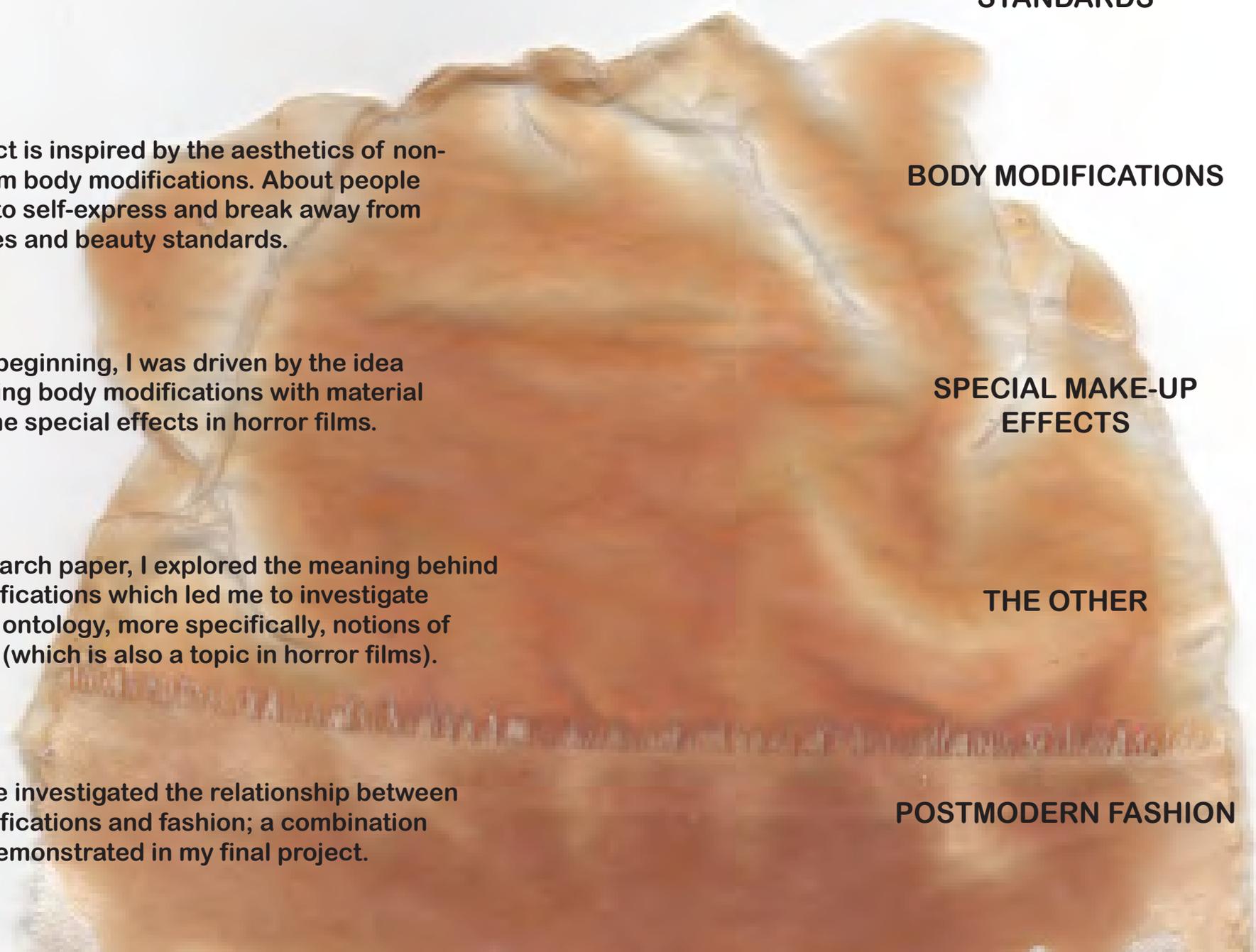


TRANSFORMING THE FLESH

JOHANA MOLINA
MAYOR: FASHION
MINOR: CULTURAL DIVERSITY

TRANSFORMING THE FLESH



This project is inspired by the aesthetics of non-mainstream body modifications. About people who dare to self-express and break away from stereotypes and beauty standards.

Since the beginning, I was driven by the idea of recreating body modifications with material used for the special effects in horror films.

In my research paper, I explored the meaning behind body modifications which led me to investigate notions of ontology, more specifically, notions of otherness (which is also a topic in horror films).

Finally, I've investigated the relationship between body modifications and fashion; a combination which is demonstrated in my final project.

**BODY AND BEAUTY
STANDARDS**

BODY MODIFICATIONS

**SPECIAL MAKE-UP
EFFECTS**

THE OTHER

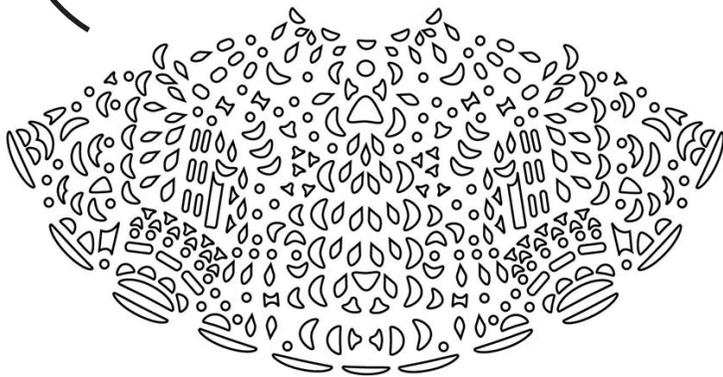
POSTMODERN FASHION



BODY AND BEAUTY STANDARDS



initial idea: to make a stencil using a pattern



FASHIONING THE BODY

At the beginning of this year I was thinking whether I should shave my legs for the summer or not. I felt the social pressure to do so, but instead of shaving I decided to dye the hair on my legs.

By doing so, I would give them a personal touch. This way of customizing my hairy legs is an action that I call 'fashioning the body'.

In postmodern society, physical appearance has become increasingly central to defining personal identity, as evidenced by the proliferation of features in newspapers, magazines, and television concerned with the health, shape, and fashioning of the body, and by the advent of a plethora of products and technologies for modifying the body (Negri, 2008). People unconsciously start self-regulating and internalizing discourses on their bodies: putting on clothes, following dress codes to look decent, appropriate and acceptable.

Body image is judged by society and the different one can be easily detected. Some bodies are celebrated but others have been marginalized, even stigmatized. People are thereby faced with social pressures to conform to physical ideals that often require modification of the body. Beauty ideals are commodified and sold to consumers in numerous ways, including cosmetic surgery.

An artist that demands the beliefs of an unachievable physical perfection is ORLAN. The french performer uses surgery to support her extreme artistic expression concerning how society pressures women to conform to narrowly-defined, fixed, patriarchal standards of beauty (Santos, 2012). Some body modifications deviate from Western 'classical' bodily norms, while certain forms of body modification have become popularized or fashionalized (Polhemus, 1995; Steele, 1996).



Kim Kardashian at the Met Gala 2019 wearing a dress by Thierry Mugler, with a corset by Mr. Pearl underneath



Orlan for Walter van Beirendonk. In his summer 1999 collection, models performed various protuberances on their faces inspired by Orland

01

SUBDERMAL HORNS

Silicone implants are pushed under the skin and moved into place.



TONGUE SPLITTING

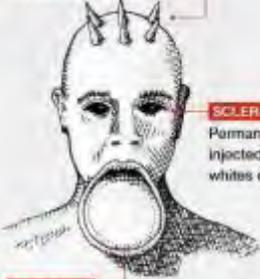
The tongue is split, and each side is stitched or cauterized until it heals.

LOBE STRETCHING

Ear lobes go through a gradual stretching process to fit discs of different widths.

METAL MORNAK

Spikes are attached to subdermal anchors.



SCLERAL TATTOOING

Permanent ink is injected into the whites of the eyes.

LIP PLATES

These originated among tribes in Africa and South America.

03

TREPANATION

A small hole is drilled into the skull to increase energy and expand consciousness.



TOOTH FILING

This is a traditional tribal practice in which teeth are filed to sharp points.

infographic: Vice (Haisam Hussein, 1996)

04

CHEEK GAUGES

The cheek is pierced, stretched, and kept open with a round eyelet.



ELFIN EARS

Ear cartilage is cut and shaped, and the skin is sewn back together.

NECK STRETCHING

An increasingly tall stack of coiled rings compresses the collarbone and pushes the shoulders down.

02

05

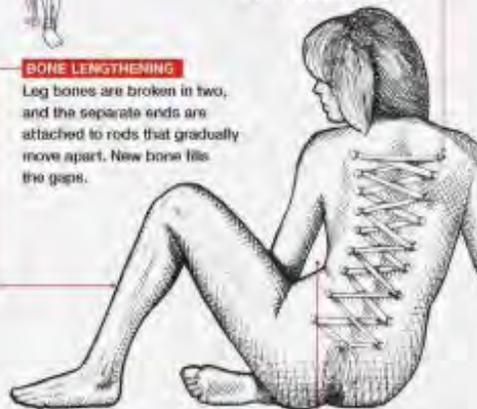
CORSET PIERCING

Material is strung through two parallel lines of hooped piercings and pulled taut to create a corset effect.



BONE LENGTHENING

Leg bones are broken in two, and the separate ends are attached to rods that gradually move apart. New bone fills the gaps.



WAIST TRAINING

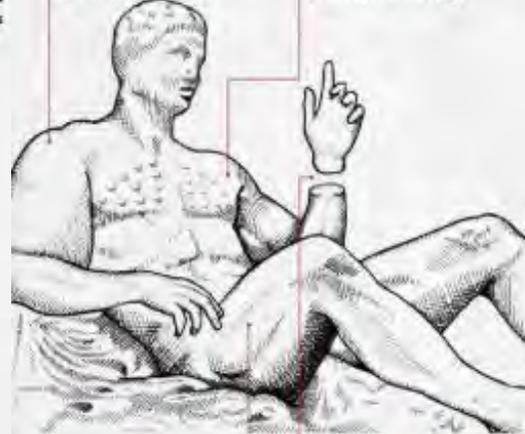
Corsets are worn to force the waist into unnaturally slim sizes. Trouble breathing and nerve damage have been recorded.



06

SYNTHOL INJECTIONS

An oil-rich mixture is injected deep into the muscle to enlarge the appearance. Misuse can make for lumpy, deformed muscles.



SCARIFICATION

These marks are achieved by cutting, branding, abrasion, or chemical corrosion. The resulting scar tissue leaves a permanent raised ridge.

PEARLING

Beads of metal, plastic, or silicone are placed under the skin of the penis to create bumps that may heighten a partner's pleasure. Or not.

APOTEMNOPHILIA

This is an extreme reason for modifying one's body. Those suffering from apotemnophilia experience an intense desire to amputate a perfectly healthy limb and often don't feel relief until they do.

BODY MODIFICATIONS

The term body modification refers to a long list of practices which include piercing, tattooing, branding, cutting, gender reassignment and inserting implants to alter the appearance and form of the body. The list of these practices could be extended to include gymnastics, bodybuilding, anorexia, fasting forms - and dietary regimes. In addition, we have to consider the ways in which the body is modified by the use of various forms of prostheses and technological systems (Featherstone 2000).

Scholars and reporters point out that there are numerous reasons for modifying the body, including identity salience, rebellion, and aesthetics. The increasing desire to alter the body has been linked to the phenomenon of postmodernity (Langman 2003), which is characterized by a lack of predetermined, fixed identities (Malson 1999). As the uncertainties of postmodernity replaces the certainties of modernity, many individuals turn to modifications in order to provide a stabilizing force in their lives (Roberts, 2015).



Fairuza Balk

1 hr · 🌐

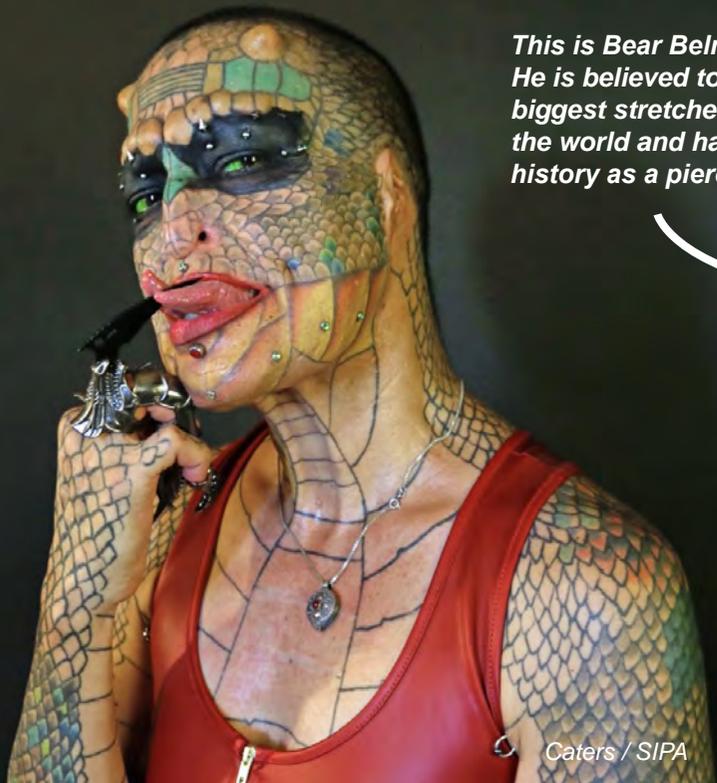
Check this out, very cool. RT @CHELSEAWWOLFE: love this <http://t.co/yfz5qfASnF> @i_D



meet the kids who are redefining beauty for the next generation | read |...

t.co

447 Likes 30 Comments



This is Bear Belmares. He is believed to have the biggest stretched ears in the world and has a long history as a piercer himself.

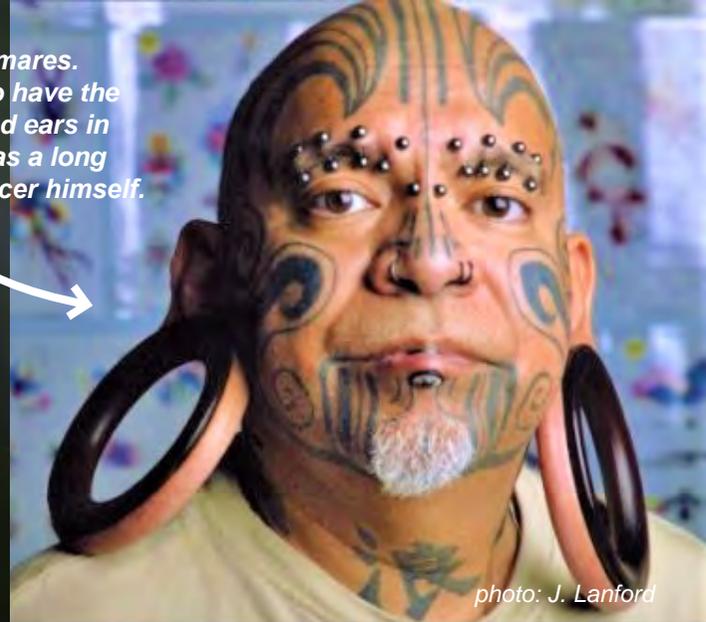


photo: J. Lanford

Caters / SIPA

This is Jim Hall aka "Blue Comma", a 78-year-old city planner with blue skin and other genital body modifications. Hall spent more than forty years tattooing his entire body.



This is Tiamat Legion Medusa, the dragon lady. She started modifying her body after finding out she had HIV. Her transformation went beyond gender, going transspecies.



This is Maria Jose Cisterna aka The Vampire Woman. She is recognized by Guinness World Records as the most tattooed woman. She started her body mods as a form of activism against domestic violence.

Presscott McDonald/courtesy of Ripley Entertainment

still from Out of the Blue (Steven Hoover & Jonathan Bregel, 1978)

SUBDERMAL IMPLANTS

An interesting aspect lies in the fact that body modification can display a non-conformist posture, but that it also explores aesthetic perspectives that aim at the embellishment of the body. Because body modification is such a wide topic, I started to look which of these ways of adorning the body I could use for the development of my project.

Subdermal implants refer to a body mod where an object (from silicone or stainless steel) is placed underneath the skin, thereby creating an extrusion of the skin. This inspired me to examine different techniques, such as using hard objects in between two layers of fabric.





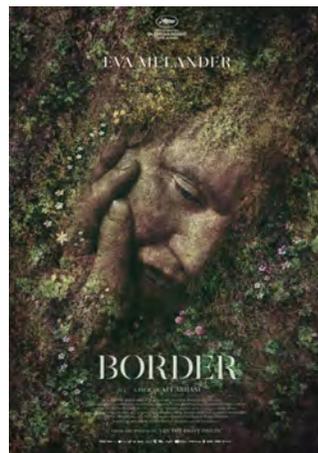
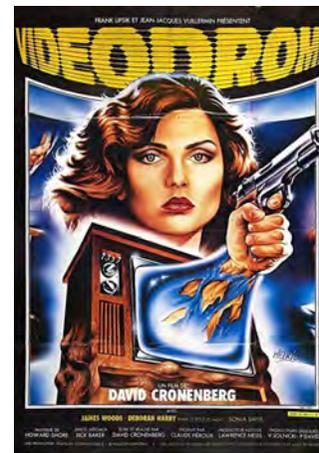
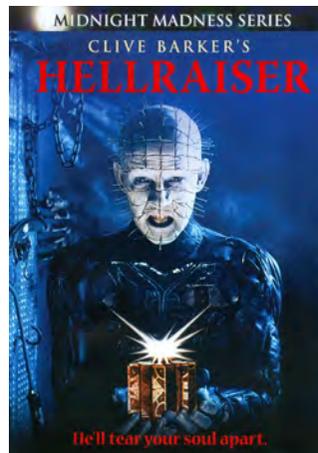
source: *Piercing* (Housk Randall, 1998)

By using playdough I could create forms and extrusion effects on the skin. This experiment also let me to explore body piercing designs with an eerie feeling.

These samples stimulated me to look for different materials that are more feasible to use in a professional practice. I realized that the focus of my research on body modification could go hand in hand with prosthetics and subdermal implants while using the proper materials to recreate it.



SPECIAL EFFECTS



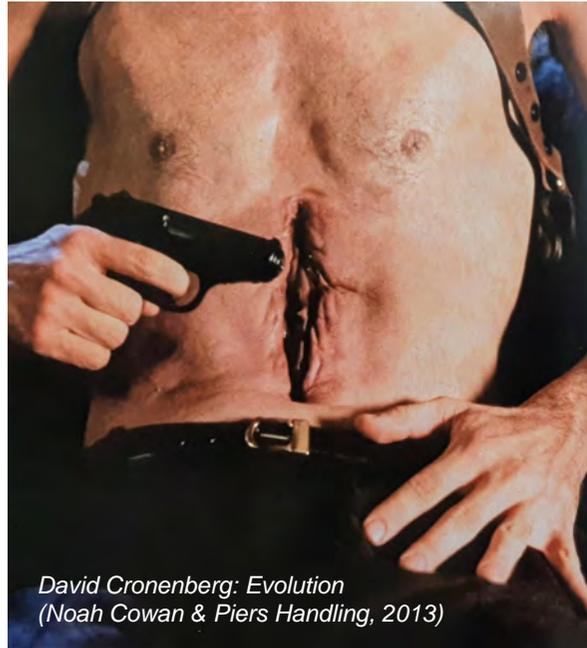
As part of my research, I've watched numerous films in which special effects are heavily featured, most of them horror films: B-movies like Frank Henenlotter's Basket Case-trilogy, the arthouse-esque Under The Skin by Jonathan Glazer or Eduardo Casanova's wildly extravagant Piel/Skins.

Considering my subject, there's an interesting horror film called American Mary by Jen & Sylvia Soska, from 2012, which takes place within the body modification community.

Mary is an underground surgeon helping her clients become who they want to be. “I don’t really think it’s really fair that God gets to choose what we look like on the outside”, as one of her body-modification-clients says, who has her nipples removed to become a life-size Barbie doll. Although the film offers a glimpse of the world of body modifications, the film is not that good and there are better films to watch about the subject (such as the documentary *Modify* (2005) by Jason Gary and Greg Jacobson). More interesting to me than the films of the Soska sisters is the work of Clive Barker and David Cronenberg. I have a fascination for practical effects in horror films and these directors have an outspoken vision behind their effects-heavy films.

Writer Clive Barker was influenced by underground piercing magazines and S&M in making his debut film *Hellraiser* in 1987. The character Pinhead, as shown in the picture, was inspired by “a hardcore S&M club in New York, where I watched people getting pierced for fun”, as the writer tells *The Guardian* in 2017. “It was the first time I saw blood spilt. The austere atmosphere definitely informed Pinhead: “No tears, please. It’s a waste of good suffering!” “And I got a good reaction from the S&M crowd – and still do. I was validating a lifestyle. It was a celebration of the beauty of these strange secret rituals”.

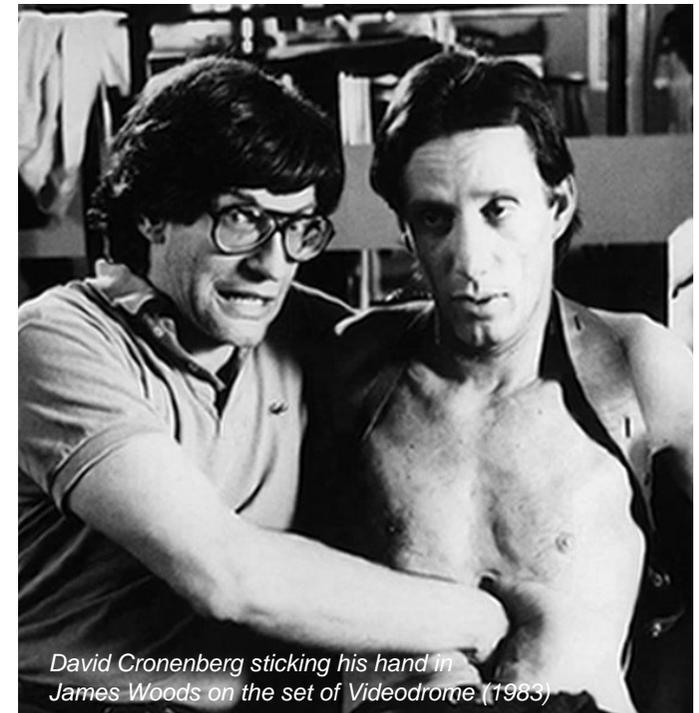
Also on the intersection of sex and violence lies the work of David Cronenberg, well-known for his body horror films, such as *Rabid* (1977), *The Fly* (1986) and, of course, *Videodrome* (1983). A network programmer is looking for the ultimate in violence on TV and discovers a broadcast signal of a live torture show. The signal creates a sort of cancer, seemingly transforming the stomach of actor James Woods in a huge vagina and / or VHS-slit. It is a stunning and unsettling body transformation that delivers on the slogan of the film: “Long live the new flesh!”.



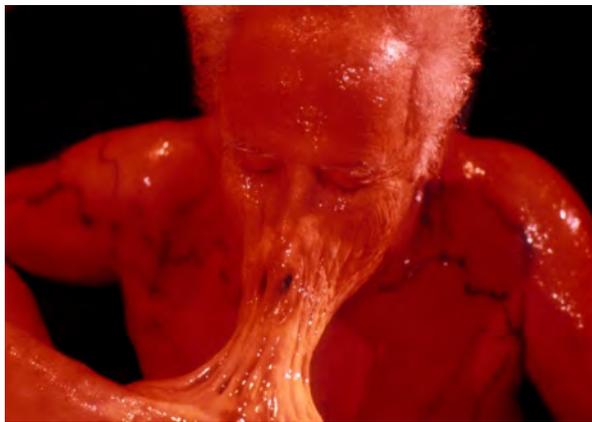
*David Cronenberg: Evolution
(Noah Cowan & Piers Handling, 2013)*



*Clive Barker with Doug Bradley
as Pinhead in Hellraiser (1987)*



*David Cronenberg sticking his hand in
James Woods on the set of Videodrome (1983)*



still from *Society* (Brian Yuzna, 1989)



introduction to Cultfilm: *Society* at WORM Rotterdam, September 2018

Looking for skinlike materials inspired by films in order to create the new flesh, I briefly thought about kombucha. Back in 2018 I used this natural material to create a face mask. I performed wearing this mask as an introduction to the screening of body horror film *Society* (Brian Yuzna, 1989).

Considering limited time and the desire to work with new materials, I decided not to use kombucha in this project.

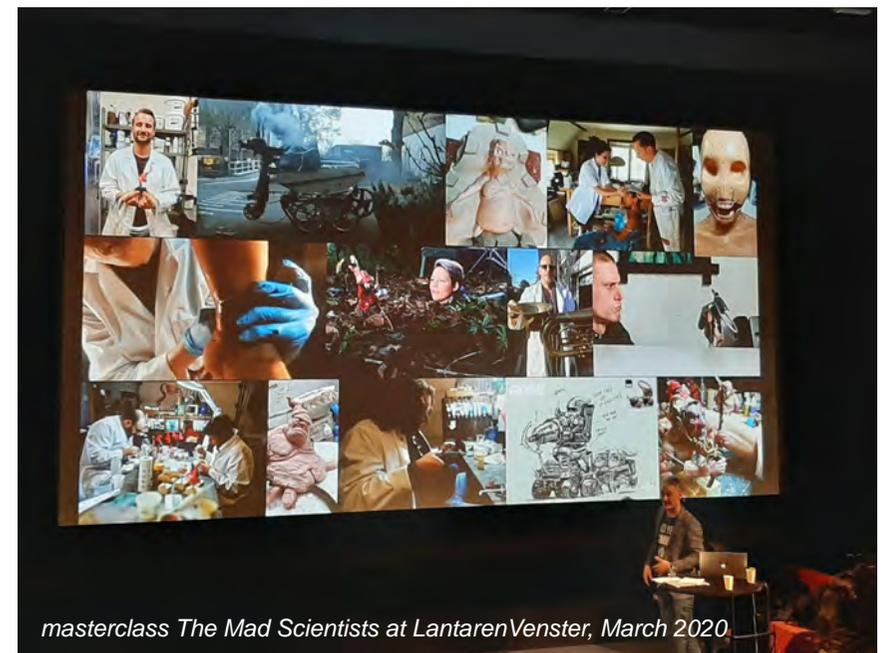


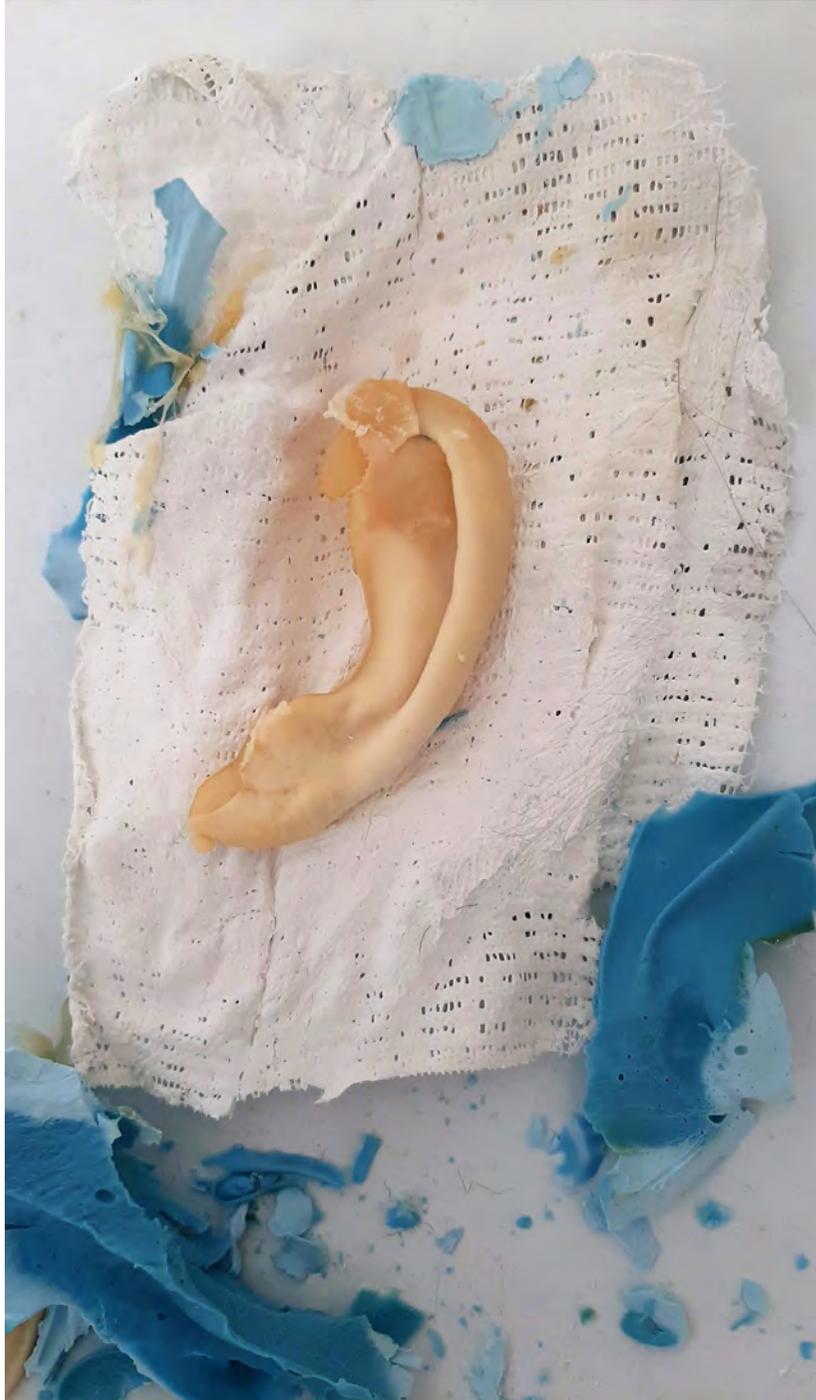
LOOKING FOR NEW MATERIALS

Special make-up effects, also called prosthetic makeup or FX prosthesis, is the process of using prosthetic sculpting, molding and casting techniques to create advanced cosmetic effects.

In March, I attended a masterclass about practical horror effects, and before the pandemic, I was right on time to visit Form X, an art supply store specialized in 3D modelling materials. I got advice and information about the possible materials for me to use.

Fashion designers such as Walter Van Beirendonck (in 1997), or Rick Owens (in 2019) have made use of special effects for the styling of their models on the runway. But why should this be limited to styling when materials for special effects are potentially suitable to integrate in clothing?





EXPERIMENTING WITH LATEX

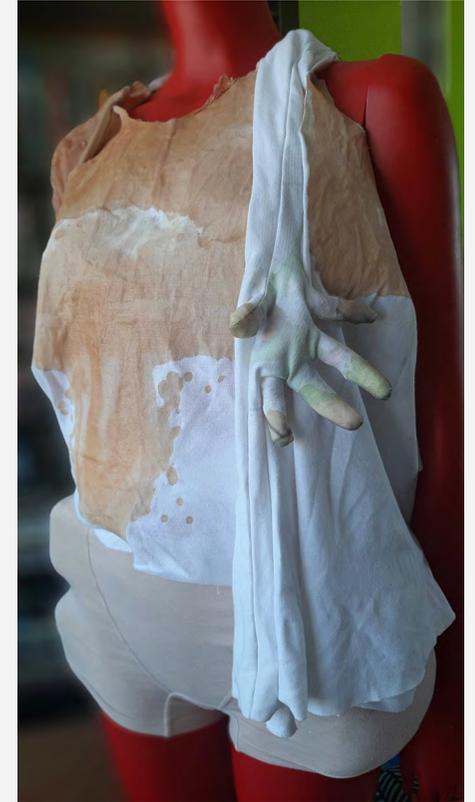
Due to the pandemic, I only had the chance to work in the material station at WdKA once. Fortunately, I bought a bottle of latex there which I could use to experiment with at home.

Latex is a natural material that comes as a fluid from rubber trees and other plants. Being liquid, it is possible to apply it on fabric. The result of it is a fleshy look, perfect for my aesthetic purposes. However, it is not long lasting because latex is a material that will continue drying in the air. The flexibility of the fabric will disappear in time.

Latex can be poured to get forms in a desired shape. The playdough experiment encouraged me to learn how to cast parts of the body to make molds. I learned to do this through videos on Youtube. To create the molds I used Alginate, a material that comes from seaweed. It is a powder that combined with water becomes a viscous gum paste. These Alginate molds can only be used one time.

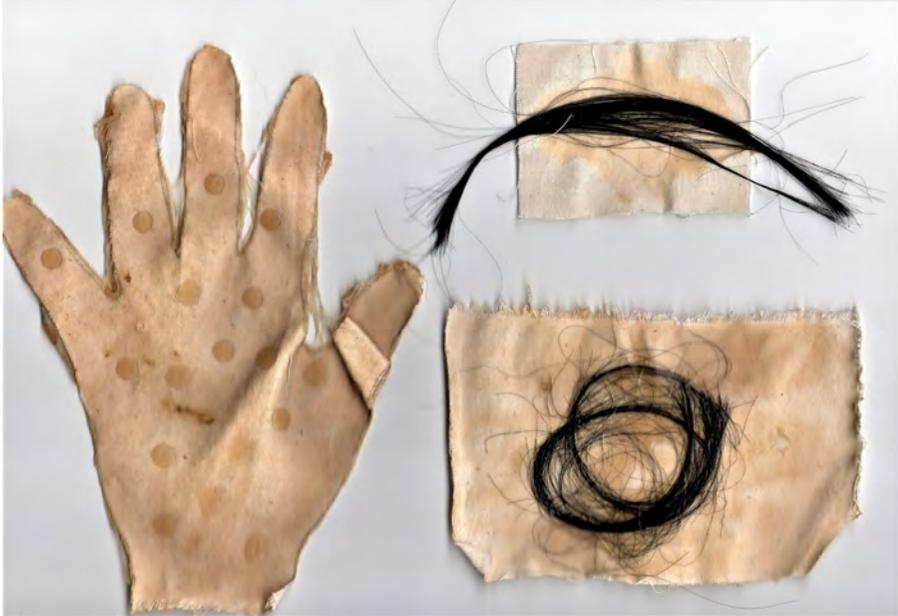
After getting to know the materials and the casting process, I created some body parts in latex.

EXPERIMENTING WITH LATEX GLOVES



I also conducted a serie of actions with latex gloves. An underlying reason is because gloves are a required element in the different settings when performing the procedures of body modifications, be it in an informal place, in a tattoo and piercing studio or in medical environments.

I cut the gloves and sewed them together. The form of a hand and fingers attached together also resembled a kind of body modification or a dissability. I continued with the idea of a hand integrated in clothes by using cutting techniques learned before.



First try out: latex on unbleached cotton and hair



Trial consistence of latex with and without fabric



Latex on fake fur



Latex on fake fur, different lighting

COMBINING LATEX WITH FABRIC



Latex on lycra painted with acrylic.

EXPERIMENTING WITH DRAGON SKIN

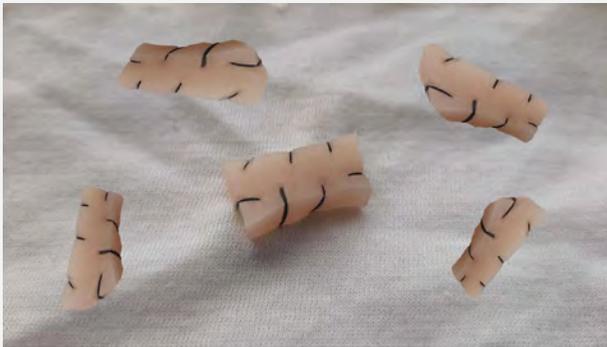


Silicone rubber, also known as Dragon Skin, is a material used for a variety of applications ranging from creating skin effects and other special effects in movies to making molds for casting. It is also used for medical prosthetics.

This is a material that unlike latex is long lasting. To prepare it, two components should be combined. The material itself is transparent, but with pigments, different (skin) colors can be achieved. Here, I again used the Alginate to make molds, for instance from real skin. The Alginate takes over every detail, including moles and scars.



CREATING TEXTURES



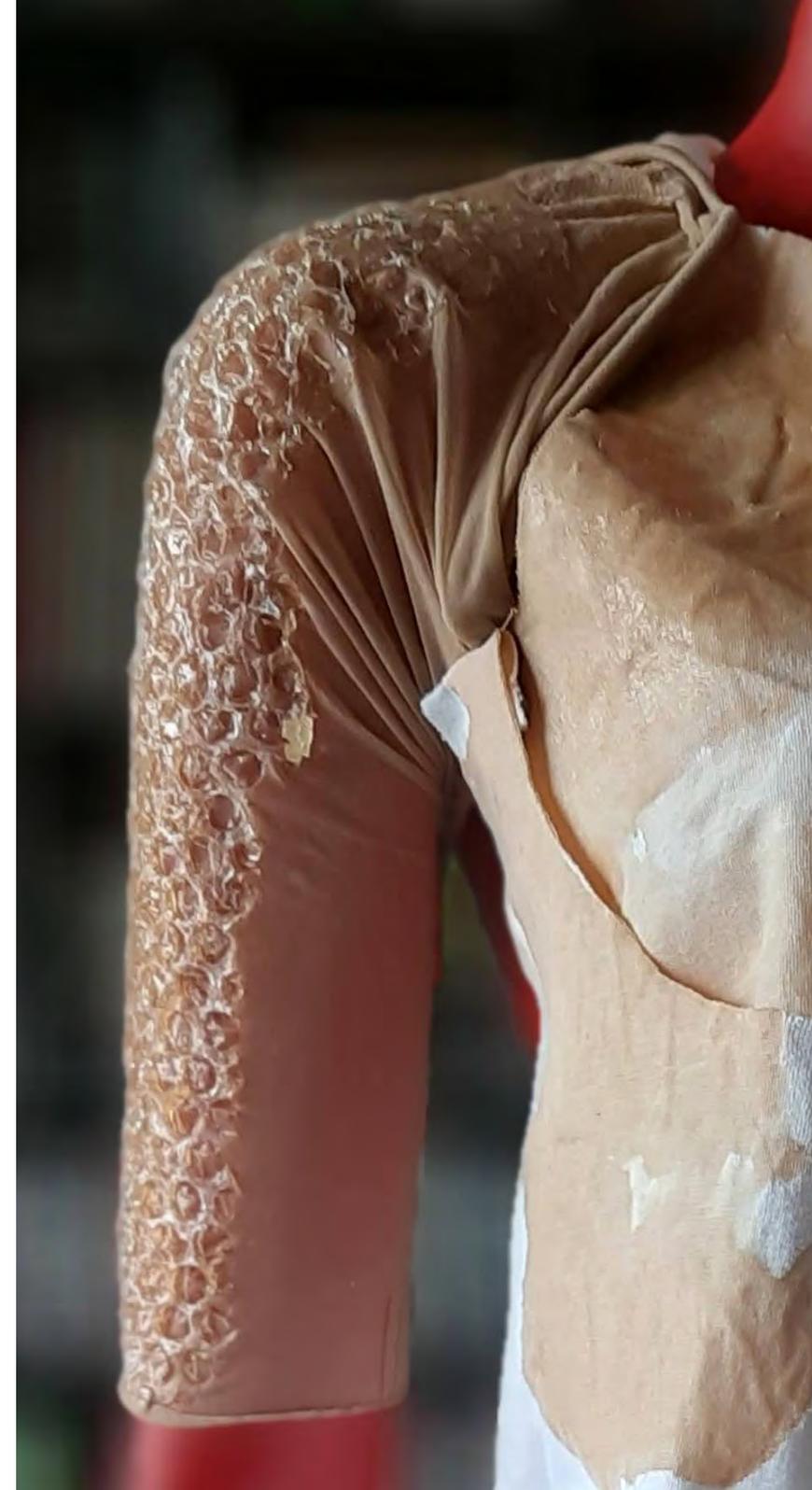
Fastening little pieces of silicone rubber on fabric give an interesting effect in movement. In the same way, when the fabric is gathered and pieces are attached to it, a dynamic texture is created.



An advantage of working with latex is that it can be used directly to a surface and it dries fast.

Latex with pantyhose are a perfect option when wanting to imitate skin. I used bubble wrap as a texture in between a pantyhose. The latex that passed through it caught the structure of the texture. The result of this experiment evokes the skin of a snake. It is a captivating outcome having in mind that snakes leave their old skin behind a couple of times per year.

While we change our clothing every day, it is amazing to think in which ways our own body changes, be it by natural happenings or by interventions we can make upon it.



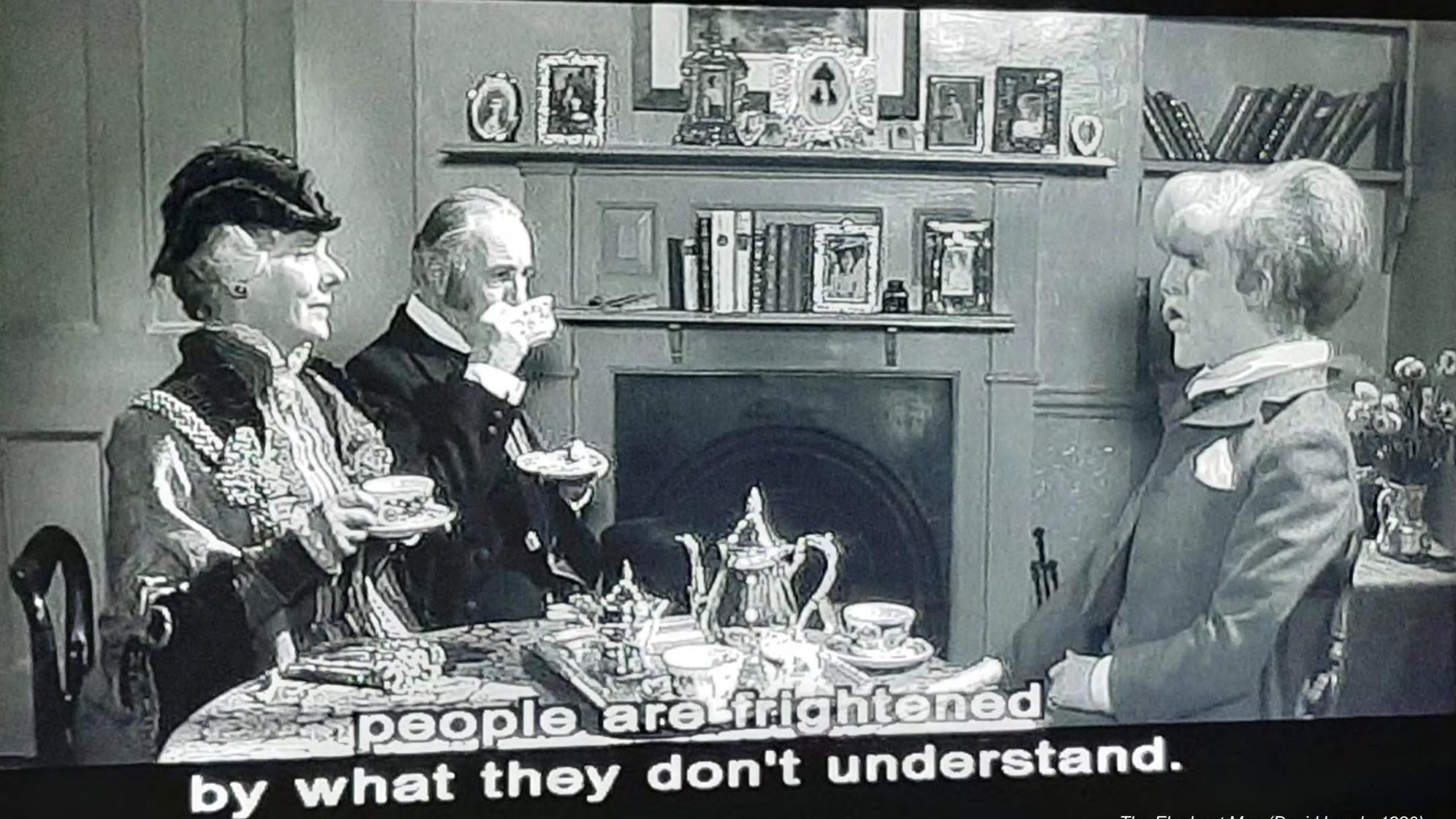


Fashion designers such as Issey Miyake have blurred the line between skin and clothes. With his 1971 Tattoo collection, Miyake suggested that a full-body tattoo could be slipped on and off with ease.

I believe that this concept can be applied to garments with incrustated prosthetics on it. Depending on the mood, one day you can wear a stretched ear and next day another full with piercings.



THE OTHER



**people are frightened
by what they don't understand.**

The Elephant Man (David Lynch, 1980)

Horror films are preoccupied with the fear of “the Other”, a concept that stands in opposition to the self, to what we are. It is in many ways an instinctive fear of that which is different, the suspicion that something that is distinct must also be dangerous. Think of the monster of Frankenstein or the numerous creature features in which monsters threaten society. Horror films have long been read as coded expressions of this deep-seated fear of that which is different from the mainstream.



MONSTERS, DEVILS, FREAKS

The idea of the modified body that oversteps the limits of what is considered socially accepted, is what has driven my attention to explore the model of 'the Other'. I have been able to understand philosopher Emmanuel Levinas' concept of otherness to a certain extent, and I believe it to be related not only to body modification and horror films, but also to the fashion industry.

The Other is the opposite to the Self. The Other is a monster. It is what we cannot stand, what cannot be comprehended. When the Other bursts in, it hits and destabilizes, and it is feared because it can invade. The Others are outsiders or those who are not part of the mainstream, or not in power. This includes immigrants, races and ethnic groups, people with disabilities etc. There is a tendency to try to dominate others because they are different, and that difference is usually a source of negative feelings or discomfort for us ranging from simple discomfort all the way up through anger and hatred. On the contrary, the outsider is an inspiration for change, a force to respect.

When embraced as part of society though, it stops being the Other. The Other is a construction of the dominant discourse, and all others become a reflection of the Self. It is here where I make the link to fashion, when the industry for instance appropriates aesthetics of subcultures bringing it to the mainstream.



Images from *Caso Cerrado* (2019), a TV program that resolves legal cases
Top, featuring the Dragon Lady. Down, Caim Morris



Basket Case 2 (Frank Henenlotter, 1990)



Freaks (Tod Browning, 1932)

“We accept you, one of us! Gooble Gobble!”



Nightbreed (Clive Barker, 1990)



Hellraiser (Clive Barker, 1987)



POSTMODERN FASHION

The aesthetics of the punk subculture are a reference to reflect on fashion, self-image and body modification. The punk movement of the mid-'70s created a new way of wearing tattoos and piercings and is the starting point for many transformations in contemporary appearance.

Provocative styles like exaggerated make-up, mohawked, spiked and dyed hair, piercings, painted or tattooed statements and customized clothing, are symbols of the punk fashion that announced rejection of social order and normalized bodies. Later though, what was once anti-establishment, became part of the mainstream.

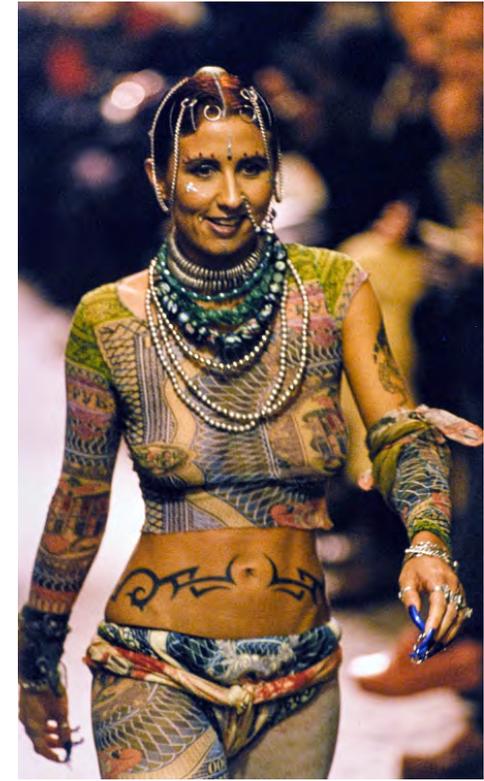
For writers such as Baudrillard, postmodern fashion can be characterized as ‘a carnival of signs with no meanings attached’ (Tseelon 1995, p.103). Fashion has appropriated ‘ethnic’ and ‘subcultural’ styles, and as a system that freely quotes from any and every potential source can be described as ‘a field of stylistic and discursive heterogeneity without a norm’ (Sweetman, 1999). This has also been called ‘the supermarket of style’ (Polhemus, 1995).

In 1994, tattoos and piercings gained visibility and became more popular after Jean Paul Gaultier’s collection entitled “Les Tatouages”. This has led some to dismiss contemporary tattooing and piercing as little more than a superficial trend, one instance among many of the incorporation of ‘the exotic’ into the fashion system (Sweetman, 1999).

For his AW19 show, Rick Owens collaborated with young artist Salvia to create otherworldly looks that saw models with horns, cheek implants, and black contact lenses. Owens declared body modification as the new tattoo. For his SS20 show, he again used the same aesthetic on the runway. Salvia, however, wasn’t aware her image would be used again, therefore claiming Owens stole her identity for that show. It is an example of how the fashion industry appropriates subcultures, in which for Salvia her aesthetics have a more profound background, while Owens copies it in a superficial matter.



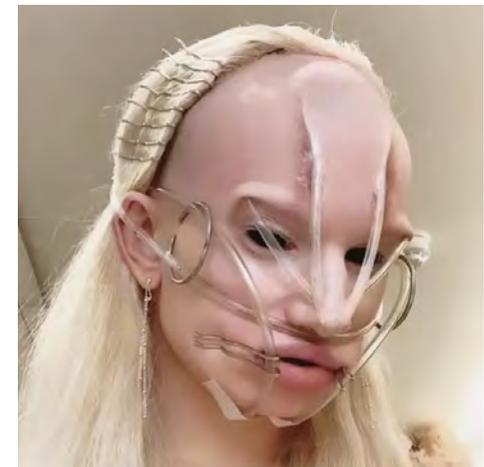
Issey Miyake 1971



Jean Paul Gaultier, 1994



Rick Owens, 2019



Salvia, 2019



Rei Kawakubo, Comme des Garçons. Body Meets Dress - Dress Meets Body Ensemble (bodice and skirt). 1997

Postmodernism in fashion has developed over the past few decades with designers such as Vivienne Westwood, Alexander McQueen, Issey Miyake and Rei Kawakubo demonstrating key elements like freedom, individuality, human nature and diversity. In the context of the human form, the body is radically reconsidered with the work of Comme des Garçons by Rei Kawakubo. She proposes new ideas of beauty by creating organic forms and protrusions in her garments, creating outfits that discard standard sizes. With her SS 1997 collection, known as “Body Meets Dress, Dress Meets Body,” Kawakubo targets body modification through dress.

A recent example of designers who strive to challenge the form of traditional garments and body aesthetics is the multi-disciplinary duo Fecal Matter. Their designs contain radical imagery that pushes the boundaries of what is considered beautiful. A signature piece within their work are skin boots made from silicone rubber.

Both Rei Kawakubo as Fecal Matter are key inspirations to me in this project. The first, because of the manipulation of shape; the second, because of the imagery and materials used.



Fecal Matter, 2020

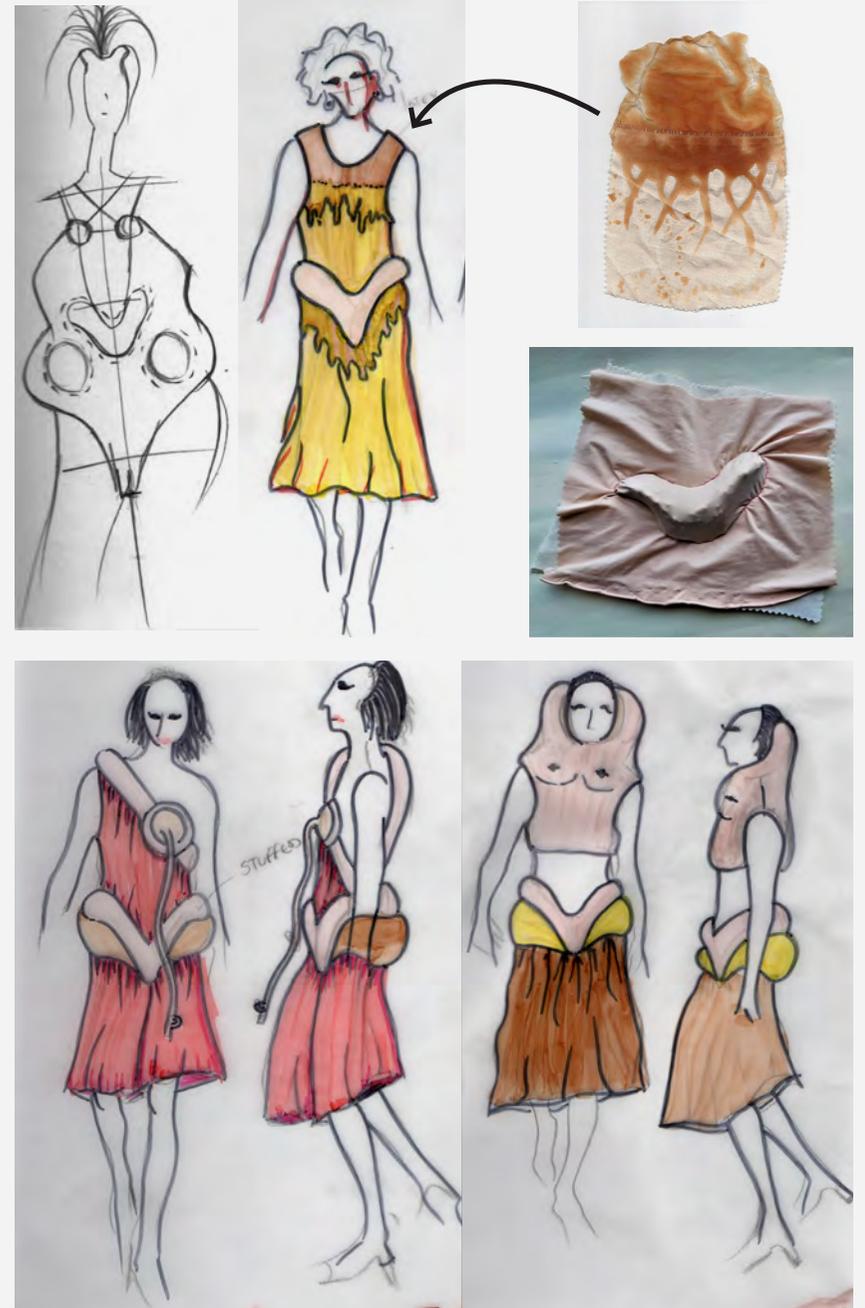


skin boots by Fecal Matter, 2018



Body shapes and subdermal implants

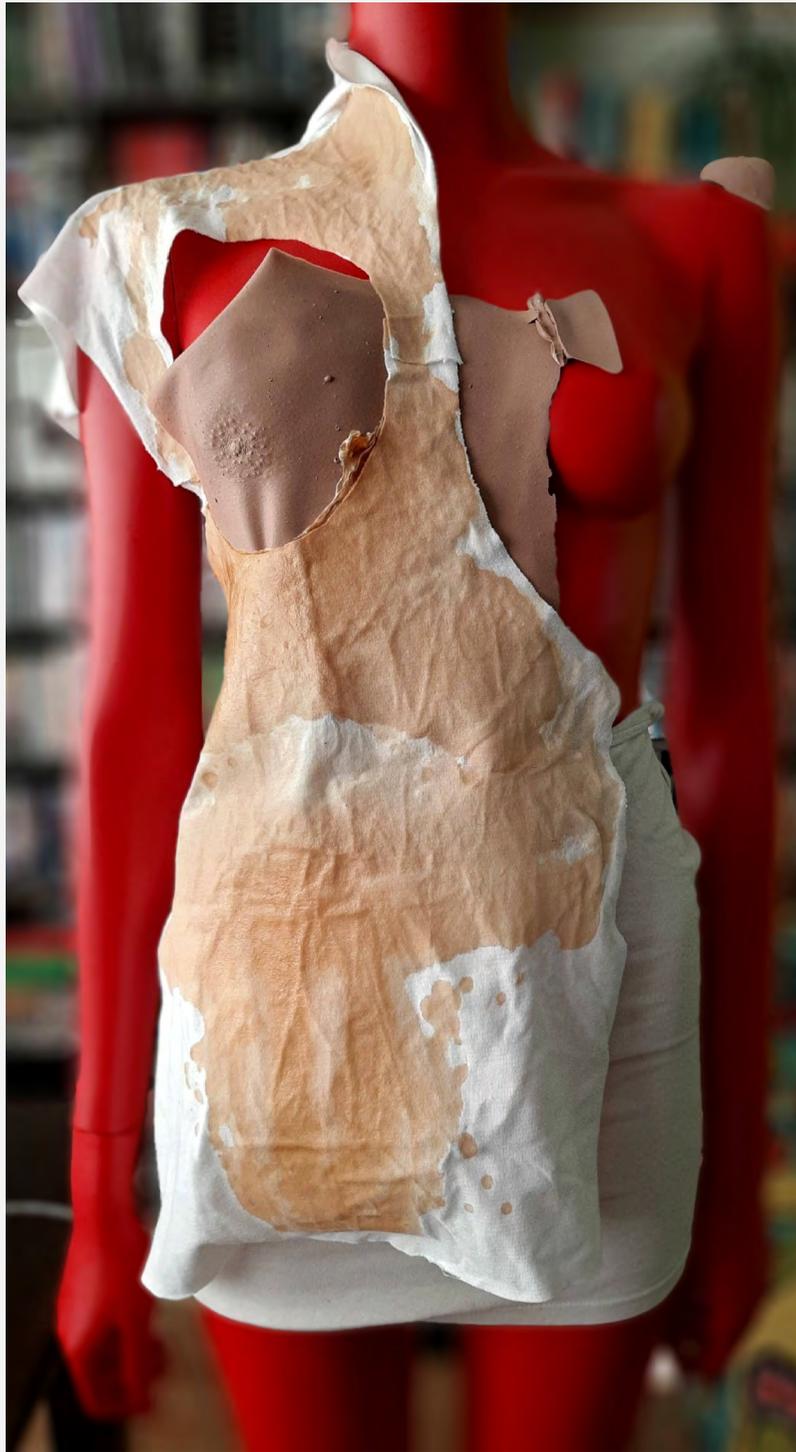
By putting objects under the vest top, I intended to emulate protuberances and subdermal implants.





Body shapes and subdermal implants

I used t-shirts for form studies. In a later stadium I applied material experiments on it.











For my graduation exam I presented three toiles based on deconstructed T-shirts. The collection combines latex on jersey, body parts made of silicone rubber, padded pieces and hard objects that support the shape of the designs. At later stage all items will be fully made with silicone rubber in different skin tones.

The items of this genderless collection are intended to be unique, thus, not for reproduction or the industry. They could even be personalized by replicating a person's own body parts. In this way, the collection offers an alternative for the fashion non-conformist while highlighting different body proportions.

This project has helped me to assert to the idea that I am interested to work for a minority. I believe in small scale, honest and sustainable production of fashion. I identify myself as a maker; I love the art of making clothes and exploring new materials. My ambitions are making non-conventional fashion and special garments. I want to make stage clothes that contribute to the full potential of artists and performers. Because I am involved in multidisciplinary projects including music and cinema, I have already built a network in the cultural sector here in Rotterdam and I am in contact with many Colombian artists as well.

As a graduate of Cultural Diversity of the social practices, I find it very valuable to work in and for a community because it has transformative values. I visualize the development of my professional field taking place in my hometown in Cali, Colombia. I have a project together with my partner of building a cultural house in Cali where fashion meets architecture, and where other artistic activities will take place. Furthermore, by building this cultural house, we will also be building a community.



TRANSFORMING THE FLESH

**THIS COLLECTION IS IN DEVELOPMENT
AND IT WILL BE READY NEXT YEAR!**