

Phantasmagoria

Audio guide

HENRY MOORE
INSTITUTE

Most Dismal Swamp

Stop 7.

My name is Dane Sutherland and I also work under the name Most Dismal Swamp. And Most Dismal Swamp is kind of led by me. But also every project picks up a number of different collaborators so that the projects can emerge as kind of video installations or gallery installations, performances, club nights, but also, developing off my own kind of research.

Scraper is a 17-minute video work and they kind of present an internet fever dream almost or nightmare, where different folklores can emerge or older folklores can come together and mix together into this weird nightmare world.

The ones shown in the gallery today for chapters one, two and three consist of, for example, a 17th century chapel hidden in Aberdeen in Scotland. This was a chapel that was built in a house secretly for private religious worship. When this Christian worship was outlawed in the country. And I was very interested in how this kind of space enabled a clandestine or secret ritual practice to remain present and kind of allow people to continue practicing it despite laws or other oppression.

So in working with artists such as Nina Davis, she had a kind of idea to work with characters that were assembling the makeshift masks on their faces, which kind of spoke to elements of building new identities online using technologies such as AI, facial remapping and things like that.

But also there are characters which are more stemmed from my own interest in how the internet is traversed now. So I was quite interested in some of the folkloric terms that come across in internet discourse. For example, maybe pursuing a rabbit hole, falling down a rabbit hole online in your own research or on YouTube. And I was interested in the rabbit holes and rabbit burrows as perhaps being an underused or under recognised folkloric symbol for today.

Rabbits are also characters that possess a knowledge of the underworld, understanding of an underworld and kind of decay, dirt, dirty, dark mechanisms that underlie things. But I was also interested in another side of this, where a burrow is not just a rabbit's home, but it's also, a means by which rabbits can be reared for meat and fur industries. So a rabbit's burrow is something that is built by a farmer to reflect the architecture that the rabbit considers to be its kind of normal, wild home in the wild.

I was interested in exploring this simple algorithmic entity called a web scraper, which can be quite easily designed and built to go out onto the internet and harvest whatever data you can programme it to perceive and gather for you. It can be scraped from web pages or profiles, anything like that. And that quite simple behaviour of being programmed to see some things and not see other things, but then build worlds out of those things that you see was quite interesting to me as a model for behaviour.

I think existing folklore does find its way into *Scraper* and my work through, for example, the rabbit character that I've mentioned before. But likewise, I'm also interested in emerging folklore. So folklore that doesn't have like a precedent in history. I also have an interest in what we are being told that folklore is or isn't. So for example, I'm interested in critically evaluating the assumption that things like memes represent folklore and whether they truly do.

And so I think *Scraper*, I would like to kind of maybe prompt people to ask some of these questions about their understandings and their assumptions about folklore and what constitutes folklore, but maybe also to ask what is the source of folkloric topic as well? Is it something that comes from folk and folk practices, or is it coming from somewhere else, like a more algorithmic, trend focused model?

This is the end of Stop 7.

This is a transcript of an audio guide produced by Henry Moore Institute for the exhibition *Phantasmagoria*, on display from 15 May to 30 August 2026. For more information visit henry-moore.org/phantasmagoria