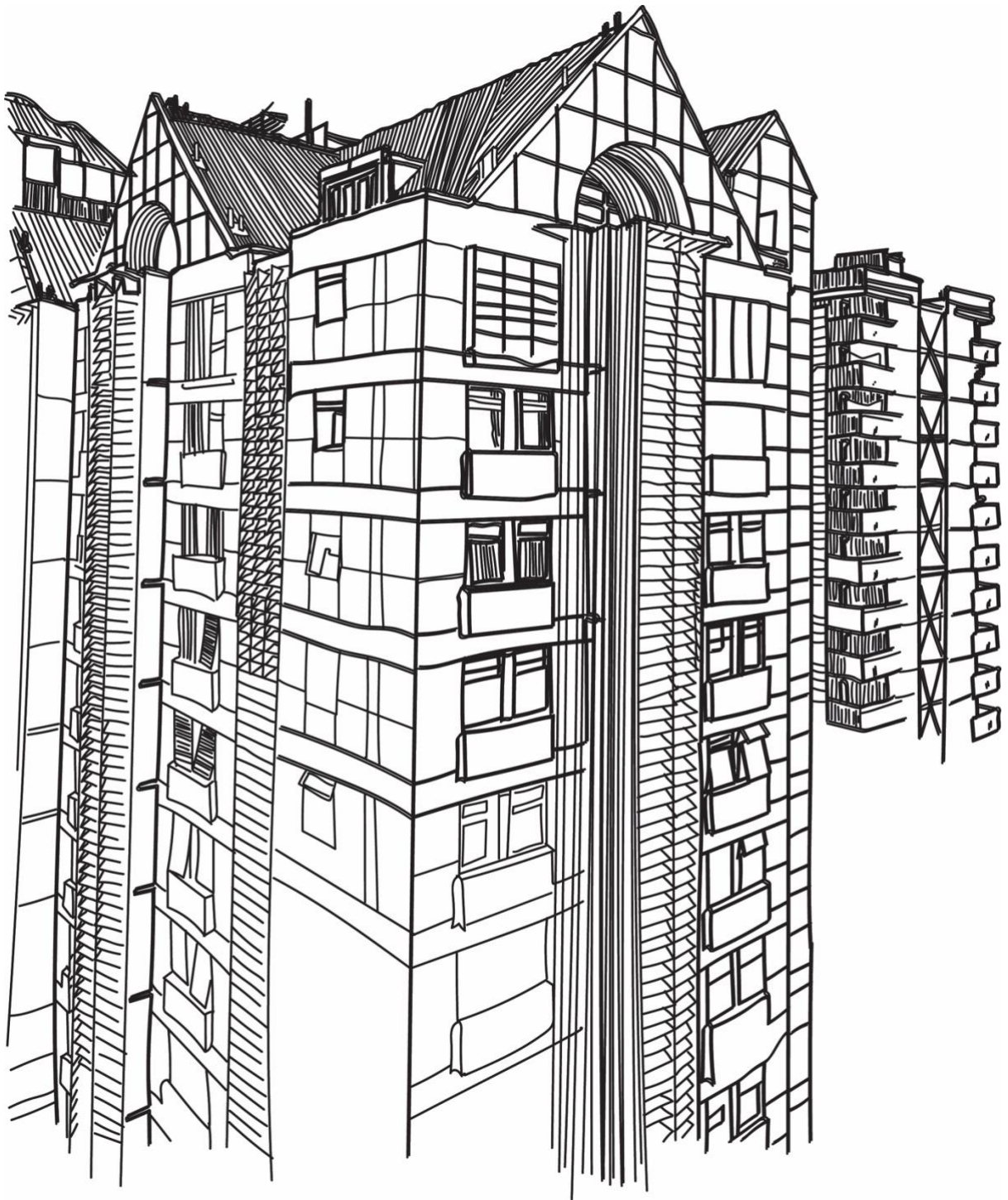


Fig 4.7. Benben Li. *Sketches Documentation- Apartments*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland

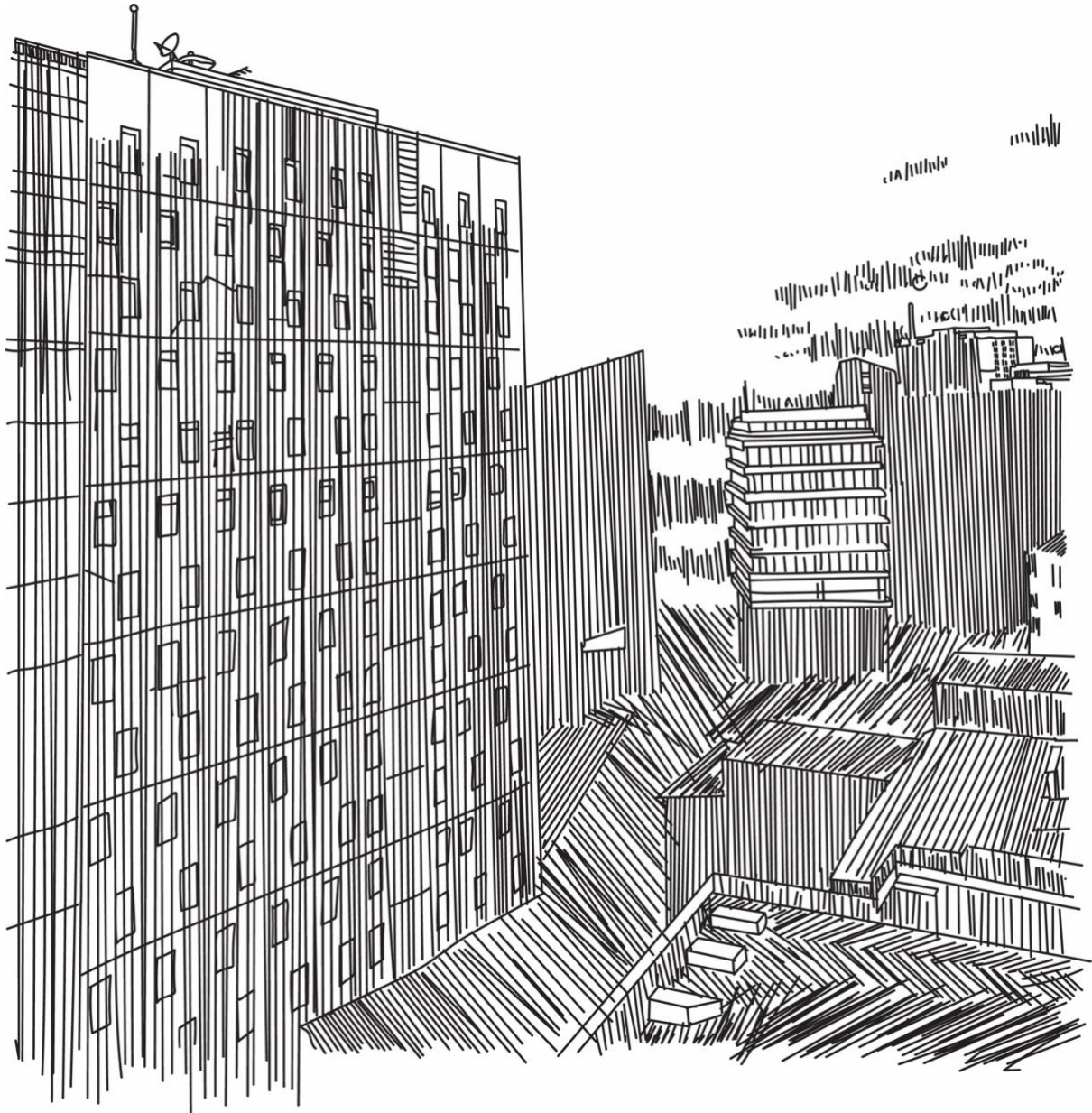


Fig 4.8. Benben Li. *Sketches Documentation – Apartments*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland



Fig 4.9. Benben Li. *Sketches Documentation – The Abandoned Church*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland

## Drawing as a method of thinking

I started by thinking about *The Uncanny City* and what I wanted it to look like, making myself the primary observer of my animation. While drawing, I asked myself the following questions:

- What if I had multiple perspectives on the city? One is a third-person perspective (outsider's view), where I look down on the world, and another a first-person perspective (insider's view), about where I am, **for example, in** which part of the city.
- What would it look or feel like if I designed *The Uncanny city* from an outsider's perspective? What about the insider's perspective?

I repeatedly pondered these questions while drawing and seeking answers to them. I situated myself as both participant and observer for my drawing.<sup>104</sup>

As Andrew Shelby stated, drawing is like “initiating a trace that must always be discovered again, opened up, opened out, initiated, incised”.<sup>105</sup> The drawing method in this research project was applied as a mode of thinking as I explored my feeling about the urban uncanny. In this research, the “trace” was my expression of uncanny perspectives in urban space. As I concentrated on my drawing, I put my trace aside for a while. Then I re-examined my trace based on my completed work if I felt I had drifted from the theme. If unfortunately, there was a disconnect between my work and the trace, if the drawing was not speaking to the theme I expected, then I put the disconnected part down, rethought my trace, and started a new round of work. The disconnected work was not classified as a failure in this research practice. I temporarily filed it on my computer and as I revisited it periodically, I inadvertently was able to find some new inspiration.



Fig 4.10. Benben Li. *Sketches Documentation – Midnight*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland

---

<sup>104</sup> As I drew *The Uncanny City*, I imagined myself in it, and after a while, I’d withdraw and look at the picture from a third-person perspective.

<sup>105</sup> Duff, Leo., Sawdon, Phil, and ProQuest. *Drawing - the Purpose*. Bristol; Chicago: Intellect Books, 2008, 120.



Fig 4.11. Benben Li. *Sketches Documentation – Drifting*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland

## What is uncanny to me?

As mentioned in Chapter One, experimenting with the uncanny has allowed me to fundamentally understand and explore my complex feelings of awe and unease about urban life, and in the process help my audience think differently about the city, the world, and our lives. Through autoethnographic and heuristic contemplations, this research aspires to connect with the research subject in a more motivated and self-initiated way.<sup>106</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> As I was thinking about constructing an imaginary city, I did not start by contemplating how the audience would perceive it. Instead, I'd start with my inner intuition and consider what I want it to look like and what my deepest fantasy of the uncanny is, which is the essential stage in my creative process. This way of thinking from

In my research practice, I aim to create a fantastic experience of drifting through the city and invite the viewer to participate in this experience in the immersive and poetic landscape that I created. From my personal experience, immersive visuals have the potential to create a powerful interaction with the viewer, who is then more likely to resonate with the narrative in this animation.

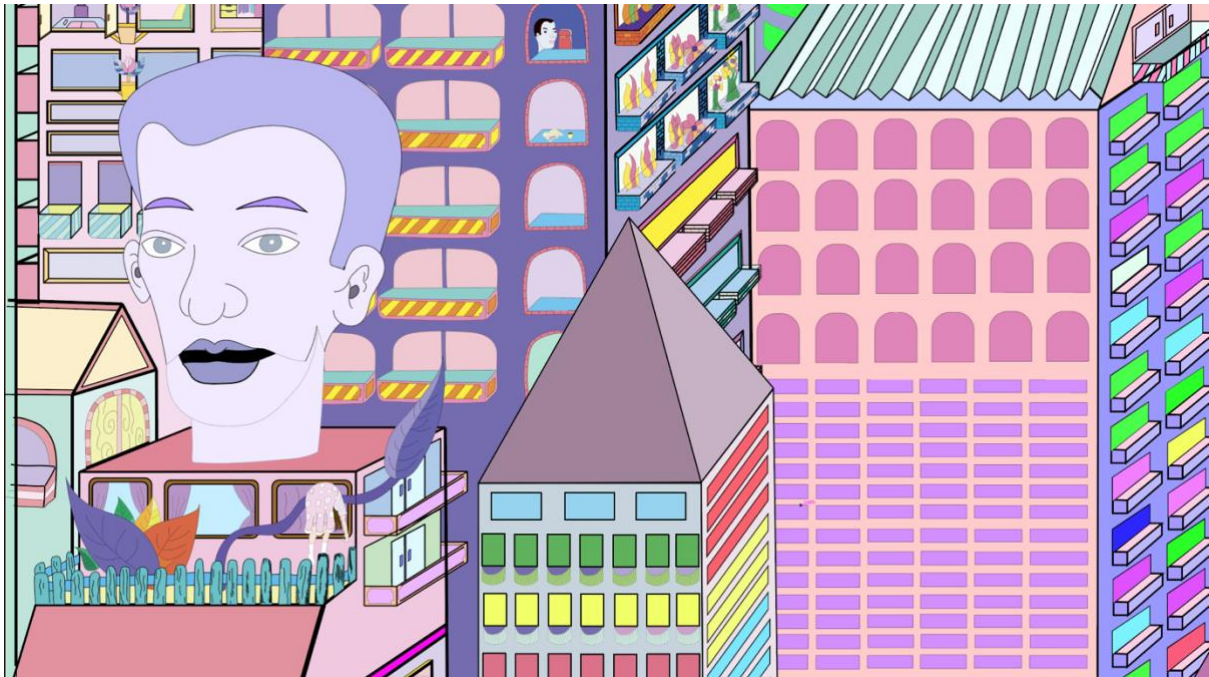


Fig 4.12. Benben Li. *Scene Test - Mirage*, 2022, Digital Animation, Auckland

The early concept of this project started around the question, “how do I visualise the sense of uncanny of living in the city?” I realised the need for a symbolic expression of the sense of the uncanny, which is otherwise an intangible concept in my projects.<sup>107</sup> The contextual explorations of the metaphorical expression of urban uncanniness informed this research to make the connection with everyday objects in urban life, as discussed in Chapter Three. While I feel a sense of the uncanny at the same time I feel attracted by the diversity of urban

---

my inner self first allows me to focus on the creation itself, maximising my creativity and avoiding being distracted by worries and anxieties about audience reaction and the visual impact of the final result.

<sup>107</sup> I understand that the inspiration for the city's sense of the uncanny cannot be entirely imagined; I need references from the real world, which I can then reinterpret and reposition to adapt and develop through my drawings.

architecture, and it is at these times I feel I have become part of the city. Therefore, in my animation, I use architecture as a visual metaphor for a sense of the uncanny.<sup>108</sup>

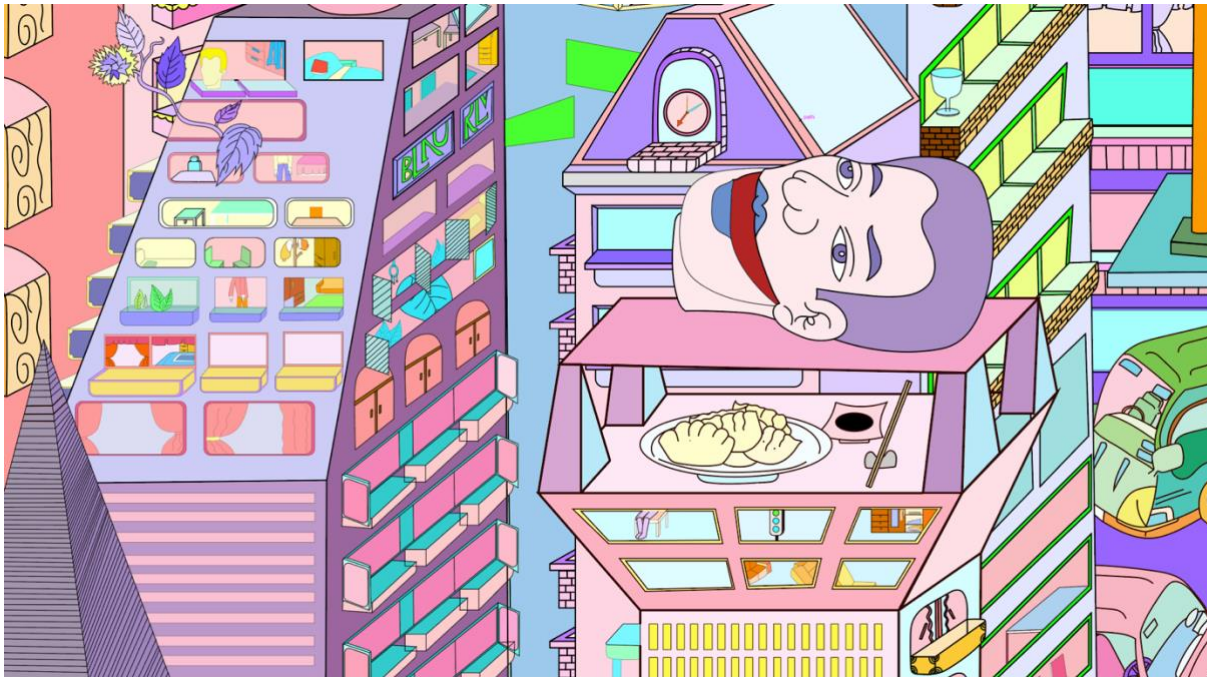


Fig 4.13. Benben Li. *Shot: Dreamcore – Still Frame*, 2023, Digital Animation, Auckland

## Structure of the scene

As discussed in Chapter One, architecture is the strong visual language in this research project, as it is applied to create an uncanny atmosphere for the animation. Therefore, I designed *The Uncanny City*'s overall structure as a metropolis of diverse alienated architecture. The alienated architecture included some anthropomorphic representations of the buildings.<sup>109</sup> In addition, to metaphorically represent the architectural complexity and diversity, I constructed many buildings with different shapes. Informed by Constant Nieuwenhuys's design in *New Babylon*, I have designed *The Uncanny City* as multifunctional.<sup>110</sup> Through the multifunctional city

---

<sup>108</sup> Susan Piedmont-Palladino states that “architectural representations often embody this tension between familiar and unfamiliar.” Therefore, this project demonstrates architecture as a concrete application of the sense of the uncanny in urban spaces.

<sup>109</sup> For example, I designed a building with eyes and the windows have various changing colours in my animation.

<sup>110</sup> Constant used different colours in his design to identify the different functions of the components, for example, the yellow component is for entertainment. Similarly, in my animation, I used the different colours of the buildings as a metaphor for the different functions of the buildings.

constructed in the animation, I convey a vision of the harmony between the inhabitants and the urban environment, which is, at the same time, my fantasy of the future urban landscape. In this way, I aimed to convey to the viewer a sense of the sublime and the uncanny in the complex structure of the city, as well as the convenience of life brought about by this diversity of urban facilities.<sup>111</sup> This arrangement also reflects my imagination of an uncanny city as an enchanting labyrinthine place. The tension-filled architectural designs revealed the city's diversity and complexity.<sup>112</sup>



Fig 4.14. Benben Li. *Scene Design – The Uncanny City*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland

---

<sup>111</sup> My metaphor for the functions of the city was evident in the animation, such as in the vehicles and traffic lights, which were a metaphor for the transportation function of the city, and the huge food images on the rooftops, which were a metaphor for the variety of dining options that restaurants offer.

<sup>112</sup> For example, I designed dense windows, doorways and balconies in the animation as a metaphor for the consequences of urbanisation resulting in population density.

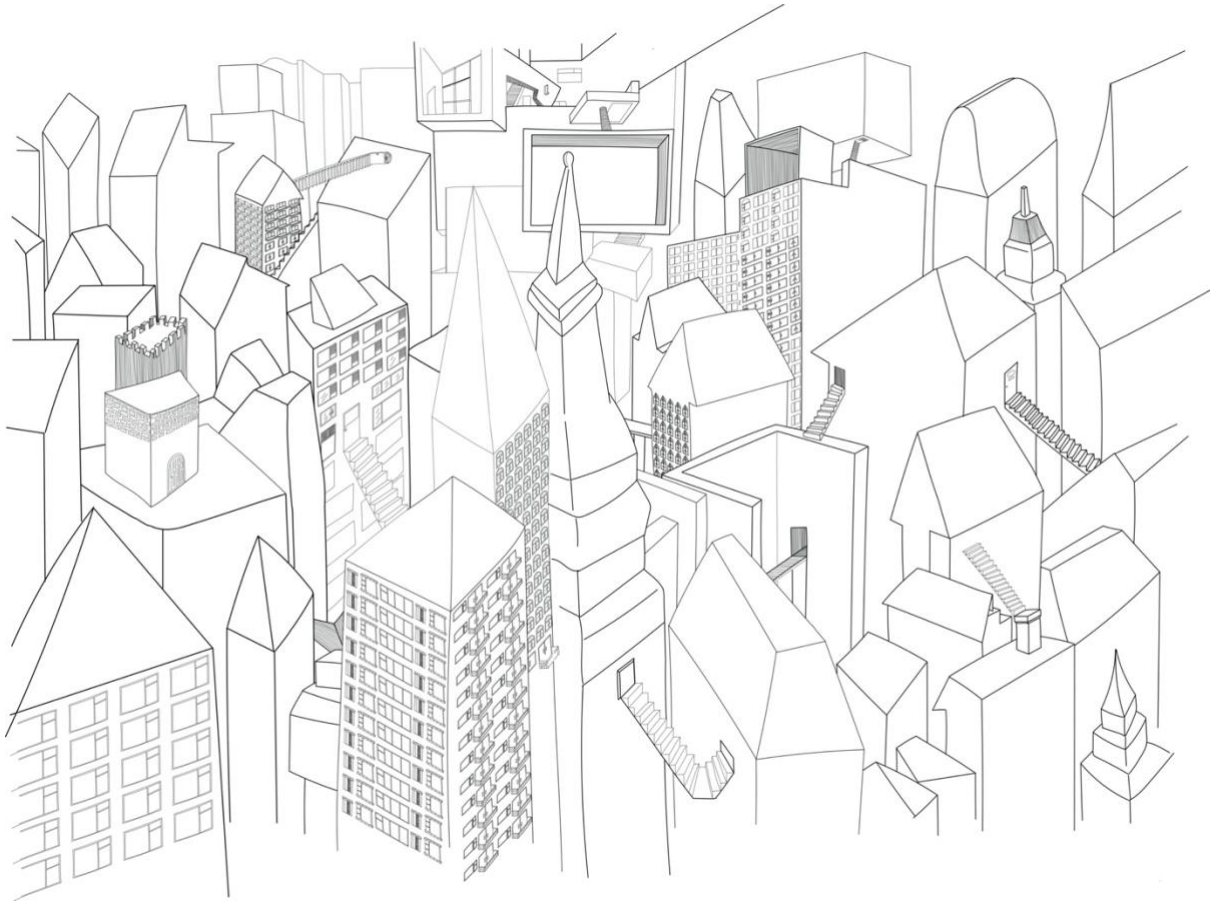


Fig 4.15. Benben Li. Digital Draft – Scene Structure Design, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland

## The Dreamlike Feeling

Based on the scene's structure, I used alienation as the visual language in my animation to convey a sense of the uncanny. Alienation is intended to create a dreamlike situation. There are threads of contextual reflection in this process, such as reviewing the portrayal of human fantasy in *Genius Loci* and the alienated city in Tabaimo's visual installation. Through the investigation of Freudian theory's dream and the uncanny, I found that the sensation of dreaming has the potential to stimulate the viewer's imagination.<sup>113</sup> Also, as dreams are a return to the unconscious and repressed products of the human mind, creating a sense of dreams in animation can create a sense of the uncanny.<sup>114</sup> Therefore, I aimed to create a sense of dreaming

---

<sup>113</sup> When you have a dream that feels uncanny, you have a unique opportunity to expand your self-awareness and discover new spiritual insights about your life. Despite their off-putting qualities, uncanny dreams are invitations to develop an expanded view of the self and reality as a whole (Kelly Bulkeley, 2020).

<sup>114</sup> Dreams in Freudian theory can be seen as a space where repressed and unconscious desires and fears manifest. [...] The return of these unconscious and repressed desires produced uncanny and horrifying interactions. The

in my work as a visual strategy of my animation to communicate a sense of the uncanny to my audiences.<sup>115</sup>



Fig 4.16. Benben Li. Shot: *Sleepwalking in the City – Still Frame*, 2023, Digital Animation, Auckland

In my animation, the dreamlike feeling is concretely expressed as realism mixed with the absurd or a mixture of familiarity and strangeness. Moreover, as dreams come from the subconscious, they tend not to be overly detached from reality.<sup>116</sup> Therefore, I added or removed elements about natural life scenes to create a sense of dreaming.<sup>117</sup> As I added and removed ideas, I would constantly test the fluency of the narrative until they spoke strongly to my sense of the uncanny - a feeling that immediately captivated me and from which I could not escape, as if I were dreaming.<sup>118</sup> For example, some character figures were removed from

---

inherent Gothic nature of dreams means they are highly effective and popularly used in literature, film, and television to evoke a sense of terror and horror because of the visceral reaction the return of the unconscious and repressed produces (Blair Ian Speakman, 2020).

<sup>115</sup> I often dream of uncanny urban life. In my dreams, familiar streets are presented in a way that is completely different from reality.

<sup>116</sup> According to Sigmund Freud, dreams are a kind of knowledge generated in our subconscious, allowing our memories to be reassembled in our minds in unexpected ways.

<sup>117</sup> In my process of animating, fluency is an essential indicator of the narrative. I rendered each part of the animation as I finished it and then as I watched it I considered how well each part connected to the theme.

<sup>118</sup> In the creation process, I constantly added and removed ideas to test their potential to interact with the audience. During the animation-making process I regularly stopped and stepped back to evaluate my work as an audience member and invite my family and friends to participate and talk about their ideas.

the scenes. I have constructed many unoccupied scenes in the animation in which objects move independently.<sup>119</sup> In this way, I directed the viewer to think about the movement of things in the city? Is there a mysterious force in the city? This narrative strategy is informed by *Genius Loci*, which inspired me to think about the rhythms of the city through the wild imagination shown in the film. Looking at the city shown in the animation through the different dimensions, I provide the viewer with clues to a sense of the uncanny. With this approach, I leave room for the viewer to imagine.<sup>120</sup>



Fig 4.17. Benben Li. *Shot: Occupied - Still Frame*, 2023, Digital Animation, Auckland

In this animation, various visual elements were inspired by my dreams about the city. I used to dream of flying above the metropolis and I could see many scenes that I could not easily see in real life, such as the tops of skyscrapers. So, I playfully placed the image of a figure of a head on top of a building. What would it be like if we saw the world from a much higher perspective than we do now? Perhaps we could see a different side of the city.

---

<sup>119</sup> I created a sense of absurdity by creating scenes in which no one was present. For example, a moving car with no one driving it, or a room with no one present where the furniture is moving.

<sup>120</sup> As an artist I understand I cannot demand the viewer to associate with my ideas. I can show them the world as I feel it in my animation.

In my animation, the recurring head detached from the body is an essential character. It is a visual metaphor that is intended to represent the subconscious and the imagination that arises from the perception of the city. The head is designed to be placed in various parts of the city, as the subconscious is uncontrollable and can emerge from all moments of daily life. In the model sheet, I presented the structure and characteristics of the head and the design concept for it, the head of a human being with an ordinary appearance, which is based on my appearance of myself and my observation of the people around me.<sup>121</sup> Moreover, the head is a metaphor for me, as an ordinary member of modern society, and also for one of the millions of inhabitants that make up the bustling social form.

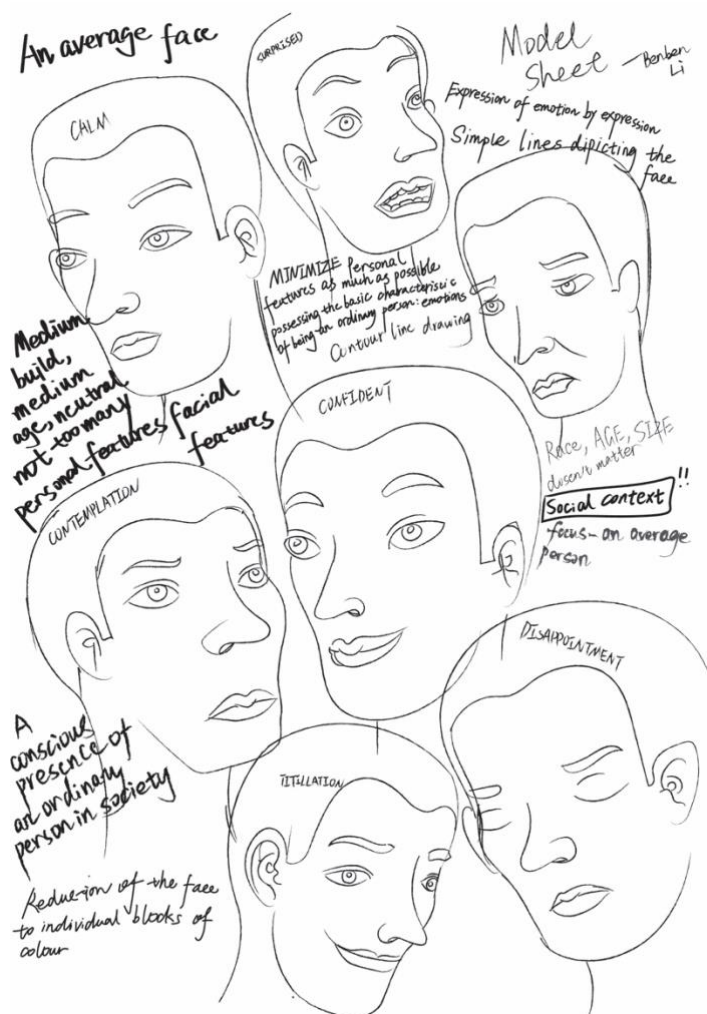


Fig 4.18. Benben Li. *Model Sheet – The Head*, 2022, Digital Workbook, Auckland

<sup>121</sup> The observation of a person or place is inevitably portrayed the way it is perceived. The artist's perception is defined by his or her background, knowledge, and context, and the way the subject is imagined or remembered (Paul Wells, 2007).

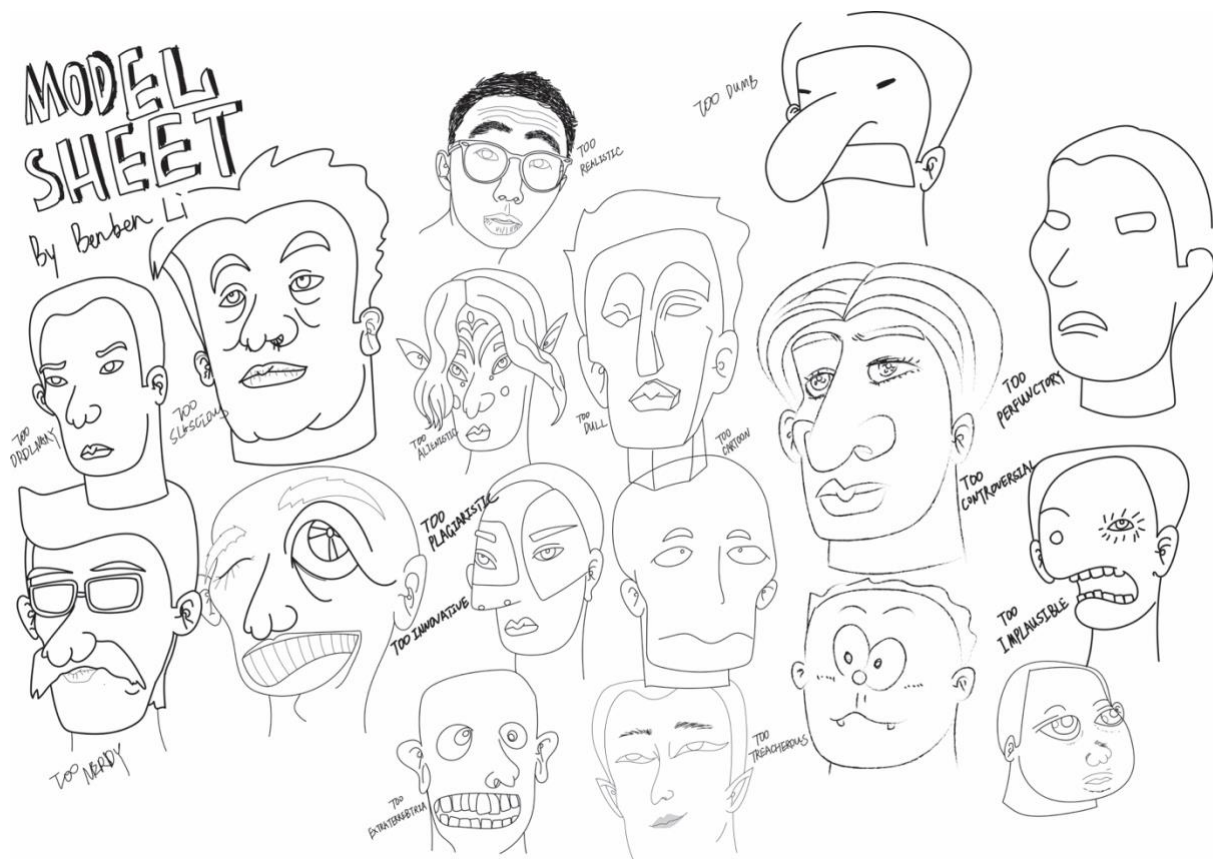


Fig 4.19. Benben Li. *Model Sheet – Design for the Head*, 2022, Digital Illustration, Auckland

## The visual metaphor - Anthropomorphism

Contextually reviewing the knowledge of psychogeography and Peter Ackroyd’s fiction guided this research project that is based on the nature of the city. The aim was to seek creative inspiration from the interactions between the city and its dwellers, as doing so may help city dwellers reconceptualise their living environment. In my research practice, the interactions between the city and its residents are symbolically conveyed through the anthropomorphic quality given to the city in the animation. At the same time, while investigating Masahiro Mori’s research on the concept of the *Uncanny Valley*, I discovered the potential of anthropomorphising nonhuman objects to convey a sense of the uncanny. Therefore, in my research practice, I created alienated features and organs to convey a sense of uncanny and to anthropomorphically imagine the city we reside in.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>122</sup> For example, I designed giant images in the animation, such as eyes, noses, mouths, and tentacles, randomly distributed throughout the city. These organs represent the city’s senses in the animation: not only are humans observing and operating the city, the city is also sensing and manipulating every human activity.

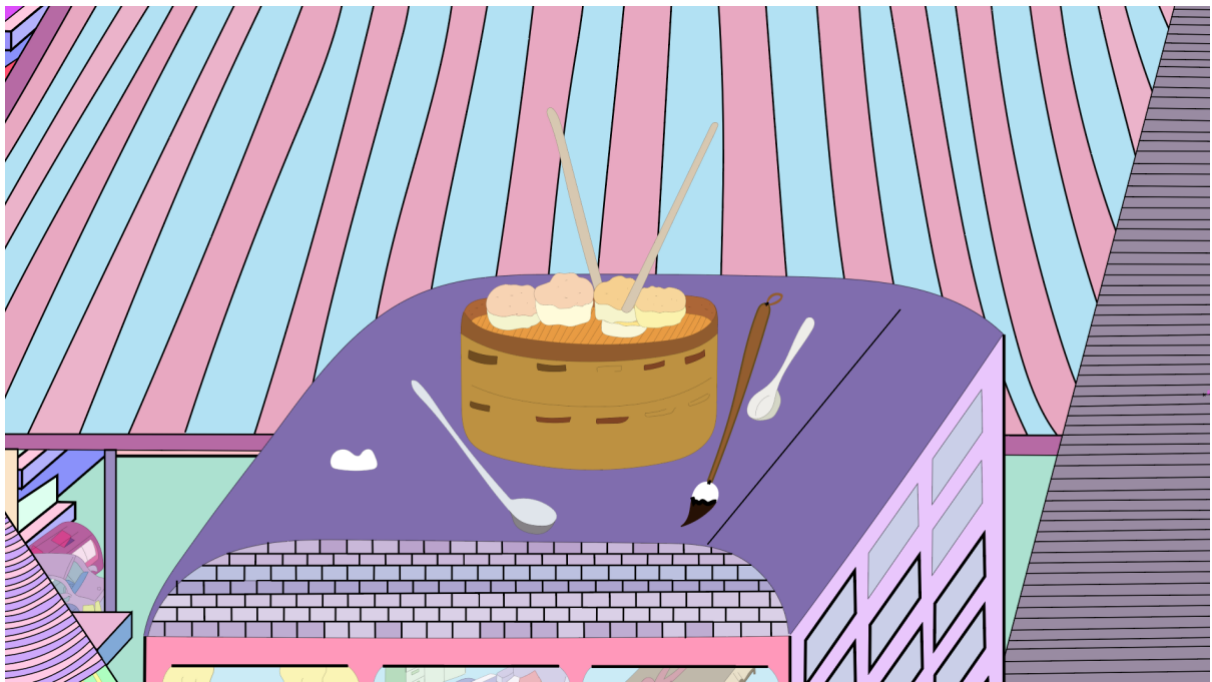


Fig 4.20. Benben Li. *Shot: The Invisible Soul of the City – Still Frame*, 2022, Digital Animation, Auckland



Fig 4.21. Benben Li. *Shot: Gaze – Still Frame*, 2022, Digital Animation, Auckland

## Design for the storyline: metaphorical, non-linear, non-narrative modes of expression

Through the contextual investigation of *Tango* and *Feel My Way*, I realised the potential of experimental animation to express the animator's fantasies and subconscious that are restricted by real life.<sup>123</sup> Therefore, I brought myself into my animation as an observer of the cityscape and a practitioner of animation to express how I feel about the city and how the city affects me. Drawing on the non-linear nature of experimental animation, I challenged myself to put unrelated events that I imagined playing out in different locations into the same frame in my storytelling. It is a metaphor for life in the city in all its diversity. It also alludes to the changes to our world caused by the cluster lifestyle of the city.

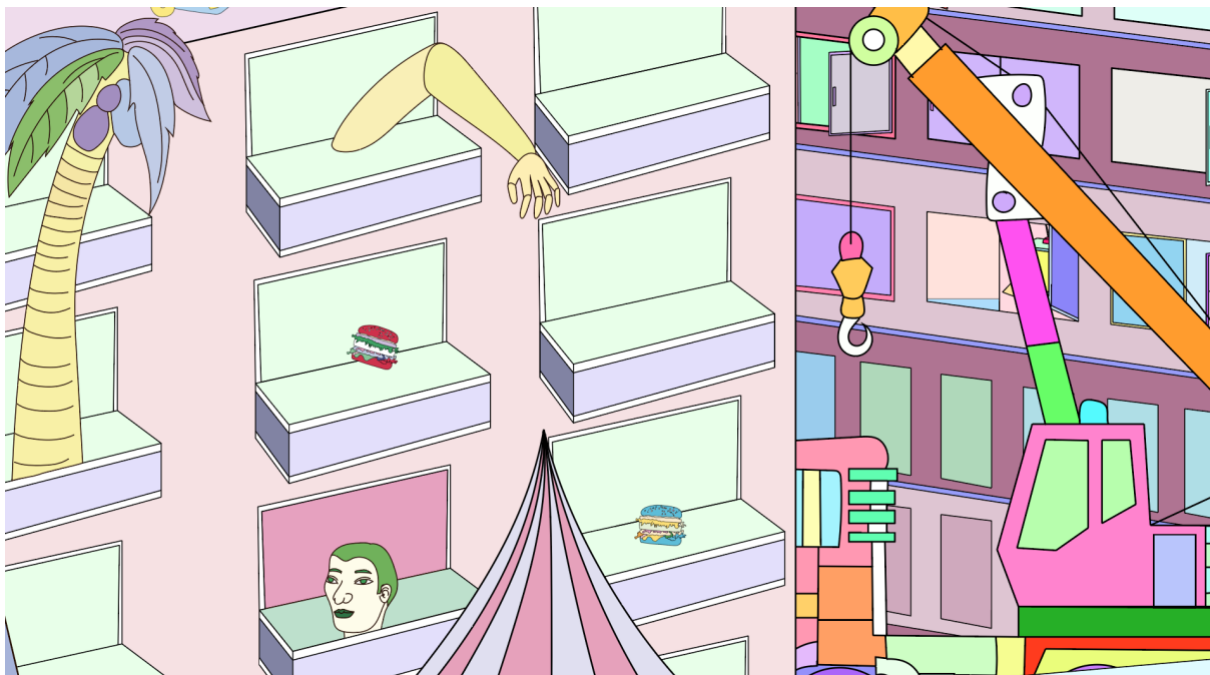


Fig 4.22. Benben Li. Shot: *Extraneous – Still Frame*, 2022, Digital Animation, Auckland

Unconsciousness and dreamlike sensations permeated my entire animation. I avoided assigning a beginning or an ending to my animations. Most of the time as I recalled a dream, I did not remember the beginning or the end of the dream.<sup>124</sup> The feeling of dreaming in my animation

---

<sup>123</sup> Benefiting from the non-objective, non-narrative and non-linear nature of experimental animation, I am free to express my self-narrative without the need for additional consideration of the integrity of the narrative line.

<sup>124</sup> In a research paper on Freud and the uncanny and dreams, Professor Blair from Auckland University of Technology states that “the temporality in the dream is non-linear as time flows in a circled repetition. [...] time itself in the dream is unclear as there is a blurring of the past, present, and future.”

is also designed as a metaphor for my thoughts on urban life. Just as urban life is seen as a whole, it is an uncontrollable and ongoing process, so, there is not a moment that represents a beginning or an end to urban life. Therefore, I designed my animation to play on a 2-minute loop. I avoided giving the animation a linear and continuous storyline or forcing a dogmatic message. The events that unfold in the animation are incidental and unrelated so as not to tie the animation to predefined messages. In this way, I encouraged the audience to actively engage with the animation, attaching their understanding and imagination to the content.



Fig 4.23. Benben Li. *Shot: Commercial Street – Still Frame*, 2022, Digital Animation, Auckland

The way the camera moves in the animation simulates the perspective of a person wandering through the city.<sup>125</sup> There is no connection between the different character elements and objects in my animated film, which insinuates the disconnectedness of people in the metropolis.<sup>126</sup> I

---

<sup>125</sup> In this animation, the camera moves in a slow and random direction. As in sightseeing, we rarely have conscious control over the sight of our eyes, we are drawn randomly and uncontrollably to whatever captures our attention.

<sup>126</sup> This reflection on the irrelevance of people in the metropolis had its roots in my own experiences growing up. I lived in a tiny town with my parents when I was very young. In those days, we were close to our neighbours. I was always kindly invited to the neighbour's house for dinner if my parents did not get off work in time. Then my parents and I moved to a bigger city. We moved into a residential high-rise flat. Almost every year, a different tenant would live next door to us. Different people moved in and out, almost all of them busy commuters. I have never met my neighbours since then. So, I have a mysterious feeling about my neighbours. This changing feeling about my neighbours was essential to my memories of the metropolis.

did not intend to deliberately design the cause and effect of the animation, which gave my audience the freedom to imagine.<sup>127</sup>

In my animation, a sense of the uncanny acted as a unique distorted tactile lens that reflects the world to us. This allowed the viewers to associate and interpret freely, depending on how they chose to unravel the chain of information presented, so they could find new connections to the urban environment.



Fig 4.24. Benben Li. *Shot: Alienation – Still Frame*, 2022, Digital Animation, Auckland

## Using After Effects for animation composition and rendering

This experimental project was animated using the rendering software After Effects rather than the traditional hand-drawn frame-by-frame animation. After Effects has powerful interactive features that align with animation needs of this project. Firstly, as my animated scene is a highly detailed illustrative panorama filled with various surreal and uncanny life scenes and visual elements, each animated scene contains a complex layer structure. To make each subtle element

---

<sup>127</sup>Although my project expresses my subjective feelings about the city through animation, my intention was not to guide or persuade my audience, my intention was to encourage them to see urban life meditatively and imaginatively.

move, I designed many movable layers in the composite.<sup>128</sup> After Effects is powerful compositing software that helps to import image sequences quickly and to merge, move and render multiple layers efficiently.<sup>129</sup> In addition, as an advanced moving image processing software, After Effects has efficient keyframe editing. This makes changes in visual elements' movement look natural and smooth.<sup>130</sup> With the After Effects' 3D camera I could switch the viewing angle and position of scenes and layers at will. During the animation process, I constantly tweaked and tested the position and angle of the footage to create the ideal cinematography result. In addition, with the path editing tool in After Effects I could freely define the movement path of objects with simple manipulation to create any visual effect I want.<sup>131</sup>

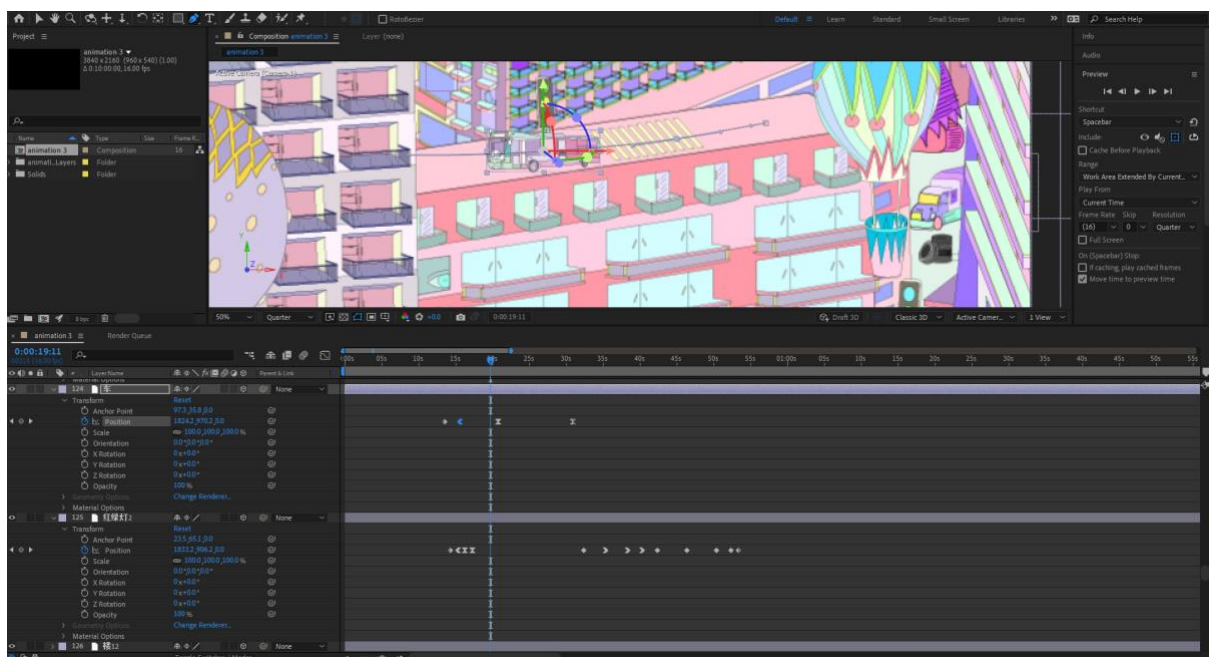


Fig 4.25. Benben Li. *Animating: Adjusting the Movement Paths*, 2022, Digital Animation, Auckland

<sup>128</sup> For example, *The Uncanny City 3* has over 500 layers of movable elements.

<sup>129</sup> The latest version, AE 2022, is a step up in interactive performance from previous versions. Between the various workflows of file import, project loading and final rendering, AE 2022 is significantly faster and more reliable compared with previous versions. It can handle complex tasks and edit many keyframes by swiping through the timeline, which helps me work quickly.

<sup>130</sup> AE 2022 supports animations with all layer properties and can automatically handle changes between keyframes.

<sup>131</sup> Just like sketching on paper, animated paths can be quickly drawn using Motion Sketch. For example, I created a dancing motion for the heels to convey a scene of a pair of high heels going wild if their owner is not at home.

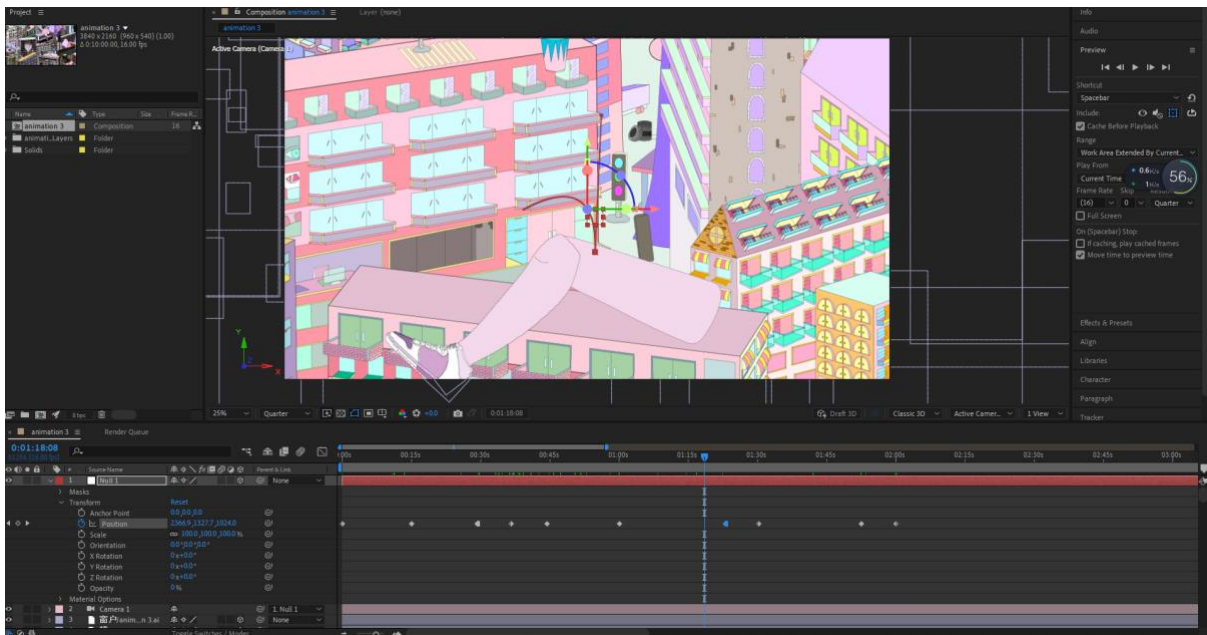


Fig 4.26. Benben Li. *Animating: Adjusting the Camera*, 2022, Digital Animation, Auckland

## Video Installation – The immersive spatial narrative

The final part of this research exercise was a video installation experiment. This video installation aimed to create an interactive environment for my audience, enhancing their perception and understanding of my animation through an immersive spatial narrative. This meant that the video installation's spatial design, ambient luminance, projection medium, and projection effects must be thoughtfully considered to integrate into the exhibition environment effectively.

I experimented in the studio by constantly adjusting the distance and projection parameters to test the effect of the projection on different projection media, including white walls, boxes, and wood. Due to the refraction and absorption of light by the projection medium, the effect on the projection is inevitable. Therefore, I adjusted the projection parameters to obtain the best projection results. In this research practice, I avoided using a traditional white screen that separates the virtual world from the projection screen. I used the architectural space itself (such as, a wall) or some object that blended better with the interior space to create an immersive experience that integrates the projection with the cinematic environment.

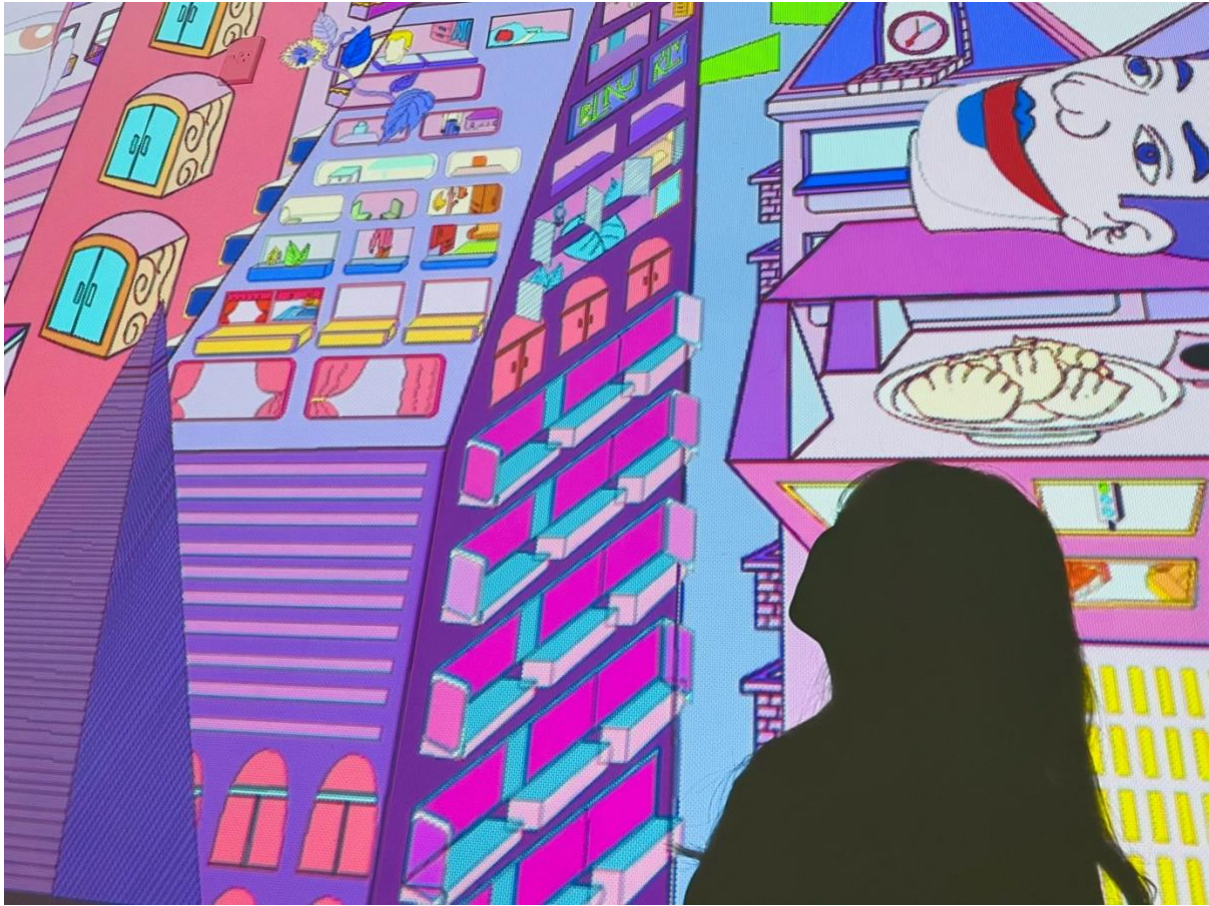


Fig 4.27. Benben Li. *Shot: Documentation of Studio Practice - The Uncanny City* projected in the WE Studio, 2022, Photography, AUT University, Auckland

## Final exhibition of the video installation

### The setting up – multi-screen animation projection

The final presentation consists of a series of three animated films, which are projected next to each other on a wall of about ten metres in length in the test space.<sup>132</sup> With three projections side by side in a line, the attention of the audience can be more concentrated, rather than being distracted by the projections separated on different walls. Moreover, in this way, the three projections become a whole, with their difference and connections becoming part of the installation, too, which makes the installation look stronger.

---

<sup>132</sup> My plan for the installation was to project three animation films on three different walls. But after considering the specific interior and the size of this test space, I updated my plan for the exhibition, to make the video installation and the specific spatial environment work better together, and to create the best visual effect.



Fig 4.28. Benben Li. *Shot: Documentation of the final exhibition and examination - The Uncanny City projected in the WM 201 Exam Room, 2023, Photography, AUT University, Auckland*

The dark room creates a highly focused environment for the viewers, as they are fully and naturally drawn to look at the projection screen.<sup>133</sup> The audience can view the film from all angles and distances of the projection surface by moving their bodies back and forth for different sensory experiences. The physical and sensory involvement of the viewer forms a crucial part of this video installation. The form in which the video installation is presented aims to encourage the viewer to use their body to look around and engage with my animation.

### **The three animated films**

This installation shows the angle of wandering and flying around the uncanny city like a space traveller through the animation on the left and right. In these two animations, I create a sense of sleepwalking or dreaming for the audience by moving the camera around. The way the

---

<sup>133</sup> The darkness of the room allows for a strong projection of light, while the boundaries of the projection naturally fade into the darkness.

camera moves, the tone and the movement of the visual figures work together to create a hazy and fairy-tale-like visual effect.<sup>134</sup>

The projected animation is in the middle with a still frame, which shows a bird's eye view of the imaginary city, this way the audience can see what is happening in this virtual city by watching all the slight movements in this moving image. While looking at all three projections simultaneously, comparing and contrasting the content and camera moves might create a loss of sense of space and time. The audience could get lost among the numerous similar buildings and visual figures or even feel a sense of familiarity. This is the intent of this installation, to create a visual experience of confusion between virtual and reality for the audience. In this way, the video installation encourages viewers to freely explore a sense of the uncanny scenes of life and find connections to the urban environment that correspond to their perceptions and understanding.

### **Engaging with the exhibition environment**

The comparison and contrast aspect of this installation also exists between the environment of the test space and the theme of the animated films. Above the wall of the exhibition space, the audience can see the ducts of the air conditioner and the shelves in the ceiling, which can serve as a constant reminder of the reality of the outside world. The metal shelves and the air conditioner can be understood as a metaphor for urbanisation and the control of human force. At the same time, the content of the animation is about the uncanny sensation and dreamlike feeling beyond human control. Moreover, while watching the installation, the audience can see the light coming through from the external reality, which strongly contrasts with the unrealistic and dreamlike animated films. It creates a sense of the strange and the familiar. This reflects the theme of the research project.

---

<sup>134</sup> In this video installation, the colour palette of the projected animations is primarily a reference to the iconic film of the retro aesthetic, *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. The three series of animations are coloured in low saturation, medium to high brightness pastels, mixed with purples, blues and greens and a mixture of them. Through this choice of colours I have attempted to create a fairy-tale, colourful and psychedelic visual experience for the audience.

## Conclusion

*Experimenting with absurdity and uncanniness -- all the unseen familiarities in the urban spaces* is a creative exploration of my sensory experience and imagination of the urban environment. Through perception, reflection and experimentation, this research project explores the potential of visual installations that are based on illustrative animation. It is an effective and efficient medium to communicate deeply about the personal experience of the uncanny urban environment. In this research project, the multi-screen video installation acts as a connection for an affective dialogue between myself, as an experimental animator and the audience, to spark the audience to experience a different side of the city that is uncanny. Regarding the aim of this thesis, I have discussed how visual metaphors and narrative strategies may be the answer, and I have also experimentally explored this ongoing dialogue through illustrative animation.

This research is informed by autoethnographic investigations and heuristic methods that include drifting, sketching, and digital illustration. Through this research project, I have found that the most significant virtue of experimental animation is its ability to transcend traditional animation's narrative and visual style constraints to allow new ways of viewing. It gives the viewers the freedom to think about their own experiences. This medium allows me as an artist to create practical knowledge that is entirely self-dialogical and self-reflective. At each stage of the work's development, I integrated my experiences and imagination conceptually and technically and I allowed the work to reflect my experiences and imagination. This project explores the potential of experimental animation combined with projection installations to create an immersive visual experience for the viewer. In the final exhibition, I communicated experimental animation in a more visually striking and thought-provoking way by integrating multi-screen animated projections into the physical environment of the exam room. It is worth noting that, given the researcher's lack of exhibition experience in the field of visual installation, the physical environment of the exhibition venue and the equipment used for the exhibition were not fully considered (many of the plans for the visual installation were at the theoretical stage), resulting in the difference between the final exhibition and the initial plan.

Experiencing the strange and uncanny aspects of the cityscape is a unique experience that changes everyday life. It has shaped and transformed my impressions of the cityscape.

Engaging and experimenting with 2D illustrated animation is my inaugural attempt at a research project and it is my first foray into my artistic career. As an undergraduate in Fine Arts, while I tried my hand at photography, sculpture and illustration practice during my undergraduate studies, I must add that graphic design has always intrigued me, especially in motion graphics and film. After my undergraduate studies, I explored the field of graphic design and moving images. I realised that combining my practical experience in illustration with the digital medium would likely lead to new practical knowledge, especially the aesthetic potential of combining still images with dynamic and spatial narratives. I have been lucky that this postgraduate research project has allowed me to express my voice in my field of interest through experimental animation projects **and** at the same time it has provided the audience with something different to contemplate.

Through this research project, I seek to facilitate this experience as a methodology that can help viewers use it in their daily life. *The Uncanny City* is a method of navigation that, if you leave your destination behind, it will lead you in a new and unknown direction. This is the subsequent journey you are about to embark on. Through this research, **I hope viewers** will think creatively about cities they are familiar **with**. **I hope** they will discover and experience the unknown. **I hope they will imagine** the magic and mystery of their everyday lives.

## Bibliography

- “Tabaimo: Mekurumeku: Exhibitions: MCA Australia.” Welcome to the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney. Accessed January 5, 2023. <https://www.mca.com.au/artists-works/exhibitions/tabaimo-mekurumeku/>.
- “The Spiritual Potentials of Uncanny Dreams.” Psychology Today. Sussex Publishers. Accessed January 5, 2023. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/dreaming-in-the-digital-age/202011/the-spiritual-potentials-uncanny-dreams>.
- Adams, Tony E., Holman Jones, Stacy Linn, and Ellis, Carolyn. *Autoethnography*. Series in Understanding Statistics. 2015.
- Allen-Collinson, Jacquelyn. “Autoethnography as the engagement of self/other, self/culture, self/politics, selves/futures.” *Handbook of autoethnography* (2013).
- Balázs, Béla, and Erica Carter. “The Spirit of Film .” Essay. In *Béla Balázs Early Film Theory*, 173–74. New York, N.Y: Berghahn, 2010.
- Banham, Reyner. “The atavism of the short-distance mini-cyclist.” *Living Arts* 3 (1964): 84-89.
- Bastian, Frank. “Defoe's Journal of the Plague Year reconsidered.” *The Review of English Studies* 16, no. 62 (1965): 151-173.
- Beckman, Karen Redrobe. *Animating Film Theory*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014, 8.
- Boulton, James T., and Edmund Burke. *Edmund Burke: A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. University of Notre Dame Press, 1958, 39.
- Bronfen, Elisabeth. “Over her dead body: death, femininity and the aesthetic.” In *Over her dead body*. Manchester University Press, 2017.
- Buber, Martin. “I and thou (W. Kaufmann, Trans.)” *New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons* 57 (1970).
- Bulkeley, Kelly. “Dreaming as inspiration: evidence from religion, philosophy, literature, and film.” In *International Review of Neurobiology*, vol. 92, pp. 31-46. Academic Press, 2010.
- Chtcheglov, Ivan. “Situationist International Anthology.” (1953).
- Clack, Brian R. “‘At home in the uncanny’: Freud's account of das Unheimliche in the context of his theory of religious belief.” *Religion* 38, no. 3 (2008): 250-258.
- Collins, Jo, Jervis, John, and ProQuest. *Uncanny Modernity: Cultural Theories, Modern Anxieties*. Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Coverley, Merlin., and ProQuest. *Psychogeography*. Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2006.
- Davies, Jo, Leo Duff, and James Faure Walker. “Old Manuals and New Pencils .” Essay. In *Drawing - the Process*. Bristol: Intellect, 2005.
- Debord, Guy, and Asger Jorn. *Mémoires: structures portantes d'Asger Jorn; suivi de Origine des détournements*. Éditions Allia, 2004.
- Debord, Guy. “Theory of the Dérive.” *Internationale situationniste* 2 (1958): 62-66.
- Debord, Guy. “Introduction to a critique of urban geography.” Praxis (e) press, 2008, 5.
- Dobson, Jill. “Imagining the modern city: Miyamoto [Chūjō] Yuriko in Moscow and London, 1927–1930.” In *Japan Forum*, vol. 28, no. 4, pp. 486-510. Routledge, 2016.
- Duff, Leo., Sawdon, Phil, and ProQuest. *Drawing - the Purpose*. Bristol; Chicago: Intellect Books, 2008.
- Frampton, Kenneth. *Modern Architecture: A Critical History (World of Art)*. Thames & Hudson, 2020.
- Frascardi, Marco. *Eleven Exercises in the Art of Architectural Drawing*. Florence: Routledge, 2011, 145.
- Freud, Sigmund, McLintock, David, and Haughton, Hugh. *The Uncanny*. Penguin Classics. New York: Penguin Books, 2003.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The uncanny*. Penguin, 2003.
- Gendlin, Eugene T. “Focusing.” *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice* 6, no. 1 (1969): 4.
- Halberstam, Judith. *Queer Art of Failure*. Duke University Press, 2011, 46, 27-28.
- Hanhardt, John G. “From Screen to Gallery: Cinema, Video, and Installation Art Practices.” *American Art* 22, no. 2 (2008): 2-8.
- Harris, Miriam, Lilly Husbands, and Paul Taberham. *Experimental Animation*. Routledge, 2019.
- Heath, Sue, Lynne Chapman, and The Morgan Centre Sketchers. “Observational sketching as method.” *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 21, no. 6 (2018): 713-728.
- Hind, Arthur M. “Giovanni Battista Piranesi and His Carceri.” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 19, no. 98 (1911): 81-91.
- Huskinson, Lucy, ed. *The urban uncanny: A collection of interdisciplinary studies*. Routledge, 2016.
- Imperiale, Alicia. “Seminal space: Getting under the digital skin.” *Re: Skin* (2006): 265-292.
- Jentsch, Ernst. “On the Psychology of the Uncanny.” *Uncanny Modernity: Cultural Theories and Modern Anxieties*. New York: Palgrave (2008), 218-219.

Kang, Yiyun. "CASTING : Site-Specific Projection Mapping Installation." *Leonardo (Oxford)* 51, no. 4 (2018): 399-404.

Kaye, Nick. *Multi-Media: Video - Installation - Performance*. Florence: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007. Accessed November 8, 2022. ProQuest eBook Central.

Kent, R. "Unquiet waters: Tabaimo. *Museum of Contemporary Art Australia. Recuperado de https://www.mca.com.au/stories-and-ideas/unquiet-waterstabaimo-curatorial-essay*.

Kinsella, Sharon. "Black faces, witches, and racism against girls." In *Bad girls of Japan*, pp. 143-158. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2005.

Langellier, Kristin M. "Personal narrative, performance, performativity: Two or three things I know for sure." *Text and performance quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1999): 128.

Lawrence, Roderick J. "What makes a house a home?." *Environment and Behavior* 19, no. 2 (1987): 154-168.

Mallett, Shelley. "Understanding home: a critical review of the literature." *The sociological review* 52, no. 1 (2004): 62-89.

Middleton, Robin. "Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778)." (1982): 333-344.

Midgley, Julia. "Drawing lives-reportage at work." *Studies in Material Thinking*,(4). Retrieved 5 (2011).

Mihalache, Gabriela. "Heuristic inquiry: Differentiated from descriptive phenomenology and aligned with transpersonal research methods." *The Humanistic Psychologist* 47, no. 2 (2019): 136.

Mori, Masahiro. "The uncanny valley: the original essay by Masahiro Mori." *IEEE Spectrum* (1970).

Moritz, William. "Some observations on non-objective and non-linear animation." *Storytelling in Animation: The Art of the Animated Image* 2 (1988): 29.

Moustakas, Clark E. *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990, 2.

Nancy, Jean-Luc., Armstrong, Philip, and Project Muse. *The Pleasure in Drawing*. First ed. UPCC Book Collections on Project MUSE. New York: Fordham University Press, 2013, 1.

Nofal, Eslam, Stevens, Robin, Coomans, Thomas, and Vande Moere, Andrew. "Communicating the Spatiotemporal Transformation of Architectural Heritage via an In-situ Projection Mapping Installation." *Digital Applications in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage* 11 (2018): E00083.

Phillips, Adams. Speaking on the 'The uncanny', BBC Radio 4 feature broadcast: 28 June; prod. Simon Hollis, Brook Lapping Productions Limited, 2012.

Piedmont-Palladino, Susan, and Taylor & Francis. *How Drawings Work: A User-friendly Theory*. 2019, 140.

Piranesi, Giovanni Battista. *The Prisons/Le Carceri*. Courier Corporation, 2013.

Plant, Sadie. *The most radical gesture: The Situationist International in a postmodern age*. Routledge, 2002, 1.

Poe, Edgar Allan, and Stevan Sylvester. *The fall of the house of Usher*. Creative Education, 1988.

Rascaroli, Laura. "Still Drifting? Expanded Situationism and Filmic Dérive." *Aniki: Revista Portuguesa da Imagem em Movimento* 2, no. 1 (2015): 21-34.

Ringelberg, Kirstin. "Little sister, big girl: Tabaimo and the gendered devaluation of contemporary Japanese art." *Woman's art journal* 38, no. 2 (2017): 31-41.

Roncato, Sergio. "Piranesi and the Infinite Prisons." *Spatial Vision* 21, no. 1-2 (2008): 3-18.

Royle, Nicholas. *The uncanny*. Manchester University Press, 2003.

Sadler, Simon. *The situationist city*. MIT press, 1999.

Selby, Andrew. *Animation in process*. Laurence King, 2009.

Speakman, Blair Ian. "'Poor creature, trapped in existential solitude forever': Gothic Dreams of the Uncanny, Repetition, Temporal Loops, and the Double in The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina." *M/C Journal* 23, no. 1 (2020).

Springgay, Stephanie, and Taylor & Francis. *Walking Methodologies in a More-than-human World: WalkingLab*. Routledge Advances in Research Methods; 24. 2018.

Stratford, Elaine, Gordon Waitt, and Theresa Harada. "A relational approach to walking: Methodology, metalanguage, and power relations." *Geographical Research* 59, no. 1 (2021): 91-105.

Sultan, Nevine. *Heuristic Inquiry: Researching Human Experience Holistically*. 2019.

Tabaimo, and Ziba de Weck Ardalan. *Tabaimo: Boundary Layer:[exposition Parasol Unit Foundation for Contemporary Art, London, 26 May-6 Aug. 2010]*. Parasol Unit Foundation for Contemporary Art, 2010.

Tso, Ann. *The Literary Psychogeography of London: Otherworlds of Alan Moore, Peter Ackroyd, and Iain Sinclair*. Springer Nature, 2020.

Vidler, Anthony. "The Architecture of the Uncanny: The Unhomely Houses of the Romantic Sublime." *Assemblage* 3, no. 3 (1987): 7-29.

Wells, Paul, and Johnny Hardstaff. *Re-imagining animation: The changing face of the moving image*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008, 9.

Wells, Paul, Quinn, Joanna, and Mills, Les. *Drawing for Animation*. Basics Animation; 3. Lausanne; Worthing: AVA Academia, 2008.

Wells, Paul. *Understanding animation*. Routledge, 2013.

Weschler, Lawrence. "Uncanny Valley: - ON THE DIGITAL ANIMATION OF THE FACE (2002)". In *Uncanny Valley : Adventures in the Narrative*, Catapult, 2011, 7-23. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=776029>.

Wigley, Mark. *Constant's New Babylon: the hyper-architecture of desire*. 010 Publishers, 1998.

Wollen, Peter. "The Situationist International." *New Left Review* 174, no. 1 (1989): 1, 68.