

Cosmetic Surgery and Tattoos - making ourselves 'attractive'

DiPs at *The Blue Mugge* Tue 2 June 2015

Notes based on *Lazy Trout* DiPs, March 2015 using Louisa Peacock – *Telegraph* 6 March 2015; Eva Wiseman – *Guardian* 10 June 2012; Louise Foxcroft – *Guardian* 12 June 2012

1. Do most humans want to be physically 'attractive'? Going round (those who wish) answer this. Then we'll begin (& end, maybe) with tattoos. Why is tattooing currently so popular with many young men and women?
2. Cosmetic surgery continues to increase: 43,069 surgical procedures were performed in 2012, 39,070 on women, up from 38,771 the previous year. Men account for roughly one in 10 of all cosmetic surgery patients.
3. Gaspare Tagliacozzi (1545 - 1599), the "founding father of plastic surgery, even though he lived well before it was known by that name". Tagliacozzi outlined step by step the exact procedure for 'restoration of deformed noses, ears and lips by skin grafting; and of the instruments and bandages used in this surgical engraving'.
4. "The overwhelming majority of Dr Bryan Mendelson's patients hide the fact they are having plastic surgery on their face from their husbands and/ or children, he tells me casually. Most women decide to go under the knife without consulting their nearest and dearest, he says." - Louisa Peacock
5. "People have surgery not to impress others, they do it to impress themselves," Dr Mendelson says in defence of his patients: "For many people, it's about getting their confidence back".
6. Body image is subjective, of course. It's an accumulation of a lifetime's associations, neuroses and desires, projected on to our upper arms, our thighs. At five, children begin to understand other people's judgement of them. At seven they're beginning to show body dissatisfaction. As adults 90% of British women feel body-image anxiety. And it doesn't wane - many women in their 80s are still anxious about the way their bodies look which, Professor Rumsey explains, can even affect their treatment in hospital, when their health choices are influenced by aesthetics.
7. There's a famous study which looked at teenage girls in Fiji after television was introduced to the island for the first time in 1995. After three years with TV, the girls who watched it the most were 50% more likely to describe themselves as "too fat"; 29% scored highly on a test of eating-disorder risk. One girl said of the western women she watched on Beverly Hills 90210: "In order to be like them, I have to work on myself, exercising, and my eating habits should change."
8. The internet is very visual - are we in for an even greater impact from "unrealistic images" of bodies?
9. Attitudes to changing body shapes are not just a recent question of fashion and aesthetics fuelled by the modern media - they have always reflected political, economic and cultural change. The last century saw the ideal body shape ricochet from the Edwardian hour-glass to the flat flapper, to the 50s sweater girl and on to the skeletal waif. We went from Jane Russell to Twiggy in a generation
10. What's our attitude to tattoos? Do they help make people attractive?