



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 Buttrass. 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 [...].

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 [...]," 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: (*).....
.....
.....
.....



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?
 How is each of them called? How are they constructed? When should you use them?

- a. **is happening**.....

- b. **has collided**.....

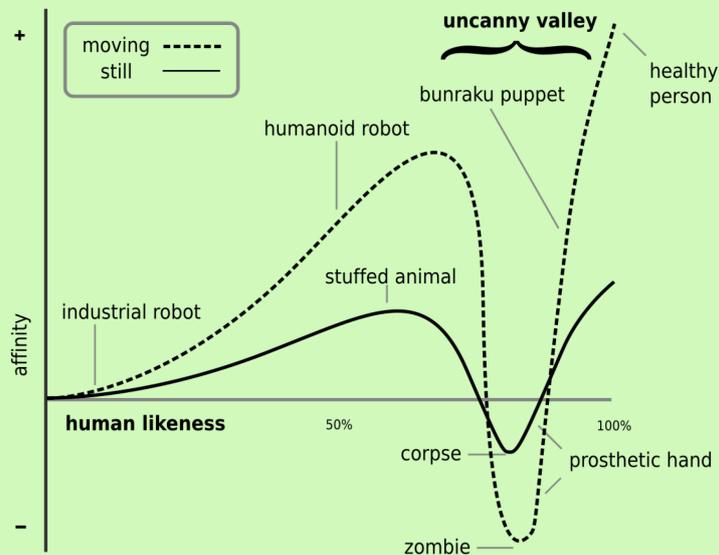
- c. **you'd think**.....

- d. **is soundtracked**.....

3. Fill in the blanks of the following sentences using the appropriate structure from the four above.

- a. Occasionally there's a synthetic wig (*to involve*), too.
- b. 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 (*to involve*).
- c. It quickly became pretty apparent that not many people (*to do*) the trend even understood what 'uncanny valley' means.
- d. Even from a grammatical standpoint, the trend often falls flat. 'Turning myself into uncanny valley' makes it more obvious that some creators (*to join*) in without really understanding what they (*to get*) themselves into.

4. Summarize the differences between the roboticist's original theory and the make-up trend by filling in the expert's explanation directly in the text (*). Try to use the phrase “instead of.”





Appendix: Additional vocabulary

Marc Défourneaux

Do You Speak Science?

Comprendre et communiquer en anglais scientifique



DUNOD

sens de variation \Leftrightarrow direction of variation	
	augmenter/[s'ac]croître, faire croître \Leftrightarrow to increase (\neq to grow) décroître, faire décroître \Leftrightarrow to decrease croissance/augmentation \Leftrightarrow increase décroissance/diminution \Leftrightarrow decrease strictement [dé]croissant \Leftrightarrow strictly [increasing, decreasing] agrandir, diminuer, réduire, abaisser \Leftrightarrow to enhance, to diminish/lessen, to reduce, to lower
	variation monotone \Leftrightarrow monotonic (\neq monotonous) variation passer par un [maximum, minimum] \Leftrightarrow to go through a [maximum, minimum]
taux/vitesse de variation \Leftrightarrow rate of variation	
	lent, progressif, rapide \Leftrightarrow slow, progressive, rapid pente [faible, douce, forte, raide] \Leftrightarrow [smooth, gentle, strong, steep] slope changement radical de [valeur, ...] \Leftrightarrow sharp/dramatic change in [value, ...] montée soudaine \Leftrightarrow surge
	les deux courbes se coupent en I \Leftrightarrow the two (\neq both) curves intersect at I I = point d'intersection \Leftrightarrow intersection point (or) intercept B = point d'intersection avec l'axe des y \Leftrightarrow y-intercept
	les deux courbes [confluent, se rejoignent] en F \Leftrightarrow the two curves (\neq both curves) [merge, join up] at F courbes concourantes (\neq concurrentes) \Leftrightarrow concurrent (\neq competing) curves
	A, B passer par un [maximum en A, minimum en B] \Leftrightarrow to go through a [maximum at A, minimum at B] I point d'inflexion \Leftrightarrow inflexion/inflection (Br/Am) point P point de rebroussement \Leftrightarrow cusp sommet, pic \Leftrightarrow apex/vertex, peak PP' [ligne de] crête, arête \Leftrightarrow crest [line], ridge A', B' sommet, fond/creux \Leftrightarrow top, trough pr. trough (trɒf) S ensellement, col \Leftrightarrow saddle point, pass