

Terrifier 2025 – Call For Papers – Jennifer Richards

“The clown with the white face and the little black hat!”
Art as the Monochrome Horror Icon.

Abstract:

“He thinks what he is doing is funny because he’s laughing. But I know it’s not funny because they’re all dead”.
(*Terrifier 2*)

Art the Clown has cemented himself in contemporary popular culture through the extraordinary trajectory and love for Damian Leone’s *Terrifier* franchise.

The significance of the clown as an archetype can be expressed through both his costume and make-up (Bala, 2013). This paper will therefore explore the visual aesthetic of Art the Clown with a particular emphasis on his clothing choices and the construction of his identity. It will discuss the origins of the vengeful clown beginning in the 19th century, which rose from the ashes of the tradition of the harlequinade (McConnell-Stott, 2012).

Art’s visual aesthetic has changed dramatically since his first appearance in the short film *The 9th Circle* (2008). His look has been steadily curated and developed, and this progression is clearly apparent through the examination of Art in films such as *All Hallows Eve* (2013), continuing to be refined in his most recent appearance in *Terrifier 3* (2024).

This transgressive figure of Art the Clown is a welcome addition to the modern horror genre, an antithesis to the established evil clowns of the twentieth century such as Pennywise from Stephen King’s *IT* or the Joker from the Batman franchise.

Art specifically constructs his identity as threatening. This subversion of the clown through his clothing choices and presentation of self makes for a visually striking and unnerving villain. He actively exaggerates his expression through the combination of simple monochromatic make-up, prosthetics and garment choices.

Uncanny and unsettling yet ultimately mesmerising, this paper argues that Art the Clown’s self-expression is identified through his clothing and make-up. This is an integral part of the examination of the phenomenon that is the *Terrifier* franchise.

Biography

Jennifer Richards is a Tutor (Research) on the MA Fashion Programme at the Royal College of Art. Her work explores a wide range of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary practices. She interrogates the idea of the meta discourse, language, ritual, identity, and the body. Her work explores the themes of identity and construction of self through the discipline of fashion, with a particular focus on Horror and the Gothic. Recent research publications include articles on aesthetics, performance and the body within film and visual culture.