



Body as the Garment: The Body as the Garment: Subversive Hedonism:
Contemporary Design Trends
Yigit Uyangor

INTR

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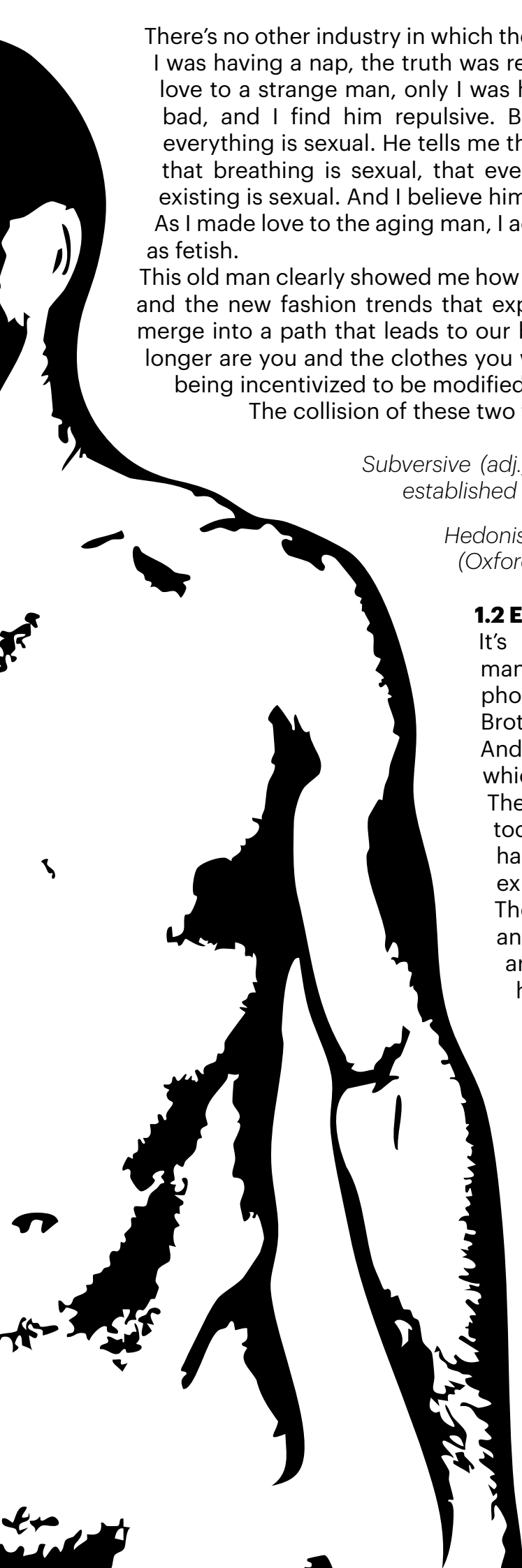
ON



1.1 The Signal in the Noise (Methodology)

There's a new kind of concentration camp. The most efficient concentration camp ever built. A concentration camp built by the inmates themselves, where the inmates are the guards and they have pride in their creation. The inmates exist in this state of schizophrenia where they are both guards and prisoners; they no longer have the capacity to leave the prison they've made or to even see it as a prison.

We are the prisoners. And the concentration camp is our body.



There's no other industry in which the body as a prison is more apparent than in fashion. As I was having a nap, the truth was revealed to me in a dream: In this dream, I was making love to a strange man, only I was having trouble because he's old and dying. He smells bad, and I find him repulsive. But then he tells me that everything is erotic. That everything is sexual. He tells me that even old flesh is erotic flesh. That talking is sexual, that breathing is sexual, that even dying is an act of eroticism. That even physically existing is sexual. And I believe him, and we make love beautifully.

As I made love to the aging man, I accepted the body as prison, as destiny, as commodity, as fetish.

This old man clearly showed me how The Clinical Shift (preventative botox, biotech beauty) and the new fashion trends that exposed the body in more and more provocative ways merge into a path that leads to our bodies being more and more exposed, where you no longer are you and the clothes you wear; rather, you are only your body, and that body is being incentivized to be modified as you were previously modifying your clothes.

The collision of these two forces is what creates Subversive Hedonism.

Subversive (adj.): To turn from below (Latin subvertere); to undermine established principles or authority (Oxford University Press, n.d.).

Hedonism (n.): The pursuit of pleasure; sensual self-indulgence (Oxford University Press, n.d.)

1.2 Executive Summary

It's no secret that we live in a period of constantly manipulated visuals, where we are being constantly photographed and surveyed, and not necessarily by a Big Brother who controls our actions, but by our own peers. And we also participate in this paranoid surveillance, of which the body is at the center.

The body used to be a passive object for the viewer, but today, the fashion industry reflects our own behavior, harvesting the body as a commodity to be played with, experimented on, and modified.

The body has to be exposed, more exposed than ever, and because of this exposition, the clothes we put around it lose meaning, leading to a state in which we have to modify this body as we previously modified the clothing around it.

From the chemical fabrics of Coperni that dissolve onto the skin to the restrictive tape styling, we are witnessing a move from the old norm of tailoring, which constructs a shell around the person, to adhesion, which modifies the epidermis itself.

As it was revealed to me, everything is erotic. To exist physically is already to be laid bare. Fashion has simply taken this truth and industrialized it. What the old man showed me in that moment, his decaying flesh, is the same logic driving the shift from tailoring to adhesion. The body is no longer protected or adorned; it is displayed, modified, harvested. The body is becoming the final garment, the prison that we willingly decorate from the inside out.

This sets up the scene for the identified trend and opens up the guiding question: Are we still wearing fashion, or are we beginning to embody it?

CULTURAL

2.1 Driver A: The Collapse of Privacy

There was a time, before the pandemic, in which we weren't accustomed to being constantly in front of a webcam, in which having a virtual meeting seemed like a far-off idea. But now, in the post-pandemic world, a psychological shift has been triggered: "Revenge Dressing." As explained by Rosseinsky (2021), this phenomenon represents the collective desire we have developed due to extreme isolation to aggressively reclaim our physical forms, our bodies. What we need changes, or at least we think it does.



This artificial need is also fed by the 'OnlyFans economy,' which has been becoming more and more mainstream since the pandemic. Not that long ago, being a porn star would have been a shameful act; now, anyone who has a phone and a tripod is getting naked, revealing what hides beneath their clothing to live the idealized lives they see on social media. Anciones-Anguita and Checa-Romero (2025) argue that this same destigmatization of the monetization of intimacy, by reframing self-sexualization as a form of empowerment, is what pushes us to become part of the trend.

Through normalization, the exposed body is no longer scandalous nor shameful; it is a commodity that is the key driving factor of the digital economy. The more we share, the more of an asset we become; and as we stop seeing ourselves as beings but rather as objects to be profited from, this is where body modification reveals itself as a necessity to us.

In this new post-pandemic environment, the boundary between the 'private' and 'public' has collapsed; now, bodies are more edited than before. As a logical evolution, fashion is adapting to it by blurring the lines between nudity and the garment. Before, being naked was a vulnerable state, where we were sharing our true self to the ones we found worthy of seeing it. Today, however, nudity is styled, managed, and displayed as content. Fashion is evolving and making this evolve, by revealing the body more and more each day, creating the need to further modify it to fit the ever-changing standards of beauty.

2.2 Driver B: The Haptic Shift

Technologically, we are also seeing a major shift that is redefining our understanding of the garment not as an object, but as our body itself. As William Myers (2012) argues in *BioDesign*, the ability to manipulate matter at the cellular level is "enabling a move from the industrial to the biotechnological" (p. 15). Fashion, as well as the body itself, is adapting to this "cellular level" change by highlighting the body as the main designed object. As the body becomes objectified, the need to change it is more and more prevalent, creating a loop in which the more we reveal, the more we change, and the more we change, the more we reveal to show off our bodies that we have spent hours of work and thousands of euros on.

We are moving away from the era in which clothes were draped over the body and the corset was adapting the body to the garment that was going to be worn on top, allowing the body to be hidden behind layers of clothing. Now, the garment is losing its autonomy as a separate object and becomes a prosthetic extension of the dermis.

This new understanding of clothing is and will fundamentally change our view of the world and the world's view of us: we are no longer protected by our clothes, but we become one with them, as the materials we wear are now attempting to mimic the "inner functioning" of what is underneath them

CONTEXT

2.3 Theoretical Lens: Design as Defense?

The paradox of control, not towards the world but the control we have of our own bodies, is a relevant point to how this trend is shaping us. Colomina and Wigley (2016) argue that the human is biologically unstable: we are soft, vulnerable, and "under some kind of threat that needs to be urgently countered" (p. 127). In this sense, we can see design as our defense mechanism: we build hard shells (architecture, thick clothing) to protect our soft biology.

However, Subversive Hedonism flips this logic on its head. In today's digital world, where privacy is obsolete and the body is constantly inspected by others, the wearer can no longer seek protection under a garment, as the garment becomes the body itself. Instead, they seek to "harden" the body itself. By embracing nudity, we transform the flesh into a designed object: we cut it, fill it, we inject it, even paint on it. This is not "nakedness" in the traditional, vulnerable sense; it functions as a form of emotional armor. By turning the body into a "design project," the wearer asserts control:

*If I am an
object, I
can not
hurt.*

be



VISUAL

Specimen A: The Architecture of Decay

Subject: Maison Margiela Artisanal AW 2025 (Creative Director: Glenn Martens)

Visual Data: Staged in an industrial basement lined with peeling posters, the collection featured gowns constructed from clear plastic dry-cleaning bags and "cordyceps-style" bead-encrusted face masks that obscured the models' identities entirely. Martens utilized battered plate metal to create rigid, car-crash-like headpieces, them with "zombie couture" appeared to be rotting or peeling body (10 Magazine, 2025; Istituto 2025).

Analysis: Through this collection, the trend. Glenn Martens, in this mutation of the skin. The models they lost their eyes, we don't see observe them as human, as the hear someone speak; they don't Hypothetically, they can't even noses are covered, objectifying ironic manner. The bodies are revealing sheer fabrics. The undergoing transformation and once used to be. As noted by The "architecture of decay" challenges the future to find beauty in the future of fashion, which is not about "terraforming" it into



contrasting silhouettes that away from the Marangoni,

we can see a direct evolution of collection, is using fabric as a are not even human anymore; their gaze. The viewer does not gaze tells a story before you even have lips to communicate to us. breathe behind the mask; their the "perfect" model body in an encased in sterile plastic and human is visualized as a host not as the glamorous object it New York Times (2025), this the viewer and the consumer of post-human. This guides us to the about dressing the body, but something unrecognizable.



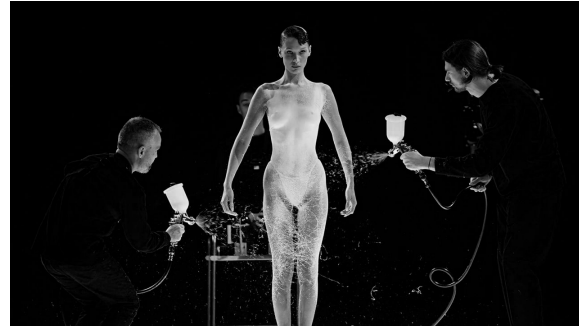
Specimen B: The Dissolving Garment

Subject: Coperni Spring/Summer

Visual Data: In a live clinical a technician applied a non-woven semi-nude body of Bella Hadid. transformed from a liquid contact with the dermis (Theis,

Analysis: This moment was an of haute couture. The show started an almost naked one, revealing all imperfections that the model modifying itself. As noted by not merely a stunt but a proposal traditional garment obsolete. It the wearers, connecting more and chemical process of modifying our action of sewing, we are seeing in

as well as being a revealer of how the body reacts with the new fashion, fits the "indeterminacy of the human" (Colomina & Wigley, 2016) perfectly because it has no shape until it meets the biological host, effectively dissolving the distinction between the wearer and the worn.



2023 (The Spray-On Dress) performance, Dr. Manel Torres and fabric aerosol directly onto the The material, known as Fabrican, suspension into a solid textile upon 2022).

unexpected one in the landscape with a naked body and ended with the curves and all the desperately tries to hide by Istituto Marangoni (2022), this was for a "second skin" that renders the highlighted the prevalence of us, more to our bodies, as well as the garments rather than the physical which is in line with the clinical shift body modification. The garment,



CASE STUDIES

Specimen C: The Body as Trompe l'œil

Subject: Duran Lantink (Body Print Trend).

Visual Data: The removal of the briefs (Miu Miu), or the total printed with anatomical details like (Duran Lantink, Jean Paul Gaultier).

Analysis: Clothing becoming hiding inside is a natural evolution glimpse of the undergarment -the shows what is usually beneath the the final step before getting naked, body and the outer layer of and more blurred. This beneath is also shown explicitly in Jean Paul Gaultier SS26 by the use prints that include all the details the undergarment and what is the line between the wearer's real "textile skin." As also mentioned by Vogue (2024) and the WWD (2025) review of Jean Paul Gaultier, this trend asserts an implicit narrative: the body itself is the only necessary accessory, and the fabric is merely a simulation of the flesh beneath.



Catsuits) & Miu Miu (The "Pantless"

skirt entirely to reveal sequined replacement of the skin with fabric nipples, genitals, and muscles

more and more similar to what is of this trend. First, by showing a diaper in the case of Miu Miu- it pants in a glorified manner. This is the final separation between the clothing that is becoming more phenomenon of revealing what is Duran Lantink's last collection for of catsuits that have anatomical one can only imagine. By exposing beneath it, designers are blurring skin and their



FORECASTING

4.1 Drivers of Change: The Democratization of Morphology

Before analyzing the future, we can identify the changes I've been discussing under a common title. The primary driver is the collapse of the distinction between "Healthcare" and "Aesthetics."

Technological Accessibility: Procedures are shifting form. Once used for healthcare, they are becoming commodities for the elite, and as the natural progression, they are trickling down to the public with time. Ozempic, fillers, and non-invasive sculpting are becoming mass-market commodities that are used to modify the body to reveal it more confidently.

The Economy of Self-Optimization: As the "OnlyFans economy" turns the body into an asset, the pressure to "upgrade" the physical form becomes a financial imperative. Thus, making the above-mentioned, now more than ever accessible, operations are an intriguing opportunity.

The Fashion-Surgery Loop: Fashion trends now move faster than Consequently, consumers are resorting to using medical the body into the silhouettes (e.g., the BBL era Heroin Chic revival) that clothing used to This fast pace and constant body shifts a loop in which you get stuck once become a part of it. The body becomes a prisoner of its own as stakes rise with permanent changes, going back almost becomes a non-option.

biological evolution.
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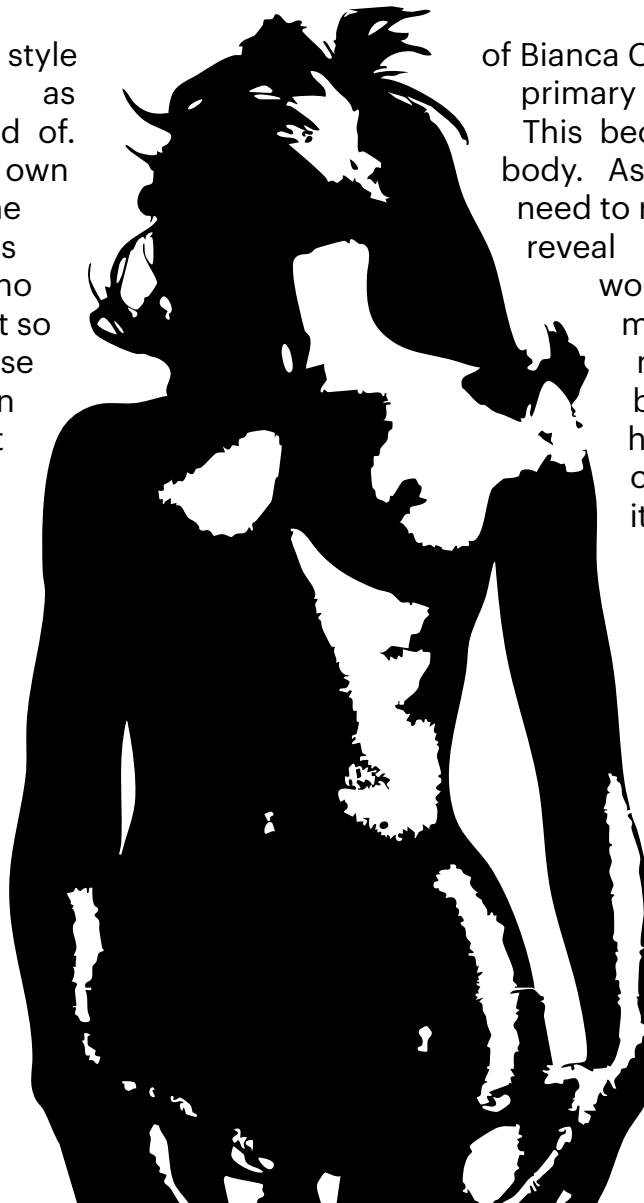


4.2 Weak Signal: The Era of Radical Transparency

As we've discussed all along, we are witnessing a structural shift where the garment is no longer a shield; it is a window.

The most aggressive example of this is Glenn Martens' debut for Maison Margiela Artisanal (2025). As noted in reviews (The New York Times, 2025; Istituto Marangoni, 2025), the direct utilization of transparent plastic covers and see-through materials opens a direct window into what is beneath, leaving no room for imagination. This is not to structure the body, but to reveal it. The material exists solely to create a barrier-free view of the flesh beneath.

This mirrors the viral street style and ultra-sheer hosiery as her body that she is proud of. vanity that one has for their own energy spent increases, the And as fashion allows this question becomes who "perfect" body they've spent so one of radical exposure: these mesh) erase the distinction worn. The fabric does not this new paradigm, the has become the garment

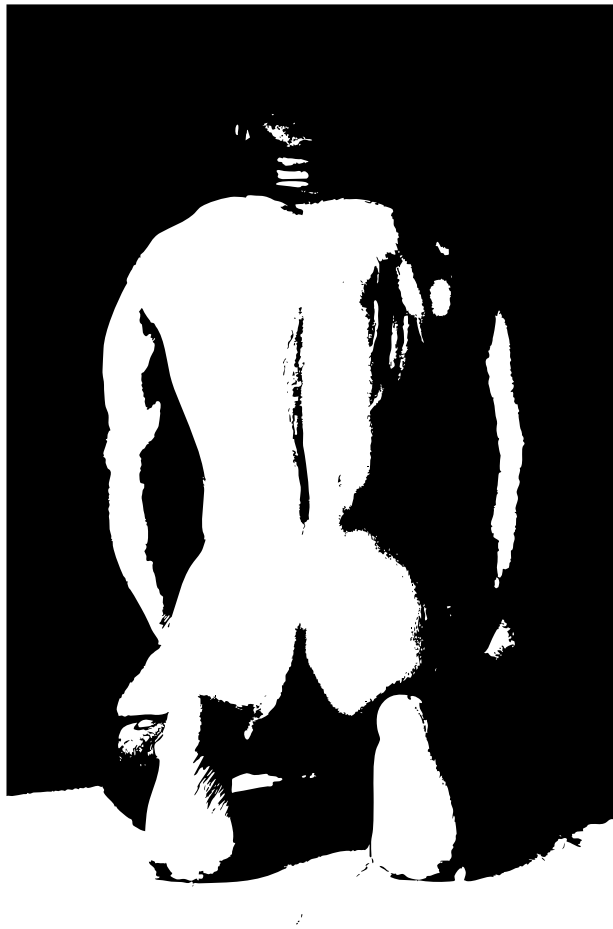


of Bianca Censori, who utilizes body tape primary garments. The idea is to show This becomes part of the pride and body. As the amount of effort and need to reveal becomes an imperative. reveal with its trend cycles, the wouldn't be showing the much on. The critique here is materials (plastic, tape, sheer between the wearer and the hide the body; it highlights it. In clothes are irrelevant; the body itself.

4.3 Scenario A (Mainstream 2030): "The Body as Construction Site"

In this future, the "Fashion-Surgery Loop" closes completely. By 2030, the concept of purchasing a "top" or "bottom" to hide imperfections will feel archaic. Instead, the Mainstream consumer will engage in modifying their body's structure on a daily basis using medical or chemical technology as if it was dressing up after having your morning coffee.

This is the logical conclusion of Myers' (2012) biotech revolution: we stop tailoring cloth and start tailoring the flesh. Why buy a corset when you can medically sculpt the waist? Fashion brands will pivot from selling textiles to selling Bio-Hacks that enhance these modifications, and your garment will become the body. The garment as we traditionally know will cease to be an aesthetic choice and become essential infrastructure for the modified body. We will be building artificial atmospheres on our skin just to survive the exposure of the modern age.

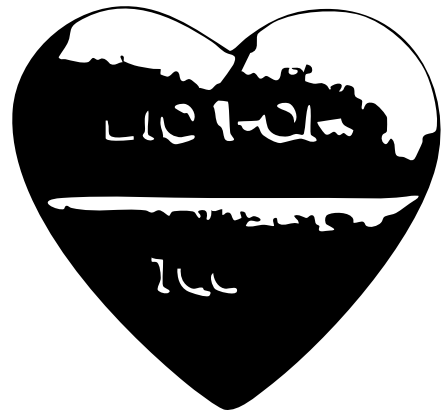
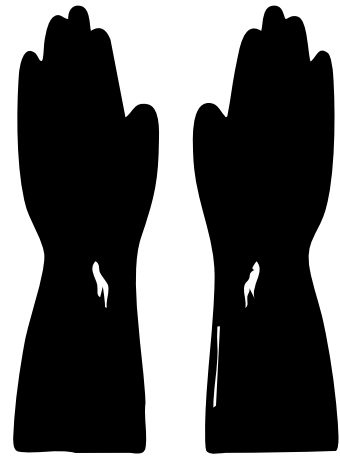


4.3.B Scenario B (The Collapse 2030): "The Quarantine of the Self"

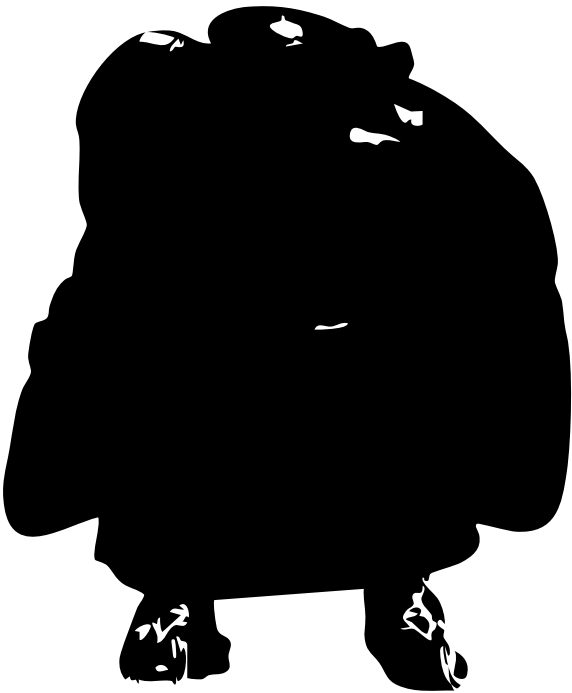
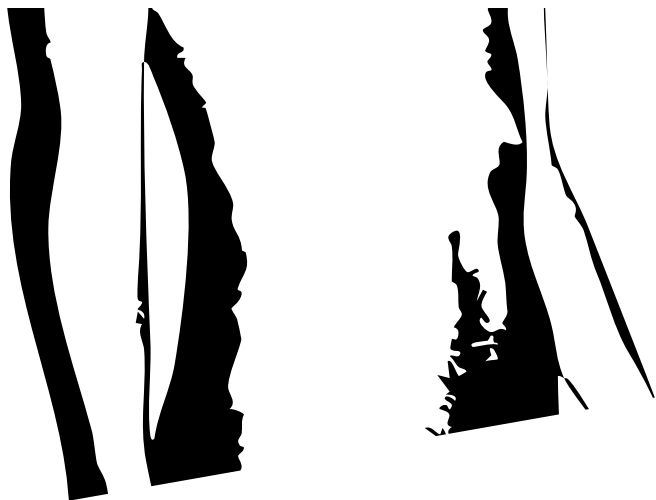
However, every trend generates a counter-pathology. If "modified nakedness" is the currency of the attention economy, we are heading for hyper-inflation. When every body is sculpted, injected, and exposed, the "perfect body" becomes banal. As time progresses and the "instagram body" becomes the norm of perfection, this will trigger a violent pivot to Bio-Puritanism.

If the body is a design project, and luxury is what is not readily available and limited to the elite, the ultimate luxury in 2030 won't be modifying it; it will be the privilege of hiding the raw, unmodified self.

We will see the rise of a retreat to covering the body that is "pure," with voluminous, non-porous fashion that functions as a quarantine, sealing the body away from the "gaze" of others. In a world of total transparency and modification, the only true act of subversion left will be to remain physically inaccessible and biologically "natural."



4.3.B Scenario B (The Collapse 2030):
"The Quarantine of the Self"



The Auto-Aesthetic Injector

Concept: A sleek, user-friendly countertop device that administers micro-injections of botox, fillers, and peptide solutions directly into the skin with surgical precision. The device scans the user's facial topography and automatically generates a real-time injection map tailored to the individual's aesthetic goals, depending on what the body goal of the day is.

Mechanism: Utilizing AI-guided nano-needles and preloaded bio-serum cartridges, the device calibrates dosage, depth, and vector in real time. Feedback sensors measure tissue resistance, elasticity, and micro-circulation to ensure safe and consistent application. Daily, incremental adjustments create a "living aesthetic" that evolves in sync with the user's desires and social feedback; there is no need to go to a doctor when you can daily modify your body to fit what is expected of you that day.

Implication: A dystopic device, it dissolves the boundary between clothing, accessories, and the body itself. Where once style was external, as you'd be able to buy your clothes or make a last-minute same-day delivery order from your favorite retail store to go to the event of the night, now your body (and thus your clothing) exists as dynamic, performative flesh. The user is continuously sculpted. Personal identity is lost; as we all are wearing the same clothes pushed by the fast fashion and micro-trend boom, now we will have the same bodies

The body will become both a canvas and a commodity, and "beauty," as we know it, will cease to be optional and will become obligatory; only luxury will become the privilege to escape these standards.





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Fashion is no longer just ornamentation; it is a mechanism of control, self-surveillance, and social signaling. The body has become the primary canvas that we have to bend and modify to meet societal expectations, desires, and judgment. Fashion sets trends that cascade through society, trickling down from elite circles to all of us, shaping behavior, taste, and aspiration. With biotech beauty, fillers, and wearable technologies, fashion extends directly onto flesh, making the body itself the site of modification and exposure.

Here we must ask a fundamental question: Is this trend of modifying the body a form of liberation, or is it a new form of constraint? If fashion evolves into a "second skin" and becomes the garment itself, doesn't it remove the democratic utility of clothing—the ability to structure, hide, or alter the body?

Traditional tailoring, still persistent but quietly fading, allowed the wearer to construct an identity on top of their biology.

They were able to get into a character without modifying themselves permanently. Subversive Hedonism, on the contrary, insists that biology is the identity.

CRITICAL

REFLECT

This trend privileges those who fit the "Heroin Chic" or "Gym-Body" ideal, transforming the fashion industry into a serial killer of body diversity. Not in the traditional sense of we

need to be body positive, but more in terms of everyone looking like one another, as if they were constructed in a factory by machine. Social media and society are serving as that same machine in this metaphor. It creates a ruthless class divide: there are those who can afford the surgery, Ozempic, and training required to "wear" their own skin as a luxury product, and those who cannot. In this paradigm, the "natural" body is no longer neutral; it is a sign of financial failure.

ON

On the issue of control and losing the control we have over our own body, as we add more technology, the world becomes more "opaque" and harder to understand. We are surrounded by what Bridle (2018) calls "black boxes" that we cannot read. The paradox of Subversive Hedonism is that it promises total transparency (nudity) but delivers total opacity. The more skin we show, the more we are actually hiding behind layers of procedures, fillers, performance, filters, and algorithmic curation.

This pressure creates the narrative that the human body is not a finished state, but a constant design project that must be medically maintained, aesthetically terraformed, and permanently displayed. In this future, the pressure to design oneself never ends, because to stop designing is to disappear.

We are living in this new reality, and the only viable path forward is not to evade it, but to accept it, adapt to it, and move forward with it. We cannot afford to surrender control to the forces that society is imposing and enforcing. The body is now our garment. This requires a strategic engagement with our circumstances: like a prisoner training during days behind bars to prepare for the inevitable time of release—whether through escape or the natural progression of events, we must also prepare for this moment. This is achieved not by hiding away from the reality of the digital gaze, but by embracing its terms.

That's the only way we would survive in this concentration camp we call our body.

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8.0 AI Acknowledgement

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