

'HORROR IS NOTHING OTHER THAN REALITY'
ANGUS MCGRATH, RAT BEDLINGTON, LEO COYTE,
YVETTE JAMES, AUDREY NEWTON, ANSO & IAN HAIG

6 July - 4 August
Opening Thursday 6 July, 6pm-8pm

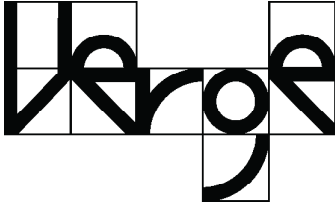
'A glimpse into the world proves that horror is nothing other than reality.'¹

Alfred Hitchcock

Horror is Nothing Other Than Reality applies the same methodology that characterises Hitchcock films, that is, engaging with tensions which arise as a natural result of our everyday experience within contemporary society. The exhibition acts as a multi-species landscape which responds to and questions technophilic ideologies and hierarchies created via the nature/culture divide. The 'horror' in *Horror is Nothing Other Than Reality* flows from an exploration of an external, often incomprehensible, force permeating one's personal sphere of being. At its core, *Horror is Nothing Other Than Reality* exposes the alienating and gnarly nature of species entanglement—whether that be in relation to the enmeshment of humanity and technology or in respect to a violation of human boundaries by other-worldly, supernatural beings. Through mutable assemblages composed of hardware and organics, *Horror is Nothing Other Than Reality* preys on fears that at first glance fall into post-apocalyptic and futuristic tropes, however, stepping back, are seen to be familiar, compelling us to recognise that these horrors, once thought as distant, are in fact current realities.

Illustrating the violation of privacy across biological and technical boundaries are works by Yvette James, Audrey Newton, and AnSo, who, through abstracted imagery, comment on the vulnerability of humanness. James' *Resting Under the Encrypted Veil* (2023) is a spindly alloy figure, representative of the weak human form, on which is draped a white 'opaque screen.' This work attempts to expose the actuality that humans are manipulated and categorised by the data systems which they create. The two-symbol digits etched into James' *Information Overwhelm* (2023) extends upon this notion further, critiquing the way in which technology delineates the fluid intricacies of humanity into marketable binaries.

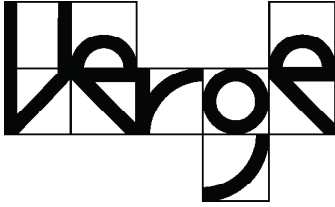
1. Stewart, Amy (2018) "Film Review: Alfred Hitchcock—The Films That Reflected American Society from 1940–1944," *History in the Making: Vol. 11*, Article 18, page 279.



Approaching human vulnerability through a biological lens, Newton's bulbous, fleshy lumps entitled *The Skin That Speaks (i think you're brilliant. I don't think I've ever told you that, but it's true.)* (2023) explores dermis as a communicator of our internal world with its permeable and reactionary nature, allowing for the invasion of bacteria and a divulgence of our inner feelings. Aligning with these ideas of vulnerability, AnSo's sonic work creates an immersive realm in which viewers are encouraged to become introspective, allowing audiences to be hyper-aware of their vulnerabilities as they move throughout the exhibition.

Ian Haig's *Useless Eaters* (2022) and Leo Coyte's *Gone* (2023) and *Dross* (2023) introduce a series of ironic and eccentric odd fellows created randomly and/or by chance — Coyte employing methods of free association to subconsciously call upon images from the depths of his mind and Haig utilising AI as a tool to generate modified organs. The characters in Haig and Coyte's works are at once horrific, awkward and exposing, with both interrogating what it is to be human today. However, where Coyte mines the subliminal, Haig confuses the biological. Coyte's fragmented painterly symbols play on the familiar, drawing upon traditional, well-known semiotic language, evoking a sense of fear not through the introduction of new horrors but by recalling symbols, such as hell fire and witches, that the viewer knows to be horrific. Touching on the transhumanist, extropian musings of 'cult' theorist Yuval Noah Harari, Haig's more-than-human hybrids are jarring for exactly the opposite reason: they expose unfamiliar, seemingly unnatural 'dis-arrangements' of flesh and hardware. Here, Haig considers these monstrous distortions and hacked body parts to illustrate the prospect of our future consciousness being downloaded from the cloud.

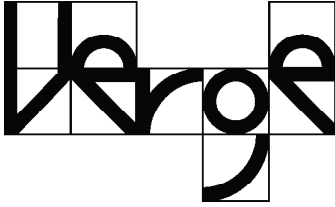
Both Rat Bedlington and Angus McGrath comment upon the often-avoided dark, poisonous aspects of human nature. McGrath's installation *Constant Nothing* (2023) approaches this horrific reality through the lens of 'teenage-ness.' McGrath examines the fact that when adolescents commit unspeakable acts, an easily-sourced excuse is proffered as a substitute for the more uncomfortable possibility that the motivation for committing such acts might be outside of our realm of understanding. McGrath communicates that there are multitudes that are unknowable about real life horror, and humanity might have a greater propensity for darkness than we have traditionally, collectively liked to think.



Relatedly, Bedlington's series of works looks at the propensity for humans to act in horrific ways; however, unlike McGrath, Bedlington considers this 'reality' from the perspective of other-worldly, supernatural beings. Demons, presented in Bedlington's video work *Demoni-logue* (2023), share their thoughts on the 'perplexing, hubristic activity of human beings.' These artists' works not only support but build upon Hitchcock's famous assertion that horror is nothing other than reality, suggesting that the horrors that we experience in this world are potentially born out of an unexplainable dark streak existing within the human psyche.

Horror is Nothing Other Than Reality is a reflection of the tensions that we experience as humans living in a contemporary capitalist world. While the tone of the exhibition is by and large tongue in cheek, some works may be confronting to members of the community. We encourage audiences to approach the curatorial staff who are on hand to speak about the nature and intention of the works. *Horror is Nothing Other Than Reality* is chapter one in a series of exhibitions that consider the construction of species intelligence and identity, looking critically at human-centric states of play. The series highlights our current existential crises and refutes the notion that human identity is separate from other intelligences, beings, and machines. The second chapter, *Entangled Me*, will look at the sensual and spiritual nature of species entanglement and will occur in November 2023.

Tesha Malott & Anthia Balis



List of works

Room 1

Anti-Clockwise

Angus McGrath, Masked Chain, 2023, plastic chain, plastic skulls, vampire mask, dimensions variable.

\$111

Angus McGrath, Constant Nothing, 2023, installation of text on wall in pencil, eraser, dimensions variable.

POA

Angus McGrath, Masked Lamp, 2023, masks from Paddy's Markets, Hektar 3-spot floor lamp from Ikea, texta, dimensions variable.

\$222

Rat Bedlington, Organisms Not Suited To Neptune's Body Hide, 2023, oil on canvas with velvet, beaded trim and polyester stuffing, dimensions variable.

\$6,500

Rat Bedlington, Glimpsed From Beyond The Horizon, 2023, oil on canvas, 505 x 305mm.

\$300

Rat Bedlington, Demoni-logue, 2023, single channel video with sound, 5m 30s, looped. Video production by Garden Reflexxx.

NFS

Rat Bedlington, Shifted Towards Oblivion, We Prepare To Become Our Own Epitaph, 2023, oil on canvas with velvet, ribbon and polyester stuffing, dimensions variable.

\$3,500

Rat Bedlington, Caged Licentious Creatures Merge, Absorbed Only In Each Other's Cells, 2023, oil on canvas, 510 x 510mm.

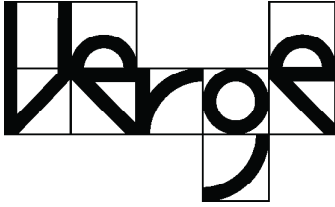
\$900

Rat Bedlington, Glimpsing From Within The Horizon, 2023, oil on canvas, 505 x 310mm.

\$300

Rat Bedlington, Synthetic Fluids Can Sustain But Cannot Sate, 2023, oil on canvas, 1150 x 510mm.

\$1,500



List of works
Room 2
Clockwise

Leo Coyte, Gone, 2023, oil and acrylic on canvas, 1380 x 1120 mm.
\$3,900

Leo Coyte, Dross, 2023, oil and acrylic on canvas, 1380 x 1120 mm.
\$3,900

Audrey Newton, The Skin That Speaks (i think you're brilliant. I don't think I've ever told you that, but it's true.), 2023, latex, beads, fabric, jelly wax, hobby fill, doll hair, dirt, dimensions variable.
POA

Angus McGrath, All around the house, in and out the windows, 2023, installation of text on wall in pencil, eraser, dimensions variable.
POA

Yvette James, Information Overwhelm, 2023, laser cut stainless steel, 600 x 1200 mm.
\$980

Ian Haig, Useless Eaters, 2022, single channel video, 48m looped, edition 1 of 10.
\$1,200

Yvette James, Resting Under the Encrypted Veil, 2023, steel, thermoplastic, 950 x 1320 x 470 mm.
\$1,750

Anso, Undermyskin, 2022, audio track, 5m 50s.
NFA

Verge Gallery would like to thank Justin Henderson, Maelyse Leculier, Jennifer White, Kiera Brew Kurec, Min Wong, Anneke Sholtz, Sophie Penkethman-Young, Tarik Ahlip, Rachel Lai, Aunty Rhonda Dixon and the artists.