

# On the Fashionable Sexiness in Aesthetics

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## Abstract

*Sexiness, representing the glamor of sex, is a kind of expression for desire by the way of sensible figure of human body. As the enchantment of sex, sexiness is one of the key characteristics of human body, which is physically expressed. Due to the sexual attraction between men and women, sexiness is based on sexual instinct - the natural attribute of human and has a generality that goes beyond histories and cultures. However, as the expression of sexual desire, sexiness is always affected by varieties of social factors along the human development history. Fashion is one of these social factors. Fashion, also known as fashion of popularity, is most concentratedly embodied by trend development of dress styles. With decoration for human body, the fashion demonstrates, specifies and shapes what sexiness is, requiring sexiness to comply features of fashion and making sensible figures change according to development of fashion. The fashionable sexiness explains the course of socialization of natural human body.*

**Keywords:** Sexiness, Fashionable, Human Body, Aesthetics.

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## Introduction

Sexiness, representing the glamor of sex, is a kind of expression for desire by the way of sensible figure of human body. On one hand, acting as a mutual attracting force between males and females, sexiness, based on sexual instinct, one of the natural attributes of human body, features universality beyond history and culture. On the other hand, how sexiness is sensibly expressed is influenced, specified and constrained by various social factors due to the social attribute of human body. Fashion is just one of such social factors that influence, specify and constrain the expression of sexiness.

## Disenchantment of Sexiness

Just like an art, sexiness has two sides: creation and appreciation. The creation of sexiness (i.e. shows/performances) is decorating persons' bodies to show their enchantment of sex; on the other hand, the appreciation of sexiness is enjoying the sex enchantment behind the body image when looking at it directly.

For the two aesthetic activities, there is difference between the aesthetic subjects. Just like the difference between Apollo Spirit and Dionysian Spirit, the aesthetic activity during shows/performances is a "dream" full

of imagination while the aesthetic activity during appreciation is “intoxication” full of indulgence. During the shows/performances of sexiness, the aesthetic status is displayed through such an imagination where the individual person enjoys the pleasure of being watched when the person’s charm is shown. The show/performance of sexiness, i.e. the self-decoration of an individual person presents abstinence and properness, showing the restriction from various social factors of normal life against the person in the “appearance”. However, in this “dream”, the individual person can go beyond the restriction of those social factors by imagination, releasing his sensitive freedom through the body images. Regarding the appreciation of sexiness, the pleasure of aesthetics is embodied in the sense of intoxication, which means the subject of aesthetics temporarily gets lost when intoxicated by enjoying the charm of object, feeling the pleasure of watching during the intoxication. The appreciation of sexiness brings out mental experience with excitement, craziness and power, making people feel ecstasy filled with happiness and enjoy the eternal pleasure of being alive. Apparently speaking, during the appreciation of sexiness, the individual person intoxicated by sexiness is all the same as not before. Behind the phenomenon, however, the individual person is actually indulged in the intoxication of life will and enjoys the pleasure as if the life had just begun.

Amongst the feelings between the dream and intoxication of sexiness, a kind of superorganic comfort help us leave the changes of world behind for a short moment. Just in the short moment we truly become the original creatures and feel their unrestrained desire for and pleasure of being alive (Nietzsche, 1994). Finally, the dream is integrated into the world of intoxication, and the person enters the self-indulgence of Dionysian Spirit along with the whole restrictions and properness, leaving the taboos and commandments of Apollo. Whenever the Dionysus is welcomed, Apollo will be abandoned and destroyed (Nietzsche, 1994). No matter the show/performance or the appreciation of sexiness, the pleasure of aesthetics will be indulged in self-lost Dionysian Spirit. The intoxication of Dionysian Spirit includes not only the intoxication of sexual drive and huge desire or strong emotion, but also that of exciting movement and even destruction, since the essence of intoxication is the sense of increasing and even excessive power and the survival instinct of human (Nietzsche, 1994). Sexiness is just built on the basis of survival instinct especially the sexual instinct of human. At last, it can be concluded that sexiness is the desire expression based on the sexual instinct between the two genders and the expression has created a new style of aesthetics and gradually become the new content for aesthetics study.

### **Sexiness, Human Body & Fashion**

As one of human beings' original instincts, sex instinct provides internal driving force for sexiness aesthetics and puts sexiness in the place of aesthetic object for human in the realm of non-consciousness while the expression of sexiness, like any of the other forms of art, realizes the sublimation of sexual instinct through transferring or substituting libido for senses of satisfaction and inebriety instead of simple and direct release of sexual desire. A pleasure of sensible liberty is obtained from the spiritual experience of dreams and intoxication by moving the depressed libido energy of a private person to sensible expressions. Therefore, sexiness means an expression of desire based on the instinct between males and females from the perspective of natural dimension. Under the driving force of sexual instinct, sexiness expresses desire with the status of human body as well as the curing of fantasy and desire and surpasses and sublimates the instinct, realizing humanization of libido regarding aesthetics (Li, 1999).

The direct expression of sexiness is the status of human body especially presenting sexual implication. To improve the attractiveness of human body by decoration and covering and revealing special parts of it is the key method to demonstrate the sexiness of human body. It's normally considered that being naked means

nothing but boringness and that dresses make it much sexier by adding mysterious elements to it. Therefore, human body that is meant to express sexiness won't be fully disclosed without any decoration. In other words, proper covering over human body will better illustrate the meaning of sexiness. Dresses seemingly are telling us: there is something here and you may finally see it although it's now covered. Despite of nothing seen at all in the end, the covered body is still empowered with the glamor of sexiness by imagined fantastic views that arise in people's mind.

Here comes the question: how to decorate and cover human body to best display its sexy glamor? It's the fashion that provides the answer. Fashion is focused on human body, which it's created based on, popularized through and displayed on. The human body listens to the voice of fashion and wears something in any of the social occasions (Entwistle, 2005). It can be defined that fashion is the most popular dressing style or behavior within a given period. The body decorations like fashion suits and makeup, etc. are the eccentric expressions for fashion. Under any cultural environment, human body will be dressed up accordingly even though some races people who are used to being naked will also try decorating themselves by drilling a hole or getting a tattoo or even deforming part of body. In modern societies, the requirements for dressing of human body are mainly embodied through fashion. As a social factor, fashion that is presented by human body influences at the same time the way of desire expression – sexiness through the fashion of human body decoration, making the sensible form of sexiness follow the trend of fashion.

Fashion, as the social factor, has determined the social property of dresses. For different times and cultures of different societies, dresses used to express sexiness are different. In the meantime, this social property is constrained by its own natural property. As mentioned in the discussion over relationship between the physical and social properties of human body, the social property of dresses constrains people's understanding towards and selection of the natural property while the natural one provides support to certain social properties and is adjusted by social norms. The meanings of them both are closely connected with and enhanced by each other. What we must pay attention to is that both the natural and social properties of dresses are also influenced by the people's opinion on human body. Anyway, human body is the basis on which dresses exist and plays the role of a connection between sexiness and fashion. The dresses of fashion are mainly presented through the norms and trends of how people get dressed. The natural and social properties of human body and dresses are combined together to form the unique glamor of sexy dresses.

### **Sexiness of Fashion**

Normally, fashion is used to flaunt the body while also used for its decoration and covering, having the sexiness glamor of human body enlarged. In the meantime, sexiness will endow objects for body decoration with implication of sex regarding sub-consciousness. In the research on fashion, many scholars have found that there is an indiscerptible relationship between fashion, sexiness and sexual attraction and carried out further researches on this issue.

Flügel decided the core status of sexiness in fashion from the perspective of why dresses were invented. In his opinion, dresses and accessories were invented for decoration of human beings, i.e. to promote sexual attraction and express sexiness. Before his theory regarding this issue, the anthropologists provided two explanations to this issue: one is theory of protection and the other theory of shame. According to the theory of protection, amongst the basic needs of human beings, one is to protect the body from harms or injury by external objects or environment and that's why dresses and accessories came out. However, there were many dresses appearing in the traditional Western cultures and those of the non-Western world that were impractical

and even might cause pain or discomfort when worn. This fact left the theory of protection doubted. Referring to the theory of shame, it considered that dresses were used to cover sexual organs. Instead, evidence from anthropology has proved that universal sense of shame didn't exist at all. Reactions to the sense of shame vary according to different cultures, which weakened the basis of the theory that considered that the sense of shame was the essential drive for appearance of dresses and accessories. Flügel didn't completely negate the theories of protection or shame, but believed that it would be more meaningful to consider the purpose of flaunting the sexiness of body as the origin for appearance of dresses and accessories because part of the body would be covered or decorated only when people wanted to enhance the attractiveness of sexiness with a certain aim. He further came up with a theory using the psychoanalysis by Freud that dresses expressed two different tendencies opposite to each other of which one was to express the sense of shame while the other was to flaunt the realization of desire, or even the dresses themselves were probably the embodiment of sexual organs (Flügel, 1930)

When illustrating the development of fashion, Laver mentioned that there was a simple principle governing the style of women's dresses called seduction principle: it deemed that women's dresses were designed to make women more sexually attractive to men (Laver, 1969) What governed the style of men's dresses is the principle of class structure: the men's dresses were designed to enhance their social status. According to the theories of Laver, sexiness governed the fashion for women and persistence in sexiness explained why the fashion always changed and developed. Wilson also mentioned that fashion featured the essence of flirtatiousness and lubricity (Wilson, 1985).

After a research on women's dresses of the Victorian Times especially corselets, Steele began to notice the content of flaunting sexiness regarding fashion. She believed that the conclusion considering that women in the Victorian Times were depressed in sex and social life should be corrected because the fashion in the Victorian Times was closely connected with the opinion of women at the same time and voluptuousness played a very important role in the aesthetic opinion of those women. It could be concluded that flaunting the sexy body was the important feature of dresses for women in the Victorian Times (Steele, 1985).

It could be inferred from the studies of those scholars above that as the social factor closest to human body, the fashion presented as the dressing practice for special scenarios was closely connected with sexiness. Therefore, dresses were originated from aesthetic decorations for human body with the special purpose of flaunting and sexual attraction. Grosse wrote in his *Origin of Art* that the primary point of body covering in the primitive times was a kind of accessory to obtain adore from the opposite sex. Although the body characters enhanced by fashion have been extended to express more than sexiness as the society evolves, sexiness, as the most natural attractiveness between men and women, is still the essential character of human body as before and also one of the main styles of fashion.

### **Fashionable Norms for Sexiness**

Fashion, a power to socialize a private person, is just an obvious example out of so many life styles that try to combine the conforming trend of society with the diversification of individuality (Simmel, 1997). The style of fashion can be seen as a sign that expresses who and what an individual considers himself as - the basic aspect of culture identification and social participation of the individual. Therefore, fashion has been endowed with a social function which makes people show their identity and information including sexes, classes and social status, etc. through the clothes they wear (Entwistle, 2005). Regarding the narrow sense of fashion, it may be understood as the dressing practice for special scenarios, i.e. specific practice activities embedded in various

social relationships. It embodies the power of socialization and affects natural human bodies and specifies styles and methods of body decoration through focusing on individual practice activities profoundly by such affections on body. Fashion will effectively specify the style of dressing once established and of course the expression of sexiness.

First, fashion will specify what is proper dressing for human body. Scenarios and occasions decide the proper dressing. Different cultures will provide different definitions, but norms for dressing in modern societies are mostly the same. For example, going shopping when wearing a bathrobe is indeed improper or even astonishing while swimming with suits and shoes on is ridiculous. The dressing norms existing everywhere probably have already penetrated into occasions where we think we are allowed to be naked. Daily dressing or accessories possibly display social pressures, becoming a method to get human body socialized and endow it with certain meaning and identity.

Fashion also specifies what is proper sexiness. Fashionable dressing behavior magnifies socialized characters of human body, making it look proper, acceptable and respectable, or even adorable. Popular dressing always enhances the glamor of human body while outdated clothes will do the opposite. Dressing properly will show the sexiness of body, making yourself feel comfortable with your own body. Otherwise, embarrassment, discomfort and weakness will be dominant. With dressing properly as the goal, fashion provides norms for sexiness and expression of human body from all aspects including what kind of dresses should be put on, which part of the body should be covered or disclosed and even how to move certain part of the body such as ways of walking, sitting and speaking. During the process of body socialization, the expression of sexiness must comply with requirements by fashion for properness and embody characters of the current time in order to acquire more acknowledgement, praise and acceptance.

Second, fashion will specify what is stylish dressing. Fashion changes all the time, which demonstrates a paradox in fashion in itself. On one hand, fashion needs imitating because it won't be called fashion until becoming popular to some extent; on the other hand, fashion never becomes a common phenomenon and it would mean an end to it when everyone has got adapted to a fashion trend. The extinction of fashion is as quick as its arising. Therefore, fashion is not allowed to be popular and keeps its eternal activeness only by change and development all the time. At the same time, fashion will transplant its norms onto every natural human body through being imitated. The direct motivation of fashion imitation is comparative consciousness – unwilling to fall behind the others or competitive consciousness – aiming at surpassing the others. During the imitation, an individual has gradually accepted the norms of fashion unconsciously when pursuing the fashion trend he has expected.

In the meanwhile, fashion also specifies what is stylish sexiness. Despite the eternal purpose of maintaining the sexy attractiveness, the changing fashion has diversified the varieties of sexiness expressions, which is always changing as the fashion evolves. Let's take the evolution of dressing for European women as an example. The sexy dresses for European women changed all the time as attention paid to part of women's body migrated. In 1890s, young girls in Paris participated in Cancan dance in a kind of skirt that would produce soft noises during dancing; when it came to the 20th century, Bressler wrote in the book of *Century Underwear*: in 20s, the skirt length that was gradually shortened made stockings more important day by day; in 50s, the cone-shaped bras that enhanced chests drew people's attention to breasts; in 60s, mini skirts became popular resulting in people's eyes attracted by thighs; in 70s, slim-leg trousers and skinny jeans drove people to transfer their focus on buttocks while panties replaced shorts which were durable (Bressler, 2000).

Laver once explained the frequent changes of women's fashion styles using theory of eternally moving sexy body part (Laver, 1969). In different times of history, fashion styles for women presented, highlighted and emphasized their different body parts, aiming to maintain the stimulated state of men's desire for women. He used some examples. In 1820s, men were fascinated by women's legs while the fascinating body part of women for men became their back in 1830s, resulting in corresponding change of women's dresses. This change occurred in order to maintain the sexiness attractiveness of women for men. The desire expression of natural body is constrained by social factors and finally reaches beyond its natural conditions. This fact is the social property endowed to sexiness by fashion.

### Conclusion

When describing his feeling of visiting the Museum of Costume, Wilson mentioned that clothes in daily life were the important embodiment of self-experience and self-emergency and they were so closely related to the identity of people that the clothes and body of a person and himself were integrated as a whole when imagined by others (Wilson, 1985). Fashion, body and sexiness expression are also related to each other as a whole with the body expressing sexiness, fashion decorating the body and both the sexiness and fashion presented through the body. The relationship between sexiness and fashion has also illustrated the double properties of the body: the natural one and the social one. Sexiness must comply with the norms of fashion and change as the fashion develops. Therefore, the sexiness in fashion is the fruit of human body socialization.

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