

TRANSFORMED BODIES

Body modification refers to cross, cut, tattoo, mark the skin with scars and modeling of the body by corsets and related practices, usually with the intention for altering the body permanently; Archaeological records confirm the existence of Egyptian mummies which were modified in the pelvic area and traces of tattoos on his arms and knees to beautify the body and give more status. Later, different communities in the world opted for body modifications such as tattoos and piercings for the initiation of the rituals, test of maturation, magical or religious practices and even as punishment for crimes committed. In Western culture these practices began in 1771 but only became massive until the first studio was opened in 1870 in New York by a German immigrant named Martin Hildebrandt.

Around the world many cultures and subcultures take these practices to the extreme, they completely change the



appearance of their bodies. Some try to adopt characteristics of animals as a snake tongue and crocodile skin.

These reasons are considered the main noun for these practices: the beautification of the body, the expression of individuality or membership, protest, recall and own therapy. Also, these people are motivated for spiritual or sexual rituals and the change to adulthood. Necessarily, these changes must be performed by a professional staff because some are microsurgeries with high risks for health.

In this wide world of body modification, we can find many types:

- a. Suspension: It consists of suspending human body in the air, through hooks inserted under skin in different parts of the body like in the back, chest and knees.



- b. Scarification: It consists in making surface incisions in the human skin with different shapes although it

has many limitations because we can't control the healing process.



- c. Subdermal implant: It consists in inserting material into the body skin through a surgery to try to change the volume of the body and its appearance.



According to current studies people do these practices in response to the need to feel alive and free. As Belén Rojo explains in her investigation of the Extreme body modification, "one of the issues that prevails is experiment to the fullest with ways to overcome the barriers of the own body." Therefore, even the pain fails to stop the desire to exceed the limits of the body. So, these practices respond to issues such as the formation of identity, a sense of belonging to a group or the idea that the body is a blank canvas for each person, as the owner of the body can translate what he or she pleases.

Although body modifications are more common each day, even these are perceived as strange, the decision to make some should be thoroughly because once you do it, you hardly can undone the change without health consequences. Currently more than cultural or artistic expressions, body modifications are used to show freedom and opposition to a social system, for this reason you must be very attentive to the development of these practices because they are certainly an interesting reflection for social change in the future.

By David Hostos.