

Monstrous Beauty: Disability and Illness in Contemporary Pop Culture

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Abstract : In the proposed paper, we would like to present the phenomenon of disease and disability as an element of discourse redefining the contemporary canons of beauty and the category of normativity. In widely understood media, and above all in social media and fashion industry, the use of the disease as an aesthetic category has long been observed. There is an interesting case of promoting and maintaining a certain, ideal pattern of physical beauty, while at the same time very clear exploitation of various types of illnesses. The categories of disease and disabled body are shown as an element of the expression of the individuality and originality of one's own identity, while at the same time the disabled person is still experiencing social exclusion. Illness or body abnormality as an aesthetic category also functions as an ethical-political category. The analysis of the interrelations of these discourses will be presented on the example of selected projects present in social media, like Instagram or Facebook. We would like to present how old forms of 'curiosities' or 'abnormalities' turned into mainstream forms of a new aesthetic. For marginalized disabled people, there is a new form of expression and built their identity. But, there is an interesting point: are this contemporary forms of using disability and illness really new? Or maybe this is just another form of Wunderkammer or even cabinets of curiosities? We propose to analyze contemporary cultural and social context in order to clarify this issue. On the other hand, we would like to present some examples from personal interviews with disabled internet influencers and statements disabled persons concerning the role of the different body in society (e.g. #bodypositive, #perfectlyflawed).

Keywords : disability, new media, defect, fashion

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