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Corporeal Design and the fates of bodily fat after surgery – an artistic perspective

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Our bodies are increasingly being experienced as objects to be honed and worked on (Orbach 2009). In the quest for an optimised body that incarnates beauty, wealth, health and success, larger parts of society are engaging in fat managing activities. Beyond calculating calories or burning fat on workout equipment, modifying the body takes place in operation theatres, which, besides irreversibly changing peoples' perception about their body-image, is proving to have addictive potential (Pitts-Taylor 2007). Taking the diverse cultural and social fates of fat as a guiding thread, the paper will elaborate on the author's on-going investigation in Corporeal Design practices (Zellweger 2010) and will discuss the topic through the presentation of his recent object-based works. Artefacts, which were exhibited in galleries and museums in London, Amsterdam or Lausanne, will be presented and responses discussed



Figure 1: Excess 2550, from the Excessories-series, glass, 2012

Figure 2: Fat, from the Excessories-series, 30x40 cm print, 2012

The artistic enquiry has mainly followed two strategies. The methodological

shift from a studio-based individual practice to an interdisciplinary exchange and collaboration with a plastic surgeon has offered the author insights outside specialised literature and the media. Being in contact also with medical staff and patients in and outside the operation theatre has led to original material, like video documentation and photography as primary sources. Secondly, expanding the traditional understanding of jewellery design (the author's original background) has allowed the unleashing of its embedded knowledge, i.e. its ability to deal with perceptions of identity, meaning and distinction. Jewellery has provided a valuable perspective that informs a view on the cultured body as modifiable artefact.

The investigation has led to the development of tangible body-related objects responding to factual, fictional and ethical dimensions of the subject. The enquiry aims to create emotional response and raise public awareness on a contemporary phenomena that borderlines issues on health and wealth, on dignity and obsession.

References

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