

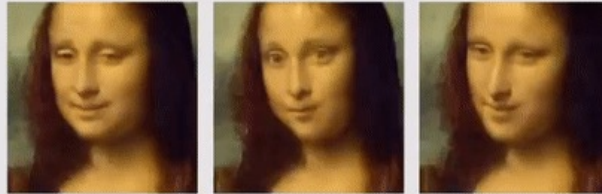
Seeing is not believing: Visual literacy in the age of AI

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Module 3: Baudrillard's Simulacra & Hyperreality

Baudrillard's *Simulacra & Hyperreality*

Living portraits



Baudrillard's Simulacrum

- Simulacrum: a representation or imitation of something; a copy
- 1st order: an original that is a copy (less real than what it represents)
- 2nd order: a copy of an original (as real as what it represents)
- 3rd order: a copy without an original (more real than what it represents)
- Hyperreality: a representation that is "more real" than the reality it claims to represent

For more on Baudrillard's Simulacrum:

http://www.sociology.org.uk/notes/sctv_simulacra_hyperreal.pdf

1st order of simulacra



2nd order of simulacra



3rd order of simulacra: Hyperreality

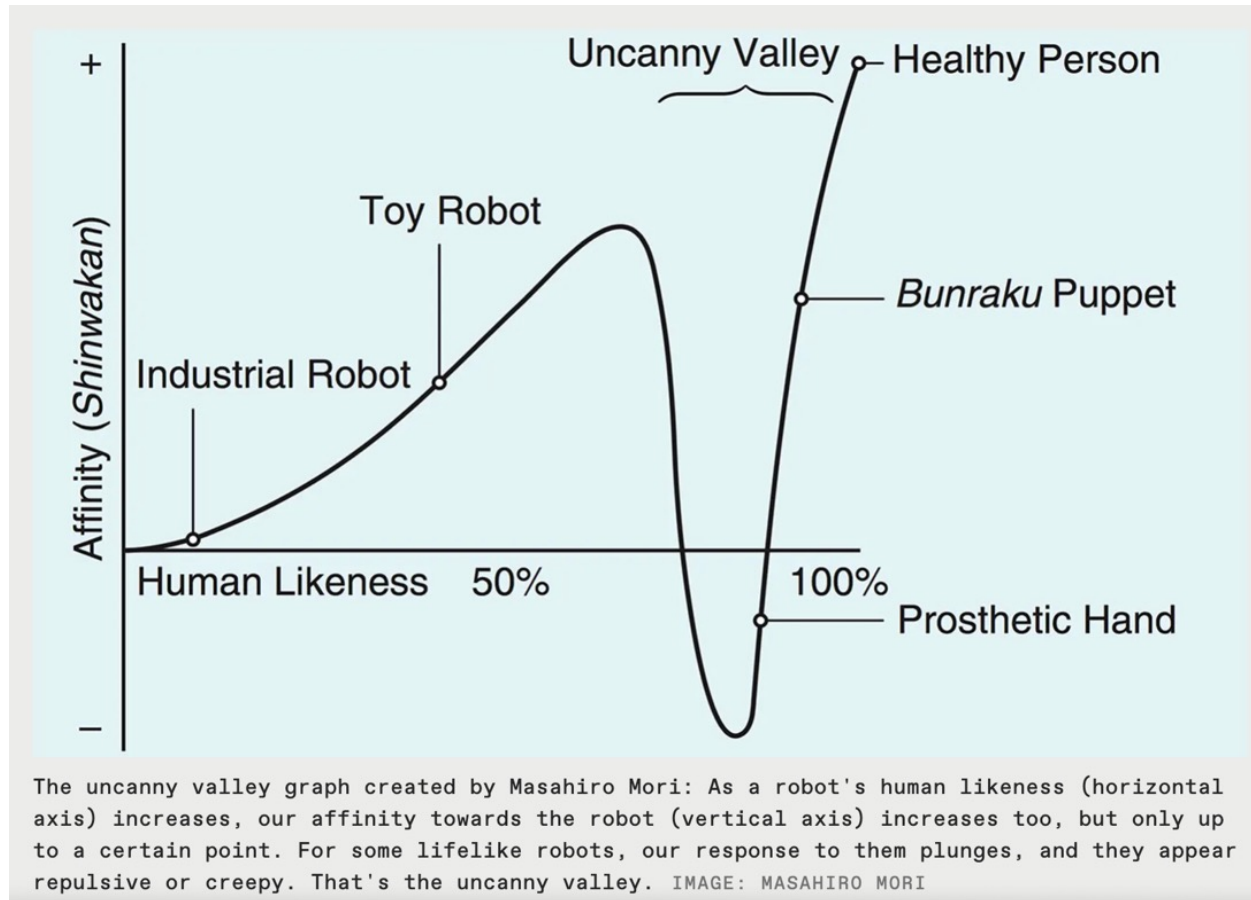


https://youtu.be/v7L_tklvOA0

Deep Nostalgia as Hyperreality

- More real than the reality it claims to represent
- Once frozen in time, the photographs suddenly come alive and the individuals they portray can blink, move their heads from side to side, and smile
- The effect is mesmerizing and at the same time eerie – we don't expect the past to be re-animated
- The element of wonder is replaced by a sense of unease as we realize that the movements, we are witnessing are computer-generated – a phenomenon known as the uncanny valley

The uncanny valley



Deep Nostalgia as Hyperreality

- An interesting framework for evaluating and interpreting images and AI-generated synthetic media such as deepfakes and Deep Nostalgia
- What are the consequences of living in the world of copies such as analog photographs, digital images, and synthetic media created with AI?
- The theory of *Simulacra & Hyperreality* can be applied to understand the effects that living in the post-modern era has on our perception of reality
- How do the different orders of simulacra affect our perception of what is authentic and what is fake?
- How may the hyperreal affect what we consider to be credible representational images?

Deep Nostalgia as Hyperreality



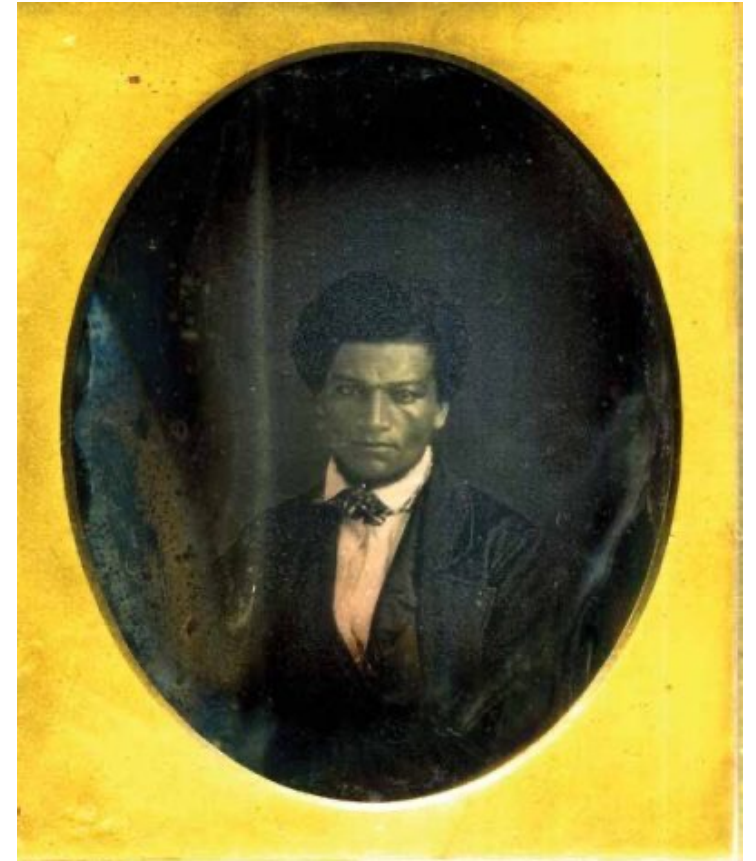
<https://youtu.be/rxp5RI1G70c>

Picturing Frederick Douglass

- The most photographed American man of the 19th century
- Saw the camera's lens as a tool to help free Black people step into a new identity
- For many, his portraits were the blueprint of Black freedom and dignity
- Through the eye of the camera, he could control how he was seen
- In images of him, his face is always stern & unflinching
- He never smiled in photographs

For more on *Picturing Frederick Douglass*:

<https://www.wbur.org/news/2016/07/21/picturing-frederick-douglass>



Resources:

- http://www.sociology.org.uk/notes/sctv_simulacra_hyperreal.pdf
- Deep Nostalgia of the Mona Lisa: https://youtu.be/v7L_tklvOA0
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/17/learning/lesson-of-the-day-your-loved-ones-and-erie-tom-cruise-videos-reanimate-unease-with-deepfakes.html>
- https://dynaimage.cdn.cnn.com/cnn/animations/w_780,ac_none/210302121836-desktop-deep-nostalgia-2.mp4
- <https://spectrum.ieee.org/what-is-the-uncanny-valley>
- <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-uncanny-valley-human-look-alikes-put-us-on-edge/>
- Deep Nostalgia of Frederick Douglass: <https://youtu.be/rxp5R1G70c>
- <https://www.wbur.org/news/2016/07/21/picturing-frederick-douglass>