

Customizing the body and constructing gender

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Customizing the Body and Constructing Gender Body Modification in Four Different Ways using the Terms of an " Artistic Gaze", " Medical Gaze", " Legal Gaze", and " Cultural Gaze"

Introduction

Body modification is the act of voluntary altering the normal human body conformation and appearance for aesthetic, medical, or non-medical purpose. An individual can resort to this modification culturally as an act of rite of passage, denoting affiliation to a community, artistically for aesthetic reason, or decoration purposes. Medically, body modification can be done through amputation of body parts, plastic surgery, circumcision and many others. This paper discusses the body modification techniques in relation to four different outlooks, which include artistic, legal, cultural, and medical grounds.

Artistic Gaze

In postmodern society, art has undergone several evolutions with one invention of the human body being used as one of the medium of expressing art. Body tattooing, body piercings, incisions like tongue splitting, elongation of body parts are just among the many ways the evolution of body modification evolution has undergone (Rose, 1993). Tattooing and body piercing are perceived as acts of pursuit of empowerment and self-expression. In countries, such as Australia and the U. S., different social groups that associate themselves with Homosexuality, Nerdism, Supremacists, Modern religions and atheists, use tattooing as a symbol of self-stigmatization and as a form of communicative or performative expression (Rose, 1993).

Medical Gaze

Medically body modification may include plastic surgery, circumcision, body amputation, body piercing, tattooing, and body parts elongations amongst others. According to Edelman, the modern society women may disregard the outlook of some parts of their bodies, and subsequently resort to plastic surgery (Edelman, 2000). The body parts that are commonly modified include the breasts, cheeks, lips, buttocks, thighs amongst others (Edelman, 2000). Some individuals resort to body amputations due to pain or medical implication such as cancer or viral infection, which cannot be treated unless the amputation is performed by a qualified doctor. Others pierce their bodies to cope with trauma or stress to act as therapeutic process, which subsequently helps the subjects in coping with the reaction of the body and mind (Edelman, 2000).

Legal Gaze

Legally, body modification under the American State Laws, stipulates that it should only be done on an individual who is of legal age (18-years-old), of sane mind, voluntarily, and the individual should not be under any influence of intoxications such as alcohol, drugs (Edelman, 2000). Only a qualified physician should perform body modifications that culminate to extreme actions such as body parts amputations and body plastic surgery. The patient or the subject should be advised exhaustively on the implications of the risks that are involved and the most likely it outcomes (Edelman, 2000).

Cultural Gaze

Culturally body modification, according to Edelman, may be interpreted as a resolution of an initiation process through the body markings (Edelman,

2000). In culturally sanctioned body modifications, the marks placed on the subjects body would probably enhance the act of social inclusion and authentically demarcate social status of the subject (Edelman, 2000). In certain cultures, body modification entails circumcision, genital mutilations and others a prerequisite for both boys and girls. For instance, women in Cote d'Ivoire cannot get married if they were uncircumcised.

Conclusion

Body modification has undergone expansive evolution as compared to the ancient society. Culture was the key factor for body modification during the ancient times. However, the modern world has practices body modification for aesthetic purposes, self-expression, medical purposes, with legal measure enacted to regulate and control them.

Reference

Edelman, D. (2000). *The Thin Red Line: Social Power & the Open Body*. ProQuest , n.

Rose, B. (1993). *Orlan: Is It Art? Orlan And The Transgressive Act* . *Art in America* 81: 2 , 83-125.