

The Female Nude: Historical Representation and Contemporary Challenges.

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Introduction

Inspiration for this essay came from my personal experience as a novice fashion designer. I observe on a regular basis the content shared on social media platforms, and often unpick the meaning behind paintings to further develop my understanding of society and the expanding urge to be perfect. It has come to my attention that there is an increased focus on women and the body. It would be advantageous as a designer to identify the reasoning for this to further inform my practice and cater my designs to suit the needs of society. Additionally, it is of importance as a designer to share a viewpoint on important topics like this to engage the consumer with the artwork.

Representations of the human body and its association with the word 'beauty' has fluctuated since the 18th Century to the present. Wolf (1990, p.11) comments "Every generation since about 1830 has had to fight its version of the beauty myth". Wolf's use of the term 'beauty myth' suggests there is a misconception with what is distinguished as 'beautiful' and this is demonstrated differently throughout centuries. Wolf's referral to 'fight' in this context gives the impression that 'beauty' stereotypes that are defined by 'the beauty myth' are often disputed by the wider population. "The qualities that a given period calls beautiful in women are merely symbols of the female behaviour that that period considers desirable" (Wolf, 1990, p.13-14). Supposedly 'beauty' is not determined by appearance alone but by the way a woman conducts herself. It is proposed that a woman's level of 'beauty' is classified by a series of 'idealized' attributes. To determine why the body is so prevalent today it is important to explore how the body was perceived previously. This has prompted me to begin examining the propositions insinuated by the male gaze during the 18th Century in Chapter 1. Theorists like Bernheimer will aid my enquiry into the male gaze, by helping me to identify the similarities and differences made between traditional representations of the body in historical paintings compared with modern. Desired attributes are susceptible to change with each decade which is why I want to investigate what factors dictate whether a woman is 'beautiful' or not. It will provide a greater understanding of the rationale behind self-image, to uncover how society invents a brand-new outlook on 'beauty' each decade.

To gain a deeper insight into the representation of women during this period I will identify what constitutes as a 'nude' or a 'naked' image. I will be incorporating the ideas manifested by theorist John Berger in Chapter 1 to support this representation. To further develop an understanding of 'desirable' attributes I will refer to aspects of the body which are categorized by critics as 'undesirable.' By pinpointing the then 'undesirable' qualities it allows for associations to be made

between the past and the present generation. I will be addressing the body language presented in these portraits to see how they differ in response. There will be emphasis specifically drawn on the act of looking. By assessing a female's prominence within a painting over her appearance, it will give a hint towards how a woman is perceived as a whole not just by her looks. I will finish off Chapter 1 by briefly introducing the work of Alexander McQueen and outlining how he challenges existing 'idealized' conventions of beauty in comparison to historical artists like Manet in the 1800's. This will include an explanation on how his work empowers women today by altering an individual's opinion of the body through the process of conditioning. At the same time highlighting the visible contrast between the centuries.

Chapter 2 will examine social media's role in changing audience's opinion of the body via the content they make available to the public. Research gained from this content will give an implication into the effect continuous use of these sites has on society. Equally, its use of conditioning in generating associated comparisons to the content advertised. To further evidence how modern technologies like social media shape society's view of the body Chapter 2 will end with a discussion on contemporary artist, Jenny Saville and fashion designer Moto Guo. This section will outline how both artists incorporate realism into their work through their 'realistic' representations to improve acceptance of the body in society.

Inspiration for this essay came from my personal experience as a novice fashion designer. I observe on a regular basis the content shared on social media platforms, and often unpick the meaning behind paintings to further develop my understanding of society and the expanding urge to be perfect. It has come to my attention that there is an increased focus on women and the body. It would be advantageous as a designer to identify the reasoning for this in order to cater my designs to suit the needs of society, also to share a viewpoint on important topics like this.

Chapter 1 The Male Gaze

The perception of women and body image in today's society has not really changed over centuries. The main similarity between historical representations of the body and modern representations is the influence of the male gaze. "Traditional representations of the nude put women on display for the pleasure of a spectator presumed to be male. Her naked body becomes nude insofar as it is seen as an erotic object offered to the man's gaze" (Bernheimer, 1989, p.258). This suggests that women are viewed as a form of property, Bernheimer describes women as being put on 'display' much like an object would be placed on a shelf to admire. Additionally, hinting towards the idea of a woman's purpose being to satisfy a male's sexual fantasies, the naked woman is transformed into a nude depending on the spectator's intentions.

There are many factors which determine whether a photograph or painting of a body is considered to be a naked image or a nude image. "To be naked is to be oneself. To be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognised for oneself. A naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude" (Berger, 2008, p.54). Berger reinforces Bernheimer's suggestion of objectification and proposes it is down to the sincerity of the image and whether the image is depicting reality. Therefore, an image which has been altered or manipulated in some shape or form is considered as a nude and can be dependant on the audience and their interpretation. Moreover, the body has to be perceived as inanimate and as a platform for imagination.

Berger (2008, p.54) states "to be on display is to have the surface of one's own skin, the hairs of one's own body, turned into a disguise, the nude is condemned to never being naked". This highlights the correlation between purity and the naked, it proposes that by changing the natural features of a human's visual appearance it creates a fake illusion of what is normal. Consequently, this idealised version of beauty could result in people having an unrealistic idea of what is beautiful. There is reason to believe this because Berger's use of the word "condemned" mentioned previously indicates that the body which we are born into is wrong in society, and we are conditioned to dislike certain aspects because it is not present in paintings or photography. Thus, this could lead to a person thinking body hair or blemishes are abnormal or disgusting.



Figure 1 Olympia by Manet (1832-1833)

Although there is still progress to be made in regard to the acceptance of blemishes and body imperfections, Manet's historical painting of 'Olympia' advocates a turning point. Figure 1 shows 'Olympia' painted by Édouard Manet (1832-1833). Olympia is seen undressed, cross legged resting on top of a draped piece of cloth. Olympia's complexion in the painting is pale and she is presumed to be staring at the viewer directly. This is considered to be one of Manet's most controversial paintings and did not receive much positive feedback at the time it was created. "The press took an instant dislike to the work, using words like: the vicious strangeness, women of the night, a sort of gorilla, a grotesque, such indecency!" (Lipton 1992, p.3). The word 'indecency' used by Lipton insinuates inappropriate behaviour and is used in relation to Olympia's direct gaze. These criticisms could derive from the viewers unfamiliarity of Olympia's active presence within the painting. Olympia emphasises her presence by returning the look of the viewer, this action establishes to the viewer she is real and discourages any objectification made by the audience as mentioned earlier by (Bernheimer, 1989, p.258). Societies conformity to the 'Male Gaze' and how it dictates how women should look within an image may have caused the audience to be offended by Olympia's presence in the painting.

The press described Olympia as a 'gorilla' and 'vicious' these are both quite aggressive terms to describe a woman. Gorillas are also associated with being extremely hairy but Olympia has no visible signs of body hair in the painting. Berger (1989) states "The convention of not painting female body hair, contributes to the representation of female submission by eliminating the hint of animal passion and physical desire suggested by hairy growth" (Bernheimer, 1989). These declarations

insinuate that body hair is considered as unattractive and subverts the idea of what is beautiful. In connection to the phrase 'animal passion' it comes across that women displaying their sexual desires is conveyed negatively. In relation to previous comments on male fantasy, a woman visibly displaying their feelings of sexual passion may destroy the male's vision. The male's vision in this case can be identified with the process of scopophilia as described by Mulvey (2011) as "the pleasure involved in looking at other people's bodies (particularly, erotic) objects without being seen...by other members of the audience"(Chandler and Munday,2011). Scopophilia can be linked to figure 1 in this circumstance because she actively returns the look of the viewer which challenges the thesis surrounding scopophilia. It implies that if a female figure is expressing too much emotion in the painting, it is no longer a blank canvas which the viewer can manipulate so it erases the ability for the viewer to seek their own narrative.

In figure 1 Olympia instigates a sense of dominance in Manet's painting, she is captured grabbing the upper flesh of her thigh with her left hand. "The dramatic ambiguity of Olympia's manual gesture not only violates the canons of the nude, it puts her in possession of her sexuality" (Bernheimer, 1989, p.269). With reference to the placement of Olympia's hand Bernheimer emphasises Olympia's sense of control. This is highlighted through Olympia's body language, her face doesn't portray much emotion but the positioning of the hand which covers her genitals and the crossing of her legs suggests she is abstaining from sexual advances. In addition to this her fingers can be seen digging into her flesh, this further focuses the viewer's attention on Olympia accentuating her existence by giving her further control over the audience's judgement. Olympia's direct gaze reflects her consciousness of being observed but her positioning informs the observer she is not open for exploitation. In addition to this the subtle grabbing of her flesh could be characterized as ownership, this is in contrast with Berger (2008, p.54) and his comparison to women and objectification on page 1.



Figure 2 The Venus of Urbino by Titian (1487-1576)

During this period a nude woman is expected to show little expression and leave much to the imagination of the audience. Parker and Pollock (1981, p.116) state that during this time frame “the female figures are frequently asleep, unconscious or unconcerned with mortal things, and such devices allow undisturbed and voyeuristic enjoyment of the female form”. This theory is conveyed by figure 2 in contrast with Olympia’s direct gaze in figure 1. There is also a clear dissimilarity between the positioning of the ‘hand’ in figure 1 and 2. Olympia’s hand is strong and immediate to the viewer whereas Venus’s hand is much more passive and limp, lacking in power. Venus of Urbino is a clear representation of a female figure during this period and is characterized by Parker and Pollock (1981,p.116). They address another aspect of the male gaze which is the objectification of women as mentioned by Bernheimer (1989, p.258) on the previous page. The male perceives the female body as a lifeless toy which they can manipulate for their own pleasure. Figure 1 is seen staring straight at the audience which forces the viewer to acknowledge her, rather than her body. This action causes the viewer to be conscious of looking at Olympia which in turn discourages their need to be voyeuristic, as a result Olympia is no longer a victim of objectification or their desire.

Whereas in figure 2, Venus is staring directly at the viewer much like Olympia but her posture is dissimilar because it is more relaxed suggesting timidity. “Evidence suggests that looking contributes

to the formation of female subjectivity” (Clark, 2017, p.1.). To summarise, Figure 1 is challenging the response of the viewer, her direct gaze grabs the viewer’s attention confirming her validity in the painting. Olympia can no longer be perceived as lifeless because she is made the centre of attention, making her impossible to ignore. This is showing Olympia’s dominance because she has power over the audience and their subjectivity, leaving the viewer to re-evaluate their premeditations of the female nude.

Another differentiation between both figure 1 and 2 is the animals positioned towards the end of the bed. In figure 1 there is a black cat perched in an upright position with distinctly alert body language. Whereas in figure 2 there is a dog instead of a cat, in a sleeping position with much calmer body language. Both animals are in an almost identical state as the female figures shown in the paintings, this could reflect the atmosphere the artist has intended to create for the viewer. Also, the cat’s alert expression conveyed in the painting of Olympia, may give some indication towards Olympia’s reaction to being observed further highlighting her existence. The dog’s lack of expression in figure 2 supports this idea, Venus of Urbino represents a traditional painting during this era therefore there would be a limited response from the audience in contrast to Olympia. Venus’ absence of emotion is reflected by the dog.



Figure 3 VOSS Fashion Show by McQueen (2001).

Alexander McQueen was a highly regarded designer who challenged cultural and social norms related to 'idealized' beauty. He overthrew old-fashioned concepts raised by artists such as Titian in *The Venus of Urbino*. McQueen implemented this by producing pieces which were controversial and stimulated conversation as shown in Figure 3 by McQueen (2001). The above image shows a voluptuous unclothed female lounging across a chaise-longue surrounded by natural organisms including moths and butterflies. The woman's face is hidden by an unusual mask which is connected to breathing tubes, encompassing the naked lady is a mirrored glass box. This controversial performance piece by McQueen challenges conventions of idealised beauty. McQueen (2015) comments on the meaning behind this staging by saying "it was about trying to trap something that wasn't conventionally beautiful to show that beauty comes from within" (Stansfield, 2015). This suggests the female model shown in figure 3 is being used as a metaphor for inner beauty intended to narrate McQueen's personal opinion. McQueen (2015) has stated "I find beauty in the grotesque" Stansfield (2015). This is an interesting concept in relation to what is considered beautiful by modern society, when compared to press reviews of Manet's *Olympia* on page 2 the grotesque is translated negatively. In contrast to Manet's painting of *Olympia* where there is no visible body hair on show, figure 3 is openly displaying her body hair without any coverage. This reflects people's change in attitude towards the body, and the progression of open-mindedness from the 18th century to the present day.

Butterflies are traditionally associated as beautiful and delicate whereas moths are perceived as ugly. The combination of both butterflies and moths McQueen has chosen to surround the naked lady may have been used to symbolise conflicting opinions of beauty. In addition to this point these two insects may have been integrated to represent the "metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly" (Collins, 2019). Metamorphosis according to Collins (2019) is defined as "a process in which somebody/something changes completely into something different". Metamorphosis could be connected to figure 3 in many different ways. Initially at the start of the show all the audience can see is their own reflection, there is no visibility of the naked lady. As the show progresses the glass box shatters revealing the unclothed female, much like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon. Throughout the show the audience's perception of themselves and the human body is likely to change. Consciousness is emphasised when the audience are confronted with their own actions. The mirrored reflection forces the audience to acknowledge themselves observing the naked female, therefore this may have influence on the audience's discernment. This can be associated with the processes involved in metamorphosis because it symbolises the audiences 'change' in perception.

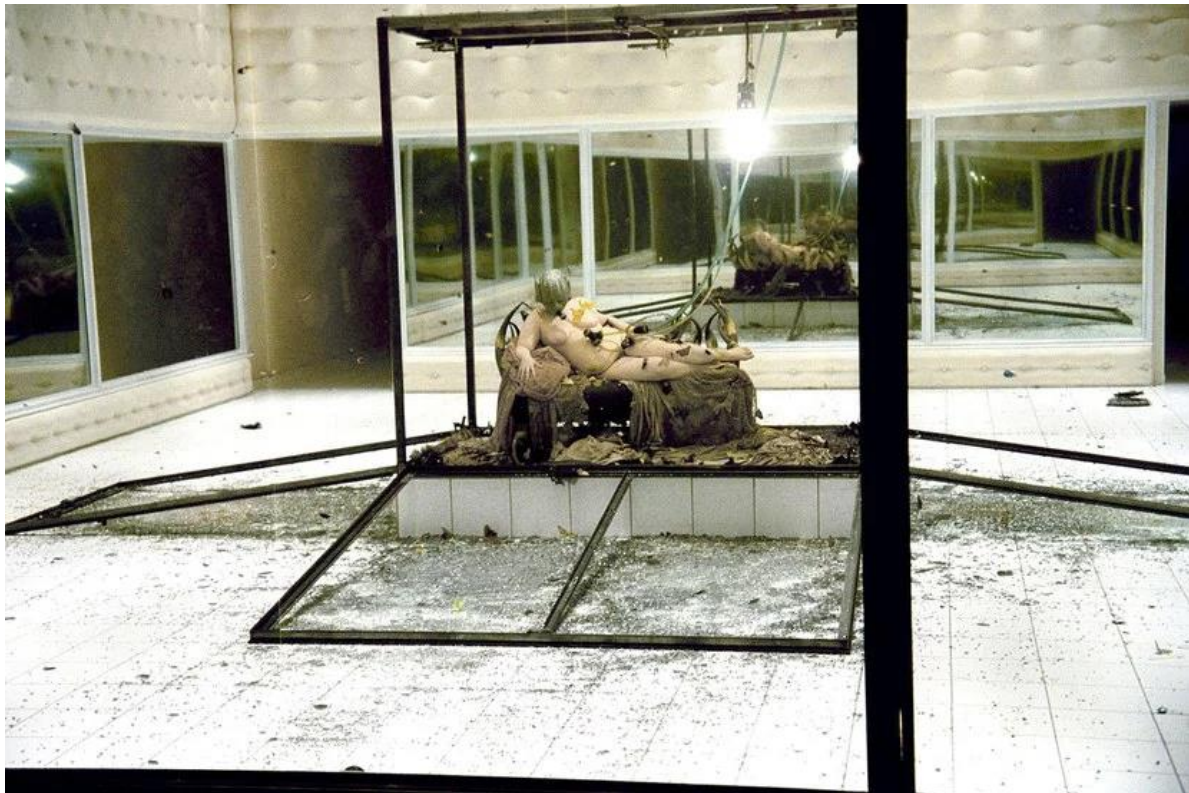


Figure 4 VOSS Glass Box by McQueen (2001)

Although figure 3 embraces the natural body we are born in to, the presence of the alien-like mask and breathing apparatus portrays the model as abnormal. McQueen has conveyed the naked model as a stimulus for fear. Michelle Olley (2015) the model featured in figure 3 quotes “My body is going to be so at odds with the... bony old crow-people in the audience...I am what most of them fear-fat” (Allwood, 2015). This comment can be used as an example to translate how some women feel about themselves and as an explanation for why women are so body aware. “This unequal relationship is so deeply embedded in our culture that it still structures the consciousness of many women. They do to themselves what men do to them. They survey like men” (Berger, 2008, p.63). When Berger refers to ‘this unequal relationship’ it gives the impression there is a separation between people in society. Inequality in this context could either be applied to the male and female or the thin and fat. Likewise, in order for women to be satisfied with the way they look they must make comparisons to others. The point of a ‘survey’ in the majority of cases is to gain knowledge, consequently this could be an indication as to why women compare themselves, to look for ways to better themselves. In addition to this we have been conditioned to ‘survey’ the human body like a ‘spectator’ viewing a painting, this is emphasised by Alexander McQueen (2001) in his Voss show with the reflective glass box. Freud (1957) investigates the theory of scopophilia he says “the pleasure of the look is transferred to others by analogy” (Mulvey, 1957, p.835). This instigates that women gain enjoyment from examining and comparing themselves to others. They believe these idealistic qualities sourced

from their own observations will reflect back on themselves, supporting the previous statement by (Mulvey,1957,p.835).

Chapter 2 Modern Influence

Idealised conventions of beauty are formed in today's society through the process of comparison, reinforced by modern use of social media. Jones (2015) supports this theory with the quote "Research has found that making comparisons with media images can be significantly linked to upward social comparison processes because such media images tend to portray "the idealized versions of physical attractiveness" (Ji Won and Makana, 2015, p. 332). Jones' quote suggests that people viewing these unrealistic images are comparing themselves to imagery which is not reflecting the average body. This gives the user an irrational perspective of the norm which may lead to further self-evaluation and comparison if the user's reality does not match with the person they are observing. Hence, providing the user with an unrealistic target to strive towards.

In the majority of cases the individuals supplying this content to users of social media sites are rich and successful celebrities. Consequently, social media users may start to believe that to be successful in life and considered as attractive by society, they must look identical to the images displayed by such sites. This form of conditioning can be associated to historical representations of the body shown by figure 2, Chapter one. Present-day and historical imagery both provide unrealistic and misleading depictions of women by not advertising true representations of the female body. Psychotherapist Sara (2018) states that "Social Media is usually edited and not a representation of real life. Social feeds are the edited highlights of life, and we all face ups and downs" (Astrup, 2018, p.16). Individuals with such social feeds bestow a life which is much superior than reality because they are only sharing the best parts of their day.

When media users receive both positive or negative commentary on their own photographs on social media, they may believe their likeability is determined by the feedback they receive from their observer. Berger (2008, p.63) stated 'they survey like men' mentioned in the previous chapter, can be linked to commentary received from the user, in this circumstance the user would be classed as the individual surveying. Tiggemann and Barbato say that "negative appearance commentary is strongly associated with body dissatisfaction, disordered eating, and poor psychological functioning" (Tiggemann and Barbato, 2018, p.61). This statement exhibits the negative influence social media has on users both mentally and physically. Although appearance commentary is supposed to be used mainly as a sharing platform and communication network it shows it can be abused in ways which may harm the user. Ilsa Whateley (2017) supports this when stating "social media made me feel worse, as I would constantly compare myself to other people and make myself feel bad" (BBC News, 2017). Whateley's mention of the words 'constantly' and 'compare' gives the impression that continuous self-scrutiny could potentially lead to obsession.

Digital platforms like Instagram and Snapchat are two contemporary forms of social media which contribute to the conditioning of individuals. “Popular features of these sites are the ‘filters’ or ‘lenses’ that alter and enhance images...they allow users to soften the look of their skin, alter the size of their lips, and cheeks, and ‘improve’ various aspects of their physical appearance”(Astrup, 2018, p.15). Platforms like these encourage body modification because features included within the sites are catered specifically to each person, allowing the user to manipulate the way they look temporarily by airbrushing out any forms of imperfection. This allows the user to generate a false version of themselves which is not real, enticing the user to seek a permanent fixture. By giving the user the opportunity to alter the way they look it motivates the user to question their own appearance. Filters which aim to reduce the appearance of blemishes or change the size of the body suggest to the user that their natural features are undesirable.



Figure 5 ‘Picnic in the Society’ Fashion show by Moto Guo (2017)

Contrary to Social Media platforms, fashion Designer Moto Guo confronts the stigma surrounding blemishes by empowering people to accept their natural complexion in his fashion show 'Picnic in society'. Unlike many designers this is not reflected through his garments but by the models chosen to walk the catwalk. As shown in Figure 5 above, the fashion show was executed by models displaying varying degrees of facial imperfections such as skin discolouration and spots. The models partaking in Guo's fashion show give the general public a much more realistic 'ideal' for people to compare themselves to, also it is something many people can relate to. According to Daily Mail (2013) "about 80 per cent of people between the ages of 11 and 30 will be affected by acne". This figure signifies that acne is a common bodily function experienced by many people on a daily basis. It makes sense for designers to display their garments on the average body because the general public are the target audience and will essentially be purchasing the garments. Accordingly, Moto Guo has addressed this whilst at the same time motivating a change in contemporary forms of advertising.

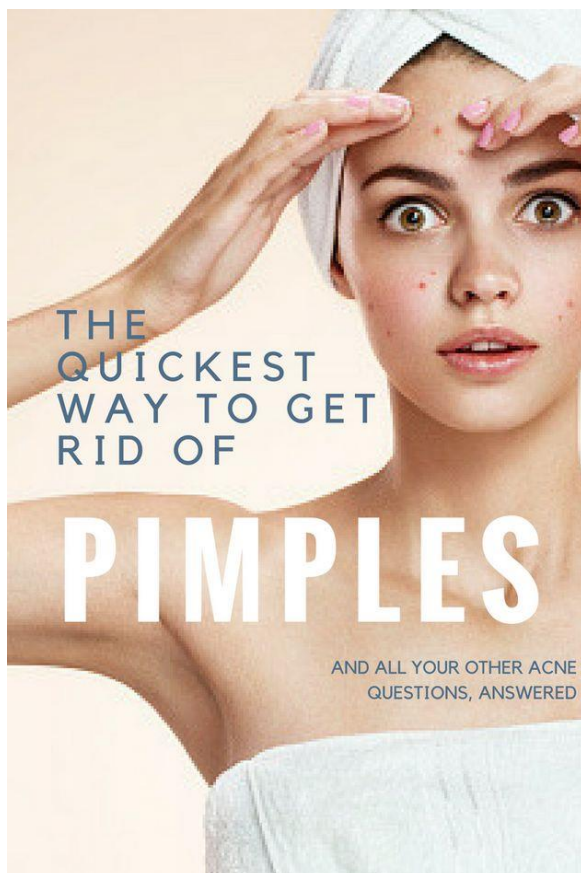


Figure 6 'The quickest way to get rid of pimples' Advertisement by Blatchford (2017)

Adverts as shown by figure 6 above, contribute towards the brainwashing of individuals by distorting their perception of the human body. The advertisement insinuates to the viewer that spots are not

accepted in society. The phrase used within the advert 'the quickest way to get rid of pimples' suggests to the audience that spots are not desirable inevitably they need to change themselves in order to be accepted. Moto Guo's fashion show has a completely different perspective to the advert shown by figure 6, instead of trying to get rid of acne with the use of concealer he embraces it. Subtle protests demonstrated by the fashion show 'picnic in society' positively influence women and boost their self-confidence. Smith (2017) a young woman suffering with acne has said "sharing photos of my skin without makeup makes me feel empowered because I am embracing something that society has taught me to cover up" (Sanghani, 2017). Smith's declaration confirms that people in society are 'conditioned' to dislike these natural features and that positive acne promotion can be beneficial for some individuals. By giving them a purpose or a sense of achievement as they are partly responsible for the growing change in attitude towards the body.

The declaration made by Smith (2017) signifies that media adverts are not all negative and can be used to our advantage to benefit people and their mental health. With advertising in consideration "if magazines are culpable, if they can distort women's self-image and impel self-destruction it would seem relatively easy to cure" (Wykes and Gunter, 2004, p.73). Fundamentally it is not advertising alone that is culpable for a person's mental health, there is reason to believe self-image is based upon several different factors. Which is why it is so difficult to uncover just one logical explanation for the way people critically analyse themselves.

Another twenty-first century practitioner who has focused on the human body specifically is Jenny Saville. Saville produces large scale acrylic paintings which reveal in great detail aspects of the female body which would not typically be captured in traditional paintings of the nude. "Her canvases, often larger than 6 by 6 feet, magnify the raw materials of embodied experience: large, drooping breasts; pregnant bellies and flab" (Cohen, 2018). The scale of Saville's paintings allows the audience to engage with the female figure initiating a feeling of involvement. This interactive quality to her work gives the audience no choice but to address parts of the human body which are not commonly advertised by social media or viewed as a taboo. This confrontational method of activism used by Saville is very similar to the work of Manet and his painting of Olympia discussed in the previous chapter, in this circumstance Olympia's direct gaze could be considered as confrontational. The artists 'magnification' of 'pregnant bellies' and 'drooping breasts' focuses on the fluctuation of the body as a result of its many functional purposes, rather than emphasising solely on the aspects which are appealing to the public and open for objectification.



Figure 7 'Jenny Saville, Propped' Artwork by Saville (1992)

Saville accentuates the growth of appreciation towards the female nude compared with the historical perspective. This is translated via a self-portrait produced by Saville in 1992 shown in figure 7 above. The artist is pictured completely nude, her body is held in a clenched position creating varying angles of protruding flesh whilst her fingers are seen penetrating into her thighs. Engraved into the paint are a series of words written backwards by writer Irigaray (2018) reading "If we continue to speak in this sameness... speak as men have spoken for centuries, we will fail each other. Again, words will pass through our bodies, above our heads – disappear, make us disappear" (Cohen, 2018). As this is a self-portrait and the words are illegible to the viewer without any form of concentration it suggests the words are purposefully incorporated within the painting intended only for Saville herself to understand. Saville may have purposefully included this hidden text to symbolize her mutual understanding with the words, reflecting her opinion on body image and to remind herself why she has produced the painting in the first place.

These words can be identified in connection with 'the male gaze' discussed in Chapter 1. The female shown by figure 2 chapter 1, is described as 'unconscious' and 'unconcerned' by (Parker and Pollock, 1981). This description characterizes women as passive in contrast to the words engraved by Irigaray (2018). Saville opposes this old-fashioned concept through her body language shown in

Figure 7 by the 'penetration' of her fingers and posture. Both gestures are tense and irate which contradict the description of the female nude by Parker and Pollock (1981). Consequently, it raises the viewers awareness of Saville because her body language conveys so much emotion, this intrigues the viewer and gives them an urge to uncover her thoughts and feelings. Saville's noticeable aggression inflicted on the body within the portrait could symbolize the abuse some individuals put themselves through when negatively analysing themselves.

Parker and Pollock (1981, p.126) contradicts Saville's use of 'reversal' within her painting stating, "Masculine dominance cannot be displaced by merely reversing traditional motifs and thinking that this automatically produces an alternative imagery". Parker and Pollock (1981, p.116) are proposing that Saville's intentions of altering traditional thinking associated with the male gaze through the process of reversal is unachievable. Ultimately Saville's self portrait is always going to be thought of as offensive traditionally speaking. The painting still displays aspects of the body which are considered 'undesirable'. Unless there is an active change in the male's attitude towards the female body then there is going to be no difference made to the male's perspective. Predominantly, for all body types to be accepted universally it is not the female body that needs to change it is the male's way of thinking.

Conclusion

In conclusion to the following question: 'The Female Nude: Historical Representation and Contemporary Challenges'. The findings discussed within this essay have given a brief overview of the male gaze and its effect on society from the 18th century to the present. Research found on this subject matter in chapter 1, confirms that regardless of how many years ago the male gaze originated it is still prevalent now. It will continue to influence the way people perceive the human body unless it is addressed and acted upon.

Chapter 1 clarified during the 1800's the sole purpose of the artwork was to satisfy the male. This was affirmed by Bernheimer (1989) with his statement "Traditional representations of the nude put women on display for the pleasure of a spectator presumed to be male" (Bernheimer, 1989, p.258). In order to comply with the standard set by the male gaze, women were expected to create a false identity to avoid any voyeuristic disturbance. Female figures painted in the 1800's were made subject to interpretation due to many artists reluctance in capturing the female bodies in all their entirety. Artists such as Titian mentioned in Chapter 1 figure 2, only illustrated the then desirable attributes of the woman which men found attractive. Physical attributes which were not seen as appealing during the 1800's was 'hairy growth' and 'blemishes'(Bernheimer,1989). Any sign of either characteristic could impact the viewer's appreciation for the painting. As a repercussion these undesirable qualities would be completely left out of the painting or enhanced in some way.

This form of reshaping is still frequently put in application to this present day. A similarity found between traditional and modern representations of the body during this investigation, is society's need to change or enhance the body's natural features. There is an added influence of social media and modern advertising today which creates an even larger platform for appearance to be manipulated. The main Imagery which reinforced the supposition of 'the male gaze' during the 1800's were paintings because today's technology was not in existence. Artists such as Manet and Titian discussed earlier were limited in their resources in comparison to society today. The growing use of technology gives people much more scope than Manet or Titian ever had to drastically enhance their appearance digitally. Social media platforms add to the misguided ideals of 'beauty' in society stemming from the ideas raised by the male gaze. Research collated from this essay indicate that artists, designers and social media platforms like Instagram, all play a role in the 'conditioning' of individuals. "Features of these sites are the 'filters' or 'lenses' that alter and enhance images" (Astrup, 2018, p.15). Comments made by Smith (2017) reflected the psychological harm modern technology has on the general public. These repercussions can easily be minimised by influencers with further consideration towards the content they exhibit. Moto Guo is an excellent example of a

designer who recognizes universal issues relating to body image and is someone who acts upon it in order to make positive changes.

Modern practitioners much like Jenny Saville, Moto Guo and Alexander McQueen as discussed previously in this essay, all focus on embracing the untouched body. An untouched body is described as a 'naked' body by (Berger, 2008, p.54). Findings found in Chapter 2 contradict the ideas raised in Chapter 1. For example, paintings produced during the 1800's like figure 2 are more likely to be considered as 'nude' images whereas more current paintings like Jenny Saville's figure 7 would be categorized by Berger (2008, p.54) as a 'naked' image. With increasing awareness of body image as a result of said artists, it hints towards a more accepting future concerning self-image, with greater use of 'naked' images opposed to 'nude'.

Research concerning McQueen and Manet within Chapter 1, still establish the act of looking as a significant part of civilization even though the images are centuries apart. Similarly, both artists subvert the male gaze with the act of looking but with a differing approach. Manet first introduced people to the act of looking with Olympia's direct gaze in figure 1, making the audience aware of their actions through their own observance. Centuries later, McQueen also drew attention to the act of looking but the audience experiences it first-hand and have direct involvement with the performance. This research confirms that contemporary artists are still trying to shift society's learnt behaviour, both work towards changing people's conformity to look, compare and make judgements on the body. These contemporary artists utilize their creativity by working together to produce new innovative ways of approaching social issues like this. McQueen's Voss show is a modern take on the principles raised by Manet with his painting of Olympia. A similarity distinguished between Jenny Saville and Alexander McQueen's work was the importance of reflection. Saville drew attention to the act of looking in terms of her own body with her self- portrait demonstrated by figure 7. Saville's self-portrait focused on her own personal reflection much like McQueen's audience who were also forced to self-reflect during the Voss fashion show.

Another point commonly pointed out throughout this essay is the 'objectification of women' demonstrated by practitioners in their work. Bernheimer (1989) shed light on this matter with his statement "her naked body becomes nude insofar as it is seen as an erotic object" (Bernheimer, 1989, p.258). This declaration was justified by Titian's painting 'The Venus of Urbino' figure 2, the female figure is lacking in entity due to her lifeless expression. McQueen stood against this notion with his glass box performance shown by figure 3, chapter 1. The breathing apparatus displayed further personified the female by giving her a property only living organisms possess. McQueen's fashion show signifies the current outlook practitioners have of women and their increase in value

since the 1800's to the present day. Artists now try to make women the focal point of their artwork instead of making them as insignificant as an object.

Overall based on all of the idea's explored throughout this independent inquiry, it has been made clear by examining the root cause of idealised conventions of beauty there is an indication into the procedures required to be undertaken in order to improve the perception of women and mental health. Although social media has not always been available to the general public and is considered as a relatively new form of advertising, it has shown to be a highly effective tool in strengthening prefabricated associations with 'beauty' and the body deriving from the 18th century. Media can be used in favour of the consumer or to benefit the distributor alone. Points continually addressed previously imply that artists are partly responsible for society's distorted perception of 'beauty'. In order to improve this issue, there needs to be more designer's like Moto Guo and McQueen promoting all parts of the human body to encourage freedom of expression. Subsequently, leading to a much more diverse and accepting society.

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