

An exhibition presented at  
EXPRESSION, Centre d'exposition de Saint-Hyacinthe  
from January 25 to April 20, 2025

# Christian Messier

## La vallée de l'étrange

Saint-Hyacinthe, January 8, 2025

Christian Messier's exhibition *La vallée de l'étrange* plunges visitors into a zone of ambiguity in which the uncanny is materialized through recent paintings shaped by artificial intelligence. This unsettling dialogue between the familiar and the unknown is supplemented by earlier works that reflect his constant quest for the uncanny. The exhibition offers an immersive experience that challenges perceptions and shakes up points of reference.

*I've been interested for a long time in the uncanny – the contradictory feeling, described by Freud, of confusion between the strange and the familiar.*

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This original series of large paintings, titled *La vallée de l'étrange*, presents odd characters who find themselves in uncomfortable situations but behave as if everything were utterly normal. People looking at these paintings, in their turn, experience empathy and feel the sense of malaise – one that is, paradoxically, joyous. These recent works (2024) were created with artificial intelligence, which contributes to the sense of the *uncanny* that Messier was looking for. The eponymous video exposes this feeling even more strongly, as Messier has used digital tools to create disturbing transformations of the characters through morphing and metamorphoses.

In this corpus, Messier explores the uncanny (S. Freud) and its technological derivative, the concept of the “uncanny valley,” which gives the exhibition its title. The uncanny is an unsettled feeling caused by confusion between the strange and the familiar. The uncanny valley (M. Mori) is a theory according to which the more similar an android robot is to a human being, the more monstrous its imperfections appear.

The exhibition also includes earlier works: a series of paintings, in a different style, titled *Rétrospective de l'étrange* (2010–23), and *La genèse de l'étrange* (1998–2008), a set of collages that bring to mind European photomontages of the 1920s and 1930s.

With this grouping, produced over a long period (1998–2024), visitors are invited to appreciate Messier's various bodies of work, which share the common denominator of the notion of the uncanny. Further, we understand through his pieces that images do not involve vision alone; it is as if, by empathy, they encompass the totality of the viewer, appealing to the sensory, the mental, and the social.

### Reflexive guide

A “reflexive guide” is now available to the public. This guide is meant to enhance the visitor’s experience. Initially designed to provide a deeper understanding of the artist’s work, this tool also helps viewers familiarize themselves with specific contemporary art terms and concepts (French only).

### Critical essay

For each exhibition, EXPRESSION invites an author to write a critical essay aimed at helping viewers further develop their reflection around the artworks. For *La vallée de l'étrange*, this text will be accessible, in print and digital versions, a few weeks after the opening.

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## Espace lecture

EXPRESSION now offers visitors the ESPACE LECTURE. It’s a space where they can take the time to take a look at various publications that testify to the richness of contemporary art in Quebec and Canada. Since 2001, all exhibitions presented at EXPRESSION have been accompanied by print or digital publications containing analytic essays. The monographs that you’ll find in the ESPACE LECTURE were published or co-published by EXPRESSION. Produced in close collaboration with the artists and curators, these publications help to highlight the visual arts and advances in research and knowledge in contemporary art.

In 2018, to facilitate the distribution of these books, EXPRESSION co-founded the Collectif d’éditeurs d’art contemporain (CÉAC).



**EXPRESSION**  
Centre d'exposition de Saint-Hyacinthe



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**Opening hours** · Free admission  
Tuesday to Thursday 10 - 5  
Friday 10 - 7  
Saturday and Sunday 12 - 5  
Monday CLOSED

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