

A LOVE NOTE TO THE LABOURING BODY

abstract:

This collection is about pleasure. It aims to enable you to increase pleasure and beauty through defining them for yourself, and it is a protest against newness as a definition of beauty

The traces of life lived appear as marks, scars or imperfections on our bodies, on our clothing, on the tools that we use. To know and perform a craft is to embody knowledge, to etch the intelligence and memory of a skill onto the body itself. The bones, muscles and skin of the worker over time takes on particular characteristics of their trade, where the affect of the body on the work and vice versa create a continuous reciprocity between object and maker, a symbiosis of creation. These beautifying effects of utility on our bodies, clothing and possessions have been shunned and shamed to the point where the ideal form is ageless, smooth, fresh and unyielding to the senses. When we instead shift our perception of beauty to acknowledge the physical traces of life on our bodies and what they wear, we reclaim a desire and pleasure dictated by the senses, and we can all have an active role in living a more beautiful life, free of the prejudice of the eyes.

A modern source of unhappiness is the split between the mind and the body, made flesh when we feel unable to accept and respect the imperfections and characteristics of our physical selves as beautiful. There is a need to confront fashion's obsession with the new and the perfect, and to give our bodies the ability to speak in a language not dictated by the artificial ideals of for-profit corporations or brands, who have an innate need to create desire for new products and new trends. The signs of life on a body or garments are often seen as difficult and disturbing, rendering life itself within fashion as it is now unwanted and impossible. The clothes we wear are more than merely physical commodities. Through its memory-carrying capacity and representational ability clothing becomes part of our extended body/mind beyond the merely material, an ever-present exchange of sensation and experience between our clothing and us leaving traces and bringing out character in each other. To define what gives you pleasure in this immaterial/material exchange of touch, memory, associations, smell, and so on, is to possess the ability to increase pleasure in the habitual, mundane.

This is a study on the importance of redefining beauty for yourself, a case for celebrating the grotesqueness of the body, and increasing sensual pleasure in quotidian life.

introduction:

What follows is a love letter to the transformations and traces left on our extended bodies from the labour they participate in, both conscious and unconscious. The aim is to illuminate the deeply personalised and intimate relationship we can experience when wearing or interacting with something old, something mended and shaped by our own body. We can learn to see the beauty of the traces of labour on skin and on fabric, to unlearn the validation of ourselves through acquiring newer things and instead seeing beauty in the multi-sensory history of something lived-in. I do not think of objects as dead, they are living by the history of their use and the times they have touched and by learning to read these traces we can expand our perception of beauty and so fill our lives with their meaning.

By examining the labouring body and its political, physical and psychological properties we can learn to see the changes that are brought upon it as filled with meaning and with pride, bringing our extended bodies further individuality and distinction. Labour changes the body, as the body changes the mind, and by letting the body over time change the clothing I wear strengthens the bond I feel to the garments my body touches. Actions taken to beautify an element can be conscious as in the tradition of monogram embroi-

dery or the making of a print, but it can also be unconscious as in the example of a visible wear of a fabric at the elbows.

By agreeing to the "extended mind" hypothesis put forward by Andy Clark, that the mind is not simply internal to a person but a constellation of mind, body and the external objects and entities it interacts with, we can apply the same theories in an "extended body" argument that includes not just the traditional definition of a body but also the clothes it wears and the tools it uses. By seeing our extended bodies as an interconnected system where all parts affect the others in turn, the intimacy between the entities increases and the identity of the extended body is strengthened.



Tool, limb, clothing or decoration? Illustration by Andrew Paul, 1564.

There is a special kind of affection to be felt for the things that have been worn by ourselves or someone close to us in the past. A baby blanket, a grandmothers hat, a graduation dress. If the history of the garment or textile is known to us we can experience the sensation again when touching, seeing or smelling the fabric. Our senses create a bridge in time and invoke old memories and create a form of immortality for the past wearer, a trace in time to be experienced by others.

If we are unable to appreciate something worn by another, seeing traces of someone else body in a garment or value the signs of ageing, it is because we are unable to accept all the aspects of a living body. This aversion to the natural functioning of the extended body (sweating, ageing, tearing, changing) is often more intimately connected to the female body than the male. Through Julia Kristeva's theory of the Abject we can see that the inability to accept your own and other's bodies in their full function is a life denying act. The need to erase from our extended bodies the signs of age and wear is the inability to accept yourself and others as living beings in the world.

To this Mikhail Bakhtin has a great argument for the celebration of what we might see as grotesque, which can be applied to the life-denying view of the extended body. In opposition to the Western romantic view of the grotesque as something to be feared and shunned, the older folklore stories of the same regions tend to see the grotesque as something grand, worthy of wonder and even humour. It is spectacular and inclusive, creator of joy. If we can apply the same principle to the perceived grotesqueness of living traces on our extended bodies, the signs of age and wear might be celebrated as beautiful instead of shunned.

chapter 1, the extended body

MY EXTENDED MIND

It is a sad affair to limit my sense of self to what fits inside my skull, when a large part of what constitutes myself is a constellation of mind, body and other external objects and entities I interact with (Bryant, p.45). My environment plays an active role in shaping my self, and the decisions I make shape my environment in turn. Andy Clark uses the example of a notebook functioning as part of an individual's memory, to be consulted in the same way I would consciously or unconsciously pursue the memory of where I have put something or the location of a particular building I have visited. This way, the tools I use are not simply external and removed from my self but are all part of an interconnected system where all parts affect the others, and the mind is recognised as a constellation of the brain, the body and the intimate surrounding.

"Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times" - Sigmund Freud, *Civilisation and its Discontents*

Accepting this, I would argue for an Extended Body view of the body, clothing and items that are in contact with our physical selves, where the constellation in its entirety is what makes a Body. To include the things a body touches or interacts with as part of it, we strengthen the body's sense of wholeness and belonging in a setting. If we accept the active role that the environment plays on the human spirit, through the sensa-

tions and embodied memories transferred through objects and materia we can decide to have a more active role in our encounter with beauty, pleasure and fascination. The clothes we wear are more than merely physical objects, there is an ever-present exchange of sensation and experience between them and us leaving traces and bringing out character. To be conscious of what gives you pleasure in this immaterial/material exchange (tactility, memory, associations, smell, heritage) is to possess the ability to increase pleasure in the habitual, mundane. Clothing, through its memory-carrying capacity and representational ability becomes part of our extended body/mind beyond the merely material. By taking a more active role in the creating, choosing and transforming of our garments we can create a more genuine and fulfilling identity than we would get from identifying with a particular brand (McGuire, n/a).

"The wheel is an extension of the foot, the book is an extension of the eye, clothing an extension of the skin, electric circuitry an extension of the central nervous system." - Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Massage*

THE TOOLS THAT USE US

The intertwined system of body, mind and external entities and its feedback loops of information is made visible in the traces it leaves on our behaviour, physical form and in the product of our labour. As the body leaves traces of its shape in a long worn jacket, the tools of a craftsman or an artist will require a certain grip or posture that over time will shape the physique of the user (Bryant, p. 20). These effects can not be eradicated or neutralised, except by the changing to another tool which in turn will leave its own mark on the product and the designer. The pen, paintbrush, sewing machine or computer will all leave their contribution to the design independent of the mind of the designer.

Still, earlier tools were originally both made by hand and made to be used by hand, as in the hammer, the loom or the scythe. These tools were made to enhance the capabilities of the body, mirroring its movements and by doing so easing the strain upon the body and increasing productivity. With the later use of large scale machinery and automation we have instead forced the body to increasingly adapt to the machine, altering the posture, behaviour and workload of the body (Deleule and Guery, p.22) and breaking the extended body-mind symbiosis. Our increased reliance on machines, like phones, computers, and televisions, have generated a new set of social norms and physical habits, which displaces the human body from the position as the one controlling the machine, to instead become one of its passive moving parts (Bryant, p.21).

"A direct consequence of the alienation of man from the product of his labour, from his life activity and from his species-life, is that man is alienated from other men ... and that each of the others is likewise alienated from human life." (Karl Marx, *Manuscripts*, p. 17)

The physical knowledge embedded in the hands and mind of the traditional craftsman, on the other hand, increases the intimacy and identity of out extended body/mind systems, and by acknowledging a need for sensory balance in our environment and a full appreciation of the sensing body in all realms of life we can regain the integrity of a fully incarnate being (Pallasmaa, p. 20). The whole body in this way becomes a site for cultural knowledge and maintains connection to our human corporeal ancestry.

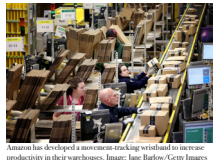
THE PROFITABLE BODY

Further dwelling into the consequences that the modern western mind-body dualism imposes on the worker we see the rise of worker surveillance, workplace disciplinary methods and surplus value production act as suppressors of the autonomy and intelligence of the extended body, where increased automation and assembly line production reduces the skills of the worker to a single repeated action and no single person will possess the knowledge of an entire process of production (Deleule and Guery, p.20), making the worker useless without the machine or without his fellow assembly line workers.



Frank Bunker Loblack, *Woman in Factory*, ca. 1911. Collection: National Museum of American History

The increased reliance on machinery to create not only jobs but also to define the time spent away from them as leisure, time to be alive and to enjoy puts us in a false sense of gratitude to the instruments of oppression we've created (Deleule and Guery, p.36). We thank technology for its efficiency, providing us more time for pleasure. However, this time is usually spent consuming, increasing our artificial identification with brands or corporations and perpetuating a disproportionate concentration of wealth in society.



Collection: National Museum of American History

chapter 2, the labouring / living body

CONSCIOUS/UNCONSCIOUS BEAUTIFYING

To perform labour through craft is to embody the skills and knowledge of the production, to possess the awareness and mechanics of these skills in your muscles, limbs and bones as well as the mental senses. Unlike much modern work in which the body is made to perform identical, static motions for a plethora of different jobs where the main tool is the computer, manual labour will demand vastly different motions and sensory perceptions depending on the type of work. The traces of physical work show as runes of labour on the bodies of the worker, in the inner structures of muscles and the outer layers of skin and cloth. If we can learn to see the changes that are brought upon a body or textile as filled with meaning and pride, to value the visible history of work done and skills acquired, we give our extended bodies further individuality and distinction. This distinction of character can be found in the bent fingers of an old woman, the sun-wrinkled eyes of the farmer, the torn denim and bleached print of a work jacket. These mark of a trade are characteristics that, even on their own, have the power to represent and recall the entirety of the person they belong to.

"The Möbius strip has the advantage of showing the inflection of mind into body and body into mind, the ways in which, through a kind of twisting or inversion, one side becomes another." - Elisabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*

The inseparability between mind and body means the knowledge acquired by the body will always affect the mind as well as what the mind knows shapes the body. Transformation is never only one way. A modern well of unhappiness is the split between the mind and the body, made flesh when we feel unable to accept the imperfections and characteristics of our physical selves, deepening a sense of shame and further enhancing the split between body and mind. We become a separated being, unable to see ourselves as whole and integrated beings (Hornbacher, n/a). Facing this modern fracture between mind and body, it is a radical act to build self-esteem based on experience, to use our bodies to live and explore and build a worth that is not tied to a perfect and untouched ideal, but to let our own bodies become the narrator of our existence.

"Sit as little as possible; do not believe any idea that was not born in the open air and of free movement — in which the muscles do not also reel. All prejudices emanate from the bowels. — Sitting still (I said it once already) — the real sin against the Holy Ghost." - Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How To Become What You Are*

The necessity of mending torn garments has historically been a reality for every person, in the past only an insane or insanely rich person would throw away what has been torn. Instead they would spend long hours patching a hole or restitching a seam, a process that over time creates a more imperfect garment with every mend, but free of the oppressive eyes of today's hysteria for newness. In the transfer of care and time from mender to garment we can see that the character and individuality of the object increase with the passage of time, each iteration making visible the worth that this garments or tool has to the owner. In the handling and transformation of our own clothes or possessions we are becoming part of the object in question, a physical and mental connection to the things we surround ourselves with. A rebalancing of the senses occur, where we learn to appreciate beauty and pleasure in an object not just with our eyes but with the entire extended sensory body; touching, hearing, feeling

and imagining the object in your hands creates pleasure in an infinitely deeper and more complex amalgamation than before. By taking care of an object you let it become a part of you, and in that way enlarge yourself.



Lara sampler TVD ANNO 1757 (p.107). Collection: Zentgrafmuseum

FETISH

The fetish as an object is material thing that in the mind of the wearer possesses supernatural or mystical properties, a wearable talisman of incarnate power (Wilson, n/a). The power of the object rests in the mind of the wearer through knowledge of the item's history and symbolism, a real magic created and enjoyed intimately with oneself. Through mystery we build fascination, but there is no mystery within fashion today to fetishise. Marx spoke about commodity fetishism, but without the personal relationship between the fetishised object and the wearer, the acquiring of the object will always be a disappointment. Modernity has replaced the amulet with the brand, where the logo on your garments is something which supposedly lends status and confidence to the wearer. But this confidence is fragile and corrupt, it is mass marketed and bought, it lacks any subversiveness and so lacks any personal bond to the individual. We must as individuals and small communities begin our own fetishising of our peculiarities, our heritage and our history, to again inject mystery and imagination into what we wear.



Line Pants by over Concretequorum, image from dpgp.com

REPAIR AS AN ART FORM

Traditionally in Western societies the mending of clothing or household items has been a female craft, and we can see in the examples of delicate family monogram embroidery or the symbolism in local pattern or colour traditions that leaving traces of our heritage and history has been an important way of showing love and finding meaning in a quotidian sense. To relearn to appreciate these meditative displays of dedication is to consciously cherish the female tradition of giving life by the association of these crafted objects with her body. As the traces of life we see on inherited heirlooms, furniture and tools tell the story of their origins (Pallasmaa, p.34) the life of a garment begins when it is worn, the personality and form of the garments and wearer blending until the garment just hanging on the wall projects the presence of the wearer (Wilson, n/a). Following this line of thought I would like to make the case for the importance of what we might call natural materials, where cotton, linen or wood has a higher susceptibility for life transferred by the wearer or user. Natural materials show their signs of ageing with dignity and bear witness to the weight of history (Pallasmaa, p.34) unlike the plastic polyesters whose aesthetic allure crumbles under the burden of repeated use.



Black Halo Tea Hood, Kurokawa type, Black Halo, Kurokawa "Amador", Studio of Chiara, Anselmo Monogram period, 16th century

An outstanding example of the respect for time as character can be seen in the Japanese traditions of Boro stitching and Kintsugi, which both fall under the aesthetic umbrella term Wabi Sabi, where damage to an object is devoid of tragedy and the lessening of its worth, which is prevalent to the West. As fabric is thinned from wear or pottery breaks from use, new elements of beautifying repair add an extra dimension of visible history to the object, creating a worth beyond the value of the material. To understand the underlying concepts of Wabi "simple, austere beauty", Sabi "rustic patina" (Parkes and Loughnane, n/a) we can look at the traditional Japanese tea ceremony. Cracked and imperfect cups and tools speak of moder-

ation, and simple, elegant spaces leave room for philosophical contemplation. Together with the respect for ageing as a path to wisdom, simple, mended objects with visible signs of ageing act as a physical manifestation of Buddhist teachings. Wabi-Sabi becomes a way to manifest a morality and spiritual guidance through aesthetics (Juniper, p.1). One reason for the historically different approach to beauty in the East and West can be seen in the references to form in traditional art, as for instance historical Greek marble work and pottery were founded upon the image of the idealised symmetrical body, whereas Japanese art from the same time were founded on a more irregular beauty seen in nature (Yanagi, p.124).

chapter 3, the grotesque body.

AGAINST INVULNERABILITY

If we want to not just enjoy but to be truly affected or changed by beauty, it can not be an exclusively positive experience to behold it (Han, p.10). Something in the experience must shake you, push you, upend a previous stability that will always be painful to lose. The imperfect, questioning, uneven beauty is what forces me out of an artificial smoothness of life (Han, p. 23). The acceptance and commemoration of irregular edges, wrinkles, long earned characteristics will force me into reevaluation and into presence - a hand painted door or hand carved spoon will invigorate more than one that is identical to thousands of others. Too often is the human element taken out of how we design and build our lives and our environment, with an obtuse insistence that things should always convey newness as an end in itself; mass produced clothing objects, houses, furniture, all made by machines to a large extent betray a fear of death through their efforts to withhold signs of age and wear (Pallasmaa, p. 34). To instead embrace the characteristics of ageing and use that might disturb or unsettle is to embrace life. The place for uneasiness and distress in our experience of beauty must be included in this sensory revolution if we want to reach that beauty which strikes us at the core, it is through pain that change is motivated (Han, p. 40). To be vulnerable is to be able to be shaken, mystified, tortured by beauty; an eroticism of the mind at the fingertips of the person who can sense with the whole spectrum of their body. Imagination and sensuality are deeply entwined in this process, as they both possess the ability to connect and transform different sensations, bodies, things within and without us. (Bataille, p.25). To be open to change is to be vulnerable, to be invulnerable is to be stuck in repeat (Han, p.39).

The fashion and beauty industry are main culprits in this rejection of history and age. What keeps the systems going is its continuous effort to distance itself from the past. (McGuire, n/a). The consequences for the consumer in a conveyor-belt production model is that our garments and possessions are made to become undesirable before they have lost their material or functional worth. They become undesirable because they are of the past and therefore irrelevant, same as we ourselves are made to feel irrelevant when we lose our youth, our smoothness. A digital age has made the fragments of our lives and bodies we share online into dismembered relics, these images do not contain our essence, they are not alive. The commercialised body is measurable, scrutinised, above all else looked at and judged, but never itself sensing, living, touching. To only experience our body through its digital reproductions, photographs, reflections is to proclaim the body as dead, unseeing. We need to unlearn our habit of judging our extended bodies through the eyes only, to shock us into change by the embracing of indiscriminate sensory experience and enjoyment.



A body made only of the pants. La Poupée imaginaire par Les yeux de la Poupée (Hans Bellmer, 1938)

LIFE-DENYING DISGUST

If we are unable to appreciate something worn or seeing traces of someone else body in a garment or value the signs of ageing, it is because we are unable to accept all the aspects of a living body. Fashion's obsession with the new and fresh shows a fear of the body and its natural bodily functions.

Through Julia Kristeva's theory of the Abject we can see that the inability to accept your own and other's bodies in their full function is a life denying act. While the abject is potentially defined as that which is "radically separate, loathsome" (Kristeva, p2) and we might shun from describing our reactions to the human body in this way, the obsessive need to erase from our extended bodies the signs of age and wear shows the inability to accept yourself and others as living beings in the world. Disgust is a way to separate myself from what I must shed in order to live - waste, refuse, secretions, old skin, and ultimately, the dead body (Kristeva, p.3). I reject the signs of death in order to live. But disgust and fear of death should not be the defining characteristics of what we choose to wear, and taken to their logical extremes in a market ruled by the adoration of youth and capital, the signs of life on a body or garments are seen as difficult and disturbing in that they remind capital of its essential demise, rendering life itself within fashion unwanted, impossible.

Research has shown that individuals with a high propensity for feeling disgust are more likely to hold politically conservative views (Xu, p.203), which underpins the link between disgust and a fear of "that which is I and simultaneously not I", the definition of the abject. According to Kristeva, it is not fear of filth or lack of hygiene that threatens me in the experience of the abject, but a fear of the dissolution of that which is me. Xenophobia, fear of change or the dissolution of known systems then also become characteristics of elevated levels of disgust, hindering evolution and progress within a community which, in the case of fashion, proposes itself as avant-garde and has the privilege to define what is a fashionable or beautiful body. Fashion's obsession with the clean, smooth, unlined body is a symptom of a culture unable to appreciate the ambiguity and sensuality of life.

THE FEMALE ABJECT

The female body is and has been more intimately connected with the unmentionable sides of life than the male, and thus the female body has more potency to invoke the abject in the habitual mind. The animating functions of the body (breastfeeding, menstruation, birthing) have historically been just another manifestation of the female body being out of control, in need of containment and civilisation offered by a society dominated by males. The functioning female body is in this context itself abject; a fleshy magic on the verge of both life and death, a constant reminder of the presence of something Other than aseptic society. Female saints in Medieval Europe were much more prevalent to exercise bodily control through fasting and "extreme austerity" (Bynum, p.3) than their male counterparts, with records of dozens of these holy women surviving by eating only the eucharist as mass.



Caroline of Sion based herself to death at the age of thirty three. Painting by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, 1745.

Pregnancy and the act of giving birth then becomes the ultimate grotesque act; the female body is here experienced as bordering on the monstrous, "cavernous and carnivorous" (Steinarsdotir, p. 14) in its cycles of fulfilled or unfulfilled conception. The origination of misogyny can be argued to lie in man's disgust of his own birth, the refusal to see oneself as part of this screaming act of blood and discharge. To think about and accept the fact that you were born in is on par with being able to urinate in front of others and being able to orgasm during sex; it doesn't happen without an acceptance of bodily disgust as part of life and is incompatible with obsessive cleanliness and order. Even breastfeeding can in this light be seen as a cannibalistic act, (Kristeva, p. 79) two bodies in an intimate symbiosis that in most societies is deemed too indecent to be seen or acknowledged in public.

Carlo Ginzburg claims in his essay *The Cheese of Shame* that our sense of belonging to a country is not correlated to the love we feel for it but to the shame, meaning that shame is a far more powerful indicator of norms and behaviour within a culture. Foucault's off-quoted theories of self-discipline of

bodies in modern society state that shame keeps us controlling our behaviours and perfecting our appearance, all in fear of being subject to the shame of not adhering to a set standard. The modern culture of self-surveillance is present in all public and, increasingly private, environments. In a society where most standards are set by men, the female body, being the anomaly, is especially subjected to control and supervision. Where the male body is the norm, the female body can only ever be seen as a failure (Hornbacher, n/a). The feeling of bodily shame is integral to how we modify our behaviours and appearance to our context, and in feeling the need to appear in a certain way and present our bodies as a desirable object to be had, we are forced to participate in the marketing of our own bodies as something that is for sale (Kesson, n/a). In reality, clothing becomes just another form of bodily control, where our consciousness of being incomplete and imperfect we feel might perhaps be remedied by the purchasing and subsequent association with a manufactured brand identity. The way out of this cycle of shame and consumption would be to celebrate the grotesque and shameful, to integrate the aesthetics of shame into our vocabulary of the beautiful.



The original shame, and of looking. Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Book's The Garden of Earthly Delights, oil on oak panels, 265 x 300 cm (104 1/8 x 118 1/8 in.). Museum of Prunk, Madrid.

CARNIVAL

Before the grotesque came to be associated with fear and the abject side of an outdated romanticism, the folkloric traditions of Europe saw grotesqueness as something worthy of celebration and wonder, even humorous in its excess. Folkloric carnival celebrations were inclusive, joyous and loud, involving all social classes, bodies and ages. They did not distinguish participants from spectators as carnival is not made to be seen but to be lived (Bakhtin p.7) and is thus an example of engaging, inclusive cultural expression that feels especially relevant today. The embracing aspects of carnival grotesqueness extends from the acceptance and celebration of differing bodies to the revelry of varying forms of life, where not only human figures are included but monsters, animals, trolls and the like, not as abhorrences but as examples of the varied forms life can take, to tame the fear of the unusual. If we can apply the same approach to the perceived grotesqueness of living traces on our extended bodies, the signs of age, wear and differences might be celebrated instead of shunned. The new romantic is to enjoy all forms of life, to celebrate what others might shun.

The 80s gave rise to multiple expressions of the grotesque in fashion, perhaps as a reaction to the increasingly polished and perfected ideal of the body (Granata, p.2). The grotesque is most notably seen in the designs by Kawakubo, for instance in the Bumps collection from 1997 there are bulging shapes hinting at lumps of flesh we cannot see and which we feel shouldn't be there, as if the clothing itself is working somehow against the body or perhaps the body working against the clothing. The relationship between the two is unclear, who is governing who, who has the agency? Where does the human end and the inhuman begin? The mystery and absurdity of these shapes carry a spirit of carnal celebration that would not be out of place in pre-modern folklore.

chapter 4, the beautiful body

BEAUTY OF CHARACTER

I argue that in order to be fully embraced by beauty is to see it not only as an aesthetic but to learn to see beauty as a story and a state of mind, to recognise it in a series of event that together create a pleasurable contrast or a particular harmony, to

appreciate beautiful reactions, beautiful values. We are more prone to see the beauty in the people to whom we feel empathic, as their familiar essence is projected through their body language, tone of voice, habits and movements. These intimate attributes are how we recognise them, so should not the clothing then also contribute to this recognisability, this character? Such a shame it would be to lose the ability to identify a friend from afar by their well known coat or favourite expression, or some other characteristic that has stayed with them long enough to have grown inseparable and inextricable from what we perceive as Them. It would be felt as a tragedy, in comparison, to recognise someone first and foremost by the borrowed identity of a purchased brand product, long clearly on display, or to not recognise them at all from a change in appropriated persona, constantly exchanged and renewed by whatever deemed fashionable at the moment. Like Proust's Madeleine, an old item of clothing, the characteristic movement of a hand or a scent from childhood has the ability to set off a clear recollection of a time long forgotten, a time travel by senses that thickens the complex maze of memories and personality (Han, p.74). The mercantilisation of the body and its identity is creating a need for the extended body to be constantly renewed, consumed and upgraded at the expense of developing true character.

The search for quotidian beauty and individuality in identity aesthetic does not require that the object of beauty is old and aged, it could be something repurposed, altered, combined or simply unpretentious in its ability to harmoniously fit into its surroundings. (Scruton, p.12). The important factor is that the pursuit is conscious and indiscriminate; the open mind that is in search of beauty will find it in new and unexpected places. The appreciation of the minimal and everyday is an exploration of the kind of beauty that slowly enriches and thickens your sensory world, a pleasure that you carry along with you always and that increases your appetite for life and experience. By describing something beautiful we are indeed becoming more beautiful ourselves, by association and integration into a consciously aesthetic worldbuilding. To define your own vocabulary of beauty is a protest against the smooth, youth-obsessed ideal of a mass consumption society.

"But by now my desire and will were turned, like a balanced wheel rotated evenly, by the love that moves the sun and the other stars." - Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*

THE SENSES or ATMOSPHERES

The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste of the distillation, it is odorless. It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it. I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked, I am mad for it to be in contact with me. -Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*

I feel my thighs through the fabric of my trousers, feel the muscles move beneath my hands and even without my eyes I perceive the sensation as beautiful. I filter all experiences through my body, and my body colours all the information passing through it, as my body affects my surrounding in an exchange between the exterior and interior of my person. The tragedy of individuality is that we are discontinuous beings, each person ends and begins somewhere and communication between us is always coloured by the impossibility of a true joining. Nonetheless we often agree on what particular sensation or atmosphere is being projected by the environment or milieu onto us; is the meadow peaceful, the office space draining, the conversation hostile? Though we tend to talk about visual perception to a much greater degree than, say touch or smell. When discussing beauty some senses tend to get left behind. I want to make a case for expanding the perception of beauty to all the senses so as to develop a vocabulary and a knowledge of what a beautiful atmosphere is to us. What makes us comfortable, happy, ecstatic? What sensory input is needed? By naming and discussing these sensory manipulations (Bohme, p.2) they can become clear guides for us to use in the creation of ourselves and our experiences.