

# **EXTENDING THE BODY**

**Marthe Huyse**

## **THE UNINHIBITED BODY**

**FOREWORD  
AN INCOMPLETE GLOSSARY**

**p7-16**

## **THE CONSTRUCTED BODY**

**THE EVER-EVOLVING NATURE OF IDENTITY  
UNRAVELING HOW AND WHY BODIES EXTEND**

**p17-35**

## **THE CLOTHED BODY**

**UNTANGELING ATTIRE  
DISOBEDIENT DRESS**

**p37-63**

## **THE EXPRESSIVE BODY**

**MAKING ROOM FOR THE BODY  
THE BODY AS A TOOL**

**p65-87**

## **THE EXTENDED BODY**

**I WOULD RATHER BE A CYBORG THAN A GODDESS  
AN OUTSTRECHED HAND**

**p89-107**

## **THE UNINHIBITED BODY**

**Reflecting at the untamed spirit of my childhood, I find resonance in the uninhibited body, integrating its essence into my present self.**

**When I almost turned eighteen, someone advised me not to lose my uninhibited attitude. I did not know then what “uninhibited” meant, and I remember looking it up that day. It was only when writing this thesis, at the age of twenty-two, that I remembered this advice.**

**The uninhibited body as both concept and catalyst, symbolizes liberation and promises a passage of transformation. Defined by its defiance of social constraints, the uninhibited body embodies spontaneity, authenticity, and autonomy. I have taken this idea to heart—rebellious against expectations, rediscovering my identity and rewriting my own narrative from day to day.**

**During my art education as a graphic designer, a fascination with the body as a cultural being emerged within me. My encounter, through Julie Peeters, with Marianne Wex's book *Let's Take Back Our Space* fuelled my interest, leading me to explore the representation of women and queer people in art. This curiosity drove me to analyse imagery and gain awareness of diverse perspectives and gazes. Thereafter, delving into literature on the body within the realms of feminist history and cultural analysis, I recognized my eagerness to understand the act of extending the body.**

**The work *Let's Take Back Our Space*—with the subtitles, *'Female' and 'Male' Body Language as a Result of Patriarchal Structures*—is based on 5000 to 6000 photographs of body postures, taken between 1974 and 1977. It is a visual survey comprised of hundreds of photographs assembled into dozens of thematic grids: seated persons—leg and feet; arm and hand positions; standing persons—leg and feet; people sitting and laying on the ground; Egyptian, Greek, and Roman statuary; how the men of Christianity took over an old goddess gesture; the stultifying effect of the patriarchal socialization. The images were collected from a huge range of sources: advertisements, reportage, fashion magazines, studio portraits, the history of art—and many were taken on the streets of Hamburg by Wex herself, who proposes that our smallest, most unconscious gestures speak volumes about the power relations of gender in daily life.**



The second encounter fuelling my interest in the body was Luanda Casella's play *The Killjoy Quiz* which brought me to —now one of favourite manifestos—the work of Sara Ahmed on the killjoy figure.

The killjoy: a word, a word-tool, a living world, a figure—it refers to a person who deliberately spoils the enjoyment of others. In her *Killjoy Manifesto*, Ahmed establishes practices of resistance which examine the idea of the killjoy feminist—along with the unhappy queer, the angry Black woman,

*To kill joy, is to open a life, to make room for possibility, for chance.*

① Ahmed, 2017

the melancholic migrant—to demonstrate how our Western obsession with acquiring and maintaining

happiness can be problematic for those whose experiences interrupt the happiness narrative.

Someone who is ready to expose harmful ideologies, while accepting the violent reality which this exposure takes place, the killjoy figure is often labelled as disruptive. They initiate confrontational discussions in any given situation, disturb family gatherings, oppose euphemisms, reject sexist comments, refuse racist remarks, and call things out, at all times.

Stimulated by these insights, I dug further into the discourse surrounding the body, an exploration that had broadened my understanding of my own physicality. From an obsession with the body as interior, such as psychology and sociology, to an expansion of the body into the exterior environment. Thus began my journey into body extensions, a journey that naturally led me to investigate gender theory, embodied practices, appearance and identity, body politics, phenomenology, among other topics.

As an artist, my main focus of my research has been in the visual arts. To better understand the act of extending the body, I started a visual research, collecting images portraying diverse artists extending their bodies. The collection is a visual narrative aimed at embracing and exploring transformative processes. The images portraying different body extensions serve as an opening to other senses and affects, to alternative modes of knowing and accessing the past they make available.

In curating—or rather caring for—these images, my effort was to redefine and reorder, unveiling the significance of these connections and clarifying what they reveal about our past. The images serve as tools to reframe and reorder history, narrate alternate tales, and help perform new histories. Designing collisions and encounters between artistic practices that may seem detached from each other. In the following pages I'll be writing through and off the thoughts and conclusions of others. To pay homage in admiring them as well as studying them. Navigating the spaces between a homage and an explanation, between a tribute and an analysis.

In my study of body extensions, I initially envisioned a realm where the term held a universal and obvious meaning. Yet swiftly I realized that this perception resided solely within my mind. The discourse I encountered often centred heavily on technology and the pursuit of 'perfection,' frequently overlooking cultural practices and failing to differentiate between modifications and extensions.

To address this, I adopted a non-traditional approach to texts and imagery mentioned in this thesis, moving beyond traditional art-historical frames. I combined obscure works with established ones, crossing different mediums, places, and times. Instead of following a chronological order, I arranged the content to encourage readers to engage with quotes and references alongside my analysis. This method allowed me to identify a shared visual practice that reveals new ways of seeing bodies and their extensions in art, regardless of specific time frames or locations.

*As scholars/curators Erica Lehrer and Cynthia E. Milton point out, the root meaning of the word "curate" is "caring for": this connection between "curation" and "caring for", they contend, demands that we think of curation "not only as selection, design, and interpretation, but as care-taking—as a kind of intimate, intersubjective, interrelational obligation," an obligation to "deal with the past" in particular.* ② Gopinath, 2018

*After all, the ideas that make us curious are not the ones we fully understand, but the ones we care about — I Love It is always more compelling than I Get It. To pay homage to someone falls somewhere between admiring them and studying them. A tribute is neither an analysis nor just a party. Giving a toast is about making people care, not about making them understand. (...) The affective curatorial approach of the I Care can inhabit that space between an homage and an explanation, between a tribute and an analysis, between a recommendation and a nomination. While behaving in the key of the I Care can be an act of celebration, it can also be one of critique: the art of the toast is closely aligned with the art of the roast.* ③ ElDahab et al., 2011

**While I strive to consider body extensions from a global perspective, my education within a Western cultural framework has conditioned my lens. However, acknowledging the limitations of this perspective, I tried to surpass it and explore diverse examples, appreciating other perspectives on beauty and art as notably gripping and enlightening.**

*Fashion's value is expressed in its encounters with bodies, as it is worn, as it is consumed, as it is remembered, as it manifests in innumerable cultural forms. The point, as always, is not to ask what any particular garment means, but what can it do?*

④ Eckersley & Duff, 2020

**Each work of art, each body extension, should be regarded as a fragment of subjectivity with no fixed semiotic value, moving on from what a garment means to what a garment can do.**

**The concept of body extensions is not just an academic pursuit but a plumb journey of self-discovery. As a child, I observed how others effortlessly moved with purpose, guided by an innate understanding of their surroundings. Yet for me, every step felt like a deliberate calculation, a conscious effort to decipher the world around me. I have found that my difficulty in moving without intention has led me to rely on intention as a guiding force in navigating the world. Over time, I came to realize that my difficulty moving without intention was not just a quirk of my own experience but a fundamental aspect of how I perceive and interact with the world. Intention is more than just a conscious decision or action; it's a guiding force that shapes our experiences and influences our perceptions. It is the invisible thread that connects us to our environment, guiding our movements and shaping our interactions. Guiding through the maze of social cues, sensory stimuli, and emotional landscapes—each movement becomes a deliberate act of self-expression, a conscious negotiation between internal desires and external realities. Through this wandering, I've come to appreciate how body extensions serve as extensions of our unknown intentions—amplifying our ability to communicate, express, and connect with others. From a simple gesture to a bold fashion statement, each extension becomes a reflection of our innermost desires and intentions, a tangible manifestation urge.**

**This way, body extensions become not just tools for self-expression but vehicles for self-discovery on personal and collective levels. I believe that this extends beyond my own experiences.**

**To get a grip on the act of extending the body we'll wander through five different body-models:**

**The uninhibited body  
The constructed body  
The clothed body  
The expressive body  
The extended body**

**Within this wandering, my study of body extensions claims a close relationship to Sara Ahmed's analyses of the killjoy figure, Paul B. Preciado's research on countersexuality within the frameworks of the naturalized heterocentric regime, Silvia Frederici's rethinking, remaking, and reclaiming of the body, Judith Butler's analysis of performative identity, and Emma Dabiri's politics of disobedient bodies.**

## AN INCOMPLETE GLOSSARY

**A concise selection designed to illuminate key concepts for the upcoming discussions.**

### AFFECT

**The experience of feeling or emotion. It encompasses**

**a broad range of emotional states, including moods, feelings, and attitudes, which can be both conscious and unconscious. Affect is a fundamental aspect of human experience, influencing thoughts, behaviors, and interactions.**

### BINARY STRUCTURES

**Systems or frameworks that categorize phenomena,**

**experiences, or identities into two distinct and often mutually exclusive categories. These structures typically involve polar opposites or dichotomous distinctions, such as male/female, black/white, or good/bad. Binary thinking tends to oversimplify complex realities and overlooks nuances, diversity, and intersections within identities and experiences. Challenging binary structures involves questioning rigid categorization and recognizing the multiplicity and complexity inherent in human existence.**

### CORPOREALITY

**Existing as a physical body.**

*Corporeality is something more than a biological or organic whole, more than a self-sufficient system. It is always a cultural product, or as Elizabeth Grosz puts it, 'a site of social, political, cultural and geographical inscriptions, production and constitution not in the opposition to each other but as necessarily interactive.' The body is traversed by various levels that link the most different bodies, particles and forces, consequently integrating into the world's structures.*

⑫ Stepień, 2017

### DISOBEDIENT BODIES

*Disobedient bodies recognise the forces of social control that*

*shape our relationship to beauty—from the moment we're born, and throughout our lives—and resist them.*

*In Western discourse there is a long tradition of imagining the body and the mind as inherently separate. Accordingly, the body is subservient to the mind. Disobedient bodies sense that there are healthier ways of relation to ourselves and are curious to explore them. A disobedient body is one that understands the interrelatedness of the two, recognising the body is no less valuable, and viewing the person as a whole, rather than composed of oppositional warring entities. ⑪ Dabiri, 2023*

### GAZE

*Nonetheless, in Western culture, 'the body is the bedrock on which*

*social order is founded, the body is always in view and on view. As such, it invites a gaze, a gaze of difference, a gaze of differentiation — the most historically constant being the gendered gaze'. ⑪ Dabiri, 2023*

### IDENTITY

**The distinct beliefs, qualities, characteristics,**

**and expressions that make an individual or group particular. It encompasses both personal and social aspects, including cultural, ethnic, gender, sexual, and professional affiliations. Fluid and multifaceted; identities are shaped by personal experiences, interactions with others, and social influences.**

### INTRA-ACTION

*Intra-action is a Baradian term used to replace 'interaction,'*

*which necessitates pre-established bodies that then participate in action with each other. Intra-action understands agency as not an inherent property of an individual or human to be exercised, but as a dynamism of forces in which all designated 'things' are constantly exchanging and diffracting, influencing and working inseparably. — newmaterialism.eu*

### OTHERNESS

**The concept of 'otherness' is key to understanding how**

**sociologists study the formation of majority and minority identities. Because the portrayal of various groups in society is often influenced by those with more political power. To grasp the idea of 'The Other,' sociologists examine how social identities are formed.**

### RELATIONALITY

**Relationality refers to connectedness, a view**

**of the world that underlines how no person or thing exists in isolation, because existence necessarily means being 'in relationship'.**

### SELF

**The individual's perception and awareness of their**

**own existence as a distinct entity. It involves introspection, self-awareness, and a sense of continuity and coherence over time. The concept of the self encompasses one's thoughts, feelings, desires, and experiences, forming the basis of personal identity; influenced by societal norms, cultural expectations, and interpersonal relationships.**

## **WORLD-SENSE**

*Sight has been held since classical times as the 'noblest of the senses'.*

*Again, we might think this is 'natural'. But the insistence that this is a universal way of relating to oneself is typically Eurocentric. Scholars such as Oyewùmí have advocated for the use of the term 'world-sense' rather than the default 'world view', when describing the Yoruba or other cultures, that may privilege senses other than the visual or even a combination of the senses. ⑪ Dabiri, 2023*

## **THE CONSTRUCTED BODY**





**Pussy Riot, 2011–present**

*“We are anonymous because we act against any personality cult, against hierarchies implied by appearance, age and other visible social attributes. We cover our heads because we oppose the very idea of using female faces as trademark for promoting any sort of goods or services.”*

**the mask does not deny identity, but indicates to the possibility of a multiplicity of identities**

*“We wish Nadia and Masha well – but they’re no longer part of Pussy Riot.”  
The Guardian (2022, October 20)*



**Franz Erhard Walther, ‘Den Körper Hinzu’, 1983  
from ‘Wandformationen series’**

*“Ever since the word performance was first applied to my work, I’ve had difficulties with it, because for me it has too many theatrical associations. All sorts of words have been used, but I haven’t found one that’s absolutely right. Certainly, what goes on in my work has something to do with action–Handlung in German. It’s thought processes developing. I’ve seen my work categorized sometimes as process art, sometimes as behaviour art. I should prefer to use the word Handlung, if it can be turned into an art word: I like action art better than performance because it’s more neutral. And yet the English word action–I’m afraid it has something programmatic about it: it almost amounts to a definition of content. I don’t think I really do actions. A better way to put it in English would be just doing –it’s simply an activity.”*

*Verhagen, E., & Walther, S. (2017). Franz Erhard Walther – Dialogues.*

**We encounter the constructed body—the frame upon which identity is carefully created. Here, the act of self–definition intersects with societal expectations, resulting in a delicate balance of agency and conformity. As an artist, I grapple with this duality, navigating between self–expression and societal conditioning. While I cherish solitude, I am wary of isolation, aware of the complexities inherent in claiming space within the cultural landscape.**

## THE EVER–EVOLVING NATURE OF IDENTITY

**Body extensions provide a focus on the self as becoming—or as Judith Butler states—as doing, highlighting the multiplicity and irreducibility of both the self and experiences. They encourage a proactive engagement with the deconstruction of knowledge and binary structures, fostering an ethos of embracing and exploring such transformative processes.**

**The self as becoming suggests that the self is in a everlasting state of transformation, a continuous process of becoming rather than a fixed or static entity, aligning with philosophical and existential ideas that emphasize personal growth, development, and evolution over time. It suggests that identity is not something predetermined or pre–existing but is instead shaped through ongoing experiences and interactions. This unending transformation can create friction when societal expectations or structures attempt to impose fixed identities or roles onto individuals, highlighting the fluidity of personal identity and the often rigid constructs of society.**

*inviting audience members to think of themselves as becoming-bodies, rather than seeing through a knowing gaze*

**⑤** *Quinlivan, 2008*

**A prominent American philosopher and gender theorist, Judith Butler introduces the idea that identity is not something one inherently is but something one actively does through performance and action, emphasizing the active role individuals play in creating and defining their identities through their behaviours, gestures, and expression. Framing identity as something enacted through actions, it challenges essentialist views and highlights the agency individuals have in shaping their sense of self.**



**Milena Naef, 'Fleeting Parts', 2016**

Ⓐ

"I am fascinated by the thought that our bodies stand in a constant 'choreography' with their environment. Due to the inevitable presence of our bodies, I believe that we define ourselves through the constant interaction we are forced to have with our surroundings. Our own creations have allowed us to appropriate, to cultivate and to reflect upon the spaces we inhabit."

myartisrealmagazine.com, Fleeting Parts By Milena Naef (2019, January 15)



**Lisa Bufano, 'One Breath is an Ocean for a Wooden Heart', 2007 performed from 1972–2013**

Ⓒ

"I am using my own body, both as a direct approach to animating forms, and also as a way to explore issues of physicality and deformity. Despite my own terror and discomfort in being watched (or, maybe, because of it), I am finding that being in front of viewers as a performer with deformity can produce a magnetic tension that could be developed into strength. I attempt to channel this tension by exaggerating the mode of physical difference (for example, presenting myself on stilts). I am using mechanical sculpture, props and prosthetics to transform my body to discover its unique physical vocabulary."

konteiner.org, Lisa Bufano (US), Sonaherke Giles (US)  
Extravagant Bodies Festival (12–16/12/2007)

The perspective of the self as doing invites a consideration of identity as a series of ongoing, performative acts rather than a predetermined essence. *Gender Trouble*, one of Butler's seminal works published in 1990, reveals ways in how dominant discourses allow no space for otherness; drawing from the legacy of Simone de Beauvoir in the mid-20th century, they argue that gender is performative. Gender is not a fixed category but is constructed and performed through repeated actions and behaviours. Identity is a fluid process that is forever unfolding.

Identity is not solely about being or becoming since it is never fixed; it is about doing, an important way to resist the power structures which regulate our lives and identities is by ridiculing normative cultural expressions and performances. Body extensions can cause gender trouble.

As Silvia Federici—an Italian-American academic and activist within the radical autonomist feminist Marxist tradition, born in 1942—aptly point out, the struggle to destabilize our assigned identities

cannot be separated from the struggle to change the social and historical conditions of our lives and above all undermine social hierarchies and inequalities. Nor frozen, nor shifting. In the ongoing process of becoming, individuals negotiate their identities within societal structures. Federici highlights that social identities are shaped by class, gender relations, and community struggles. The notion of identity as fluid challenged rigid definitions, emphasizing the complexity of individual identities influenced by various factors.

*Social identities are neither essences, fixed, frozen, determined once for all, nor groundless, infinitely shifting realities. (...) Social identities, including gender identities, are shaped by class, gender relations, and the struggles of the communities we come from. (...) Thus, the struggle to destabilize our assigned identities cannot be separated from the struggle to change the social/historical conditions of our lives and above all undermine social hierarchies and inequalities.* ⑥ Federici, 2020

Multiplicity suggests that the self is not a singular, unified entity but a complex, multifaceted construction influenced by various factors. Irreducibility implies that the self and experiences cannot be easily separated or reduced to simplistic categories; they are interconnected and intertwined.





**Jana Sterbak, 'Remote Control II', 1989**

(f)

"Contemporary art is a means of communication. For me, that communication is not necessarily pleasant, since my subject matter is not all milk and honey, but an approach has to be possible. In order to tackle serious subjects, they have to be presented in such a way the potential audiences feel motivated to confront the reality or the reflections that we want to present to them."

youtube.com, Jana Sterbak, 2012 Canada Council laureate (2012, February 28)



**Sandra Poulson, 'The Ladder', part of 'AAA', 2020**

(e)

"You walk in the street, you see the lady selling mangoes and you think that she's a mango seller; every time you see somebody doing something you immediately assign that activity to their identity, constructing the idea of a person based on what you see. But realistically, we're all in motion."

koozarah.com, Bodies in Motion, Dust as Trace: Sandra Poulson at Sharjah Architecture Triennial (2024, January 22)

"I have always been incredibly passionate about fashion as a discipline, only realizing later that I am actually interested in anything that comes in contact with the body. It has taken me working as though I am having conversations with myself to evolve into understanding the body as a subject and perhaps the garments as a space being activated, a space with agency."

Sandra Poulson On Life's Privileges, Macro Politics And Accountability, The Fashionography (2022, August 30)

**Identity is always already plural, a multitude of identities. Each of us constitutes a 'multi-culture' or multiplicity: we are all shaped by many cultures, and we embody a co-existence of many cultures at once. We are almost constantly engaged in presenting ourselves to others and to ourselves, and thus representing ourselves in language and gesture, external and internal. Becoming oneself and understanding oneself take place in relation to others. Identity is always a borrowed identity, borrowed from others. We always use the words of others and could never pretend to be someone outside the chain of the past, outside the realm of worlds. We are all translators of our accumulated quotes and cultures.**

*We are what we have been given by, or have taken from, others: our name (always referring to others), our language (always a strange, arbitrary system), our culture, etc. We would be nothing without our ability to imitate others. We are made out of and by others. As subjects, we are continually borrowing, taking, stealing, copying, etc., our identity from others. Our identity is permanently becoming, never finished or fixed, engaged in a continuous process of constructions and creation. ⑦ Garabedian, 2015*

**Body extensions encourage an active engagement with the deconstruction of knowledge and binary structures related to the body and the self. Deconstruction involves critically analysing and breaking down established concepts, challenging binary oppositions, and questioning traditional norms. The overall ethos emphasized is one of openness to change and exploration. Body extensions are seen as tools that facilitate transformative processes, fostering an ethos that encourages individuals to embrace and actively explore new dimensions of their identity.**

*Identity is a process that never comes to halt, as bodily layers can be taken off one by one and rearranged anew.*

*Femininity and masculinity are now strata that are neither stuck in the prisons of essentialism or social constructivism, but are free-floating, nomadic, volatile, performative markers of gender and identity. Feminist thinkers from Donna Haraway, Judith Butler, and Rosi Braidotti to Elizabeth Grosz, Moira Gatens, and Luce Irigaray are part of this new approach to the body, an approach that first needed the fantasies of disembodiment described by Hayles to produce the surplus of gender.*

⑧ Wegenstein, 2006

**Identity is a process that never comes to a halt, as bodily layers can be taken off one by one and rearranged anew, influenced by personal experiences, cultural context, changing perspectives, life events, education, relationships, and resilience in the face of challenges.**





**Marta Minujin, 'Colchón', 1963**

"They [the invited artists] had to show up at the empty lot (Impasse Ronsin) on June 8, at 8 p.m., bringing with them the elements of their work that best expressed them, and they had to create on my pieces (as symbolic destruction); and they had to implant their images on mine, delete, erase, modify my works. Create in order to destroy; burn out my identity."

exhibits.haverford.edu, CANTOR FITZGERALD GALLERY, Marta Minujin  
Archaeologies Of Destruction, 1968-2014 (2015, February 19)

h



**Betsy Damon, '7,000 Year Old Woman', New York  
May 21, 1977 1-3 p.m.**

"She is my sister, mother, my grandmothers, my great grandmothers, friends and lovers. She is my woman line of 7000 years and she is me, the me that I know very little about."

"There were 400 bags filled with pale red, yellow, orange and purple flour. This became an intimate ritual of its own which lasted nearly an hour. When this was done Su left the circle and I remained with my only protection, the bags. There were a few bags left over which I tossed to the audience, hoping to capture some of the clown and establish contact with the audience. However, my sense of vulnerability was overwhelming, I could not move from the center of the circle and did not want to begin cutting the bags off."

"Friends brought flowers, boys threw eggs and I could feel the intense reactions of the audience."

betsydamon.com, 7000 Year Old Woman, Excerpt from Heresies (1977)

g

**Each of these factors contributes to the intricate and dynamic nature of one's self over time.**

*The body is no longer understood as an ahistorical, biologically given, a cultural object.* ⑨ Grosz, 1994

**In this line of thinking, the body is no longer understood in an ahistorical, biological vacuum. Rather, emphasis is placed on the lived, experienced body, which comes to the forefront in identity exploration. Simone de Beauvoir in *Le deuxième sexe* (1949), understands the body as a situation, emphasizing the phenomenological insight that our engagement with the world is inherently linked to our embodied existence; the body is not merely a passive object but is actively lived and experienced, shaping and being shaped by our interactions with the world.**

*In questioning the binary restrictions on gender definition, Wittig and Foucault release gender from sex in ways which Simone de Beauvoir probably did not imagine. And yet, her view of the body as a "situation" certainly lays the groundwork for such theories.*

⑩ Butler, 1986

**The process of becoming, for example what it means to become a woman, entails the lived experience of one's body in one particular lived reality.**

*The study of feminist body art fruitfully interrogated the sites where marginalized individuals articulate their bodies to counter official discourses and center the corporeality of rhetoric. (...) Feminist body artworks are invention-memory vehicles—they refuse binaries, deconstruct acts of remembrance, and interrogate the drive toward fixed identity.*

⑤ Quinlivan, 2008

**Body extensions reveal a complex interplay with identity; on one hand, they possess the capacity to alter and manipulate identity, to remove, disguise, or conceal one's inherent traits and beliefs, allowing individuals to adopt different persona's or cloak aspects of their identities. On the other hand, body extensions serve as instruments of affirmation and empowerment, strengthening identity by reinforcing uniqueness, values, or cultural affiliations, amplifying a sense of self. By using body extensions and inviting viewers to reconsider their self-perception, artists in particular offer new viewpoints on the lived experiences of individuals.**

**Identities resist finality, unfolding as an ongoing never-finished narrative. Each body modification, whether it be scarification, branding, or surgical alteration, signifies**

*When possible we should flow counter to our atomised, fragmented, and alienated culture, which lends itself so well to*



*reducing ourselves and each other to the fixed and frozen. Rather than the immobile and static body parts we broadcast on apps, we could prioritise and value wholeness, moving towards integration, honouring that we are alive and mobile and complicated and powerful.*

⑪ Dabiri, 2023

**Modifications signify a deliberate intervention aimed at shaping the body according to certain (temporary) desired outcomes.**

**Identities challenge the notion of finality, resisting the confinement of fixed definitions. The dynamic essence of identity resonates with the temporality of body extensions, which, in their connection to art, can serve as transformative tools. These extensions have the ability to connect with or attach to human bodies, initiating changes within the physical space. They are enabling instruments that empower artists in their communication, providing a medium to navigate the fluidity of contemporary lived and disobedient bodies.**

*Rather what is at stake now is the lived, experienced body and actualizations, for instance in language.*

⑧ Wegenstein, 2006

*The body extends itself, while being at the threshold of the unknown, interacting with otherness to produce new ways of embodiment. The process of becoming is activated and thus a reconfiguration of the pre-established possibilities of what a body is and can do is triggered.* ⑫ Stępień, 2017

**a moment frozen in time, a chapter concluded in the story of the self—these modifications represent specific actions taken to alter the body in a permanent or semi-permanent way, resulting in a physical change that is fixed and concluded.**

## UNRAVELLING HOW AND WHY BODIES EXTEND

The word ‘body extensions’ is used in this essay to direct attention away from the inherent disciplinary connotations of terms such as fashion (theory), wearables, costume design, embodiment studies, anthology of dress, and others. The term is used to recognize that many practitioners, artists and designers, identify across one or more disciplines. Through various forms of artistic expression and technological advancements, body extensions profoundly impact individuals’ daily lives. Artists, scholars, and activists from diverse cultural, ethnic, racial, gender, and socioeconomic backgrounds offer valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of body extensions. Their experiences challenge dominant narratives and expand the conversation surrounding the practice.

**Emphasizing body extensions as practices rather than mere forms is crucial, as they actively engage with the world. By prioritizing body extensions as practices, we acknowledge their dynamic role in reshaping our world—sense, bringing forth alternative possibilities that were previously unseen. Depicting new forms of relationality and connections between bodies, spaces, objects of study, and fields of thought.**

*(...) these aesthetic practices disorient and reorient us; they unsettle normative temporalities by pointing to alternative pathways and routes through the past and to the future that bypass the familiar touchstones of hetero- and homonormative life histories.* ② Gopinath, 2018

**Body extensions enact a practice of reading and possess the unique ability to disorient and reorient us, unsettling conventional narratives by unveiling alternative pathways through history and towards the future. As we engage with these practices, we learn to decipher dominant codes through a lens attuned to the marginal. Uncovering gaps, shifts, and omissions that offer new insights and perspectives.**

*This practice teaches us how to read dominant archives through the minor, and for their gaps, slippages, and erasures.*

② Gopinath, 2018

**In posing the question how artists use and can use body extensions as a tool to alter dualities, I’m not only furnishing such a thinking, but also the very process through which this becomes possible. This process unfolds through the lens of the ever-evolving nature of identity; where body extensions serve as transformative mediums for navigating**

**and challenging traditional binaries—it manifests through encounters with fashion; where the fusion of body and attire blurs distinctions between self and other—it emerges from encounters with diverse bodies; where the incorporation of extensions sparks dialogues, reshaping perceptions and dismantling entrenched dichotomies.**

**The implications of body extensions extend beyond individual experiences to influence broader policy decisions in healthcare, accessibility, and human rights. Advocacy for inclusive design, equitable access, and protection of self-expression and bodily autonomy are crucial for societal well-being.**

**Body extensions take the technological production and transformation of, for example sexed and gendered bodies as its objects of study. It does not reject the hypothesis of social or psychological constructions, but it does reposition them as mechanisms, strategies, and uses within a larger system.**

**Moreover, body extensions play a significant role in shaping social dynamics and community engagement. Performance art and collaborative installations involving body extensions create shared experiences that foster empathy, connection, and dialogue among diverse groups of people. Through these artistic expressions, individuals can transcend cultural and societal barriers, forging deeper connections with others and supporting inclusivity and understanding.**

**Underneath are three definitions that reveal different perspectives on the concept of extending the body. While each portrayal is intriguing, I find myself simultaneously fascinated yet not wholly aligned with their assumptions. Each definition offers a distinct gaze:**

#### **Through the lens of a masculine fantasy**

*The fantasy of bodily extension has always been part of human concerns. To increase his power, to protect himself or to follow his desire for seduction, human beings use all kinds of artifacts that allow them to lengthen, unfold, expand or swell.*  
— Mudac, Cantonal Museum of Design and Contemporary Applied Arts, *Body Extensions*, Exhibition 2004/2005

#### **Through a lens of societal perfectionism**

*Artistic and cultural phenomena reveal that the desire to extend*

*and 'perfect' the body is one of the most widespread human obsessions. Always dissatisfied with what nature has endowed us, we regard ourselves as 'deficient beings' (Sigmund Freud). Body extension can be achieved by artificially lengthening parts of the body – as exemplified in 1970s Performance art (Rebecca Horn) – or by transforming the entire silhouette – as done in 1980s fashions (Vivienne Westwood, Jean-Paul Gaultier). Body extensions are encountered in films and comics in the supernatural powers of superheroes (Spider Man, X-Men) and in the technically perfected Cyborgs. — Pantellini, Claudio (ed.), *Body Extensions: Art, photography, film, comic, fashion*, 2004*

#### **Through the field of wearable technology**

*In our work, bodily extension refers to devices attached to and extending from the body, such as a robotic arm. In particular, as noted also above, we are interested in moving, interactive and shape-changing pieces. Our work broadly relates to the wearables field since the body extensions are worn on and attached to the body. — Buruk et al., *Towards Designing Playful Bodily Extensions*, 2023*

**The key point missing in all these definitions is that body extensions supposes that the body and its social identities ought to be understood as complex political mechanisms. Not a fantasy not an attempt to perfect the body, but a practice on extending attempts to change the way people understand each other.**

### **UNRAVELLING THE MOTIVATION: WHY PEOPLE EXTEND THEIR BODIES**

**Extending our bodies, whether in a metaphorical or artistic sense, serves various purposes, and the motivations behind such extensions can be diverse and multifaceted. It reflects the richness of human expression and the ways individuals navigate their identities within various contexts. Multiple motives can occur simultaneously, and several motives may interplay with one another.**

## Reasons why individuals may engage in extending their bodies...

### Expression of Identity

Body extensions are a form of self-expression, allowing individuals to convey aspects of their identity, values, and beliefs. It becomes a means to communicate personal narratives on the body.

### Artistic Expression

Many forms of body extensions fall within the realm of art. Artists use the body as a canvas and a medium to explore concepts, challenge norms, and provoke thought.

### Cultural Significance

Body extensions are rooted in cultural practices and rituals. Traditional clothing or accessories often carry cultural meanings and play a role in identity within communities.

### Communication and Dialogue

Certain body extensions serve as conversation starters or tools for communication. They create a shared space for dialogue, fostering connections and interactions between individuals.

### Challenge the Norms

Extending the body in unconventional ways can be a deliberate act to challenge societal norms and expectations. It prompts viewers to question established ideas about the body, beauty, ability and identity.

Some individuals extend their bodies as a form of personal exploration and experimentation. This can involve trying out new styles, accessories, or artistic forms to discover different facets of oneself.

Body extensions are a means of exploring philosophical concepts, such as the ever-changing nature of identity and the relationship between the personal, private, social, and political spheres.

Body extensions are used to make statements about societal issues, politics, or cultural critiques. By extending the body in certain ways, individuals may aim to draw attention to specific themes or contribute to broader conversations.

Body extensions amplify emotions and attitudes through their movement but also create unique modes of communication, enhancing both self-expression and understanding. They can spark a transformation in identity as wearers move in ways divergent from their usual, reshaping their sense of self.

Adornment with extensions can prompt temporary shifts in moods and attitude; e.g. an individual typically introverted, if adorned with gracefully undulating tendrils, might find themselves experiencing a shift toward extroversion.

## Exploration and Experimentation

### Philosophical Exploration

### Social and Political Commentary

## UNRAVELLING THE METHODS: HOW PEOPLE EXTEND THEIR BODIES

Extending the body can take various forms, and the methods used often depend on the context, purpose, and individual preferences. The act refers to external manifestations or applications beyond its core physical form.

Body extensions focus on adding something onto the body, rather than the inherent physical parts of the body itself (meaning skin, limbs, fingers, and toes). This thought aligns with the concept of technological extension where extending devices are used to augment or enhance bodily functions or capabilities. Wearable technology, prosthetics, exoskeletons, or other tools that extend the body's abilities beyond its 'natural' limits.

I draw a line between the differences of an extension and a modification, while both may involve altering the body in some way, modifications involve permanent changes to the body's appearance or structure—extensions on the other hand often imply temporary additions that can be attached and detached from the body.

Several ways in which people can extend their bodies...

### Wearable Art and Accessories

Extending beyond conventional clothing, wearables encompass clothing, jewelry, and accessories that pass traditional boundaries to communicate meanings, provoke thought, and serve as powerful mediums of artistic expression.

### Performance Art

Engaging in performance art allows individuals to extend their physical presence across time and space. Performers utilize their bodies to convey narratives, evoke emotions, and explore abstract concepts.

Unconventional clothing and innovative materials redefine societal norms, liberating individuals from traditional constraints through daring silhouettes and experimental fashion choices.

Art installations extend the body experientially, blurring the line between the physical self and the artistic creation, offering transformative, immersive experiences that extends beyond mere observation.

In a more literal sense, prosthetics and technological augmentations can be considered as extensions of the body, they enhance physical abilities or fulfil artistic purposes, respecting that for some users, these devices provide essential mobility and independence.

Symbols, whether expressed through clothing, accessories, or body markings, can extend the body symbolically by imbuing it with additional layers or meaning and significance. They act as extensions of one's identity, beliefs, or cultural affiliations, shaping both self-perception and external interpretation.

### Experimental Fashion

### Interactive Installations

### Prosthetics and Augmentations

### Symbolic Representations

## STRATEGIES TO EXTEND THE BODY

**A thoughtful selection of strategies gifted  
by Seppe–Hazel Laeremans while reflecting  
on my collection of imagery on body extensions.**

to abate  
to affix  
to alienate  
to amplify  
to attach  
to bond  
to bound  
to box  
to broaden  
to buffer  
to cage  
to camber  
to contain  
to control  
to cover  
to curb  
to dance  
to dedichotomize  
to deform  
to dilate  
to disrupt  
to distance  
to distort  
to dramatize  
to elongate  
to embrace  
to encase  
to enclose  
to enfold  
to engulf  
to envelop  
to exaggerate  
to except  
to expand  
to flaunt  
to fragment  
to free  
to gap  
to hamper

to hide  
to hinder  
to inflate  
to insulate  
to insure  
to isolate  
to lengthen  
to mantle  
to mask  
to mock  
to prolong  
to publicize  
to pull  
to purse  
to release  
to repel  
to restrict  
to rupture  
to salvage  
to secrete  
to shape  
to shelter  
to stretch  
to subvert  
to surround  
to swaddle  
to swell  
to swivel  
to trap  
to uncover  
to unfold  
to unfurl  
to unsettle  
to unshackle  
to untie  
to whirl  
to widen  
to wind  
to wrap

## **THE CLOTHED BODY**



*What artists wear can be a tool in their practice. Their clothing can tell of their desire for another mode of living or, sometimes, their conscious subscription to the status quo. (...) By studying the garments of artists, we are able to approach them as human beings. Once we break from the assumption that artists are god-like, we can disrupt the canon, an art-historical tradition dominated by white men. In the process, we can look again at the meaning we attach to our own clothes, and free ourselves from ways of being that seek to keep us in our place.*

*When we wear clothing, we all adopt some form of persona, (...) We may be so used to the role, we forget we're playing it at all. In clothes, we are all performing, all the time. (...) This sense of personal performance has only intensified as dress codes have broken down over the past five decades. We have more choice in what we wear, the fashion industry thriving on selling us ideas of who we could be. Many are willing performers, though we may not like to admit it. (...) These behavioral changes are mirrored in the emergence of performance art. By the 1970s, it had become a practice for disobedient artists to define the parameters of their work outside of gallery and museum traditions. They would transcend notions of what and where art should be, often having no terminology to describe what they were doing. (...)* <sup>⑬</sup> Porter, 2021

**In the chapter that follows, we delve into the essence of the clothed body, recognizing it as the canvas where outer identity is a constant, tried-and-true performance. The clothed body is a site of cultural exchange and political statement. Through garments, we communicate narratives of identity, activism, and belonging. As a white Northern-European woman, I am aware of the privilege and responsibility imbued within my sartorial choices. Each article of clothing becomes a vessel for self-expression, a channel through which I navigate the complexities of personal and collective identity. Here, we pivot our gaze from the singular to the collective, moving away from the constructed body to the clothed body, the socio-political theatre of attire.**

*The clothed body is the physical cultural territory on which the visible and experiential performance of our outer identity takes place.* <sup>⑭</sup> Brooks & Calefato, 2006

**Our clothed body speaks volumes about who we are, a constant, intuitive language that extends beyond fashion, revealing our beliefs and intentions. Each garment carries weight, reflecting privilege and responsibility. Whether dressing to make an impression or seeking comfort, our attire narrates our daily story. Engaged in the analysis of what artists wear, we will encounter ideas that surpass the boundaries of mere clothing. These key concepts spotlight the notion that clothing is not merely a static aspect of one's appearance but can be a dynamic tool within the artist's practice. Drawing inspiration from the ideas explored earlier and positioning fashion not solely as a representation but as a zestful encounter with the body.**

## **UNTANGLING ATTIRE: DRESS, CLOTHING, COSTUME, AND FASHION**

**The clothed body embodies a multitude of practices—dress, clothing, costume and fashion—each carrying nuanced meanings that evolve and intertwine. Delving into this complexity, we examine how clothing extends beyond the physical body, shedding light on the relationship between attire and our corporeal presence.**

## DRESS

While dress generally refers to attire worn for a specific occasion or purpose, clothing covers a broader spectrum of garments that people wear in their daily lives. The evolution of dress throughout history serves as a fascinating mirror to societal changes, reflecting economic shifts, technological advancements, and shifts in cultural norms.



**Satas plisadas (pleated skirt), Falda (skirt)**

*“When it stopped raining, they dropped their skirts and continued working”*

*no specific name for this phenomenon, rain suit from Ochagavía, Navarra, España photo made by the Roldán photo studio in Pamplona in 1924 for the exhibition of regional and historical costumes (Madrid, 1925)*

portalcultura.navarra.es, Traje regional de Navarra. Hilandera de Iesaba.

In most cultures, the significance of dress extends beyond aesthetics, acting as a symbol of identity, social status, or religious beliefs. Dress serves as a tangible manifestation, since specific garments or styles are rooted in historical narratives, they carry the weight of generations that came before.

Social status is entwined with dress, where specific garments or accessories are reserved for ceremonies, rituals, or elite circles, indicating one's place in the social hierarchy. Dress codes in various settings, from workplaces to social events, balance personal expression with conformity, which raises questions about individual rights and collective

expectations. These codes aim to uphold decorum, ‘correctness’, while prompting debates on individual expressions rights within societal norms which reflect the tensions between personal freedom and social unity, excluding certain people and reinforcing hierarchies.



**Millstone collar (pipe collar, pleated collar), approx. 1550–1630, portrait of Ernestine Yolande, princess of Linge, 1618**

*gender neutral clothing piece worn in Western, Central, and Northern Europe & Spanish America from mid-16th to mid-17th century*

Likewise, dress codes are rooted in religious structures, containing symbols and traditions: from sober robes denoting spiritual austerity to ornate attire signalling sacred rites, clothing as a visual language narrates stories of faith and devotion.

As cultures evolve, dress can remain a visual statement to their shared past.

Within the essence of the clothed body in relation to dress lies adornment—the practice of decorating the body to enhance its allure and express individuality.

*Adornment is the practice of decorating the body. Of making it more attractive. Adornment brings with it rich associations of taking pleasure in our bodies as well as conveying a sense of ritual. Adornment can be part of a practice of enjoying the communal nature of beautification rituals and the experience of sensuality, attraction and desire.*

⑪ Dabiri, 2023





**Bow cap / Schlupfkapp / Coiffe Alsacienne, eastern France, early 19th century** (k)

“Religion divided schlupfkapp wearers. Both Catholic and Protestant women – married and unmarried – adopted the style, but the Protestants were more reserved, with a somber black bow that fell to the shoulders. Catholics, on the other hand, had more liberty in terms of color, fabric and embroidery, often wearing bows that went down to the waist.”

messynessychic.com, French Folk Costume or Next Season's Haute Couture? (2022, April 24)

**Adornment carries with it a sense of ritual, inviting individuals to partake in beautification rituals that foster a connection between bodies and identities. The tactile experience of embellishing bodies, exploring the boundaries of aesthetics, personal style, and communal experiences, brings people together.**

For example, in traditional rites of passage, or ceremonial events, adornment plays a crucial role. They mark a passage from one social or religious status to another, existing in all historically known societies. The most common are those connected to the biological crisis, or milestones, of life—birth, maturity, reproduction, and death. Examples include bodies adorned in intricate jewellery worn during coming-of-age ceremonies or elaborate body paintings signifying tribal affiliations. Viewing these adornments as extensions of the body highlights how external alterations can reflect internal changes. While modifications—such as scarification, tattoos, or piercings—hold cultural significance, temporary adornments emphasize the fluidity and versatility of the body while expressing identity and belonging.



**Àsikò, 'Giants at the residence 01' (3/5), 2022** (i)

“The exhibition-Rites of Passage—examines the status of postcolonial Black identity, specifically the “triple consciousness” experienced by members of the African diaspora when encountering counterparts who identify with local majority populations.”

“Àsikò, in his photographs, recombines and extends various masquerade traditions rooted in Yoruba history and culture to explore how the representation of ancestral communities might inflect contemporary diasporic identities”

**Dress and fashion, though distinct, intertwine in their shared undertaking of extending the body through the medium of clothing. Dress—rooted in cultural symbolism and historical narratives—serves as a tangible manifestation of identity and tradition, weaving stories of generations into the fabric of the present. Fashion, meanwhile, transcends materiality, offering a platform for individuality—it extends the body through personal expression and trendsetting. Despite their differences, both dress and fashion enrich our understanding of how clothing functions as an extension of the self.**

*Fashion should not be treated, in the first instance, as a function of discrimination, taste, style or aesthetics, as important as these elements undoubtedly are, for it is the encounter between fashion and the body that we wish to foreground in our analysis.*

④ Eckersley & Duff, 2020



## FASHION

If clothing is the tangible aspect of one's wardrobe, fashion delves into the intangible world that goes beyond mere materiality, embodying creativity, innovation, and the dynamic interplay of trends that shape personal expression. At the intersection of clothing and identity, fashion becomes a vibrant language; to carry messages of belonging, rebellion, and individuality and to create a visual dialect that speaks volumes about individual and collective identity.



Costumes by Paul Poiret, photograph by Graziela Morelli, 1914

"The revolutionary act of breaking away from the confined dress code stirred up huge amounts of controversy as women brave enough to embrace this newfound liberation faced public heckling and even acts of violence. In contrast, the strait, tight hobble skirt Poiret presented was less than liberating, complicating his relationship to feminism, as he liked to joke, 'I freed the bust, but I shackled the legs.' Nonetheless, the silhouette the hobble skirt made was an entirely new aesthetic that was still seen by many as a form of transgressive rebellion."

blog.fabrics-store.com, Paul Poiret: Fashion's First Modernist by Rosie Lesso (December 28, 2019)

Beyond its aesthetic allure, fashion serves as a tool for empowerment, enabling individuals to express themselves and challenge societal norms. It fosters agency, liberating from conventions and empowering own narratives.

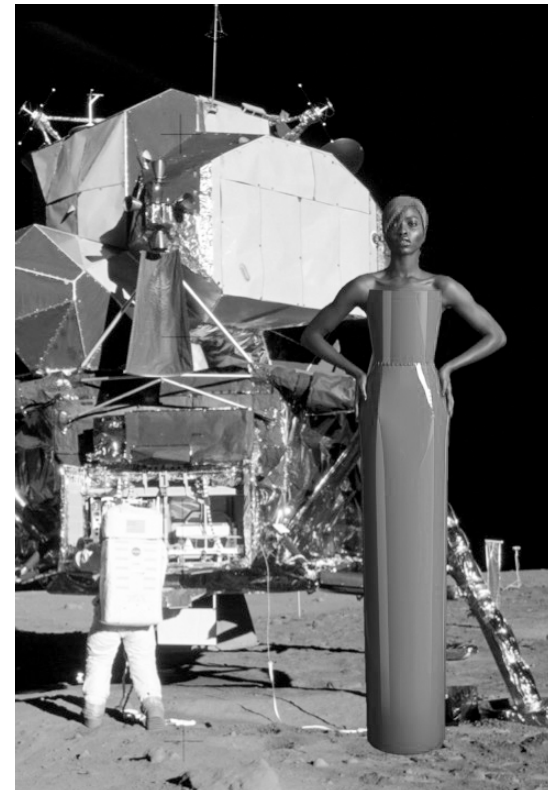
The fashion industry has historically been driven by commercial interests—prioritizing mass production, overconsumption, and marketability. One significant consequence of this commercial-driven approach is the prevalence of fast fashion, which not only causes environmental crises but also relies on the exploitation of labour.

True groundbreaking fashion extends the body and defies trends, prioritizing artistic expression over commercial success. The ebb and flow of trends, while seemingly providing a framework of understanding, can distance us from the authentic narratives woven in each piece of clothing.

By redefining beauty and fashion on our own terms, we can resist the pressures of fast fashion and mass consumption. Designers who prioritize sustainability, social responsibility, and diversity are leading the way towards a more inclusive and representative fashion industry.

*If we redefined beauty and fashion on our own terms, might we be less susceptible to the constant consumption demanded by fast fashion? Would we feel less empty, and thus less compelled to try and fill the void with consumption?*  
 ⑪ Dabiri, 2023

*Trends can seem like an easy way to understand garments or styles, but they put us at a remove. By discussing a garment through a trend, we are discussing it through a preconceived idea, approaching it as an archetype. We are talking about the idea of the thing, rather than the actual garment itself. It is like Plato's allegory of the cave, in The Republic. Trends are like the shadows on the wall. Seeking knowledge through them means staying in the dark.*  
 ⑬ Porter, 2023



Gareth Pugh, S/S18 collection

"Gareth Pugh's SS18 show/film-screening was a striking mix of the barbaric and beautiful, creating a claustrophobic atmosphere that defied traditional fashion show norms."

"Fashion exists within this strange space. It exists within a space where people understand it in a way that they can't necessarily do with an artist's work because it's wearable. There's a relatability to it. I think fashion is one of those mediums that can very quickly and very succinctly connect to the times in which we live. Although it can be slow at changing its actual bureaucratic structure, the creative content can. We should be able to move with the times in a very nimble way."

anothermag.com, Gareth Pugh on His New Visual Album and the Future of Fashion, Interview by Hannah Tindle (2020, September 18)

It is crucial to distinguish between commercially driven fashion who prioritizes creative expression, innovation, and pushing boundaries over mass appeal and commercial success. While preserving certain looks solely for the runway can improve their allure, it also risks maintaining exclusivity and limiting access to those who don't conform to fashion norms. Additionally, current issues of cultural appropriation and misrepresentation highlight the need for a more inclusive and respectful approach to drawing inspiration from diverse cultural sources in a global, post-colonial society.

The industry is evolving towards a more inclusive future through adopting diverse beauty standards and challenging gender norms. Western beauty ideals, characterized by preferences for thin, tall, and Eurocentric features, have exerted a weighty influence on the fashion world. Historically, the industry emphasized youthfulness and straight-sized bodies, reinforcing narrow beauty norms. Along with the tradition of destructive binary norms through distinct clothing categories of men and women. While progress is being made, there is a need for reform in fashion education to challenge entrenched beauty ideals and foster critical discussions, paving the way for a more inclusive and representative industry.



Merce Cunningham's Scenario, 1977, costumes by Rei Kawakubo  
 'Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body', S/S 1997

"I started thinking about, well, the clothes are worn by our body. Let's go back to our bodies and then look at it."

wwd.com, Rei Kawakubo on Newness, The Met in Rare Interview at Noguchi Museum, interview by Maxine Wally (2019, May 3)

"Fashion was very boring, and I was very angry. I wanted to do something extremely strong. It was a reaction. The feeling was to design the body. (...) I was interested in the defiance and fusion of the dancers within a limited and fixed white frame," Kawakubo explained. "I didn't want a 'stage' feeling, but more like a room, which the audience would feel they shared with the dancers."

walkertart.org, exhibition Dance Works III: Merce Cunningham / Rei Kawakubo  
 (Oct 4, 2012–Mar 24, 2013)

Emma Dabiri—an Irish-Nigerian author, academic and broadcaster born in 1979—reminds us that true beauty transcends physical appearance, rooted instead in actions and character. She says that beauty is a verb; this notion supports the interconnectedness of beauty and behaviour. Adornment is not inherently problematic, it is rather the result of the commercialization of human emotion, experience and the patriarchal oppression of women which makes them so.

Bearing this in mind, the fashion industry and -history not only reflects societal attitudes towards the body but also actively shapes and extends our perceptions of what the body is.

*Thinness represents a triumph of the will over the body, and the thin body (that is to say, the non-body) is associated with 'absolute purity, hyper intellectuality and the transcendence of the flesh'. (...) I can't think of a beauty ideal further from the purge-and-punishment food culture that I grew up with in Ireland. And certainly many black cultures appreciate fuller figures, with nothing like the mainstream disdain for women who have the temerity to be bigger than a size eight.*

*As well as 'fat', 'old' might be the second dirtiest word when it comes to beauty — and here again, I have found inspiration and a glimmer of hope when I began to look to other cultures and times to change my thinking and my feelings about my own body. ⑪ Dabiri, 2023*

The term fashion theory indicates an interdisciplinary field that portrays fashion as a system of signs that enact the cultural and aesthetic representations of the clothed body. Touching on different walls of theory—such as performance theory, gender theory, queer theory and critical theory—which view its object as a system within which roles, social hierarchies, models of imagination, and bodily practices fold and unfold. Rather than focusing primarily on fashion history drawing from chronological events and historical developments, the domain of theory explores conceptual aspects. Delving into underlying principles, meanings, and cultural influences behind clothing and dress. By making it accessible to imagine beyond historical timelines, we can recognize the ever-evolving nature

*Across fashion studies, fashion and clothing are commonly read as manifestations of important social, cultural and political changes, for example, in gender relations and sexuality, in class, ethnic, national and/or religious identifications and subcultural involvement. Karen Hansen argues that historically, clothing and dress have been analysed as representations of structural processes and phenomena, rendering clothing as 'an accessory in symbolic, structural or semiotic explanations'.*

④ Eckersley & Duff, 2020



*Without the inner character, the outer beauty will not be recognised.*  
 ⑪ Dabiri, 2023

of the clothed body through dynamic and contemporary perspectives. The way we understand the clothed body is shaped by the ongoing

process of breaking down and re-evaluating how individuals are defined within society, as well as by the conversations happening around us.



Guo Pei, 'Alternate Universe', Paris Haute Couture A/W 2019/2020

"The interplay between theatre and fashion is deep-rooted in Chinese sartorial practices," explains D'Alessandro.

"When she's doing her runway presentations, she's presenting them like theatre; she has a narrative, there are characters, and she collaborates with theatre directors to develop her shows."

bbo.com, How Guo Pei created the world's most striking dresses  
 By Oath Pound (2022, 25 April)

Fashion design and costume-, while distinct, share the commonality of extending the body through clothing. Costume design extends the body by embodying characters and shaping narrative worlds. In contrast, fashion design extends the body through personal expression and cultural reflection, allowing individuals to hide or reveal their identity through their attire.

## COSTUME

Costume design—in film, dance, theatre, and cultural performances—beyond mere aesthetics, is a lively tool for storytelling, carrying emotions, historical contexts, and social nuances. Through carefully chosen colours, fabrics, and silhouettes, costume designers evoke emotions, working closely with directors and actors to ensure that every aspect contributes to the scene's emotional impact.

Costumes influence the performers' movement vocabulary, shaping choreography and theatrical dynamics. Costumes don't just adorn characters; they shape movement, emotion, and narrative resonance, elevating the overall artistic ensemble of the performance.



Ursula Sax, 'Geometric Ballet', performance 1990 in the Akademie der Künste in Berlin

"The 'Geometric Ballet' Hommage à Oskar Schlemmer by Ursula Sax was premiered as a scenic re-appropriation as part of the Bauhaus Honours in autumn 2019 and was produced in Dresden in the choreography of Katja Erfurth with various artists. The concept of the sculptor Ursula Sax is characterised by the transgression of genres of sculpture, performance, dance, theatre and music, without prescribing a libretto or a concrete performance method."

"The geometry of the human body fascinates me. It gives me great pleasure to bring my dance sculptures to life through actors in a stage play or simply through performance"

In circus and clown practices, costume design plays a unique role in character portrayal and performance. These costumes serve as transformative tools, enabling performers to embody a multitude of identities and personas within a single performance, showcasing the versatility and adaptability of the body. However, despite its creative potential, costume

design in the circus, like in other forms of entertainment, is not immune to the pitfalls of stereotyping. The history of blackface and other racially insensitive portrayals, exemplify how costume design can perpetuate harmful stereotypes underscoring the importance of sensitivity and cultural awareness in costume design.



Brigitte and Jean Soubeyran performing Im Zirkus, early 1950

*“But Tanztheater only occasionally introduced pantomimic actions, for the point of Tanztheater was to show in an innovative way how social environments, conventional structures of “beauty,” and emblems of power regulated the movements, the steps, and the positions by which persons of both sexes interacted within and toward a society. Pantomime, still clinging to French ideas from the 1850s, offered nothing nearly as compelling. Soubeyran apparently sensed the need for a more serious mood in pantomime.”*

kaeltsoepfer.com, Pantomime in Cold War Eastern Europe: French Pantomime in East Germany (2019, July 3)

This is especially apparent in carnival traditions, which usually involve elaborate costumes and performances, and often can manifest stereotypes in festive contexts. Carnival costumes, while celebratory in nature, can often times reinforce caricatures or outdated representations, highlighting the need for critical reflection and conscientious design practices within costume creation.

The portrayal of witches during Halloween, for example, often overlooks the tragic history of witch hunts and the oppression of women, trivializing the suffering experienced by those accused of witchcraft throughout history. While some may not find these costumes inherently damaging, it is important to be aware of the potential impact they can have since many other popular costumes—stereotypes

of Native Americans, East Asian women, Mexican fiesta, mental health patients, and gender-specific costumes—reinforce outdated and harmful narratives about marginalized people’s power and autonomy.



Trulee Hall, ‘Tongues Duel the Corn Whores’, an Opera, 2020

*“The word “witch”, to me, is not a bad word at all. I embrace that word and consider myself a witch in the best possible way. To me, it’s a really empowering word. It gives an agency. (...) And the word “whore” – I am using that in a nice way, too. It’s like someone who is super-embodied sexually and empowered by her own sexuality. That is a cool thing. In the opera, I set up these dichotomies between the two polar opposite sides of what you would think of as “woman”: pure, innocent and righteous versus an overly sexualised, hedonistic being. To me, they are two sides of the same coin. I set up these dichotomies, and then I break them down. I wouldn’t say that, when I say “whore”, it’s a bad word. In the opera, the whores are the coolest chicks around.”*

In reconsidering terminology related with body extensions, I’ve chosen not to enclose myself to the conventional categories of dress, costume, fashion, or adornment. Instead, I make use of the concept of body extensions as a flexible framework that enables me to step over traditional disciplinary boundaries. By adopting this perspective, I seek not to disregard pre-existing frameworks but rather to transcend them, opening new avenues for understanding and redefining the relationship between the body and its adornments.

studiointernational.com, Trulee Hall - interview: “When I say “whore”, I wouldn’t say that it’s a bad word, by Anna Molloy (2020, December 16)





**Take Back The Night, 1970s–present**



*“In the 70s, incidents of violence against women in Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Los Angeles garnered media attention. In 1972, women at the University of Southern Florida donned witches’ brooms and black capes, marching through campus to demand resources and safety for women. In 1973, San Francisco citizens protested violent “snuff” pornography films. In 1975, Philadelphia residents rallied after microbiologist Susan Alexander Speeth was stabbed to death on a sidewalk after work. In 1976, a Tribunal Council of women from 40+ countries met in Belgium to advocate for the safety of women on the street.”*

takebackthenight.org, INTERNATIONAL HISTORY OF TBTN

## DISOBEDIENT DRESS

Through protest photography, I came to realize the significance of the clothed body in relation to intentional extensions, such as banners and sings. Building upon part one, where the language of attire is unravelled, the different terms are closely connected to body extensions when they underline social change.

Across historical and contemporary movements, each garment, each protest sign, becomes a tool for individuals to extend their bodies. Transforming the mundane act of dressing, into a tool for self-expression and social transformation. Clothes can transform subjects into citizens, empowering them to with agency and purpose. Clothing can be a language of dissent and solidarity, to articulate resilience and defiance.

While marching down the streets, adorned in collective protest attire, individuals challenge oppression and demand justice. Disobedient dress becomes a form of embodied activism, a visual statement of autonomy and a testament to the power of community. Through acts of sartorial rebellion, individuals undermine oppressive norms, reclaiming space for their authentic selves within a world that often seeks to confine them.

British–Jamaican fashion designer, curator and art historian, Christine Shaw–Checinska, sees fashion as a way of pushing back against stereotypes and resisting limitations based on negative readings of racial, cultural and gendered differences. Her gold dance shoes are her act of disobedience through which she analyses the relationship between cloth, culture, and race. Through acts of disobedience, individuals reclaim agency over their narratives, challenge societal norms and push back against invisibility, stereotypes, and the erasure of personhood.

*Fashion is part of the process by which the unequal distribution of power within society is constructed, maintained and experienced as legitimate. But fashion can also be used to challenge and contest one’s position within society. So by evoking this idea of disobedient dress, I’m suggesting that fashion might also become a way of resisting societies at times limited and therefore limiting expectations of us.*

*In this way the body becomes a site of protest, the border itself, a space for transformation.*

<sup>(15)</sup> TED Talk by Christine Shaw–Checinska in 2016



©  
**Helio Oiticica, 'Parangóles P15, Capa 11', Incorporo a Revolta 1967 photograph by Claudio Oiticica**

*"The Parangóles—a combination of capes, sculptures, and a form of locomotory frenzy—were produced by Helio Oiticica between 1964 and 1979. These works, characterized by gravity and lightness, are an impartial act disguised as an affirmation of political commitment incorporating revolt and poetry."*

*"To quote just one, 'Incorporo a revolta!' (I incorporate the revolt!) could not be more explicit."*

*"Oiticica used to say that the cape of the Parangóles and the body are one. He tried to eliminate the intellectualization of art by creating his Parangóles. The work, a sort of covering, only revealed its colors, textures, and messages when it was worn and made to move."*

Helio Oiticica: Parangóles, Texte by Delmaro Romero Keith and Maro Pottier  
 Published by Mousse Publishing (2023)

**The concept of disobedient dress invites us to reconceptualize fashion as a means of resistance, a tool to transform societal boundaries and expand the possibilities of dress. Drawing inspiration from thinkers like Emma Dabiri, we confront the ways in which societal constructs of race, gender, and ability intersect with fashion to shape the lived experiences of individuals within marginalized communities.**

## **DRESS CODES AND CULTURAL RECLAMATION**

**Clothing has long been used to enforce norms, reinforce power structures, and impose social control.**

*Our deepest selves are inseparable from our physical bodies—not only because of our bodily needs but also because our consciousness itself is formed by our bodily experience. The way we cover, embellish, and present our bodies influences how we come to understand our place in the world. Our clothing can transform us from subject into citizen.*

**Richard Thompson Ford—a prominent figure in civil rights and anti-discrimination law born in 1966—explores dress codes in his book, *Dress Codes: How the Laws of Fashion Made History* (2021) He unveils the ways**

**in which clothing serves as a mechanism of control, maintaining conformity and upholding existing power structures. However, Ford also recognizes fashion as a site of protest, where fashion offers a space for radical re-imagination and transformation. The interconnectedness between our bodies and their extensions underscores the complexity of clothing's role in societal dynamics. For example, dressing for dinner may seem like a minor aspect of daily life, yet, beneath the surface lies a complex interplay of power dynamics and social control. Throughout history, people have wielded attire as a means of claiming dominance and although we moved away from the rigid dress codes of bygone eras, in the subtle yet widespread expectations of contemporary fashion, clothing is still weaponized to maintain existing power structures and marginalize those who diverge from the prescribed norms.**

**In Charlie Porter's—a British fashion journalist born in 1973—his book**

*Bring no clothes: Bloomsbury and the Philosophy of Fashion*, he discusses Virginia Woolf proposal to 'bring no clothes', which implies to come as you are. However, 'bringing no clothes', is not without its risks; the very act of challenging dominant dress codes can provoke violent reactions. The freedom to dress as one pleases is a privilege often denied to marginalized communities, who face unreasonable observation and punishment for daring to defy social conventions. In this

*Our experiences, aspirations, and ideals are inseparable from our bodies and how we present them to the world.*

⑩ Ford, 2022

*It sounds so innocuous.*

*What's wrong with dressing for dinner? The rigid, inhibitive clothing worn by women for centuries—cinched, trussed, prettified—manifested the control of a patriarchal society. It was a society that cast women as mere fodder for marriage. For centuries, women were expected to wear restrictive clothes, the garments themselves often the products of oppression: of the colonization, enslavement and exploitation that lay behind the global cotton industry.*

*'Dressing for dinner' cemented hierarchies of class, power and gender. Whenever we 'dress for dinner' today, we continue to perpetuate these hierarchies. It is in each of our power to change this, through simple but affirmative acts.*

⑪ Porter, 2023

*All Woolf needed to say was 'bring no clothes'. Her meaning: come as you are. We are no longer living by those rules. We refuse them, we reject them, we are pushing for something new. If we were to accept Woolf's invitation, we could 'bring no clothes' to our own lives, breaking from preconceptions to forge new ways of being.*

⑫ Porter, 2023



light, the seemingly innocent act of dressing for dinner reveals itself as a miniature of broader struggles for power, autonomy, and self-expression.

## A POTTED HISTORY OF FASHION'S ROLE IN SOCIAL CHANGE

The clothed body extends outside physical constraints, becoming a tool for social transformation. From suffragettes in symbolic white garments to drag artists challenging heteronormative standards, each garment and protest sign becomes a tool for extending the voice.

The following examples showcase how clothing became and becomes a visual manifestation of solidarity and resistance to symbolize collective action and shared purpose. With so many influential figures and movements, it's challenging to select just a few. This potted history offers context, providing a (very) brief outline of fashion activism.



Hussein Chalayan, 'After Words', fall 2000

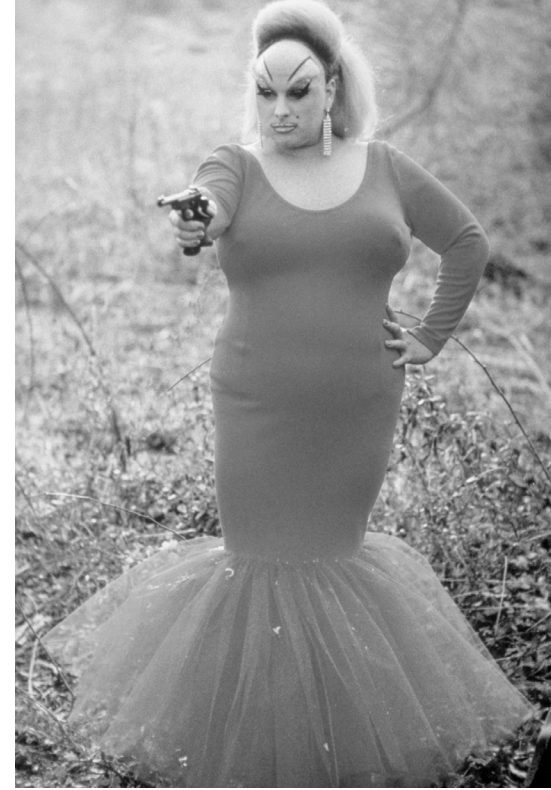
"It was the nearest thing I had to being part of, not a movement exactly, but an energy," recalls Chalayan. "There was this incredible synergy with the YBAs [Young British Artists]; we were all doing work that challenged social and sexual mainstreams. I met so many of them, Sarah Lucas, Wolfgang Tillmans. I worked with Björk and Michael Clark. Judy Blame styled our shows. Everything felt so fluid, so possible."

"Based on the plight of refugees and the horror of being displaced in times of war, the show is one of Chalayan's most personal. 'I used it as a way to talk about what happened to my family in Cyprus before the island was divided in 1974. My mother would have been around 14 years old when she had to leave her home and go into hiding.'"

10magazine.com, Hussein Chalayan on The Catwalk Moment That Defined Him by Rebecca Lowthorpe, April 3

Take Back the Night marches <sup>(t)</sup>, originating in the 1970s, was the first illustration to me of how collective attire serves as an extension of activism. Participants, predominantly women, donned black clothing, carried candles, and marched through the streets to protest against sexual violence and reclaim their right to public spaces. The clothed body became a form of armour, empowering individuals to challenge gender-based violence and demand safer communities. Through imagery of these marches, I came to see the body as a vehicle for collective disobedience.

In a similar way, Russian punk rock collective Pussy Riot <sup>(b)</sup> utilizes fashion as a tool for protest. Clad in brightly coloured balaclavas and bold patterns, they stage guerilla performances in public spaces to challenge authoritarianism and advocate for political reform. Through their distinctive attire, they not only conceal their identities but also amplify their message of resistance, disrupting the status quo with sartorial subversion.



Divine, Babs Johnson in 'Pink Flamingos', 1972

"Could you give us some of your political beliefs?"  
 "Kill everyone! Condone first-degree murder!  
 Advocate cannibalism! Eat shit!  
 Filth are my politics!  
 Filth is my life!"



Drag culture has been influential in reshaping my understanding of identity and self-expression. The culture has roots in activism, whether marching in pride parades or staging performances in public spaces, drag artists use their bodies to amplify marginalized voices and demand visibility and acceptance. These artists don costumes and personas that transcend the boundaries of gender and identity, serving as a powerful vehicle for individuals to assert their identities and push back against heteronormative standards of appearance and behaviour.

At its essence, drag is not just performance; it is a radical act of self-expression and resistance. Drag artists use flamboyant and extravagant styles not only to entertain, through their bold and unapologetic expressions of self, they extend the boundaries of what is deemed acceptable by society, creating spaces for disobedient, queer bodies to flourish.

From the late 20th century onwards, there has been a shift towards gender-fluid fashion that challenges traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. In Japan, there is a long history of androgynous fashion. One prominent example is the style known as “genderless kei,” a radical movement challenging traditional gender norms which emerged in the early 2010s. Many genderless kei fashion icons, such as models and influencers, embrace a fluid approach to style, mixing traditionally masculine and feminine garments to create unique and androgynous looks. Among many other examples, these fashion movements signify a celebration of diversity and empowerment, allowing individuals to challenge traditional gender roles and express themselves authentically.

Reflecting on movements like the suffragettes and the civil rights activists, I’m struck by the strength conveyed through attire. Imagery of these large protest groups, composed of diverse communities, underscores the power of collective action and the unifying force of disobedient dress. In the act of marching down the streets, activists engage in a form of collective action that oversteps individual identity.

(...) “right” to appear is tacitly supported by regulatory schemes that qualify only certain subjects as eligible to exercise that right... For those who are considered “ineligible”, the struggle to form alliances is paramount, and it involves a plural and performative positioning of eligibility where it did not exist before.

⑮ Butler, 2015

In Judith Butler’s *Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly*, they offer valuable insights into the power of collective action. When bodies come together in the street in a political action, they signify that they are here, visible, and they have a “right to appear”.

The suffragette movement of the early 20th century stands as a testament to the power of sartorial activism. The suffrage movement was different on each continent, shaped by politics, public mood, and personalities. In the United States, the movement focused on recruiting educated white women who lobbied and petitioned for suffrage, which at the turn of the last century was focused on winning women to vote state by state. They adorned themselves in symbolic white garments, decorated with purple and gold, challenging stereotypes, and demanding recognition of their rights. Suffragettes in India, amidst the fervent struggle for independence, draped themselves in vibrant sarees, fusing tradition with defiance in their march for equality. For Indian women, the suffrage movement was closely linked with their fight for independence against British colonial rule. They wore these suffragette uniforms to reclaim public spaces and challenge the patriarchal status quo.



A suffragette advertising a 'Votes for Women' march from Victoria Embankment, 1908

“Suffragettes knew that clothing was important. They really harnessed the idea of having their own colours—purple for loyalty and dignity, white for purity and green for hope. In an edition of their magazine *Votes for Women*, it urged women to ‘be guided by the colours in your choice of dress. We have 700 banners in purple, white and green. The effect will be very much lost unless the colours are carried out in the dress of every woman in the ranks. White or cream flatters the should, if possible, be the dominant colour. The purple or green should be introduced where other colour is necessary. If every individual in the union would do her part, the colours would become the reigning fashion and, strange as it may seem, nothing would so help to popularise the WSPU [Women’s Social and Political Union]. They were really quite detailed and specific and wanted this united uniform to look striking as they marched.”



**Civil rights march on Washington, D.C., 1963**

(Y)

"All of the movements were very savvy around media, that they were creating images that would tell the story, and the horror and the brutality that was illustrated in such a way, like when you are brutally beating a man in a suit, when you're brutally beating a young girl in an A-line skirt...the juxtaposition of violence and elegance was very intentional and very powerful," Angela Davis said. "We see pictures of Martin Luther King in a perry walk in a proper hat with his brim tilted just to the right side. His tie was always straight...Even watching when John Lewis was being honored and we kept seeing the reel of them walking over the [Edmund] Pettus Bridge, the crispness of his trench-coat and the white shirt and his tie, even his backpack, knowing that he would probably get bloodied by the police, but there was a respectability to it, like they could have been walking to church."

www.com, Dress and Protest: Fashion Hasn't Been a Bystander in the Black Civil Rights Movement, written by Tara Donaldson (2021, February 1)

During the Qing Dynasty in the late 19th, early 20th centuries, the wearing of traditional Chinese garments, particularly the qipao (cheongsam), became a symbol of resistance against foreign imperialism and cultural assimilation. As Western powers exerted increasing influence over China through unequal treaties and colonial expansion, there was a growing movement among Chinese intellectuals and nationalists to reclaim and promote traditional Chinese culture. The qipao, with its elegant silhouette and intricate designs, became a symbol of Chinese identity and pride, representing a rejection of Western fashion and values. By wearing the qipao they asserted their cultural heritage and solidarity in the face of external pressures, contributing to the broader movement for Chinese independence. Famed designers like Jean Paul Gaultier and Guo Pei have paid tribute to the qipao by incorporating its elements in high-fashion pieces. With the qipao reimagined and reinvented, a new generation of western audiences is beginning to venture beyond the stereotypical representations of Chinese culture.

The civil rights movement of the mid-20th century saw activists donning Sunday best attire as a symbol of dignity and respectability. Being "well-dressed" was defined by

and for the privileged white people. Yet, alongside appeared a counterflow of rebelliousness, embodied by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), who abandoned formal attire for denim and workwear to align themselves with the working class and challenge racial stereotypes.

In the same way, the zoot-suiters in Los Angeles—Mexican and Mexican American youths wearing

broad-shouldered drape jackets, balloon-leg trousers, and sometimes, a flamboyant hat—were marked as criminals because of their clothing. Only in 2023 the extreme violence against them was officially condemned, highlighting the struggle of fighting racism and how fashion laws made history.

*The real offense of the zoot suit was symbolic: it was an assertion of self-determination and personal pride at a time when America's racial hierarchy was experiencing its first signs of vulnerability.* ⑩ Ford, 2022



**Judith Baca, 'Las Tres Marias', 1976**

(Z)

"However, these young women were not merely the sexual property of either group; known as pachucas, they actively participated and contributed to the vibrant youth culture, pachucismo, associated with the zoot suit. The pachuca style in 1940s Los Angeles was variable; she could wear a cardigan underneath a broad-shouldered jacket, a knee-length skirt, and platform sandals or an actual zoot suit, with dark lipstick and her hair styled in a high bouffant. While the zoot suit was seen as a racially charged symbol of delinquency by whites, la pachuca was also a contested figure in the Mexican American community; some young women admired and wore the style while others saw her as dangerous and disruptive of the ideal Mexican American womanhood. (...) In her triptych, a 1970s Chicana is at left, the artist dressed as a 1940s pachuca is at right, and a mirror at center allows viewers to reflect upon their racial, gender, and cultural identities."

statesofnoconcern.org, La pachuca: Women in Zoot-Suits  
Written by Christina Pappous

As the 20th century unfolded, the Black Panther Party in the US crafted a distinct aesthetic of militancy, donning black leather jackets and berets to assert their strength and resilience in the face of systemic oppression. Meanwhile,





Ⓐ The British Black Panther movement, Piccadilly Circus, London, against the British invasion of Anguilla, 24 March 1969

*“They took it to another level of very military-oriented, Black power, black clothing, black leather, very much sending a different message...[it] was using appearance to help tell a message that change was being demanded.” Eulanda Sanders said. “It definitely wasn’t assimilation into the culture, it wasn’t trying to parallel the appearance with cultural norms. It was a direct way of pushing back against the cultural norms visually, through body, dress, appearance.”*

www.d.com, Dress and Protest: Fashion Hasn’t Been a Bystander in the Black Civil Rights Movement, written by Tara Donaldson (2021, February 4)

**Afrocentrists embraced traditional African attire as a form of cultural reclamation to reject mainstream norms and assert their identity on their own terms.**

*In the mid- and late twentieth century, the movement for racial justice was split between those who adopted a strategy of respectability and those who favored the tactics of rebelliousness. The use of respectable attire could be a challenge to racial stereotypes and a bold assertion of dignity. But it also could be seen as a sycophantic form of status emulation in the classic Veblenian mode. By contrast, ethnically distinctive garb and grooming was a rejection of mainstream norms, expressing racial activists’ demand for equality and respect on their own terms.*

*But “radical chic” could also be self-indulgent and naïve, romanticizing poverty and marginalization in the name of combating them. In this turbulent era, dress codes always had double meanings.*

**Globally marginalized communities have harnessed the transformative power of fashion to resist oppression and reclaim their narratives. Indigenous designers breathe new life into traditional garments, infusing them with contemporary flair while honouring ancestral legacies. Grassroots movements advocate for ethical sourcing and fair labour conditions, challenging the exploitative practices of the fashion industry and amplifying the voices of marginalized artisans. From the Red Dress**

**Project raising awareness about the missing and murdered Indigenous women to the #BlackLivesMatters movement’s iconic black t-shirts, collective attire serves as a visual manifestation of solidarity and resistance.**

*As social justice struggles divided the nation, what would become known as the politics of respectability would divide advocates for racial justice.*

ⓑ Ford, 2022



ⓑ Red Rebel Brigade, Houses of Parliament, London 7 October 2019, photograph by Peter Brooks

*“People were interested, and Doug made some videos for how to make the costumes, how to do the movements, and try to kind of decentralise it and enable people, empower people to take it on and do it for themselves.”*

*“One of the inspirations for the Red Rebel Brigade was Butoh Theatre. It’s a Japanese style of theatre and it’s very much about stillness and tuning in. So, I went back to the origins of it and thought a lot about Butoh theatre, and different costumes, and different ways of expressing things through costume and through movement.”*

**Disobedient dress invites us to reconceptualize fashion as a means of resistance and self-expression, extending beyond the confines of mere cloth to shape our identities and interactions with the world. By challenging societal norms and reclaiming agency over our narratives, we expand the possibilities of dress and assert our presence in the world, literally embodying the transformative power of fashion. Through fashion and activism, we stitch together narratives of hope, resilience, and defiance, redefining what it means to be clothed in a world ripe for transformation.**

## **THE EXPRESSIVE BODY**

*Yet to make from the body a work of art involves the creation of a supplement or extensions. The work of art as costume, mask, and disguise differs significantly from the work of art as an external object. The body is paraded, put on display, in time as well as in space; most often those contexts in which it appears are structured so that there is little or no division between participants and audience. The distance between the artwork, the artist, and the audience is thereby collapsed doubly; the body is the work, and there is reciprocity between individuals/works rather than unilinear distance between work and observer.*

①<sup>9</sup> Stewart, 1993

**The expressive body is a vessel for emotion, communication, and connection. As an artist, I harness the power of gesture and expression to reconstruct narratives that resonate on a bodily level, channelling my personal experiences into embodied expression.**

**Central to our understanding of the expressive body is the recognition of the physical vessel through which we communicate and express ourselves. It suggests creating space, physically and metaphorically, to allow the body to fully inhabit its presence and potential. When the body is cared for and given room to thrive, it becomes a potent tool for communication; however, when neglected or constrained, its ability to communicate senses may be stifled.**

*It is from what we come up against that we gain new angles on what we are against. Our bodies become our tools; our rage becomes sickness. We vomit; we vomit out what we have been asked to take in. Our guts become our feminist friends the more we are sickened.*

① Ahmed, 2017

**In Ahmed's reflection on the killjoy figure, we are invited to confront the transformative power of embodied experiences in the face of hardship. Within this context, our bodies appear as tools of resistance, capable of channelling our thoughts, emotions, and desires into expressions of rebellion.**

**In moments of frustration and anger, our bodies bear witness to our defiance, embodying our refusal to accept the status quo. Our rage, once suppressed and internalized, manifests as a visceral sickness, a physical rejection of the injustices we have been asked to endure. Yet, amidst chaos, our bodies—once the site of our discomfort and anguish—become our allies, our feminist friends, standing in solidarity with us as we navigate the complexities of resistance.**

**The expressive body stands for the reminder of the heartfelt connection between our physical selves and our lived experiences, bearing witness to our joys and sorrows, triumphs, and tribulations. Yet to make from the body a work of art involves the creation of an extension.**



## MAKING ROOM FOR THE BODY

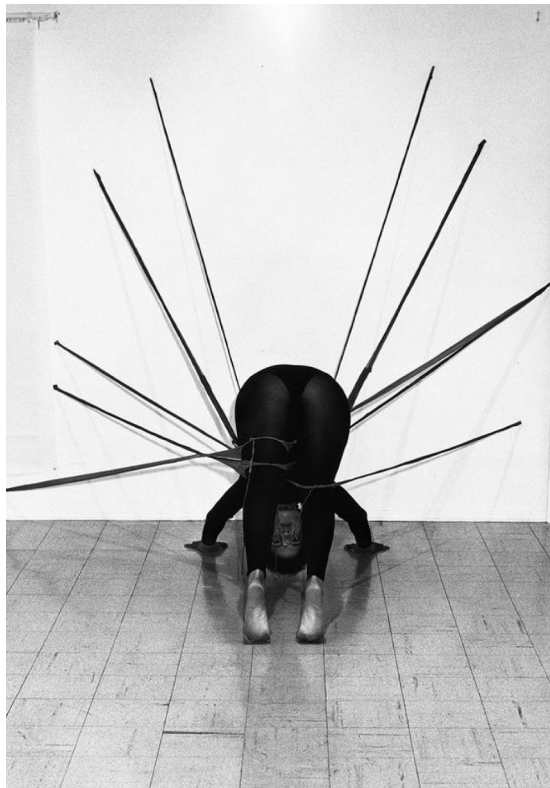
### The last decades we made room for the body.

*(...) the last decades have seen an ever-increasing number of studies about the human body, representing a bewildering array of perspectives and approaches. Today we know the histories of a sexual body, a female body, a pregnant body, a Greek body—to list but a few of innumerable examples—as well as the histories of a body-in-pieces; in other words, of a certain organs and body parts in their specific cultural, historical, and geographical configurations.*

⑧ *Wegenstein, 2006*

**The body communicates tales without the need for words. Each movement, every curve, carries with it a distinct identity. The body is more than just a vessel; it is a record of our experiences, visible in our deeds, responses, and the shapes we inhabit. Emotions find expression in the unspoken language of the body—a constant poem written in gestures**

**and postures, unfolding with each passing moment. The body stretches limits, revealing strength in the unexplored. It moves through space, leaving behind traces and echoing the tales of its passage.**



© Senga Nengudi, 'Performance Piece' with 'R.S.V.P. series' 1978

*"I liked the idea of people touching them, and how the sculptures responded when touched. I was fascinated by the flexibility and durability of the body, and the changes that it goes through, not only in pregnancy, but in the psyche. Even though it might not look that way outwardly, your body shifts when there is a lot going on in your life."*

*"The body can only stand so much push and pull before it gives way, never to resume its original shape..."*

mutualart.com, Repondez #il vous plait: An Interview with Senga Nengudi by Natalie Hegert (2016, September 28)

**In its simplicity, the body stands as a manifesto; a visible, tangible statement of beliefs and values on both individual and collective levels. By approaching the body in a straightforward, realist perspective, it implies a preference for a pragmatic, evidence-based understanding of the body, considering both biological and socially constructed elements. This approach recognizes and engages with the ongoing dialogue surrounding the nature of the body in contemporary discussions, considering various perspectives and debates between essentialism and social constructionism.**

*In today's discourse on the body is the conflict between essentialism and social constructionism; do our bodies determine us, or is culture victorious vis-a-vis our flesh? (...) Bodies do in fact 'talk back' at us all the time, reminding us of our mortality and cooling us down in the midst of all our self-constructing projects. ⑩ Davis, 1997*

**Essentialism suggests that certain characteristics or features of the body are intrinsic, universal, and biologically determined. In contrast, social constructionism posits that aspects of the body, such as gender roles or identities, are shaped by societal influences, cultural norms, and historical context rather than being predetermined. Despite the body gaining attention in scholarly discussions, it sometimes becomes an abstract concept in anti-essentialist debates, where the focus shifts away from embodied experiences towards theoretical abstraction.**

**Yet, there is a noticeable trend in gender studies to reestablish the body's materiality and corpo(re)ality. This perspective contends that bodies aren't only surfaces for cultural inscriptions; they continually 'talk back' to us, serving as a reminder of our mortality and grounding us amid our self-constructing projects. Combining this understanding of the body with studies of fashion and dress enriches our exploration of how cultural narratives and personal expression intersect in shaping our perceptions of the physical self.**

*Psychologists study body images and self concept. Anthropologists deal with cultural meanings which are attributed to the body. Sociologists have discussed the body as a carrier for the 'self'. The body is treated obliquely, as a symbol for something else: 'nature', desire or biology. In this context, the recent interest in the body can be viewed as a long overdue attempt to redress an imbalance. By 'bringing the body back in', social scientists are retrieving a neglected topic and making it the focus rather than the implicit backdrop of their analyses. (...)*



**Tessa Boffin, 'Together', 1990**

"WHERE IS MY KNIGHT  
MY KNAVE  
MY ANGEL  
MY CASANOVA  
MY LADY-IN-WAITING?  
I COULD HARDLY FIND YOU  
IN MY HISTORY BOOKS  
BUT NOW IN THIS SCENE  
YOU ALL COME TOGETHER."

Vicinus, M. (1996). Lesbian subjects: A Feminist Studies Reader. Indiana University Press.



**Birgit Jürgensen, 'Hausfrauen - Küchenschürze', 1975**

"Dressed as a housewife, the artist hangs the stove around her neck, thus bearing the weight and burden of the one-dimensional housewife role socially assigned by the patriarchy."

"Her work unfolds modern concepts of the self (by dint of negating false identities and the act of transgression) as well as postmodern concepts of the self, in which the self as a narrative authority is lost to us under the guidance of deconstruction."

birgitjuergensen.com, GABRIELE SCHÖR  
"I WANT TO GET OUT OF HERE!" BIRGIT JÜRGENSEN'S ART OF THE 1970S

ways of portraying the human body. Despite moving beyond traditional mediums, the fascination with the body persists, whether as a medium, object, or subject. In post-modernism starting from the late 1950s, artists often deconstruct the body, dividing it into fragments and challenging the idea of reassembly.

As artists move beyond traditional mediums, their departure reflects a broader societal shift towards individual expression and a rejection of fixed meanings. Amidst these transformations, it's noteworthy that people harbor a fascination with observing other bodies. Confronted with a representation of a person, we respond based on the spectrum of attraction or repulsion, considering how it expresses something about our own bodily awareness. The fragmentation of the body in postmodern art disrupts traditional representations, echoing the era's skepticism towards grand narratives. Recent interests in the body in art can be viewed as long overdue attempts to redress imbalances.

**Drawing on Elizabeth Grosz's—Australian feminist theorist and philosopher born in 1952—insights into the textualization of bodies in modern Western societies, we recognize the widespread influence of societal norms in shaping our perceptions of the body. She emphasizes how the body becomes a text, "a system to be deciphered and read into", often leading to shallow assumptions about individuals and entire groups based solely on appearances. However, amidst these**

**deep-rooted assumptions, there exist ways for challenging and undermining these expectations. Body extensions offer unique opportunities to disrupt conventional norms of bodily representation. By deliberately altering or embellishing the body, these extensions not only challenge preconceived notions of what constitutes a 'normal' or 'ideal' body**

*Contemporary feminist theories have historically drawn upon the body in order to understand gender and sexual difference. Scholars have shown how the female body is implicated in the construction of femininity as well as how differences are constituted along the lines of social class, 'race', ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, able-bodiedness and more. ②0 Davis, 1997*

*The appeal of an image of a body, has to do with 'likeness', a term that shifts meaning situationally, like the pronouns I, you, we, they. Confronted with a presentation of a person, we respond according to how and why we are attracted to it, or repelled; how it expresses something about our own bodily awareness; in other words, how we are like it or unlike. Many images of human beings that have survived from ancient times through the Renaissance were intended for ritual and devotional use, expressing religious beliefs that developed as a means to understand the natural world and perhaps to manage social behavior. ②1 Phaidon Editors, 2015*





**Renee Cox, 'Hottentot Venus', 1994**

(G)

"Once I was able to return the gaze, that was the sort of like triumphal moment, because obviously, she was completely objectified, put on a pedestal, ridiculed in England, observed in France like a specimen. Then going back to England and they decided to create the bustle; based on her behind which was kind of a weird thing that I found. And when I became familiar with the history and what happened to her and then what happened to her body after she died I mean I felt compelled to try to illustrate that and came up with the notion of doing the Hottentot Venus myself. The most important thing was her having the gaze and power to turn it back on all these people that had observed her. It was obtained actually in a costume Halloween store..."

youtube.com, "After Hot-En-Jot: A Conversation with Artist Renée Cox" Spelman College (2010, January 6)



**Renate Bertlmann, 'Tender Pantomime', 1976**

(F)

"It is about attraction and repulsion, acceptance and protest, anger and tenderness. About finding forms of non-destructive female aggression."

Renate Bertlmann: works 1969-2018, edited by Gabriele Schor and Jessica Morgan Published by Prestel Publishing (2018)

but also provide individuals with the opportunity to inhabit and experience diverse bodily perspectives. Furthermore, by prompting critical reflection on the social construction of beauty and bodily norms, body extensions encourage a more inclusive and accepting view of bodily diversity. The extensions create space for dialogue and exchange about representation, identity, and the politics of the body.

**Emphasizing queer and feminist perspectives involves scanning the body as a social construct shaped by historical colonization. It seeks to understand and recognize the desires of queer, Black, colonized, female, and disabled bodies, challenging the conventional, male-centric approach.**

**The feminist lens, particularly within sociology, critiques predominant male-centric viewpoints, aiming to redefine our understanding of the body in societal and historical context. Scholars such as Judith Butler and Donna Haraway stress the importance of listening to marginalized bodies, amplifying their voices, and recognizing their agency in shaping body narratives.**

**By connecting these bodily concepts—the countersexual body, the disobedient body, the oblique body, the body-in-pieces—with fashion and dress studies, we can explore the diverse role of body extensions in art. The combination of studies offers a blanket of the value of the clothed body in contemporary artistic expression, where the movement of the fabric and the contours of the body contribute to the blurring lines between body and garments.**

*Elizabeth Grosz (one of my favourite philosophers) describes the role of the body in modern Western societies and thus our complicated obsession with our own and everyone else's: 'The body becomes a text, a system to be deciphered, read and read into. Social law is corporalized, bodies are textualized, read by others as expressive of a subject's psychic interior. The scene is set for shallow assumptions to be made not just about individuals, but entire groups of people, based on what they "look like."*

(11) Dabiri, 2023

*Enter Gayle Rubin, Sylvia Wynters, Judith Butler, Rod Ferguson, Kara Keeling, and Donna Haraway. Enter generations of queer, decolonial, and feminist scholars who know exactly what "women" want—namely, the end of the culture within which woman is defined in relation to man, female embodiment stands in for the lack that all humans experience, black bodies represent the aberrant shadow of whiteness, colonized bodies aspire to become real only through imitation and subordination, and the phallus is*

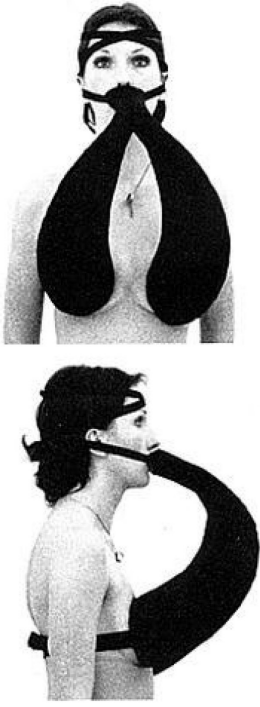




**Cocky Eek and Maria Blaise, 'Kuma Guna', 'Rollerskate Chair 01'**  
1996

"In *Adorned in Dreams* the fashion historian Elizabeth Wilson writes that dress is "the frontier between the self and the not-self." Much of what Blaise has designed over the past twenty years occupies this nebulous space between the self and the not-self. Her creations manage to both amplify and distort the body, often at the same time. The space around the body (another form of the not-self) is accentuated and activated by the introduction of the stark geometries she places on the body. Many of these objects are static sculptural investigations as well as dynamic garments or accessories that enlarge, restrict, contain and extend shape and movement."

jessicaheimings.com, Maria Blaise exhibition review  
Selvege Magazine (2006, Sept./Oct issue 07)



**Rebecca Horn, 'Cornucopia', Séance for Two Breasts'**  
1970

"*Cornucopia* impedes any interpersonal communication, but it also has a liberating purpose. Two years before, in 1968, Brazilian artist Lygia Clark had designed her *Máscara Abismo* (Abys Mask), consisting of plastic and netting bags in which to insert the head to explore one's interior space and one's relation to the weight, texture, sound, scale, and movement of the object. The piece seeks to connect the interior of the body with the outside space. Both of these works enable the body to go beyond mere experience. Using Guy Brett's terms, these works are 'sensorial filters' through which to experience the world further; they are filters that, through immersing the head in the body, enhance the experience of the body as a united whole, transmitting to the wearer the sensation of having an empty space in themselves not yet explored."

Rebecca Horn: Devising Intersubjective Connections Diana Bulaoa,  
published by Taylor & Francis in *World Art*, written by Diana Bulaoa  
(2019, July 9)

**When we approach body extensions in art, we look at our personal relations with a lot of different aspects of the body concerning a variety of studies; extending the personal into the political. It acknowledges the interconnectedness of individual experiences with broader socio-political structures.**

**Body extensions are a collective achievement of encounters between bodies and fashion, and various scholars underscored and emphasized the indispensable link between fashion studies and embodied studies.**

Joanne Entwistle, who has widely published on fashion, dress and the body, notes on the lack of theories about worn and lived fashion, stressing on the interrelations of body- and fashion studies. Studying sociological approaches to fashion instead of economics. Professor of fashion history and theory, Caroline Evans, takes a personal position into a critical and theoretical framework of fashion "against the grain" reading of fashion classical theory. Encouraging non-linear reading and offering new insights to look at the history of fashion. Researchers Andrea Eckersley and Cameron Duff bring contemporary studies on fashion into closer dialogue with contemporary studies on the body and embodiment. Giving insights about encountering fashion in moving from what fashion is to what fashion does.

*still the (white) penis. Preciado, writing after Butler but before queer people of color's critiques, also aspires to know what the queer/black/colonized/female/disabled body wants—it wants prosthetic extension, dildonic substitution, inauthentic routes to non-redemptive, anti-capitalist, somatic insurrection.*

*If for Lacan, the human wants, period; if for Freud, the human body orients towards death, dying, and unbecoming; if for Marx, revolution depends upon the white male working body and its orientation to liberation, then for Preciado, what we want hangs in the balance and its contours will be known only once we overcome what he calls heterosexual choreographies in favor of a "new political organization of sex and sexuality."*

② Preciado, 2018 (2000)

*The point, we would argue, is that fashion is a collective achievement of encounters between bodies, human and nonhuman, such that analysis should move from what fashion is, to what fashion does in its encounters with bodies.*

④ Eckersley & Duff, 2020



**Penny Slinger, 'Wedding Invitation', Bride's Cake Series, 1973** (K)

"Penny Slinger's art has always been propelled by an interest in performance, but unlike most theatrical, film, and performance art formats, it never involved her playing the part of someone else. Her goal was to bring the many different facets of her own self to bear in aesthetic creations and visual productions that negotiate femininity at the intersection between personal freedom, intimacy, and social convention."

Feminist Avant-Garde: Art of the 1970s in the Verbund Collection, Vienna, author Gabriele Schor, page 334-339, Penny Slinger: Exorcism Exercises text by Angela Stief (2016)



**Ann Hamilton, 'Body Object Series #13, Toothpick Suit', 1984** (C)

"Weaving. Unravelling. Burning. Engraving. Writing. Carding. Erasing."

JF: "You've talked about the room as a skin, as an extension of the body. And much of your work involves negotiating space, smelling things, engaging with all of the senses."

AH: "I think a lot about forms of tactility and how we know things through touch and embodied experience. One ongoing challenge is to find form for the ways vision, which can so consume the world, can become tactilized. The value of the body's felt experience and the importance of sensory knowledge is increasingly acknowledged but cultural habits that privilege rationality and language-based experience over other forms of knowing are hard. My work explores those relations and hierarchies."

Attending to Presence: An Interview with Ann Hamilton by Jennifer Fisher, Jim Drobnick (2019)

**To disrupt the distinction between fashion understood as a material object or as a social and cultural doing—practice; fashion regards each of these processes but only insofar these practices affect bodies in their encounter with fashion.**

**Wearing body extensions transforms the human form and creates a captivating distortion that challenges the conventional notion of beauty tied to symmetry. Each element, set in motion, contributes to reshaping and distorting the body's contours, inviting us into the realm of 'becoming,' where sensations and affect unfold in unique ways for the observer. Drawing on Karen Barad's concept of intra-activity, where the notion of cause and effect is replaced by entanglement, the artist's body and the extensions mutually influence and transform each other. Re-connecting the body to the outer world to form numerous intra-activities; relations that enable to deterritorialize fixed structures.**

*By examining different projects, it is evident that the designer creates different intra-activities between bodies and garments that unfold themselves to non-homogeneous, non singular spaces and matters, revealing and concealing their inner structures. (...) Exposed to the process of constant becoming, the body in his collections transgresses its dominant position (a masculine, white, heterosexual praxis) melding with the minoritarian, the rejected/the abject, to activate the open-ended process of depersonalization.* (22) Stepienné, 2017

*Clothing has tended to be understood as craft and in different disciplines it has adopted different status. New terms have emerged such as wearable art, conceptual clothing, conceptual fashion and devised costume. However the significance of the clothed and communicating body is often misunderstood as it is a practice that can transcend disciplines and has the potential to be further explored in this interdisciplinary landscape but grounded in an understanding that it is situated on the body.*

(23) Bugg, 2011





Collette Lumiere, 'Living Environment', 1972-83

(M)

"Old movies! Art History! Dance, music, theater, style, mythology, ruins! Oh, forgot to mention that most of the rooms incorporated sound. "The Beautiful Dreamer LP," one of Justine & the Victorian Punks' theme songs (released as art multiple 1979), was re-released by DFA record label in 2011!"

"The media that I use is not as important as the fact that I turn it into art" (Justine 1978). Johnathan Grary wrote in an article in 1982: "At the core of Collette's work is a nomadic principle...not one medium is valued more than the other...also a wish to reach high and low audiences..."

whitehotmagazine.com, Interview with Lumiere by Kofi Forson (2012, October)



Rebecca Horn, 'Arm Extensions', 1968

(L)

"Looking back at my first pieces you always see a kind of cocoon, which I used to protect myself. Like the fans where I can lock myself in, enclose myself, then open and integrate another person into an intimate ritual. This intimacy of feeling and communicating was a central part of the performances."

quoted in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, p18 (1983)

## THE BODY AS A TOOL

**The body as a tool, a vehicle, a medium upon which a multitude of disciplines converge and intermingle. Similarly, as Italian art essayist and curator Lea Vergine talks about *The Body as Language*, a phenomenon that touches upon artists who represent different currents and tendencies, who use widely differing art techniques, and who come from a variety of cultural and intellectual backgrounds, certain characteristics of this way of making art are nonetheless to be found in all of its manifestations.**

*The use of the body as a language has returned to the scene of the world around us in new and different forms, and it speaks through altered declinations. The body as triumphant, immolated, diffused, propagated, dramatic, and tragic. The political, social, and mystic body. The body as the site of the extreme. The body as humanity's most ancient instrument for speaking hic et nunc. (...) The instrument that speaks and communicates without the word, or sounds, or drawings. The body as a vehicle, once again, for declaring opposition to the dominant culture, but also of desperate conformism. ②A Vergine, 2000*

**Rebecca Horn, a prominent figure in contemporary art, has explored the theme of extending the body through various mediums during her early years as an artist. Her works, such as the 'Feathered Prison Fan,' 'Finger Gloves,' and 'Arm Extensions,' exemplify a unique approach to body extensions, blending surrealism, symbolism, and sensory experiences. Unlike many artists who represent body extensions through their work, Horn explicitly discusses the concept of 'extension,' viewing the body as a cocoon that evolves through cycles and using her body as a tool for protection.**

*Rebecca Horn has pursued the aesthetic of the extended body throughout her career, repeatedly exploring the intersections of intimate boundaries, the sphere of influence beyond normal physical reach, and the metaphysical realms of philosophy and art. ②S Dean, 2023*

**Body extensions overstep traditional disciplinary boundaries, and many artistic bodily expressions are confined to specific categories such as body art, embodiment studies, identity politics, feminist perspectives on the body, corporeal aesthetics, posthumanism, and others. They all present necessary perspectives, and they all focus on extending the body.**



Lucy Orta, 'Nexus Architecture X 50 Intervention Köln', 2001

"We are developing poetic actions closely linked to human, social, and economic developments. We are interested in an art form that crosses disciplines, integrating both the poetic and the functional. By reclaiming public space, these projects sought to empower marginalized individuals and render them more visible."

"I'm not sure what you mean by 'grammar'; this term would imply to me a controlled set of signs or codes, but I hope that it's more of a fluid language. Perhaps, however, it is a new discourse weaving in and out of different scenarios, moving from the public to the private, crossing over, raising questions, listening to different reactions and building from these responses into a nourishing experience."

artspace.com, How to Make Useful Art as a "Proposal for Alternative Living": Nicolas Bourriaud Interviews Lucy Orta (2017, August 16)



Maria Blaisse, 'Kuma Guna', 1996

"When static, the objects Blaisse creates are relatively easy to name as sculpture. But when they are understood as types of dress they are less easy to define. As performance pieces they become even harder to categorise. Photography and video are used to capture this transient research that often involves collaborations with professionals from other disciplines, such as dancers. As a result, the designs speak to, and command the attention of, multiple disciplines: sculpture, fashion, performance, prosthetics."

jessiehemmings.com, Maria Blaisse exhibition review Selvedge Magazine (2005, Sept./Oct issue 07)

Within fashion and performance, the interdisciplinary nature of artistic expression is particularly pronounced. This interdisciplinarity—integrating knowledge, methods and approaches from different disciplines—stems from the inherent fluidity and malleability of both fashion and performance as mediums of expression. They both serve as focal points for understanding the multifaceted nature of body extensions.

As already apparent within the clothed body, fashion and costume designers draw inspiration from a diverse array of sources including art, architecture, literature, and culture. This allows for the fusion of different creative disciplines, resulting in innovative design that blur the lines between fashion, art, and sculpture. Within the confines of traditional catwalk presentation, the room for the body to extend is limited. The linear and static nature of the catwalk restricts the range of motion and interaction between the model and the audience, constraining for dynamic and immersive experiences. Despite the limitations, imaginative designers have found ways to challenge the traditional runway format, incorporating elements of performance art to create more engaging and momentous presentations.

*In recent years performance of the clothed body has emerged as central to catwalk presentation* (23) Bugg, 2011

Designers like Hussein Chalayan—Turkish-Cypriot fashion designer born in 1970—seamlessly integrate elements of performance art into their fashion shows, transforming the runway into a stage for artistic expression. Another example could be Leigh Bowery—a pioneering figure in London's art and fashion scenes during the 1980s and early 1990s—known for his avant-garde style and fearless exploration of the body as a site for artistic expression. Collaborating with fellow artists, designers, and musicians, Bowery pushed the boundaries of conventional beauty and gender norms, leaving a lasting impact on bodily practices. Among many others such as Rei Kawakubo, Maria Blaisse, Lucy Orta; their works challenge traditional notions of fashion, transcending mere promotion and marketing to communicate themes, ideas, and messages through the language of the body.

Similarly, performance artists incorporate elements of theatre, dance, visual arts, and music into their practice. Performances blur the boundaries between disciplines, challenging audiences to reconsider preconceived notions





**Ana Mendieta, 'Bird Transformation', 1972**

©

"By using my self-image in my art, I am confronting the ever-present art and life dichotomy, it is crucial for me to be part of all my works. As a result of my participation, my vision becomes a reality and part of my experiences."

"In this piece, Mendieta says, she has been transformed into the "white cock of voodoo." As she present the image of herself as a white sacrificial bird, she indicates a link to her Cuban background. She says: "In my work I am in a sense living my heritage. My sources are memories, images, experiences and beliefs that have left their mark on me."

The Female Imagery of Mery Beth Edelson and Ana Mendieta, thesis written by Nancy Harris (1978, August)



**Leigh Bowery, 1961–1994**

©

"In redesigning the actual shape of his body, Bowery visually contested assumptions about identity and exposed how a body's surface manifests the prescriptive norms of social identity in its surface features. His art belongs in a category of artistic practice that progresses from initially appropriating alternative fantastic identities through dress, to actively subverting the gender divide as a social idea, to reinventing the body's physique and, by implication, its physiology."

"The history of queer identity is one of seen bodies as much as silenced subjectivities. A queer history reclaimed from secrets and clandestine communication is one in which speaking out directly was always dangerous. But queerness could be communicated body-to-body without speech, and this covertiness was fundamental to queer histories."

What's a Man Gotta Do? Masculinities in Performance, Performing Shamelessness: Leigh Bowery, Copi and queer physicality, written by Peta Tait (2008)

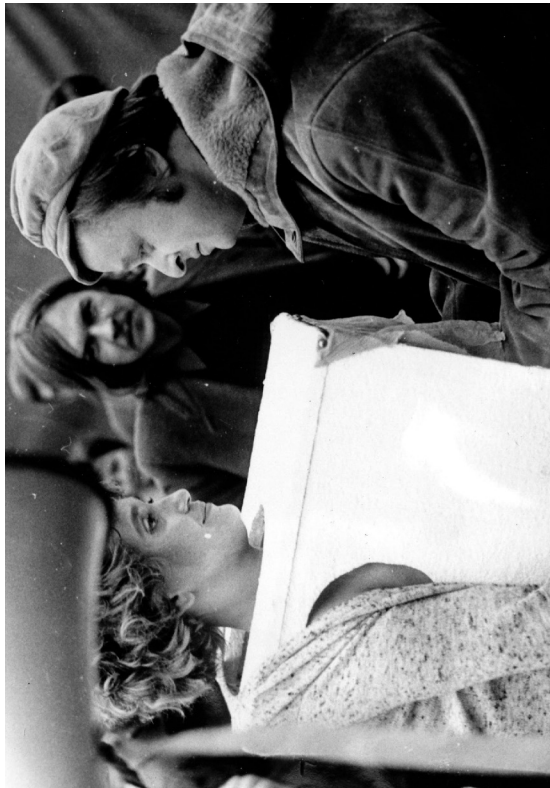
of what constitutes art. Figures like VALIE EXPORT and Ana Mendieta practiced this approach, creating gripping experiences that defy categorization and invite audiences to engage with art on a visceral level.

Ana Mendieta, born in Cuba, centred her work on the decolonization of the body, drawing inspiration from indigenous Cuban culture and rituals. She offered viewers a glimpse into the interconnectedness of all living beings and the cyclical nature of existence; restoring the values of the body lost by its reduction to a machine. Seeing the earth as the extension of the body she breaches the binary boundaries between human–animal, body–nature, and many more.

Different from fashion, within performance, bodies are generally sensed as sites of knowledge, where the attention is put on the embodied experience rather than the aesthetics of clothing. This underlines the transformative power of embodied experiences in shaping our understanding of the world, others, and ourselves. Even though conceptual fashion and clothing designed for performance have tended to be analysed as separate and distinctly different, both use the body as a site. The body as a catalyst, through which meaning is created, and communicated. Where room is created for bodies to be able to question, comment and communicate through a shared understanding of the body.

Beyond fashion and performance, body extensions manifest in various other disciplines such as interactive installations which extend the body experientially, blurring the line between the physical self and the artistic creation. By combining elements from diverse fields such as art, technology, and psychology through tactile encounters and interactions, these installations offer transformative experiences that engage the senses and trigger reflection.

In the field of symbolic representations, artists harness clothing, accessories, and body markings to infuse the body with meaning. These symbolic extensions reflect the interconnectedness of human expressions across different cultural sceneries, expressing identity and social commentary. Moreover, in collaborative practices active settings are created for individuals from diverse fields to gather, to spark shared creation and interdisciplinary dialogue. Think of film sets, operas, music performances, and many more.



VALIE EXPORT, 'Tapp und Tastkino', 1968–1971

⑤

"My artistic work centres on the human body as medium of information, as signal bearer of meaning and communication. I occupy myself with the pictorial representation of mental states, with the sensations of the body when it loses its identity, when the ego gnaws its way through the scraps of skin, when steel casings straighten the joints and the worn-out identity is nailed with steel pins to modern mythomania... I try to shape the social structures (power current) and standards (mutulations) of life into a metanoia of pictures."

popao.net, VALIE EXPORT: The 1980 Venice Biennale Works by Ely House, London (2019, November 28 – 2020, January 26)



Yayoi Kusama, 'My Flower Bed', 1962

⑥

"Filled with loneliness, unable to sleep, I curl up for the night in My Flower Bed because flowers are tender and loving. Now I am an insect that returns to its flower during the night; the petals close over me as the mother's womb protects the unborn child. . . . Until dawn, the flowers in My Flower Bed will sway in the night breeze and caress me gently, for the night is the time of love and sex."

"Kusama's practice of inserting her body in photographs of her own works can be considered an extension of her artistic creation. Through painting, sculpture, environments, and/or photographs, her work has constantly pursued this concept of blurring body and environment, art and life."

Into Performance: Japanese Women Artists in New York by Madori Yoshimoto Published by Rutgers University Press (2006)

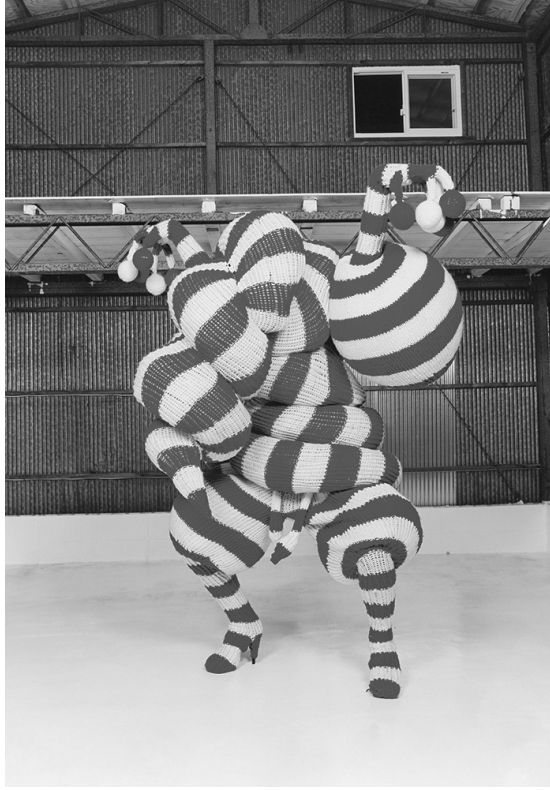
Within the installations of Kusama, EXPORT, Lumiere ⑥, et cetera, the concept of body extensions also resonates in architecture, where the body and space interact dynamically. When a costume becomes more than clothing and starts to act like a shelter or hideaway for the person wearing it, it begins to embody architectural qualities. They foster dialogue between the human body and the spaces it inhabits.

Akin to Rebecca Horn's ⑦ cocoons, the costume as a form of architecture embodies principles of shelter, enclosure, and spatial manipulation, redefining the boundaries of both disciplines

The trans-disciplinary nature—the fusion of conceptual frameworks that extend beyond disciplinary perspectives—of expression opens new possibilities; by breaking free from the constraint of tradition, artists can explore new aesthetic territories and challenge established norms. The intersection offers unique opportunities for social and political commentary, fostering fruitful dialogues and collaborations across different fields. Artists use their platforms to address pressing issues, to spark thought through and with bodies. By harnessing the expressive power of the body, they can communicate complex ideas and emotions in ways that transcend language and cultural barriers.

(...) we begin to understand the significance of the body itself as the site and it is in the context of the performing body that ideas are experienced, communicated and understood. It is the focus on the body both physical and emotional and the experience of clothing as part of a complex performative dynamic that enables communication through and on the body. I argue that it is the concept of "situated bodily practice" that resonates with and in many cases drives the practice of conceptual fashion design, performance art and costume design. The body in effect is the site for the creation of and communication of meaning whether that be a narrative, a concept, an emotion or character. ②③ Bugg, 2011





**Pyuupiru, 'PLANETARIA / pluto', 2003  
'Love Incarnation', 2001– 2005**

*"For me, the body is like a vase made of fragile glass. Liquid is an emotion of various colors poured in the vase, and identity is a will to make one pour the liquid into it. You know that the glass changes its shape when heat is added. And you know you choose what you wear by your will."*

*Just like that I've transformed my body by my will, both internally and externally. It required me to reveal my very emotion. Emotion is just like a heat having various temperatures, and everyone has it. Though I knew these feelings could be a mere illusion, I've tried that way."*

peril.com.au, Interview with Pyuupiru, by Owen Leong (2009, November 27)



**Lee Bul, 'Sorry for suffering—You think I'm a puppy on a picnic?' 1990**

*"But in using my body as material in images and performances, it was often seen as dealing with issues of gender, simply because of the fact that I am a woman and Asian."*

*But if I were a man or if I were not Asian, maybe the same work could be considered more broadly as proposing a new mode of expression or posing questions about the power structures that I spoke about before. Related to this, I'd just like to note that images of so-called Asian women in my work are deliberately of indeterminate origins. So, I'm looking at problematic dichotomies, not only of gender, but of cultures, for instance, and Orientalist perspectives that continue to underlie existing power structures. There are many more layers to my early works than most commentators recognize."*

ropao.net, Interview with Lee Bul, featured in La Stampa (2023, June 18)

**In scanning the expressive body, we are reminded of the importance of physicality in communication. Through experiencing the body, whether our own or others', we are able to connect and become participants in the creation of interpretation of meaning. These moments of connection, grounded in the reality of our physical selves, offer glimpses into shared understanding and empathy.**

**However, as we delve deeper into the expressed body, we must also confront the challenges posed by the absence of the physical body in art. In an era dominated by digital interfaces and virtual spaces, the challenge lies in preserving the authenticity and richness of embodied experiences. This absence underscores the importance of recentering the body as a site of expressions and understanding in artistic discourse.**

**Ultimately, the expressive body serves as a demonstration to the enduring power of physical presence. It is a reminder that, despite technological advancements, the corporeal experience of the body remains irreplaceable in its capacity to evoke emotion and forge meaningful connections.**

**The concept of body extensions serves as a testament to the boundless potential of the expressive body. As we move forward let us cherish transdisciplinarity and celebrate the impact of embodied experiences in shaping our collective understanding of art and the multifaceted nature of human experience.**



## **THE EXTENDED BODY**

*In a world of fragmentations, the self  
is our main focus, repeating, echoing,  
partly remembered, partly anticipated.*  
②⑥ Virginia Woolf, 2016

Throughout my research on body extensions, I delved into the theoretical frameworks that underpin my understanding, encountering a fragmented field. Just as a body itself can be seen as a collection of fragments—each extensions a piece that both completes and redefines—the field of study is similarly composed of desperate yet interconnected parts. A body-in-pieces is not simply a metaphor but a lived reality for many, reflecting our fragmented experiences and identities in a constantly unfolding digital world.

This final chapter bridges these theoretical insights with a personal reflection on extending the body. It underscores the tender act of curating our bodies, of caring for our bodies, where each extension is a gesture of empathy, inviting us to rethink our shared experience.

## I WOULD RATHER BE A CYBORG THAN A GODDESS

Within this research, I find myself confronted with a paradox—a territory with boundless possibilities yet lacking a comprehensive theoretical framework that correlates with my perspective. It is within this paradox that the heart of body extensions reveals itself—evidence to the inherent complexities of the human condition and the innumerable ways in which we seek to extend our physical limitations.

Artistic exploration knows no bounds, and this fact becomes more apparent when exploring body extensions. Although comprehensive theoretical frameworks specifically addressing body extensions in relation to cultural practices may be lacking, this absence mirrors the interdisciplinary complexities inherent in investigating the relationship between the body, identity, and artistic practices.

The development of a unified theoretical framework is challenging since the study of body extensions emerges at the crossroads of transdisciplinarity. The term ‘extension’ carries fluid and subjective connotations, shaped by cultural, historical, and individual contexts, complicating efforts to establish rigid theoretical boundaries.

Although I highlight a dearth of studies on body extensions, I discovered several theoretical frameworks that serve insights on the topic.

In a 2017 study written by Popat S. et al, titled 'Bodily Extensions and Performance,' we are invited to peer beyond the surface and delve into the symbiotic relationship between flesh and technology. Through a collection of essays spanning diverse themes and contexts, we are confronted with the transformative power of bodily augmentation. Among the voices, the intricate processes involved in the formation and experiences of bodily extensions are acknowledged. From Daniel O'Brien's exploration of the experience of interactive art installation to Vivian Sobchack's study on bodily extensions through everyday

*Bodily extensions can attach to or connect with human bodies to adjust, change or augment them in physical (or virtual) spaces. They may be perceived as enabling tools by some, replacing or augmenting body parts, capacities or abilities, ... However, others may see them as disabling restrictions, with their use enforced by social or cultural expectations about what a body should be. Inevitably, extensions are incorporated into body images and implicated in social identities.* ⑲ Popat et al., 2017

movement; they reveal layers of fragility at both individual and cultural levels and all authors return to narrate from the viewpoint of the human body, emphasizing the critical role of the sensory field in interfacing with technological parts.

One of the essays from the collection above called, 'Savage Beauties' by Justyna Stępień, explores how Alexander McQueen's

posthuman bodies, augmented by their material extensions, serve as assemblages that give rise to novel forms of subjectivities. Highlighting McQueen's transformative approach to fashion, wherein his projects redefine the body, offer an entirely new language that transcends traditional binaries. Leading to the creation of pieces where these divisions are abolished, fostering a dynamic interplay between opposing forces.

*His projects alter the body, offering an entirely new language of fashion that could embrace the dynamic relation of the world's polarities to form an assemblage where the division into beauty/ugliness, human/nonhuman is abolished.*

⑳ Stępień, 2017

'Extending Bodies' (2019), by Lisa Le Feuvre, dives into how artists interact with and utilize prosthetic technologies. In the examples, the artists not only humorously critique aspects of humanity but also

earnestly strive to enhance and extend the capabilities of the human body. This involves a nuanced examination of the relationship between humans and prosthetics, aiming to both satirize and contribute to the goal of pushing the limits of the human body. Yet, as I navigated through these studies, I kept questioning—what role does technology truly play in shaping our understanding of the body and its extensions?

*Extensions celebrate possibilities while revealing the constraints we have engineered for ourselves.*

*In all these examples, artists utilize technology to exceed and extend the body, showing humanity is too often inhuman.* ㉑ Feuvre, 2019

Some may argue that technology serves as a mere tool, a means to an end—a way of extending the capabilities of the human body beyond its natural limits. Others, however, contend that technology is more than just a tool; it is a reflection of our longings and dreams, a mirror that reflects back to us.

In the words of Paul B. Preciado, indeed, it is this mediating role that is central in this research—one that oversteps mere functionality and extends into the field of identity, embodiment, and expression.

*The term technology (from techne, "craftsmanship," versus physis, "nature") puts a series of binary oppositions into motion: natural/artificial, organ/machine, primitive/modern, where the "tool" has a mediating role between the terms.*

㉒ Preciado, 2018

Through technology artists explore new sensory experiences; from cybernetic enhancements to prosthetic limbs, from wearable technology to virtual reality, we witness multiple ways in which artists harness the power of technology to push the boundaries of human experience.

Cybernetic enhancements merge organic and mechanical elements, transforming the body into a canvas for innovation, from bionic limbs to sensory implants, these advancements offer not only functional improvements but also drive movements for artistic expression, blurring distinctions between human and machine. Similarly, prosthetics have evolved beyond medical aids, becoming platforms for creative experimentation. Collaborations between artists and engineers result in prosthetic limbs that celebrate individuality, challenging societal norms. Rather than viewing prosthetics solely as tools for restoring function, they design prosthetic limbs that reflect



the wearer's personality, preferences, and identity. This celebration of individuality is evident in the diverse designs, colours, and functionalities of modern prosthetics, which allow wearers to reclaim agency over their appearance and express their sense of self.

Furthermore, the collaboration between artists and engineers in the development of prosthetic limbs challenges societal norms by reshaping perceptions of disability and beauty. Historically, prosthetics were often designed to mimic the appearance of natural limbs, adhering to conventional standards of beauty and normalcy. However, contemporary approaches to prosthetic design embrace diversity and creativity, rejecting the notion that disabilities should be hidden or normalized. By creating prosthetic limbs that are bold, innovative, and visually striking, people challenge societal norms regarding appearance, disability, and bodily perfection. This shift towards embracing uniqueness and individual expression contributes to a more inclusive and accepting society, where differences are celebrated rather than stigmatized.

Nonetheless, beyond technological extensions lies another, equally potent form of extension embodied in the clothed body. While the evolution of technology often dominates discussion in extending the body through art, it's important to recognize that body extensions extend beyond mere technological advancements.

In the transdisciplinarity of body extensions, the boundaries between art, technology and fashion blur, giving rise to new modes of expression that defy conventional categorizations. As artists continue to share embodiment, they invite us to reimagine our relationship with our bodies, our technologies, and the 'others' around us.

Building upon the practical manifestations of body extensions explored in the studies above, we now turn to a theoretical study in 2009 by Helena De Preester and Manos Tsakiris. *'Body-extensions versus body-incorporation: Is there a need for a body-model?'* delves into philosophical and psychological perspectives of the human body and its relationships with technology and the environment. The authors discuss the distinction between body-extension (in the case of tool-use) and body-incorporation (in the case of successful prosthesis use), exploring how individuals perceive and interact with their bodies in relation to external tools, prosthetics, and technological extension.

They argue for the necessity of a comprehensive body model that can account for the dynamic and complex ways in which humans incorporate external elements into their bodily experiences. For them body-extensions are the utilization of external tools or technology to extend the body's capacities, placed side by side with body-incorporation, which involves the seamless integration of external elements into one's bodily schema and sense of self. This distinction underscores the evolving relationship between humans and technology, wherein body-incorporation suggests a deeper level of interaction and a more fluid relationship between the body and its environment.

De Preester and Tsakiris examine the distinction between body extensions and the replacement of body parts with non-corporeal elements, emphasizing the potential for completion. As they note in their research, not all prosthetic users necessarily experience a sense of completion; instead, many articulate a profound sense of extension. Crucially, within my theorization of body extensions, I emphasize the potential of temporary completion rather than a fixed state. This perspective resonates with the notion of the body as a dynamic site of continual transformation and adaptation. However, this does not mean that all prosthesis users do or should experience a relation of completion with their prosthesis. Often, they experience a relation of extension, as reported by the following subject.

*Using a prosthetic is not a natural thing, because a prosthetic is not a substitute leg, it is a tool which may or may not do some of the things that a leg might have done.*

<sup>(29)</sup> De Preester & Tsakiris, 2009

*It is not easy to maintain an adequate conceptual distinction between a tool that extends the body, and a prosthesis that is incorporated into the body. (...)*

*The above examples illustrate that the difference between incorporation and extensions, and this between tools and body-parts, and between tools and prostheses, is most often blurred.*

②⑨ De Preester & Tsakiris, 2009

**Yet, in essence, the human experience is not confined to the biological body alone but is intrinsically intertwined with a broad range of prosthetic elements that co-constitute the world inhabited by humans.**

*In Stiegler's context, a prosthesis is considered very broadly, as anything which does not belong to the biological body but co-constitutes the world inhabited by humans. In this sense, prostheses, or technics in general, constitute an essential characteristic of humans, i.e. human are essentially defined as prosthetic beings.*

②⑨ De Preester & Tsakiris, 2009

**highlighting the intricate web of relationships between bodies and tools, technologies and cultural artifacts that shape their existence.**

**As such, being a prosthetic being implies that our identity and agency are intertwined with the various extensions that co-constitute our reality. From the tools we use to the clothes we wear, each external element becomes an extension of ourselves, influencing our perceptions, behaviours, and interactions with the world around us. This perspective challenges traditional notions of human autonomy and individuality, emphasizing instead the interconnectedness and interdependence of all beings and things.**

**This perspective resonates with the insights of Preciado, who explores the complex dynamics of power, desire, and technology in shaping the human experience. Preciado's work underscores the ways in which technology mediates our relationship with our bodies and the world,**

**In intending to understand body extensions, it becomes clear that the phenomenology of bodily changes outdoes mere replacement, embodying a relationship of addition. The question they ask what can induce the relation of completion is not irrelevant in a highly technological and 'cyberized' society.**

**Drawing upon Stiegler's context, wherein prosthesis is construed broadly as anything that contributes to the human experience, we come to recognize that humans are in essence prosthetic beings. This perspective reframes our understanding of the human condition,**

**blurring the boundaries between nature and artifice, organic and synthetic. By embracing a cyborg consciousness, Preciado invites us to reimagine our relationship with technology and to embrace the fluidity and hybridity of our identities.**

**Including at last the concept of cyberfeminism and the figure of the cyborg, as discussed in Donna Haraway's 'Cyborg Manifesto', to further understand the prosthetic nature of human existence. Haraway's manifesto challenges traditional notions of gender, embodiment, and identity, proposing instead a vision of hybridity and multiplicity. The cyborg, as a symbol of this vision, embodies the fusion of human and machine, nature and technology, blurring the boundaries between self and other, individual and collective. In embracing the cyborg perspective, we embrace a politics of difference and a celebration of diversity, acknowledging the myriad ways in which technology shapes our lives and identities.**

***I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess—rejects fixed identities and hierarchical binaries. By preferring the cyborg, Haraway embraces the fluidity and multiplicity of identity and signifies the departure from traditional notions of perfection and divinity associated with the goddess archetype. Embracing the cyborg and acknowledging the prosthetics nature of humans, we extend the body outside binary constraints.***

*It means both building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, space stories. Though both are bound in the spiral dance, I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess.*

③⑩ Haraway, 1991

**At the heart of extending the body lies a call to embrace a flexible approach that acknowledges the fluidity of contemporary lived bodies. As prosthetic beings, as cyborgs, we are not defined by the boundaries of our physical bodies. This perspective steps over traditional dichotomies, urging us to envision a world where extensions cease to be mere tools but rather, where the body itself becomes a tool.**

## AN OUTSTRETCHED HAND

I often find myself crawling inwards, seeking solace from the overwhelming stimuli of the people around me. Each of us moves through life with our own set of experiences, struggles, and triumphs. As I reflect on the concept of body extensions, I focus on intention as a guiding force in our interactions with the world. From the uninhibited body that revels in its rawness to the constructed body that beat the weight of societal expectations, from the clothed body that hides and reveals in equal measure to the expressive body that communicates without words. We wander the abundance of embodied experiences.

Combining these body-models sheds light on the extended body—marking how we wear our defiance, how we kill joy, and how we reimagine our bodies. In the words of Preciado,

*...inspired by the autistic and infantile energy that sprouts and resists the processes of discipline and control of the body”, this essay is a theoretical and visual attempt to understand the many artistic practices that escape from the power dynamics governing our bodies. ② Preciado, 2018*

And as Dabiri asks:

*...what might our relationships to ourselves, our bodies, and each other look like under the light of other suns?*  
⑪ Dabiri, 2023

By moving away from viewing ourselves as ‘deficient beings’ and striving for perfectionism, we can begin the process deconstructing our perceptions. Through body extensions and the liberation of our bodies, we can experience joy and untangle ourselves from some of the more destructive dynamics.

Ahmed describes a manifesto as a statement of principle, a mission statement, a declaration of the intent, to make manifest. How can one write a manifesto around a practice, an activity: extending the body.

Extending the body is about what we come up against. To think of body extensions as manifestos is to say that a politics of transformation is not a program of action that can be separated from how we are in the worlds we are in. We enact the world we are aiming for. Our lives become archives of rebellion and disobedience. This is why, just like Ahmed talks about a personal killjoy manifesto, every body extensions will be personal. There is no doubt that a body extension is for something.

*Why is it important?  
It is about what we come up against.*  
① Ahmed, 2017

As Ahmed states, ‘a life can be a manifesto, and a manifesto has a life, a life of its own, a manifesto is an outstretched hand,’ and if a manifesto is a political action, it depends on how it is perceived by others. Writing a manifesto is not a commitment or an idea of how to move forward but an expression of principles that guide us.

As an artist focused on extending the body, principles are important to me. Every artist has their own guiding principles, but extending the body is not just about making art; it is about challenging the power dynamics that affect our bodies every day. Think of body extensions as practices and actions—rather than forms and aesthetics. These principles are not set in stone; they are the beginning of something. Every time I find myself crawling inwards, I think of these principles. Inspired by Ahmed’s notion that a killjoy manifesto is a wilful subject, I express these principles as statements of will: ‘she can share them if you can bear them.’

### 1. I AM WILLING TO CARRY MY BODY AS A TOOL

Use your body actively as a means of expression and engagement.

*The tools are often stories, retold stories, versions that reverse and displace the hierarchical dualisms of naturalized identities. In retelling origin stories, cyborg authors subvert the central myths of origin of Western culture*  
③ Haraway, 1985



## **2. I AM WILLING TO WEAR MY BODY**

**Engage with the body actively, living and acting through it, rather than focusing on appearance. The opposite: to disown, or to dissociate from the body.**

**Wearing the body means to not look a certain way but act a certain way. Engage with your physicality.**

## **3. I AM WILLING TO TREAT MY BODY OBLIQUELY**

**Approach the body from different, non-direct perspectives to gain new narratives. Instead of addressing the body head-on, in a straightforward manner, treat it from a lateral angle. As our bodies are written, allow new narratives to intersect.**

## **4. I AM NOT WILLING TO CATEGORIZE MY BODY**

**Reject predefined categories and appreciate the body's unique, individual state. The body and their extensions laugh in the face of our attempts to tame its radicality. Rather than analysing and categorizing, seek to marvel at the beauty of each individual state.**

## **5. I AM NOT WILLING TO COMPLETE MY BODY**

**An extension is not added to complete or to make the body 'better,' they replace and redefine, and fill voids with new narratives.**

*We don't need strong legs to walk forward. We need to think differently of movement and stillness, action and passivity, productivity and creation.*

*②② Preciado, 2018*

**Extending the body moves from wearing to carrying, from passive to active engagement. Through these principles, our extended bodies become manifestos in motion, (re)shaping the spaces we inhabit.**

**Body extensions attempt to make 'ineligible' bodies 'eligible', involving a plural and performative positioning of eligibility where it did not exist before. ①⑧ Body extensions can blur the boundaries between the self and the other.**



**Sarah Ross, 'Archisuits', 2005–2006**

(W)

*"The suits [...] allow a wearer to fit into, or onto, structures designed to deny them. The project points at architecture as an arm of the law, a form that uses the built environment to police and control raced, classed and gendered bodies. Archisuits suggest a wearer might resist by not only being present but being present comfortably, leisurely."*

designboom.com, CHALLENGING EVERYDAY SPATIAL POLITICS  
by Lea Zeitoun (2022, November 5)



**Guda Koster, 'Bagman', 2011**

(V)

*"By omitting essential body parts, the works can also you. Physical defects are implied and social discomfort is covered up. Everyone knows the feeling of wanting to disappear, of wanting to be invisible."*

amuse.art, Interview met Guda Koster (2023, February 9)



**Lucy McRae, 'Hope Floats', 2008**

(Y)

*"I'm not interested in a future that is associated with science-fiction tropes that are masculine, mechanical, or not reflective of what I think makes us human."*

*I'm interested in things that are messy, visceral and human."*

*"This thinking relates to the body, both aesthetically and in how we could experience the world. As an artist, the way that I approach technology is using it like a membrane, an elastic visceral membrane that can be draped, pulled apart, made transparent or mutated."*

dezeen.com, "I'm interested in giving science fiction an overdue sex change" says Lucy Mae, by Amy Pearson (2019, September 11)



**Malin Bülöw, 'Elastic Bonding', 2019**

(X)

*"I am interested in the relationship between body and architecture and I strive for a fusion between the rigid architectural forms and the organic bodily forms. I seek to stretch the lycra into monumental sculptures that extend the limits of the dancers' bodies until they melt into their most architecture, and vice versa."*

*In Elastic Bonding, the bodies are stuck inside elongated elastic membranes."*

*"The elasticity of the fabric and the movements of the bodies, which continuously initiate changes in the shape of the larger structure, can be seen as an expression of resistance and initiative for liberation."*

stirworld.com, Oslo-based Malin Bülöw discusses body, relationships and environment, by Shraddha Naif (2020, August 27)





**Lygia Clark, 'Máscaras Sensoriais', 1967**

"Tucked into the hood's folds were sachets of varied textures and aromas (lavender, cloves, a salty seaside odor). Combined with a disorienting reduction of visual stimuli, these sachets would spur participants' disengagement with their visual surroundings in favor of a rediscovery of bodily experience and an immersive inner world."

"A collective listening Clark described as "like analysis, without being psychoanalysis." It is this commitment to "elaboration" and its various meanings of support, listening, evolution, experimentation, and fabulation, as much collective as individual, that were central to Clark's "art as shell," as Wanderley characterizes. An "affective space," as Clark advanced, mobilized by a practice of singular repetitions vested in otherness, duration, relationality, material, sensual experience, and deep listening."

stedelijkstudies.com, How to Care for an Art? Lygia Clark's Caminhandu and Rosácea Toward Curating Inside/Out, by Jessica Gogan (2023, January 10)



**Heidi Bucher, skinning process of 'Gentlemen's Study' 1978**

"Rooms are shells, they are skins. Peel off one skin after the other, discard it: the repressed, the neglected, the wasted, the lost, the sunken, the flattened, the desolate, the reversed, the diluted, the forgotten, the persecuted, the wounded."

hausderkunst.de, Exhibitions, Ecologies, Body Heidi Bucher. Metamorphoses (2021, September 17 - 2022, February 13)



**Maud Madison, 1870-1953**

"Inspired by Fuller, Madison took a particular interest in lighting effects and innovative costuming for her performances. She amazed audiences when flags and famous portraits were projected onto her skirts while they whirled and fluttered."

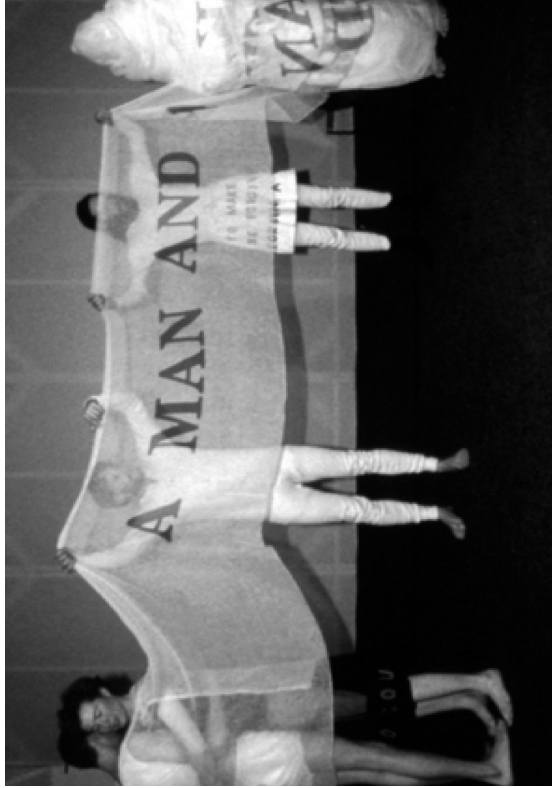
"Bermuda's New Theatre", The New York Times. p16 via ProQuest (1910, January 16)



**Marina De Caro, 'Papa rosa', 2015**

"Architecture, fashion, some books and much more cross my path. I build the technique with the work. I get lost in the metaphor, everything for me is a way of talking about how to be in this world, I am 100% a fetishist."





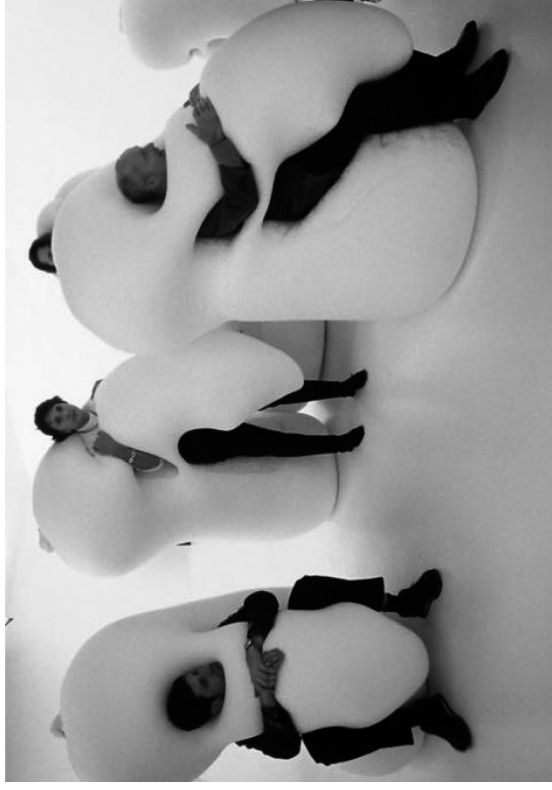
**Louise Bourgeois, 'She Lost It', 1992**

**E**

"A MAN AND A WOMAN LIVED TOGETHER. ON ONE EVENING HE DID NOT COME BACK FROM WORK, AND SHE WAITED. SHE KEPT ON WAITING AND SHE GREW LITTler AND LITTler. LATER, A NEIGHBOR STOPPED BY OUT OF FRIENDSHIP AND THERE HE FOUND HER, IN THE ARMCHAIR, THE SIZE OF A PEA."

"And yet our body is more than the sum of its parts. We are after all more than the sum of our experiences. We are as malleable as wax. Descartes wrote about wax. We are sensitive to the souvenirs of what has happened before and apprehensive to what is going to happen after."

artspace.com, "I Don't Need an Interview to Clarify My Thoughts":  
An Interview with Louise Bourgeois (2017, August 22)



**Ernesto Neto, 'Humanoids', 2001**

**D**

"...a series of polyamide and polystyrene sculptures that must be worn by the beholder like bags and prostheses. After the touch and penetration, there comes the time to wear. However, it is not really a matter of "wearable art", or a crossing between art and fashion. When wearing the sculptures, we feel in our skin and our body their weight, volume and texture. We can walk with the Humanoids. Their verticality is provided by us and the notion of anthropomorphism depends on the human body carrying the sculpture. We can also seat on the Humanóide, which gets more flexible and protects us, within it and with it."

ropao.net, Interview with Lee Bul, featured in La Stampa (2023, June 18)



**Martha Araújo, 'Hábito/Habitante', 1982-1987**

**G**

"For me these gesticulations are the means to find ourselves with ourselves, the others and the environment within which we live while liberating ourselves."

"Since the 1980s, Martha Araújo, (b. 1943 Maceio, Brazil) has explored the physical and psychology limits of the body. She has explored space, the body and mind by asking spectators to use objects and clothing that she produces and exhibits in exhibition spaces. The use of the body is linked to African-Brazilian rituals, carnivals and especially to specific political contexts where the body is a means of resistance."



**Loie Fuller, 'Serpentine Dance', ca. 1900  
photograph by Samuel Joshua Beckett**

**F**

"The factors depriving Fuller of lasting fame are the very factors that made her such a household name during her lifetime: her whimsical but unglamorous persona, her technical genius, and the uncategorizable nature of her art itself. By not fitting into established and narrow parameters for female performers, by branching out into such overwhelmingly male fields as stage design, mechanical invention, and filmmaking, and by straddling both music-hall and "high" culture concert dance, Fuller left no ready "hook" on which to hang memories of her."



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**EXTENDING THE BODY**

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