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BODY. The body is relevant for aesthetics from two perspectives. We experience and assess bodies aesthetically from the outside; and we have aesthetic experiences of and through our bodies from the inside. In experiences of one's own body, these perspectives often intersect in interesting ways. From both perspectives, the body is a site where aesthetic and ethical considerations are deeply intertwined.

Beauty and the Body. Consideration of human bodies as aesthetic objects has often focused on beauty. Art historians celebrate the beautiful nude in art, and evolutionary psychologists suggest that we have evolved to find particular facial and bodily configurations beautiful because they are honest indicators of health and fertility. It has been commonplace at least since Hume for philosophers to argue that there are objective norms of beauty in art, and one might be tempted to extend such an approach to bodily beauty.

Complications arise immediately, however. Given the malleability of standards of bodily beauty across decades and cultures, it is clear that evolutionary factors are extensively mitigated by sociocultural influences. In addition, there may be far more variability in individuals' taste in bodies than one would infer from the narrow standards of beauty conveyed by popular media and advertising. There are thus reasons to be skeptical of the idea that there could be objective or even broadly applicable standards of bodily beauty that are derived from individual or societal judgments. One might think that beautiful bodies are those whose appearances indicate health, which could then serve as an objective anchor for judgments; but this would be a revisionist rather than descriptive position, for judgments of bodily beauty in many cultures are tied to characteristics that are orthogonal or even opposed to health.

In addition, standards of physical attractiveness contribute to a number of intersecting oppressions. Feminist theorists point out that these standards are disproportionately applied to women, who are often made to feel that they must do extensive beauty labor to make their bodies acceptable for public presentation. The norms are enforced not only through social disapproval and harassment for those who fail to comply, but also through financial penalties in the workplace, where appearance has a dramatic effect on the assessment of women's performance even on tasks whose substance is unrelated to appearance. (Rhode) Once women internalize expectations about their appearance, social enforcement of beauty standards is supplemented by Foucauldian self-surveillance, with women feeling shame and displeasure when they fail to comply. (Bartky)

Critical race theorists have noted that standards of bodily beauty in white-dominated societies are racialized, framing women of color, especially those with dark skin, as ineligible for beauty, as ugly, or as exotic (often in a sexualized way). Given the spread of Western media and marketing, the racialization of beauty norms as white has expanded globally. The tendency for beauty to be framed in terms of youth is damaging to aging subjects who are regarded, and encouraged to regard themselves, as unsightly. Fat subjects are subject to disapproval that is often rationalized as health-related, though the evidence that they would be healthier if they lost weight has come increasingly into question. Disability theorists note that being excluded from appreciative gazes is dehumanizing for

those with visible physical disabilities. The application of aesthetic standards to bodies is thus responsible for a great deal of harm.

One response to these concerns is to relinquish standards of beauty, and physical attractiveness more generally, without giving up on aesthetic appreciation of bodies. In relation to sexuality, Ann Cahill suggests, “[O]ne must look with wonder. One must take bodies on their own terms, without imposing a pre-existing standard upon them. The ethical sexual gaze hungrily seeks out the particular, the surprising, the nowhere-else-but-here-ness that marks each incarnation of the sexed human.” (Cahill 2011, p. 103) Recent work in everyday aesthetics supports the idea that such appreciation of the particular, without the application of normative standards, can be genuinely aesthetic.

Aesthetic Body Practices. A wide variety of aesthetic practices are undertaken in the name of beauty and physical attractiveness, involving temporary or permanent cosmetics, hair color and style, bodybuilding and other forms of physical exercise, steroid use, hair removal, clothing and accessories, food deprivation, and surgery. These can involve a great deal of cost, time, effort and discomfort, and extreme weight-loss practices can be life threatening.

However, renunciation of beauty is not a trouble-free option even from a feminist and antiracist perspective. Refusal or inability to comply with standards of beauty subjects women, especially, to harsh social and financial penalties. Beauty and beauty labor, though influenced by oppressive forces, can be a source of pleasure and even creative agency for women. (Cahill 2003) For women of color, engaging actively with white-oriented standards of beauty, in order to expand and reshape them, may be a more effective exercise of agency than refusing them. (Tate) Men of color, too, likely suffer harsher penalties than white men for non-compliance with norms of bodily attractiveness. The suggestion that such norms should be refused or ignored, then, may be the product of unselfconscious white privilege.

Some body practices seek to reorient the focus from beauty to other aesthetic values. Tattooing and piercing, as currently practiced in the West, inscribe a range of values from the interesting to the grotesque on the body; lesbian and gay dandyism celebrates the dapper; camp explores frivolity, humor, and visual excess; and so forth. These practices, as used by particular individuals, interact with and disrupt beauty in complex ways: they may reject beauty, parody it, seek to expand or replace it, or juxtapose it with other values to striking effect.

Aesthetic body practices, whether emphasizing beauty or other values, serve many expressive and communicative functions. Attention to one’s appearance reflects and conveys the recognition that one’s body is an aesthetic object in the perceptual field of others; efforts to make one’s body pleasing or disturbing for particular observers, or to ignore others’ expectations and responses, exemplify the way in which one occupies social space more broadly. (Hanson) Aesthetic self-presentation consolidates group affiliation and tends to express one’s acceptance of the values associated with the group. The same descriptors can often be used for bodily style and for associated traits of character or sociopolitical stances: flamboyant, conservative or unconventional appearance signals a great deal about one’s values and personality, though such signals may be intentionally or unintentionally inaccurate. Given the social signaling potential of somatic style, it is not surprising that some moral systems, such as Confucianism, give considerable attention to modes of presentation and use of the body. (Olberding)

Crucially, the signaling associated with bodily appearance is tied to broad cultural conventions and understandings. An individual may be able to choose his style of dress, but he cannot choose what that style of dress communicates in public space. Aspects of one's appearance that are not voluntarily chosen, too, may be read as signals, as when brown skin color becomes a signifier for terrorist affiliation. Sometimes these elements come together in explosive ways. Trayvon Martin, the unarmed black teenager shot dead in Florida after a neighborhood watchman misidentified him as a suspicious person, may have chosen his hooded sweatshirt as an expression of relaxed, confident, youthful style; but the garment, paired with his skin color, was taken by some white commentators, and seemingly also by the watchman, to signal thuggishness or criminality.

Body Aesthetics and Gender Construction. The aesthetics of the body is inflected by and partly constitutive of gender. Women are expected to beautify themselves, as we have noted, whereas use of the word 'beautiful' to describe a man may be perceived as feminizing. Norms of physical attractiveness seem to admit of greater variability when applied to men – a man may become distinguished, rather than ugly, as he ages – and non-compliance often comes with fewer social penalties for men than for women.

The categories 'man' and 'woman,' however, are not givens onto which aesthetic norms are projected; they are historical categories whose biological basis is sharply contested. (e.g., Irigaray, Wittig) One must be perceived as a man or woman before the associated norms are applied; and many of the cues that are used to make gender assignments have, themselves, to do with somatic style. As Judith Butler has argued, gender is performed: the modes of movement, speech and dress that we adopt, consciously or unconsciously, signal our identification with a particular gender. When we comply with the aesthetic norms associated with our gender, and especially when we participate in subtle or overt disciplining of others who fail to comply, we are not only performing as men or women but also reinforcing gendered norms and their coercive force.

Aesthetic norms play a central role in the construction of gender categories: norms of female beauty are also norms of femininity, and the disciplinary systems associated with these norms serve to maintain distinct, binary gender categories. The social punishments doled out to women who fail to comply with beauty norms push them toward femininity; when transwomen attempt to comply with those same norms, they may be violently assaulted or even killed by people who label them as male and object to their encroachment on feminine territory / their absconding from masculinity. Similarly, women who are perceived as masculine and men who are perceived as feminine (often labeled by the pejorative 'effeminate') may be subjected to harsh social discipline, including violence.

Despite the penalties, the crossing of gender boundaries has proved aesthetically fruitful. Lesbians, gay men, genderqueer people and drag queens, compelled to aesthetic innovation by the need for social signaling mechanisms specific to their identities and group affiliations, have developed a rich array of categories and individual expressions of bodily style that provide resources for resisting, challenging and replacing gendered norms, thereby enhancing the aesthetic possibilities for everyone.

Somatic Dimensions of Aesthetic Experience. Contemporary philosophers, hearkening back to earlier work by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, are increasingly recognizing that much of our experience, perception and knowledge is shaped by our embodied condition. Alva Noë and other theorists of embodied cognition argue that bodily movement

plays an extensive role in much perceptual experience and knowledge. While philosophical aesthetics traditionally disparaged the aesthetic capacity of the “lower” senses, including touch, recent work demonstrates that rich aesthetic experiences can be had of and through the feeling body. Richard Shusterman, proponent of a discipline of somaesthetics, speaks of “the beautiful experience of one’s own body from within – the endorphin-enhanced glow of high-level cardiovascular functioning, the slow savoring awareness of improved, deeper breathing, the tingling thrill of feeling into new parts of one’s spine.” (Shusterman 2000, p. 262)

All senses are somatic, of course, but the tactile sense tends to be more closely associated with the idea of bodily experience. Recent work in everyday aesthetics and environmental aesthetics demonstrates that aesthetic experience is often multi-sensory, including touch along with sights, sounds, smells and tastes. Appreciation of food and drink involves sensations of the lips, mouth and throat as well as smell and taste. Appreciation of a natural landscape may involve the tightening of salt drying on one’s skin after a dip in the ocean, the grit of sand under one’s feet, and the texture of seaweed or shells one collects on the beach. Aesthetic experiences in the sexual realm typically involve a complex melding of multi-sensory appreciation of the body of the other along with the sensations in one’s own body.

Feminist theorists have argued that women are capable of distinctive forms of embodied aesthetic experience. Pregnancy calls into question the boundary between self and other (Ettinger), giving the pregnant woman a new perspective on and heightened awareness of the shape, movements and sensations of her body. (Young) Childbirth experiences often involve severe pain, and are accompanied by the knowledge that birth can result in serious physical injury or death to the mother. The intensity of such experiences can give the birthing woman access to the sublime. Women’s experiences of eating disorders, too, have been argued to provide access to the sublime (Lintott) and to involve “an ethic and aesthetic of self mastery and self transcendence, expertise, and power over others through the example of superior will and control” (Bordo 1993, p. 178).

The body plays a distinctive role in aesthetic experiences of art as well. Appreciation of works of architecture involves movement of the body through space. Proprioception, or the experience of one’s own body’s position, can allow one to have aesthetic experiences of one’s own movements or the movements of others. Dancers, actors and athletes may directly experience their own movements as graceful or awkward; viewers, too, whose muscles are sympathetically activated as they watch the performer’s movement, may have their aesthetic responses deeply informed by bodily experience. (Montero) Appreciation of static works of sculpture may involve similar mechanisms: our bodily movement around the sculpture informs our aesthetic experience, and statuary that depicts bodies in particular postures may trigger bodily mirroring responses like those we adduce in response to dance.

Even our aesthetic responses to paintings and literary works may have a more pronounced bodily dimension than has traditionally been recognized, insofar as these responses are, in part, emotional and thus bodily. Disgust, in particular, is an emotion with a pronounced bodily element that can play a central role in aesthetic responses. Bodily experiences may, therefore, play a pronounced role in appropriate aesthetic judgments of art.

The Body in Contemporary Art. Representations of the human body in art have, of course, been commonplace for millennia. Contemporary art has adopted new strategies to directly engage the bodies of artists and viewers. Immersive works of installation art, much like works of architecture, are explored through bodily movement. Viewers of Doris Salcedo's (2007) *Shibboleth*, for which she created an enormous crack in the floor of the turbine hall of the Tate Modern in London, walked the length of the crack, straddled it, sat next to it and even inserted their heads into it.

Interactive artworks sometimes incorporate information about the viewer's bodily activities into their displays: Scott Snibbe's (1998) *Boundary Functions*, for instance, projects lines onto the floor so as to create boundaries between viewers, with the lines shifting as the viewers move through the space. Popular art forms like video games, using the Nintendo Wii and related devices, are similarly responsive to the user's bodily activities. Jason Rhoades's large installation *SLOTO: The Secret Life of the Onion* (2003) gets curators involved in bodily play, requiring them to help assemble components and then ride around in a pig-shaped children's carnival train before positioning the components in the display.

The making of contemporary artworks often implicates the artist's body viscerally. For *Gnaw* (1992), Janine Antoni used her mouth as a sculpting tool to chew huge blocks of chocolate and lard. For *Injustice Case* (1970), David Hammons, whose works frequently treat themes of racial identity and anti-black racism, made a direct print from his own seated, gagged body, with hands and feet bound. The work alludes to a 1969 courtroom drawing of Black Panther Bobby Seale, who was bound and gagged, at one point so tightly that he began to choke, after he protested the judge's refusal of his request to represent himself at trial. Other works by Hammons incorporate the artist's hair as an artistic material.

Performance art involves direct presentation of the bodies of artists or performers, often prompting reflection on our ways of viewing and treating each others' bodies. For *Rhythm 0* (1974), a 6-hour performance in 1974, Marina Abramović put 72 objects on a table with instructions that the audience could use the objects to interact with her in any way they wished. Audience willingness to engage in violent assaults on the artist's body was chilling: while playful at first, they eventually cut off her clothes, cut her neck, drank her blood, and placed a loaded pistol against her head. In *Disarming Venus* (1995), Mary Duffy posed nude on stage as Venus, while describing the ways in which her body, lacking arms, had been subjected to persistent medicalization and public scrutiny. Duffy rejected the discourse of her body as defective, saying, "I felt my body was right for me.... Whole, complete, functional." (Millett-Gallant, 26)

Other performance artworks explore societal treatment of the raced body. For *Artifact Piece* (1987), James Luna, a Pooyukitchum/Luiseño Native American, dressed in a loincloth and lay in a display case in the San Diego Museum of Man. Luna inserted his living body into a museum of anthropology, where Native Americans are often presented only as skeletons and understood only as creators of historic artifacts. In *Catalysis I*, performed in the early 1970s, Adrian Piper soaked her clothes in a smelly mixture of cod liver oil, eggs, vinegar and milk, and then wore them on the New York subway and to a bookstore, prompting viewers to react with confusion, disgust and sometimes aggression, responses that parallel expressions of anti-black racism.

Performance artists have, of course, explored many other dimensions of bodily experience as well. Performance art, like dance, may provide for distinctive aesthetic experiences by engaging viewers' bodily responses through the proprioceptive mechanisms described above.

Future Directions. Inquiry into the aesthetics of the body has accelerated dramatically in many disciplines, including contemporary art, art history, law, sociology, critical theory, feminist philosophy, and philosophy of race. Here we have made only a brief survey of recent work in these areas. Philosophical aesthetics, particularly its analytic branch, has traditionally rejected the relevance of the body for aesthetic experience, except insofar as bodies – particularly female ones – have been seen, rather uncritically, as objects of appreciation. Recent work in the aesthetics of bodily appearance and experience offers new resources for thinking about the nature and viability of aesthetic norms, about the relationship between ethical and aesthetic concepts, and about the nature of aesthetic experience as it relates to the embodied human condition. Exploration of the body should thus prove to be a fertile avenue for progress on central issues in philosophical aesthetics.

[See also *Abject*; *African Aesthetics*; *Beauty*; *Black Aesthetics*; *Bourdieu*; *Bourgeois*; *Camp*; *Dance*; *Death*; *Disability Aesthetics*; *Disgust*; *Embodiment*; *Emotions*; *Everyday Aesthetics*; *Fanon*; *Fashion*; *Feminism*; *Foucault*; *Gay Aesthetics*; *Haptics*; *Irigaray*; *Japanese Aesthetics*; *Kinaesthesia*; *Kristeva*; *Lesbian Aesthetics*; *Masculinity*; *Models, Artists'*; *Obscenity*; *Orientalism*; *Performance Art*; *Phenomenology*; *Pleasure*; *Pornography*; *Queer Theory*; *Race*; *Sensation*; *Sensibilité*; *Sexuality*; *Suffering*; *Taste*; *and Theater*.]

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