An Autoethnography of Bodybuilding Visual Culture, Aesthetic Experience, and Performed Masculinity

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Abstract

This autoethnographic study examines the social history of bodybuilding along with personal testimonies of those with experience in weight training and bodybuilding to raise awareness of aesthetic experiences found within the culture of physique. The author explores aesthetic experiences in both the formal and performative sense as frames for reflecting on his adolescent pursuits as an amateur bodybuilder in order to deconstruct the visual archetypes of bodybuilding and their impact on his formative notions of maleness.

Author Biography

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Sharif Bey is an Assistant Professor of Art Education at Syracuse University. He earned his Ph.D. in Art Education from The Pennsylvania State University. As a doctoral student, Bey was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to conduct research on post-socialist art education reforms as a scholar and artist in residence at The Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, Slovakia. Bey’s writing offers revisions of personal and institutional art education histories through archival research, interviews, narrative inquiry, and ethnographic studies. Bey has published articles in publications such as Studies in Art Education, The Journal of Curriculum & Pedagogy, The Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education, and The Journal of Power in Education. Dr. Bey is editor of The Journal of Social Theory in Art Education for years 2013-2015 and serves on the editorial boards of The Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education, Studies in Art Education, and Visual Arts Research. Bey is an internationally exhibiting studio artist. He has been an artist-in-residence at the McColl Center for Visual Art in Charlotte, Hunter College in New York City, the Vermont Studio Center, and at the John Michael Kohler Art Center/ Kohler Plumbing Company. For correspondence, Sharif Bey can be reached at shbey@syr.edu.
An Autoethnography of Bodybuilding Visual Culture, Aesthetic Experience, and Performed Masculinity. Visual Culture & Gender, 9, 31-47. Bickel, B., & Hugill, T. (2011) Re/Turning to Her: A Co-A/R/Tograhic Ritual Inquiry. Where Lived Experiences Resides in Art Education: A Painting and Pedagogical Collaboration with Paula Nicho Cúmez (Spanish translation). Visual Culture & Gender, 1, 47-62. Staikidis, K. (2008). It is about rethinking performance autoethnography, about the formation of a critical performative cultural politics, about what happens when everything is already performative, when the dividing line between performativity and... This book is a manifesto. It is about rethinking performance autoethnography, about the formation of a critical performative cultural politics, about what happens when everything is already performative, when the dividing line between performativity and performance disappears. This is a book about the writing called autoethnography. It is also about what this form of writing means for writers who want to perform work that leads to social justice.