DAZED

Decoding Uncanny Valley make-up, TikTok's creepiest beauty trend

Something unsettling is taking place on our faces

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By Hatti Rex

Something unsettling is happening across BeautyTok. The monumental rise of AI-generated content has collided with the tail-end of this year's spooky Halloween transformations for an unnerving TikTok beauty trend that's leaving viewers feeling uncomfortable – and not always for the reason you'd think. The #uncannyvalleymakeup hashtag has quickly risen to 146 million views, with beauty creators clunkily using make-up to appear robotic, doll-like and not-quite-human. Each video is soundtracked by the same eerie and off-kilter choral tune, taken from the intro of "Brutus" by rapper The Buttress. It's not really something you want popping onto your explore page during a late-night scroll.

Techniques to create this uncanny look vary from person to person, but will often include blocking out large portions of the eyebrow with concealer before filling in the hair using a darker-than-natural colour, as well as contouring that often feels very theatrical. Eyes are made to seem smaller and cartoonish by using eyeliner that focuses on the centre of both lids. Occasionally there's a synthetic wig involved, too. It's not just make-up: there's also an uncanny valley make-up-inspired filter so those who aren't handy with a make-up brush can get involved […].

Dr Carl Strathearn, a researcher in Humanoid Robotics and Artificial Intelligence, says that humans have been trying to achieve this 'uncanniness' through make-up for years. "Traditionally Geishas were used as an example of the uncanny valley effect in make-up, as the objective of [their look] was to recreate the tonality of porcelain ceramics, giving them an ethereal appearance to make them stand out," he says. "The Barbie look may be a modern example of this. [It is a way of] using make-up to create a plastic-like light reflective skin complexion, or changing the contours of the face to emulate smooth doll-like features."

The uncanny valley hypothesis, from which this beauty trend takes its name, was coined in 1970 in an influential essay by Japanese professor of robotics Masahiro Mori. In it, he posits that we are inclined to feel 'cold, eerie feelings' towards a robot or non-human if they become too human-like. You may freak out, for example, while watching a clip of Sophia the Robot, the live-action *Cats* musical remake, or The Polar Express. Mori's theory was also supported by [a] 2019 study, which identified the areas of the brain that reject and accept these human-like artificial entities.

[…] [T]he Uncanny Valley effect on TikTok has been reversed. "The Uncanny Valley Effect involves looking at an entity, usually some kind of robot, that may appear to be almost human at first glance but then you look a little closer and discover that it is actually *not* human," Dr Dennis Küster says. "If a human is using make-up to look less human, or less 'alive', then the later parts of this perceptual process differ because the result is the opposite". […]

"It quickly became pretty apparent that not many people doing the trend even understood what 'uncanny valley' means – instead of creating an 'almost human' look, they were treating it as though it were synonymous with anything creepy or weird, which isn't quite accurate." Even from a grammatical standpoint, the trend often falls flat. 'Turning myself into uncanny valley' makes it more obvious that some creators are joining in without really understanding what they're getting themselves into. After all, it's not always about being scientifically accurate – sometimes it's just about watching budding make-up artists and amateur entertainers have fun.

https://www.dazeddigital.com/beauty/article/61420/1/decoding-uncanny-valley-make-up-tikoks-creepiest-beauty-trend

1. Read the text to learn more about "the uncanny valley effect."

2. Look at the structures highlighted in the first paragraph.

What do they have in common? They all use auxiliaries **(réviser les conjugaisons de "Be" + Have", s'assurer de pouvoir les conjuguer aux différents temps et personnes).**
Les auxiliaires modaux ne se conjuguent pas!
How is each of them called? How are they constructed? When should you use them?
a. is happening Present Be + -ing
Subject + Be + Verb-ing
Le procès est en cours, n'est pas fini > le procès est inaccompli au moment où on parle
b. has collided Present Perfect
Subject + Have + Past participle   (regular past participle: Verb+-ed)
Temps du présent > on rattache le procès au présent > on fait un bilan ou on constate les effets de l'action
c. you'd think Modal + Verb in the infinitive   (here: "you would think")
La valeur dépend du modal choisi (futur, volonté, possibilité, probabilité, conseil etc).
d. is soundtracked Passive voice
Subject + Be + Past participle
Le sujet mis en avant, contrairement à la voix active, est celui qui subit l'action.
Voix passive: Each video is soundtracked by the same tune.
Voix active: The same tune soundtracks each video.

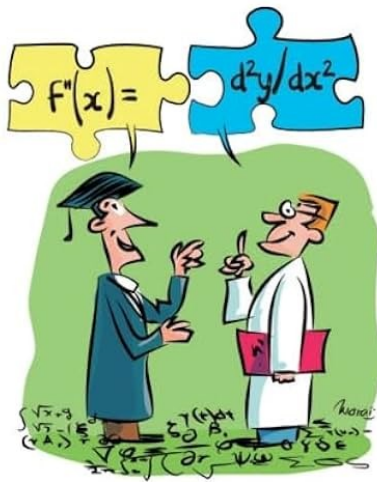**3. Fill in the blanks of the text using the appropriate structure from the four above.**

4. To check your understanding of the "uncanny valley effect," write down what Dr Dennis Küster could be saying.

Appendix: *Additional vocabulary*
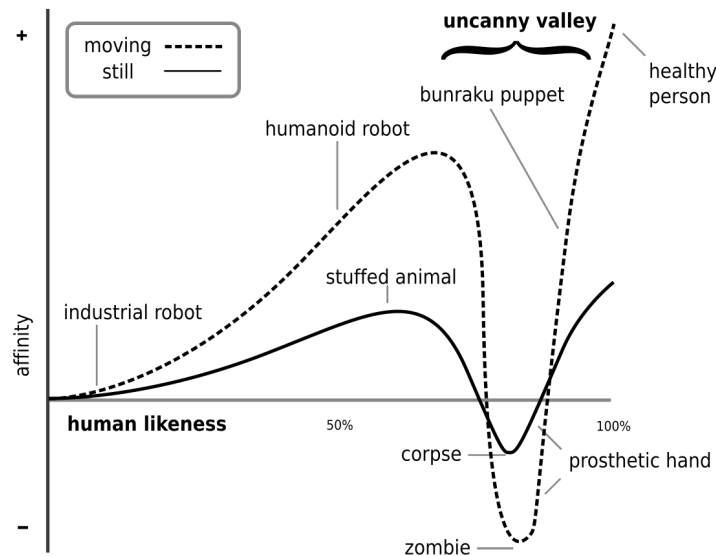
Marc Défourneaux

Do You Speak Science?

Comprendre et communiquer en anglais scientifique

$$f''(x) = \frac{d^2y}{dx^2}$$

DUNOD

	sens de variation ⇔ *direction of variation*
x↗ x↘	augmenter/[s'ac]croître, faire croître ⇔ *to increase (≠ to grow)* décroître, faire décroître ⇔ *to decrease* croissance/augmentation ⇔ *increase* décroissance/diminution ⇔ *decrease* strictement [dé]croissant ⇔ *strictly [increasing, decreasing]*
	agrandir, diminuer, réduire, abaisser ⇔ *to enhance, to diminish/lessen, to reduce, to lower*
	variation monotone ⇔ *monotonic (≠ monotonous) variation* passer par un [maximum, minimum] ⇔ *to go through a [maximum, minimum]*

	taux/vitesse de variation ⇔ *rate of variation*
	lent, progressif, rapide ⇔ *slow, progressive, rapid* pente [faible, douce, forte, raide] ⇔ *[smooth, gentle, strong, steep] slope* changement radical de [valeur, …] ⇔ *sharp/dramatic change in [value, …]* montée soudaine ⇔ *surge*

	les deux courbes se coupent en *I* ⇔ *the two (≠ both) curves intersect at* I *I* = point d'intersection ⇔ *intersection point (or) intercept* *B* = point d'intersection avec l'axe des *y* ⇔ *y-intercept*
	les deux courbes [confluent, se rejoignent] en *F* ⇔ *the two curves (≠ both curves) [merge, join up] at* F courbes concourantes (≠ concurrentes) ⇔ *concurrent (≠ competing) curves*

A, B	passer par un [maximum en *A*, minimum en *B*] ⇔ *to go through a [maximum at A, minimum at B]*
I	point d'inflexion ⇔ *inflexion/inflection (Br/Am) point*
P	point de rebroussement ⇔ *cusp* sommet, pic ⇔ *apex/vertex, peak*
PP′	[ligne de] crête, arête ⇔ *crest [line], ridge*
A′, B′	sommet, fond/creux ⇔ *top, trough* pr. trough (trɔf)
S	ensellement, col ⇔ *saddle point, pass*