Study on Anti- Lookism An analysis through Modern art and Fashion

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Abstract

In modern society, humans’ misdirected aspirations towards ideal beauty are discussed and criticized. This research utilizes a paradox to express the modern standard of beauty and the society’s homogenization of it through plastic surgery. An empirical analysis was conducted of the artist’s works that reflect anti–lookism. The works were classified as provocation, aesthetic, symbolic and paradoxical depending on the variety of the artists’ approaches and expressions. Also, this part looks at anti–lookism cases in modern fashion industry that were given lascivious expressions. They characterized various types of human beauty. Anti–lookism is a movement that goes against this social trend. It seeks to awaken modern citizens from blind submission to homogenized beauty and commercialization of humans.

This study intends to offer an image of ideal beauty that should appreciate and the concept of an ideal female body. The author hope that further researches are done in social, political, cultural and other levels of the society to establish anti–lookism.

Key Words : Lookism, Anti–lookism, Ideal beauty, anti– fashion, anorexia

Ⅰ. Introduction

In modern society, as social and cultural interests grow, appearance is considered more important than any other standards in judging people. Although a standard of ideal beauties exits in every era, the standard for beauties, in modern times, is getting unified because beauties are overly emphasized. A sociocultural standard for outward beauty was perceived as it was spot lighted in various mass media, and it also internalized an unrealistic, fascinating image. That is, outward looks that mass media show are not reflecting realities but wrapped by body managements, make–ups, and the like. 1) Photos are made up by perspectives, mechanical manipulations, etc., and moreover, objects are constituted from a special stance and images of human body are artificially processed.

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Lookism examined in a previous study is a new social trend that appeared together with capitalism, and studies on it have not been done a lot so far. Especially, lookism is a social phenomenon, most of the studies on it have been done from subjective perspectives rather than objective perspectives. Although art works reflecting anti-lookism have been created multi-laterally in the field of modern arts, diverse studies to emphasize seriousness of the current social trends in mass media, such as fashion magazines, have been done tenuously. By observing from various perspectives anti-lookism that appeared in the modern fashion, I will reconsider the roles of human bodies in the society of appearance for appearance’s sake, and, at the same time, by suggesting various images of beauty, I will be able to reconsider self-identity about beauty which was lost because of unified ideal beauty.

Method of this study is compare to expressive feature of anti-lookism phenomenon appearing in modern art and expressive features of anti-lookism appearing in fashion design. By analyzing from various perspectives the lookism phenomenon in modern society, this study intend to realize anti-lookism with the thought of the times, ‘ontologistic stabilities’, that a body is a direct area where self-identity of a commercialized body can be recognized. I classified anti-lookism works in the modern art and fashion industry as provocation, symbolic, and paradoxical in terms of expression modes. Significance in that it can realize anti-lookism conveying important messages of a current social phenomenon by researching theoretical grounds and various shapes of human bodies and by researching profound works.

II. Theoretical Background

1. Definition and Concept of Lookism

Lookism is a compound word of Look and ism, and this represents appearance for appearance’s sake or appearance discrimination which people, believing appearance divides superiority and inferiority among individuals and segregates success and failure, cling to. Pointing out ‘appearance’ as one of the causes that brought inequality in the human history together with race, sex, religion, ideology, and so on, he defined lookism as a trend or a social fashion that people believe appearance determines superiority and inferiority among individuals and success and failure of lives and that they excessively stick to it.

2. Cause of Lookism Occurrence

Social structural causes of the lookism occurrence are technological innovations in visual media rapidly growing in the latter modern society, extensions of capitalism markets targeting the young, rapid growth of the beauty industry and beauty techniques in the consumer society, and so on. And its social influence is that the beauty industry is consistently growing and an obsession with beauty will be greater. Along with visual media rapidly growing in the latter modern society, the expansion of lookism is not a problem of only the western societies. Lookism that implies inaccurate judgments or valuations, prejudice, and discrimination, all coming from physical appearance or outward images, may more foster the disintegration and conflicts of our society together with ideology and sex. To examine fundamental problems, I researched the causes of the lookism occurrence.
1) Development of Mass Communication

Mass communication means a great deal of social information conveyed using mass media to the unorganized public and the situation of the conveyance. The development of mass communication led to the cultural democratization through which cultural outcomes could be distributed inexpensively, abundantly, widely and easily. However, mass communication is characterized largely by images of unified models shown in the existing media advertisements in which senders pursue only a trend. Media critics stipulate that cosmetic surgery frenzy in the whole country is caused by the influences of media. TV dramas influence significantly the attitude toward cosmetic surgeries. The attitude to them, subjective norms, and cognized behavior controls ultimately took effects on behavioral intention on cosmetic surgeries. Specifically, it was found that cognized behavior controls among the constituting factors has the most influence on behavioral intention on cosmetic surgeries. The psychology of imitation forms personal values according to the fashion and trend conveyed through mass media. This turns up as the unified culture by destroying the cultural diversity.

2) Capitalism Culture

J.Baudrillard said, "Slenderness and beauty do not have any natural congeniality". This means that today’s standard for beauty is contrary to the natural ones. Companies make use of it to make profits. They emphasize the unified standard for beauty, which is never natural and so most people do not possess. Signing up celebrities or stars who meet the unified standard, companies tempt and create an illusion that those who purchase their products are able to reach the level of the appearance the celebrities have. The egoism that the haves (the capitalists) desire to have more is making consumers spend in the tempting goods. In this way, companies make use of appearance for appearance’s sake and fortify it for their interests.

3) Sociocultural Factor of the Male Governance Structure

From the past when mental and rational values had a dominant position over physical values, the male has been believed to be a mental and rational existence and the female to be a fleshly existence, and so the female’s value could be acknowledged only by physical beauty. In the patriarchal society and history, women with the appearances that men preferred received recognitions and rewards from men and obtained social identities. In the end, women inevitably poured their energy into shaping their bodies. These, in company with social changes such as development of modern technologies of outward appearance managements, led to appearance for appearance’s sake. Moreover, sociocultural factors of the male governance structure wielded its great influences. As it did so, a number of women were stricken by an obsession with appearance, and thus they fell so low as to become an adaptive and dependent existence rather than an autonomous self constituting the society. The distorted appearance for appearance’s sake annihilated individualities and caused a discrimination.
<Table 1> Previous research of Lookism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anderson &amp; Didomenico</td>
<td>Development of Mass Communication</td>
<td>The psychology of imitation forms personal values according to the fashion and trend conveyed through mass media.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heinberg &amp; Thompson</td>
<td>Media critics stipulate that cosmetic surgery frenzy in the whole country is caused by the influences of media.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baudrillard</td>
<td>Capitalism Culture</td>
<td>The egoism that the have the capitalists desire to have more is making consumers spend in the tempting goods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis</td>
<td>sociocultural Factor</td>
<td>Female’s value could be acknowledged only by physicalauty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) Social side effect

(1) Society of Appearance Inequality

Entering the 21 century, our society regards appearances of people as a basis for an important judgment before we knew it as our lifestyle and values have changed depending on social and economical changes of structure in society. Not people’s personalities and abilities but their appearances became an object of evaluation. The perception that a person with a small and pretty face and a slim body not only draws attention but also receives better evaluation in the circumstances of getting a job, taking an interview, and getting married than do others, and that, on the contrary, a person who has abilities but is not good in appearance cannot receive right evaluation is rampant in our society. Those who have beautiful appearances would be satisfied with themselves, live actively, exert their abilities, and have self-confidence, while those who have unbeautiful appearances would be socially intimidated and not receive good treatments from others in their social lives. Our contemporaries go after unrealistic attractive appearances. This reflects the modern society that considers only appearance highly.

(2) Physical Side–Effect

With the development of mass communication, modern society has a globally universal sense of beauty, and thus a unified image of beauties exists. However, this image of beauties formed without taking into account humans’ inherent (ethnic, genetic, individual) differences and ignores the diversity. Nevertheless, our contemporaries recognize this standard as absolute, blindly go after it and, as a result, overtax physically themselves. This trend becomes more serious as it is realized for humans to artificially reform their bodies with the development of science. I studied the reality of addictions to plastic surgeries and diets, the most extensive and serious problems among the social problems caused by this trend. I handled ways in which patriarchal ideology of beauty, which is a backdrop of lookism, and a bourgeois mechanism, which led to commercialization of woman bodies are grafted with medical technologies.<Fig.1> Cosmetic surgeries are in nature purposed to surgically correct and recover ill–looking part of a human body which is due to an injury or an inherent deformity.<Fig.2> It is also purposed to pursue mental health by treating a complex about one’s
look. However, current cosmetic surgeries are
done not for the purpose of physical and mental
health but for the purpose of abnormally making
a body more beautiful and young, and thus they
are moving to the beauty sector. This trend is
progressing fast globally.

III. Expressive Feature of
Lookism Phenomenon

1. Expressive Feature of Anti-Lookism
Phenomenon Appearing in Modern Art

Researches for self-identity through a body,
that is, attempts to establish self-identity
through a body, stand out in the modern art. As
mentioned before, after 1980s this reflected a
social phenomenon, a confusion of self-identity,
in the middle of existing orders and pivot
ideologies which were disintegrated or rapidly
changed and this started to use a body as a
means of a research for self-identity.\(^{15}\)

Relevant to expressions of a body, shocking
and provocative methods are increase as time
passes along. This exemplifies the avant-garde
art that has pursued a new style along with the
spirit of the times and reflects our current
existence or human self-identity’s exposure to a
crisis.\(^{16}\) The most important key factor is the
principle that a body expresses the human ego.
By analyzing from various perspectives the
lookism phenomenon in modern society, this
study intend to realize anti-lookism with the
thought of the times, ‘ontologicist stabilities’,
that a body is a direct area where self-identity
of a commercialized body can be recognized. I
classified anti-lookism works in the modern art
as provocation, symbolic, and paradoxical in
terms of expression modes.

1) Provocation

A body artist Saint Orlan, who stood in the
middle of a global dispute and acquired a
reputation by demonstrating a surgery process
of her body as a part of a multi media art work,
shows a body transforming through a contact
with a machine and a connection with a network
which is called a surgical performance
<Fig.3>.\(^{17}\) Moreover, she, leading the surgery
process with her open eyes and resolute voices
without anesthesia in a surgery process,
criticizes the social meaning of a cosmetic surgery. Her performance of a cosmetic surgery shows lasciviously that the ideal feminine beauty has been defined and made by men, how infeasible an attempt to obtain it is even though women want to, and how difficult the objective ideal beauty is. Also, Kiki Smith’s works show that humans are in the times when they design their faces with their own will just like Kiki Smith’s works that can change indefinitely through artificial actions.

2) Symbolism

Figure 6, a series of a German photographer Ivonne Thein, was exhibited in ‘Anti-Anorexia Art Photos’ exhibition and, by giving salience to a woman’s skeleton-like skinny body wound with bandages, shows that a human body can be distorted by anorexia. Although it is alive as a subject of a horrifying image that a woman of 32kg weight can give, the Figure 7, doing photography with digital techniques, expresses symbolically a scene in which a woman like a corpse makes up a fashion pictorial. ‘Run the Numbers’ is a work to give his view on women’s breast cosmetic surgery. When we glance at the picture, it will look like a drawing expressing a beautiful breast line in a painterly manner. However, when we magnify and magnify the picture, we can make sure that it is a picture consisting of a number of Barbie dolls. The artist used a Barbie doll, a standard for beauty of an abnormal body shape, as a symbolic objet. Only in 2006, about 3,080,000 U.S. women underwent breast cosmetic surgeries. This means that 32,000 women on average took the surgeries each time. The artist reflecting sociality expressed a replica of a breast of a woman using 32,000 Barbie dolls. That is, a Barbie doll is a symbol of women who took cosmetic surgeries.

3) Paradox

Debbie Han consistently suggests her critical views on cultural phenomena of Korean modern society from an alien standpoint through formative art works. Through the series of ‘Terms of Beauty’, she shows her critical views on modern women’s beauty standards getting privatized and standardized with sculptures of a hybrid of the statue of Venus, which is recognized as a typical model of beauty or a standard of traditional western beauties, and celadon techniques. The celadon Venus of Terms of Beauty is a work reflecting a prevailing social condition that goes after uniformly the western outward looks in inundation of attractive images illuminated through various...
media and in the reality of and of the global village being connected in a network as a whole world. Moreover, in the mix of celadon of a grace color, multiracial appearances and the figuration of Venus, the symbol of beauty, it projects the reality in which our contemporaries who live in the society of ‘appearance for appearance’s sake’ are required of pursuance and at the same time compulsion of outward beauty.\textsuperscript{19} Eun-Jeong So paradoxically expresses commercialized and unified everyday values shown in her ‘The Body Factory’ exhibition on the basis of influences of woman images in advertisements as a process of commercialization of woman images. A cross section of the modern society that makes people go after unified beauty and idealized images of women is reflected. \textit{<Fig.10>} Mind over mirror shows anorexia nervosa sufferers cannot see their bodies accurately because the symptoms, such as an obsession with food and weight and fear of getting overweight, are literally presumed as mental stress. Anorexia nervosa sufferers’ distorted awareness of themselves implies that something is wrong and physiologically abnormal in brain.

\textit{<Fig.11>} the distorted vision gives a message that an after-image of herself a woman with anorexia nervosa sees is a complex and very concrete delusion. Although they are able to recognize other women have normal weights and know other women with anorexia nervosa are too skinny, women with anorexia nervosa do not see the reality of themselves. This means a mirror in a distorted truth. It paradoxically expresses a distorted appearance although human bodies being changed by psychological hypnosis see the identity of themselves.

Firstly, in the lascivious expression, anti-lookism works describe artificial distortions of human bodies as real bodies or body images to alert people watching them to distortion of human bodies.

Secondly, in the symbolic expression, anti-lookism works express more metaphorically and indirectly side-effects of lookism.

Thirdly, the paradoxical expression has been tried by largest number artists and realizes the anti-lookism through more dramatic effects by adding icons of beauty already set like existing stereotypes.
Table 2: Expressive Feature of Anti-Lookism Phenomenon Appearing in Modern Art

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provocation</th>
<th>Artists</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orlan</td>
<td>Multiple identities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kiki Smith</td>
<td>Indefinitely through artificial actions of beauty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolism</td>
<td>Ivonne Thein</td>
<td>Symbolized a human body can be distorted by anorexia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chris Jordan</td>
<td>Expression a replica of a breast of a woman using 32,000 Barbie dolls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradox</td>
<td>Debbie Han</td>
<td>Critical views on modern women’s beauty standards getting privatized and standardized with sculptures of a hybrid of the statue of Venus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eun Jeong So</td>
<td>Paradoxically expresses a distorted appearance although human bodies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.10 Mind of mirror – www.monthlyphoto.com
Fig.11 Identity – www.monthlyphoto.com
Fig.9 Debbie Han – www.monthlyphoto.com
Fig.4 Saint Orlan
Fig.6 Ivonne Thein
Fig.9 Debbie Han
2. Expressive Features of Anti-Lookism appearing in Fashion Design

What provides an image of a model which already became a beauty standard in modern society? In advertisements for the beauty industry and the fashion industry, which try to foster commercialized ‘appearance control’, ‘appearance’ is described as the subject that can be renovated and controlled easily according to individuals’ interest and investments. A commercial copy, ‘Appearance is exact self-identity’, beautifies processes to control and tame appearance as creative activities for constituting self-identity. Borrowing the post-modernism theory emphasizing formativeness, flexibility, possibility of transformation, and diversity, the consumption culture is advertising that a transformation of appearance is a pleasant amusement. In mass media like fashion magazines and advertisements, unified images of models shown in existing media advertisements where appearance is excessively commercialized and where trends are pursued with a human’s inherent individuality and nature being ignored take large part. It is not each company’s problem anymore to suggest an artificially westernized face shape, which cannot made from a face of an under weight oriental woman, and it is our society’s responsibility to make brands, centered on media forming a trend, suggest a healthy model. Especially, various campaigns arising as an anti-lookism in the whole modern fashion and beauty industry and Anti Fashion Week seeing images of models, which brands suggest during Fashion Week period instigating global trends, as a means of aggravating lookism take an important role in recognizing a right standard for beauty through various images and ideas. I will examine cases of anti-lookism arising in modern fashion by suggesting a variety of beauty of human bodies and provocative images.

1) Suggestion of Diversity of Beauty of Human Body

An advertisement, "Your beauty can not be measured" <Fig.12>, emphasizes characterful beauty in contrast to the human desire of a slim body. An advertisement of a body shop, "Not all can be a Barbie doll", is a good example. "There are 3 billion women who don’t look like super models and only 8 who do."<Fig.13>
The advertisement of the body shop which crafted a Barbie doll as the most universal image of women by citing a commercial copy "Only 8 women among 3 million women have a body shape like super models" emphasizes the dignified individuality of human themselves in contrast to the lookism that considers only beauty highly in modern society.

Dove begins to conveys a message that inherent natural beauty is the real beauty with a campaign called 'real beauty fund'<Fig.14>.

Marc Jacobs launched Plus Size (Size 14) line. Showing overweight women can wear high-end clothes, this suggests that women with skinny and slim bodies as well as women with voluptuous bodies have their own individuality and can become fully beautiful <Fig.15>.

2) Suggestion of anti anorexia

(1) Nolita

Shown during Milano Fashion Week, Nolita lines that were presented on the debut stage of Flash & Partners put up Isabelle Caro, 27, who suffered in a long time from anorexia nervosa, as a model and turned seriousness up. In fact, the picture of this model,<Fig.16>, was taken by Italian photographer Olivie Toscani and used for anti-anorexia nervosa campaigns.

(2) Exhibition of Anti Fashion

Exhibition of Anti Fashion was started in Germany and criticize lookism phenomena shown in modern fashion. Its representative works include Anorexia Art Photos, Venus with anorexia nervosa, and so on, and they provocatly show images of human bodies transformed by anorexia nervosa.

(3) Sexy Anna Rexia

As a well-planned collection, Sexy Anna Rexia, a costume brand, combined woman bodies transformed by anorexia nervosa with a paradoxical expression of "Sexy" as part of 'Pro–Ana Movement' and made its appearance in Halloween parties, etc. As it expressed a body of a skeleton-like and corpse-like skinny woman as a dress, it was exhibited in Pro–Anorexia collection in Victory & Albert Museum.
3) Suggestion of New Beauty of Body

<Fig.17> expressed a transformed skinny human body with an overly exaggerated silhouette of a human body. It, Junya Watanabe’s S/S collection of 2001, expressed a silhouette of a human body exaggeratedly and distortedly. <Fig.18> is a work shown in the exhibition called Future Beauty. It suggests new beauty of human body, opposing the existing unified ideal beauty. This makes it possible to see diverse forms of human bodies. <Fig.19> is one of Rei KawaKubo’s S/S works of 1997. It stresses a silhouette of a hip and thus is different from existing beautiful body shapes. However, it shows a silhouette of a beautiful human body. <Fig.20>,<Fig.21> is a work shown in Comme des Garcons’s S/S collection of 1999.<Fig.22>S/S collection of 1997. It does not meet the standard for beauties because it overly stresses the shoulder part and swells the upper body, but it is a work showing a swollen silhouette of the belly part is well balanced. It suggests new beauty of human bodies which deviates from existing standards for beauties.

IV. Conclusion

This study deals with ideology of an ideal female body. The works reflect criticize the social
Anti-Lookism contrary to their appearance in the sense of supremacy of beauty to be uniformed, the modification of human cognitive awareness is designed to move.

Art reflects the Anti-Lookism through Art to Wear study of the fundamental factors that occurs of one of the fashion media present a distorted body image was a symbolic representation. In particular, the representation of the area expansion and creative materials and art techniques through software was utilized, the artist's subjective artistic and creative images to create their own aesthetic values were expressed as symptoms.

Anti-Lookism demonstrate the artist's works reflect the artistic side approached by analyzing the various pieces, depending on how the expression obscene expression, artistic expression, symbolism, was classified as a paradoxical expression. It also appeared in modern fashion obscene Anti-Lookism case representation, expressed through a variety of incidence at what beautiful body image last saw expressed in art warehouse was to study the work of traditional artists. The conclusion to reach ideal beauty the ancient human desire to exist even today. Beauty studying features of human expressive.

As results per period but the icon along with the development of modern medicine to come to a non close to perfect as humanly body was to pursue a conclusion.

Based on these conclusions of the study presented through a variety of human silhouettes became transformed into an artificial form of the human body need to be aware of it, by showing modern shows in the form of ideal beauty. This notion of the ideal present for a female body should be.

Firstly, anti-lookism works in the provocative expression describe artificial distortion of a body as a real body or an image of a body to arouse viewers’ cautiousness about the distortion of a body.

Secondly, anti-lookism works in the symbolic expression metaphorically and indirectly express side-effects of lookism.

Thirdly, the paradoxical expression has been tried by a largest number of artists. This realizes anti-lookism by changing beauty icons fixed like an existing stereotype.

The beauty images towards regulation in modern society as the distortion of human society and reflect the desire, while criticism of supremacy and cosmetic appearance due to the uniform representation, paradoxically, by modern standards of beauty and awareness of modern humans think you make a difference in society and politics. I realized that culture for Anti-Lookism hope to follow-up studies done.

Reference

6) Ibid, pp.74.
10) Ibid, pp.130.
14) S.W.Hwang(2009), op. cit.,p.49.
15) Ahn Jinkook(2005), op. cit.,p.79.
18) Gordon L. Patzer(2009), op. cit., p.94.