

Tattoo Art in the Era of Consumer Culture

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Abstract: The paper discusses about the popularization of tattoo art in the society in the recent times. The writing explores the intertwined relationship between the popular body art and consumer culture. The issues of stigmatization related to the form of body art have also been delved into. Moreover, the relation between construction of identity and tattoo art has been explored in the course of the paper.

Index Terms—tattoo art, stigma, social taboo, consumer culture.

I. Introduction

Tattooing has become extremely popular in the recent times, and the paramount popularity is found in different cultures or communities. This popular creative expression has become a style statement for innumerable people across the globe. However, there remains a stigma on the part of the society that segregates tattooed people, and generalizes them. Capitalism tends to commercialize everything, and it extracts profit out of it. Everything is promoted as a commodity that is popularized by the machineries of capitalist economy. Tattooing is taken by consumer culture as a tool to reach out to the masses. The primary ambition of consumerism is to promote tattoos as a popular culture, so that more people are inclined toward getting tattoos having the idea that tattooing is the stylish thing that is in vogue in the society.

II. Tattoo art in the present era

In the age of commercial culture and commodification, tattoo art's popularity has increased in leaps and bounds. Tattoo is an expression of culture and identity. The stigma fails to constrict the popularity of tattooing among people, and in stark contrast defines their personality and creative zeal. In the era of commodification, people are inclined even more toward getting tattoos. The cultural roots of tattoo art make it quite interesting for people to get tattoos. People are intrigued by the history behind tattoo art that goes back in time. The acceptance of tattoos by cultural institutions has enhanced the popularity of tattoos among people across the world society. It is the nature of human beings to stick to culture, and make his existence based on the cultural understanding of the world. Thus, having a tattoo makes a person stand out among all. More than just being a fashion statement in the present era of commodification that goes on to promote the form of art, tattoo links a person with the cultural root. Tattoos often become the signifier of the thoughtfulness of a person, and it perfectly portrays what the person wishes to express in front of all.

There can be no denial of the fact that the notion of the self has went on to be destabilized via the massive commodification of culture. People live under the constant pressure of refining their contingent identities, while the target of fulfillment never gets achieved. In the age of consumerism, people are imbued with the perception that they have to supplement their identity. Things like tattoos are portrayed to be a signifier of being cool or trendy. The situation never lets a person feel perfect about his or her own self. Thus, people get tattooed to add to their personality and identity. It is the sense of imperfection that makes people opt for such art forms that they believe would make them different from others.

III. Tattoo art and identity construction

Tattoos might attribute generalized characteristic traits to the tattooed people, but these play the major role in shaping the identity of a person. The generalized characteristics that are attributed to a tattooed individual are robustness and courage. Research has shown that the people who have tattoos also tend to be more sexually active than people without tattoos. It is also believed that tattooed people have more inclination toward taking risks in the course of life. People going through the process of tattooing face the pain that is afflicted by the tattooing needle.

However, people can have their own behavioral traits that cannot be gauged under the generalized characteristic traits. The sense of individuality that a tattoo brings to a person is priceless to say the least. Tattoos are taken to reflect the strength of character of a person as it involves inflicting some amount of pain on oneself during the time of getting the tattoo. Also, permanent tattoos take a lot of grit and courage on the part of the individual as the tattoo would remain for a lifetime. One needs to comprehend the fact that the images for the tattoo art can be chosen idiosyncratically on the basis of personal choice or reasons. This adds to the statement of identity that goes on to be directed toward other people or the own self.

IV. Consumer culture and tattoo art

The commercial culture aims to gain the best out of the scenario where tattoos have become so popular among people across the nations. However, while there remains a chance of many people being swayed by the consumer culture in the age of commodification, the significance of tattoo art in its truest form cannot get lost. In the age of Late Capitalism, where the bourgeois culture has taken its nearly-perfect form, being successful in influencing so many aspects of people's lives by consumerism, tattoo art with all its aesthetic value and skillfulness is growing with flying colors. It is also perhaps voicing the protest in its creative form against the ills of commodification. The significance of tattoo art needs to be taken into account in the context of discussion regarding tattoo culture. While tattooing has its own cultural heritage, in the age of Late Capitalism, it is quite tough to remain outside the influence of the consumer culture. The debate then lies in the question if tattoo art has lost its cultural relevance in the transcendence of consumerism.

It needs to be understood that consumer culture aims to profit out of every avenue of human existence. However, that does not necessarily mean the meaningfulness of tattoo art has diminished in any way owing to the overpowering presence of capitalist forces that has commoditized tattoos. In a way, consumer culture has played a role in popularizing tattoos in a bid to obtain profit. The popularization of tattoo art among people across cultures and communities has worked in favor of tattoo art. More and more people have become interested to learn making tattoos. The yearly tattoo conventions that take place at different venues across the world testify to the fact. Apart from this, more people have started getting tattoos either in a bid to look trendy, or due to the meaningfulness and uniqueness of the art form.

V. Conclusion

Thus, it can be comprehended that the popularity of tattoo art is definitely on the rise with time. The commercial culture of the present era has only added to the mass acceptance of tattoo art. The flip side of the matter is that many people take tattoos to be signifier of fashion. The cultural link of the aesthetic meaning of tattoo art is not taken into consideration when it is gauged by the looking glass of commercial culture. Whatever be it, the heritage and meaningfulness of tattoo art can never lose its relevance, in spite of the booming effect of commercialization of the art form as a commodity that aims to serve the people in lieu of a hollow sense of fashion and self-proclamation. Tattoos would flourish among people with time, whatever is the catapulting factor. The society might leave no stone unturned to stigmatize tattoo art. But, that would not have any negative effect on the popularity or meaningfulness of tattoos. The cultural heritage is too strong to lose its tie with tattoo art in the age of commodification.

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