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A Contemporary Body in Classical Guise

*Representation of disability in classical form and
contemporary beauty norm in Alison Lapper Pregnant.*

Elisabeth Tveite

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Foreword

My interest in art have always been in sculptures and particularly on how the artists chose to present the human body. I went into my first semester thinking I would write about Antonio Canova, whom I had grown fond of through my bachelor thesis, with his white marble, flawless skin and delicate details. However, I felt there was something missing from his idealised bodies. When Bente Kiilerich introduced me to Igor Mitoraj and Marc Quinn`s work with marble, I were intrigued and could not wait to look further into them and their art. Especially Marc Quinn`s *Alison Lapper Pregnant* and the positive and negative feedback it had received interested me, to a degree that I could not leave it alone. I am very grateful that Kiilerich introduced me to *Alison Lapper Pregnant*, because if she had not I would not have written this thesis.

Kiilerich has given me constructive guidance, and I have to thank her for her continuous help and feedback through my writing process. A big thank you to University of Bergen for partially founding a trip to Rome, where I spent hours of looking at sculptures, absorbing as much as I could.

I want to thank Hanne Husebø Aga for looking over some paragraphs for me pro bono. I also have to thank my fellow students for their support and conversations through this process. It has been reassuring to have a small group of people to share problems and ideas with, and be able to help back. Lastly, I have to thank my family and my friends for always supporting me, even when they do not really know what I am doing, and especially when I am not so sure myself.

Introduction

Gullbarbie

Every year PRESS, a sub organization from Save the Children in Norway, gives out an award called *Gullbarbie*¹ to a brand that is marketing towards young adults and children in a damaging way, with over-sexualised poses, unnecessary nudity, unhealthy beauty ideals and/or unhealthy gender caricaturising. In 2012, Victoria Secrets won the prize with their campaign *A Body for Everybody*, where they were claiming to have a collection of underwear for everybody, no matter what body type a woman or a girl had. PRESS pointed out that all of the models in the ads were almost the same size and body type, creating an illusion that this is what a female body should look like, thus saying that the sizes and body types that differed from them would be outside of the norm². The title of the campaign tells us that “everybody” should look like the models. If you do not, you do not get into Victoria Secrets underwear, and then you are not a part of “everybody”. PRESS is a youth organization that only works for the rights of children and young adults, and one of their most passionate cases are how damaging our beauty ideals are towards children. A tell-tale indicator that our society might be over average interested in physical beauty. Current leader of PRESS, Andrea Sjøvoll, connects our society’s beauty pressure to how we try to be successful and happy in everything we do, and how we increasingly incorporates social media in our daily life³. The more visual and hyperreal our society gets, the more candidates PRESS have for their award.

When I was involved in Bergen Student PRESS⁴ I forced myself to think twice about commercials, to look several time at it and truly understand what it was telling me and more importantly what it was telling children and young adults. I discovered something I had not detected before: the women and men in the commercials look all the same. Sure, some have brown hair and others have blond hair (some may even have red hair), one female model may have short hair and a male model have long hair. Small differences in height and skin colour occur. However, they have an unsettling way of looking the same. The women are not too low and not too tall, and if they are not catwalk models they have a bit of curves, just enough to be sexual alluring and feminine. The men are not too low and not too tall, and they have muscles (the infamous V-shape), but not too much muscles since that can make them look big and

¹ A barbie sprayed in gold.

² Vollan, “Victoria's Secret er Årets Gullbarbie: La dem få høre det”.

³ Sjøvoll, “Plastisk generasjon: Ungdom bombarderes med beskyldninger om at vi ikke er perfekte nok”.

⁴ Bergen Student PRESS is a subgroup of PRESS for students in Bergen.

static. In commercials, women are mostly portrayed static and men dynamic. Once you start looking at the bodies that are displayed in magazines, on Television and on the internet, the sight might discourage you, but most of all it is supposed to encourage you to be the person you are looking at, whatever means necessary.

As our society becomes increasingly concerned with beauty, perfection and ideals, we are also talking more and more about the risks these beauty ideals have on us as women, men and children, and as our quest for physical beauty increases there are increasingly more people advocating against what has become the beauty norm and evolved into being an ideal. Groups like PRESS stands up for the pressure on behalf of the young, and we can see commercials starring people with tattoos or other body modifications and people with a different beauty norm become idols for adolescents. One example in relation to Victoria's Secrets commercial *A Body for Everybody*, was Dove's campaign *Real Beauty* using women in a larger variety of sizes and body types than Victoria's Secret, indicating that Dove stands against our unhealthy body focus (a good PR move marketing towards the largest buyer group, "the normal women"). However, our culture still seems to ignore or disregard certain groups. There still is a representational problem in our society for groups of people that are too far from what we consider our norm on beauty and normality.

The western contemporary society are not the only ones that portray the human body in an idealized manner and striving to achieve perfection in our own bodies. Art history shows several examples of beauty ideals. Greek and Roman sculptures of Aphrodite, Venus, Hermes and Apollo show us young, flawless beauties, a beauty ideal that the Renaissance and Neoclassicism continued. The gods and heroes are portrayed in a dynamic pose, whilst most of the goddesses (certainly Aphrodite and Venus) are portrayed as though they know they are being watched and in a freezing pose try to cover themselves up. I look at these sculptures, these idealized bodies, and I do not doubt that they are beautiful or "correct" according to our standards of physical beauty as well as aesthetic beauty (the women may be a bit more fleshy in Greek and Roman idealized sculptures but the overall features look very much the same). Today we display the same tendency towards a beauty ideal that we can see in antique art. The unobtainable beauty ideal that was frozen in marble or bronze is now going in loops on the internet, in between TV programs as well as in TV programs, and in magazines. The idealized sculptures of antiquity were similarly displayed in temples, public buildings and private villas, making them accessible to most of the public. On the other hand, most of the Greek and Roman sculptures that we have today are not "perfect" and "whole". They may be

lacking some limbs, or all, and in addition, their heads, but we still treasure them as some of our most valuable objects of high art. They have survived since they were made, surviving wars and political change and in the end displayed in museums all over the world. These sculptures have inspired artists, poets, and world leaders, countries have fought over them and people have cried when seeing them in real life. They inspire great feelings and debates. Classicisms have continued to use the same materials and forms, and constitutionalised the well-known sight of idealized bodies in white marble as the greatest of art.

Fragmented bodies

When Marc Quinn took a walk in the British museum, looking at the fragmented ruins from antiquity, he asked himself why we respond differently to fragmented bodies, like *Venus de Milo* and *Belvedere Torso*, than to real life bodies with the same physical features. His question is what ultimately inspired this master thesis: “(...) how come, when you see a real person missing an arm or leg, and when you see a sculpture without limbs, the emotional response is completely different?”⁵ Commercials are a good indicator for how we (as a society) think a body should look, and therefore indicating that we do not feel comfortable with bodies that are physically different from the bodies we see in commercials and perceive as “normal”. In art, we may have a bigger tolerance for what is different as they are only representations of reality or a fiction of imagination. Take, for instance, Picasso’s women in *Les Femmes d’Alger*, they cannot be considered “normal” built as we see them in the painting, but then again, they are not supposed to and the artist’s presentation of them does not correspond with how they look in real life. It is art, and the artist painted what he saw. Then what about a realistic representation of a person that is considered not “normal” or outside of the norm in art? One thing is an artist that plays with how to portray a body, then the bodies can turn out like the way Pablo Picasso depicted the women in *Les Femmes d’Alger* but how about when artists are depicting real life people with physical disabilities?

In *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* by Victor Hugo the lame, blind and crippled are described as thieves and crooks, they are all beggars that live in an underground community called Cour des Miracles where no honest man would set his foot. Most of them are even faking their disability, which one of the protagonists in the story, the poet Pierre Gringoire, horribly observes as he is drawn down to the city of thieves: “In the meantime the legless man, erect upon his feet, crowned Gringoire with his heavy iron bowl, and the blind man glared in his

⁵ Celant, *Marc Quinn: Memory Box*, 111.

face with flaming eyes!”⁶ Disabilities are portrayed as something disgusting, as though an honest man cannot be disabled, and most of them are portrayed as fake. This is one literary example of how disabilities can be seen as having a “representation problem”. In art, as I shall explore through Greek and Roman art, the same “problem” can be seen through caricaturizing and stereotypes. It seems that while gay activists and feminist activists have been able to push their cause forward and gain more and more widespread support, disability activists feels that their cause are still being overshadowed and hence, do not gain the same kind of support. I shall look at how this might come to light with Quinn`s sculpture series *The Complete Marbles*.

Quinn`s question lead him to make *The Complete Marbles* a realistic representation of ten physically disabled people using the same material and form that he had seen in the antique fragments. His work opens up for some questions. How do we perceive disabilities, but more importantly, how do we portray disabilities? We can see sculptures from antiquity of mythological creatures like cyclops, dwarfs and Medusa, and portrayals of crippled beggars and even overweight gods. Therefore, at the same time that they created the idealized sculptures of beautiful young gods, they also created sculptures of disabled and deformed humans and other creatures. Their portrayal of disability seems to be steered by a fear or fascination for “otherness”, an attitude that is present down to Hugo`s story and perhaps all the way down to our society. Their representation of disabilities take a different form than what can be seen in *The Complete Marbles*, firstly because the classical fragments and not antique representations of cripples was Quinn`s inspiration. Many artists before him had been inspired by fragmentation, and created fragmented bodies, like sculptor Auguste Rodin and painter Johann Heinrich Füssli, as two modernistic examples. Igor Mitoraj and Christoph Bergmann are two contemporary examples and shall be mentioned later on. What makes Quinn`s contribution to this line of work is how he chose to execute his inspiration, and more importantly, what subjects he chose to use.

My research question

When *Alison Lapper Pregnant* (figure 1.) was presented to the public in 2005 the response was diverse and intense. What surprised me was not how much attention the work got; the fourth plinth is an exciting exhibit place with interesting contemporary artists, which deserves media attention. What surprised me was some of the arguments that were stated. Among the

⁶ Hugo, *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, 101

positive response on how Alison Lapper stands as a symbol of womanhood and as a role model for disabled, there was also some murmur about how that sculpture should not be on the fourth plinth, especially because the Trafalgar Square is dedicated to British military achievements and heroes. It got me wondering about disabilities in art, public art and the public. Would it be less of an issue if *Alison Lapper Pregnant* had only been confined within the white walls of a gallery? The difference between public art and art in museums or galleries are significant, and there seems to be different sets of rules for what is “appropriate” to display in public than what can be shown within the institutions of art. As public art is just that, public, the reactions are louder and more widespread. Then there is the representation of disabled, a group of people that, certainly through media like commercials, have been near invisible or ignored. There seems to be a tendency to ignore or disregard what is not within the norms of “normal” (normal, being a hard term to define, will here imply the majority’s perception of the term), or treat it as something unhuman to keep a distance from it, like the people in freak shows that were sensationalized as everything but human. In the arts, there seem to be another approach as well towards people that are considered being outside of the norm: caricatures. Physical disabilities have been caricatured through different ways of portraiture, which have been limiting people with physical disabilities to these visual caricatures; then how can an artwork like *Alison Lapper Pregnant* change this perception of physical disabilities?



1. Marc Quinn. *Alison Lapper Pregnant*. Marble. 2005.

My thesis

In this thesis, I have made some preconceived statements, which will help me explore my topic and will be steering this thesis's direction: 1. Western society has a much narrower norm for beauty now than before, and this is similar to Greek and Roman beauty ideals. The ideals are not the same now as they were then, which is only natural considering the centuries that have gone by, but there is a similarity in the way they had ideals that they stuck by and reproduced in sculptures and paintings. There still are aspects about the antique ideals and the present ideals that are similar, like the focus on young people and flawless skin. This is also, what limits the visibility of the disabled in our society. 2. Our caricatures of disabled people originate from an abject or an uncanny feeling when faced with disabilities. 3. Quinn's choice of form and material makes an opening to redefine our perception of the disabled.

To proceed with this thesis I shall start with a presentation of the artist and the sculpture series in question. My focus shall lay on *Alison Lapper Pregnant*, because, though it is part of a series it became just as much an independent work when it was displayed on the fourth plinth. When I use the phrase "our society" I am embracing the western society, where all my references to beauty and the ideal come from, and it is the context of Marc Quinn's choices when making this work. I am using references to commercials as I consider them to be (in this context) a good indicator for what we consider to be physically beautiful and ideal, therefore it is a good example. I shall mention other artists and works in relations to *Alison Lapper Pregnant* that I deem interesting and relevant. My interest in representations of disability comes mainly from Morten Traavik's book *Djevelen er en fallen engel: Eventyret om Miss Landmine*, where he shared his experience and thoughts around the making of his project *Miss Landmine*. I got a look into Angola's and Cambodia's treatment and attitude towards disability, and how the western society reacted to his subjects and execution. *Miss Landmine* is therefore an art project I believe is relevant here. Igor Mitoraj is relevant because of his inspirations from Greek and Roman fragments, and his choice to make fragmented works. In chapter 2, I shall look at Postmodernism to explain the Young British Artists and Quinn's art. I am placing this thesis in a postmodern context, because I believe it is Postmodernism that powers Quinn's plays with materials and subject matters, and in this context his exploration of the classical expression. There will be a presentation of contemporary theories of beauty, a presentation of disability studies and a presentation of a phenomenon within psychoanalysis: the uncanny/ the abject. Chapter 3 is where classical beauty and ideal are looked at against the

contemporary views of beauty and ideal. My first statement will here be proved or disproved through examples. My main discussion comes in chapter 4, where I have chosen four topics to discuss *Alison Lapper Pregnant*: disability/fragmentation, marble/classicism, the abject/ the uncanny and the political aspect/ the public aspect. I have included a discussion of the political dimension since the version of *Alison Lapper Pregnant* that I am focusing on is the one that was displayed in Trafalgar Square, which I believe gives it a political dimension. The discussion of *Alison Lapper Pregnant* (figure 2.) (and the four topics are all presented under my main topic: beauty ideals and what is considered to be the opposite of beauty ideals.



2. Marc Quinn. *Alison Lapper Pregnant*. Marble. 2005.

1. The fragmented body in contemporary art

Marc Quinn (1964 –) is in many ways quite typical of his time. He is an artist experimenting with different materials as silicon, marble and body fluids, and he became a celebrity through his affiliation with the Young British Artists. His experiments also includes different visual expressions: a gold statue of Kate Moss, colourful fingerprints in silicon, a circular fountain in metal and a bust in blood all meet in Quinn`s production. His work history shows an unwillingness to constrict himself to one medium or one visual expression. Quinn got his breakthrough in 1991 with a self-portrait in his own blood⁷. The work was called *Self*, being literally himself in material and image. It contained the same amount of blood that a human body has, only it was now gathered in a frozen condition. Quinn has made several heads like this with a couple of years in between, as a way of mapping the changes in his life. *Self* is supposed to recall a meditation around morality with its reference to ancient death masks⁸, however, Quinn himself says, “the sculptures are about life rather than death”⁹. The first *Self* was bought by Charles Saatchi, which was considered good fortune¹⁰, as Saatchi was the leading figure in the contemporary art scene of London. He could (and can) make or break an artist`s career.

Marc Quinn was born in London and studied art history at Cambridge University, before he started working as a sculptor in 1984¹¹. He is associated with the British movement of the 90s called Young British Artists (together with artists like Tracy Emin and Damian Hirst), a group described as “[S]wagering provocateurs, throwing themselves about town and flaunting their talent in front of high-powered collectors.”¹² YBA became known through their group shows like *Freeze* in 1991, for their unconventional materials – dead cows, blood, flies, and hardware store materials – and shock tactics. Their trips to art supply stores were rare, as their trips to hardware stores increased in number. The materials and ideas behind the work itself became more important than the image itself when they started picking up ideas from

⁷ Quinn, “Biography”.

⁸ Muir, *Lucky Kunst: The Rise & Fall of Young British Art*, 46.

⁹ Celant, *Marc Quinn: Memory Box*, 347.

¹⁰ Celant, *Marc Quinn*, 47.

¹¹ Muir, *Lucky Kunst*, 45.

¹² *Ibid.*, 3.

conceptual art and kitsch: “(...) everyone was seeking some killer conceptual idea – a sudden bolt of genius.”¹³

In dialog with Quinn

Quinn explains his procedure and thoughts around the artwork's subjects, materials and method in dialog with journalists and theorists in Germano Celant's book *Marc Quinn: Memory Box* (2013). The book gives great insight into the artist's own experience with the works and their making, and how he explores his own self, physicality, beauty, science, and the human body, through various materials and expressions. His own body has been frequently used as subject, as he has explored his inner and outer self. The use of different expressions and, not least, materials, makes me believe that artists like Quinn are “onions”. Instead of a static visual expression (a core), Quinn has many layers of visual expressions and ideas. Linda Nochlin writes that in Postmodernism the “postmodern body (...) is conceived of uniquely as the “body-in-pieces”: the very notion of a unified, unambiguously gendered subject is rendered suspect by their work.”¹⁴ The postmodern artist looked at the body in a different way, in art it was – and is – no longer a unified subject, when new genders, gender roles, and body images entered the stage. Where the artist of antiquity would hold himself to marble and/or bronze and the 1600s Dutch painter would concentrate on the canvas, Quinn do not confine himself to one medium or one type of expression: “My feeling is that art should reflect the world we live in and the world isn't one thing (...)”¹⁵. The fragment (as I shall come back to) is here not only physical, but is related to how one feels and defines oneself. A person, a body, can have several layers at the same time, and therefore the self becomes fragmented. Quinn explores this by using himself and others to raise questions about beauty, perfection, life and death. He takes big philosophical questions – questions that can turn into clichés – and explores them in new mediums through the spirit of the YBAs: provocation, shock and edge.

Quinn is not reluctant to use beauty or create beautiful art, as long as the artwork also makes his audience (and himself) think and feel¹⁶. In an interview with Joachim Pissarro, he reveals that he goes through the same process as the viewers do when faced with his own works. When he uses beauty in his art, he makes the beautiful surface, material or image work as a

¹³ Muir, *Lucky Kunst*, 116.

¹⁴ Nochlin, *The body in Pieces: the Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity*, 55

¹⁵ Celant, *Marc Quinn*, 376.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 376.

smoke screen or “a sugared pill”¹⁷, so that “something a little more challenging slips in before you’ve realised it.”¹⁸ Quinn made it clear that he does not like the concept of “art for art’s sake”, as he needs art to be about something, which is where his metaphysical queries fit in: “Art should be something more profound: about life and being alive, (...)”¹⁹. His artworks reflect his engagement with society and social questions.

The Complete Marbles: classical material, new subject

Quinn challenges the way we see beauty and normality, which we can see in his two projects *The Complete Marbles* (1999-2000), and *Allanah Buck Catman Chelsea Michael Pamela, and Thomas* (2000). *Allanah Buck Catman Chelsea Michael Pamela and Thomas* shakes our perception of what is beautiful and “normal”, but this sculpture series will not be discussed here, though it is worth mentioning, as it shows how Quinn is not afraid to question the concepts “normal” and “ideal”. In this series, we see people that have gone through several and life-changing surgery to alter their appearances to fit with whom they feel is their true self. This includes sex change, facial reconstruction, breast enlargement, and so on. They have altered themselves to look like someone else than what they looked like on the outside, which makes them and their appearances stand outside of our norm. He singles out the work of Thomas Beatie as an image that “reflects the uncertainties and contradictions of the period we are living through (...)”²⁰. Thomas Beatie is a woman that underwent a sex change to become a man; however, he kept his (her) female genitals so he could have children. When Beatie became pregnant in 2008, he shocked the Western world’s perception of gender: he categorized himself as a man, but he had the ability to be pregnant. Beatie is now best known for being the world’s first documented man to give birth²¹. A man giving birth is certainly a contradiction according to society’s norms. *The Complete Marbles* explores a different kind of contradiction. Quinn got his idea for the series when he was visiting the British Museum and looked at the classical sculptures. He started to wonder why the classical fragments were celebrated, yet when people saw a person with the same physical features they felt uncomfortable or would not acknowledge the same admiring. The contradiction is found in where the admiration for fragmentation in art, turns to something else when faced with the same “fragmentation” in reality. *The Complete Marble* series consists of eleven sculptures,

¹⁷Celant, *Marc Quinn*, 376.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 376.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 347.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 355.

²¹ DefineNormal, “Thomas Beatie”.

Jamie Gillespie, Peter Hull, Tom Yendell, Catherine Long, Alexandra Westmoquette, Selma Mustajbasic, Stuart Penn, Helen Smith, and the famous *Alison Lapper Pregnant*, a sculpture of Lapper and her baby son, and a sculpture called *The Kiss* with two people kissing.

The Complete Marbles have more in common with neoclassical sculptures by Antonio Canova and Bertel Thorvaldsen than with works by Praxiteles and Polyclitus, even though Quinn's inspiration came from looking at Greek and Roman sculptures. Knowing that the Greek and Roman marbles were painted in bright colours, as purple, red, and yellow, Quinn's marbles with white marble eyes place themselves in the tradition of Renaissance and Neoclassicism. Knowing about the polychromy in the fragments did not stop sculptors from making their own touches upon classical art and redefining what classicism should be. The sculptors of neoclassicism followed in the footsteps of renaissance sculptors like Michelangelo and established the white marble as the symbol of classical art. Even now when we see white marble fragments from antiquity it seems natural, and reconstructed versions with colour may seem artificial, as we are used to a less colourful antique world.

The notion of sculptures in white marble being the highest of all art forms gets tested with Quinn's subjects. His subjects are not gods or generals, they are physical handicapped (even though some of them are athletes, which could fit with the classical symbolism), and he has portrayed them as heroes: "In the classical world the hero is someone who conquers an exterior foe or world. Now it seems to me a hero is the one who conquers the inside."²² They have conquered their own disabilities by becoming an athlete, an artist or "normal" citizen, which Quinn sees can be as heroic as the victories of the Greek and Roman heroes. Some of them lack a leg and others lack all of their limbs. Most of them are born this way, yet some has lost their limbs in accidents or from a sickness. No matter how many limbs they are missing, Quinn tells us through the title that they are still complete even though they may appear fragmented. However, their "fragmentation" is what makes them similar to the Greek and Roman sculptures. *Venus de Milo* lacks her arms and *The Belvedere Torso* lacks all of his limbs (and his head, which obviously is not the case of any of Quinn's subjects), Alison Lapper lacks her arms and Peter Hull lacks his arms and his legs. Here I shall quote Barbara Sliwinska, who has explored the same field that I am looking at: "The lack of limbs is unnoticed as we are so accustomed to the perfect Greco-Roman figures, such as the Venus de

²² Celant, *Memory Box*, 124.

Milo, we do not really pay attention to bodily distortions.”²³ I see her point, but I would argue that because “we are so accustomed to the perfect Greco-Roman figures”, we notice the physical distortion even more. Especially in realistic representation like *The Complete Marbles*. This was clear to me in the reactions that *Alison Lapper Pregnant* (figure 3.) got when it was introduced to the public on the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square in 2005.

Alison Lapper Pregnant



3. Marc Quinn. *Alison Lapper Pregnant*. Marble. 2005

The sculpture of Lapper is in Bianco P marble from Carrara²⁴, a material that has been used for monumental statues since the time of Augustus. It is considered the finest marble. Lapper is shown holding her head high, her eyes fixated on something beyond what we can see. Quinn has given her the typical neoclassical introvert eyes. It seems as though she has transcended into the same level as heroes, military leaders and other historically important

²³ Sliwinska, *Venus in the “Looking-glass”: para-classicism and the trans-body in the works of Igor Mitoraj and Marc Quinn*, 26.

²⁴ Rogers, *Marc Quinn Fourth Plinth*, 17.

people. Her body language exudes confidence and respect. The marble makes the whole statue seem transcended onto a higher plane, since in our western society marble is associated with something exclusive and beautiful. However, this only works if one accepts the classical sculpture as the best from art history, or as a foundation for all “good” art. Her head and face is androgynous, she could have been a general or a triumphant hero, had we only seen her head (as in a bust). It can be looked at it may seem unfair to give Lapper such a stern and seemingly less feminine face, which also is expressed by some of the viewers²⁵. This is probably the meaning behind the facial expression: Lapper’s survival “despite” her disability makes her a hero, whether she is a woman or a man does not matter (though the masculine features generates more respect and confidence, than if she had more feminine features). Lapper was quoted in the *Telegraph magazine* after *Alison Lapper Pregnant* was introduced at the fourth plinth: “This is an amazing day, not only for me but for all the people in the country and across the world who have got a disability.”²⁶ She puts herself forward as a pioneer, and encourages others with disabilities not to hide, but to make themselves visible as she did. She is leading other people with disabilities on the way to be seen.

Fragmented gods and goddesses

Igor Mitoraj (1944 –) is another contemporary sculptor known for his fragmented bodies, but in a different way than Quinn’s *The Complete Marbles*. He is a Polish artist, but he settled down in Pietrasanta in 1983 after he started using marble (and bronze) as material for his art²⁷. He was inspired by Giorgio de Chirico and fascinated by “the recycling of the antique and mythological inspirations”²⁸ as in, for example, Giulio Paolini. His works are difficult to place since his influence from Greek and Roman art is very prominent, and yet, there are elements of his works that are alien to classical art. As in Neoclassicism, Mitoraj has reinterpreted the antique fragments in a new way, but his sculptures are created more on Greek and Roman notions of symmetry and proportions. In addition, the fragmentation brings his sculptures closer to how we perceive antique sculptures today, than if he had made his sculptures whole.

²⁵ Louise Jury (Arts Correspondent) interviewed a selection of people about *Alison Lapper Pregnant* and one woman answered: «I would have liked something more feminine. You wouldn’t know it was a lady, facially.» Jury, “Alison`s a real eye-opener for Nelson” in *Marc Quinn Fourth Plinth*.

²⁶ Jury, “Alison`s a real eye-opener for Nelson” in *Marc Quinn Fourth Plinth*.

²⁷ Contini, “Igor Mitoraj”.

²⁸ Sliwiska, *Venus in the “Looking-glass”*, 16.

At first sight, the sculptures can be mistaken for a Greek bronze like the Riace warriors or Roman marbles like the *Belvedere Torso*. Where Quinn draws on popular culture, Mitoraj uses classical mythology and classical images, which strengthens the sculptures connection to the classical world. Mitoraj makes several sculptures of the same subject, most often gods or mythical figures, and most are in a monumental size. The size of the sculptures is one element that usually sets them apart from preserved Greek and Roman fragments, since they are most often in life size. In 2004, he had an exhibition in Mercati di Traiano in Rome and in 2010 he had one in Agrigento²⁹. These two locations have a historical significance and are monumental in size, which gave his statues a stupendous context. His statues were placed amongst some of its inspirations, and they seemed to fit in perfectly as works from the same era as the ruins and fragments they were situated among. They lay there broken, with bandages and broken limbs. The way that they were exhibited made them look as though they had been dug up by an excavation team, or fallen from a considerable height and scattered around like old gods that nobody believes in anymore³⁰.

Torso di Ikaro and Torso Alato

Where Quinn makes his popular cultural influence more obvious and easy to recognize, Mitoraj is more subtle in his ways. He puts small foreign elements on his monumental fragments: wings on the hips instead of the back, ribbons that look like bandages, small eyes in the back, and torsos emerging from the flesh of the object. It can take a while until one notices the small surrealistic elements on the bodies, which until then might have given the perfect impression of being antique fragments. Mitoraj deliberately makes sculptures that are fragmented, and interestingly that is what makes his sculptures seem closer to the antique “originals”. One gets the feeling that they have just been dug up from a Greek island or Roman ruins. Sometimes there is just a head left, and other times only a torso and partial head, like in *Torso di Ikaro* (2000) in bronze. Here the legs, arms, and half the head are missing. A large, soft mouth and nose are visible, but there is not much signs of an expression in the face. Mitoraj`s sculptures do not engage with the spectator. The body is fit with defined muscles, which seem neither restrained nor relaxed. The limbs seem to be cut off unevenly. We know that Mitoraj made these sculptures and made them look like fragmented sculptures, but they could have been made so by nature and time. We perceive them as whole figures that unfortunately have been exposed to political change, climate and time, which have left them fragmented. In the case of the

²⁹ Kiillerich, *Mitorajs moderne myter: nytt liv til gamle former*, 46.

³⁰ Note: I did not attend any of these two exhibitions.

fragments from Greek and Roman art, we do not know if the statue lost its limbs in this way through time naturally, or if someone did this with purpose in a war or by accident.



4. and 5. Igor Mitoraj. *Torso Alato*. Marble. 2001.

His marble version of *Torso Alato* (2001) (figure 4. and 5.) is cut in a way that makes it look like it has lost its limbs naturally, as one can see in the *Belvedere Torso* (ca. 180-160 BC), however *Torso Alato* has physically more in common with the late archaic statues. All of his sculptures have more in common with the Archaic period than, for example, the Hellenistic period. There is less dynamic movements, display of feelings or any communication with what's outside of the sculpture. His sculptures are in a static pose and idealized body, which makes the figures seem more like sculptures of sculptures, than a realistic take on the human body. *Torso Alato* is one of the sculptures that inhabit the archaic form the most. Its muscles

is not as defined and exaggerated as in, for example *Belvedere Torso*, which makes the winged torso look like the body of a young man as one can see in the *Kritios Boy*. The *Kritios Boy* is a sculpture that shows a small, but significant, change from the strict archaic kouroi to a freer round sculpture where the pose is more natural³¹.

When looking at *Torso Alato* there are three elements that make the statue seem unnatural or surrealistic. These three elements give the sculpture its contemporary look. First, it has a wing placed over the right hip, second, there is a ribbon running from right, just under the chest and diagonally down to over the left hip, and finally, there is an eye placed on the torso's back above the buttocks on the right side. These elements, when first noticed, cannot be ignored, and bring the sculptures back into the contemporary art world. Mitoraj's sculptures are fragmented, but they are not necessarily perceived as fragmented. We are used to seeing torsos, heads, arms and legs from Greek and Roman cultures. Their form are so imbedded in our consciousness, that Mitoraj's sculpture makes perfect sense and appears whole.

Female [pregnant] nude

Alison Lapper Pregnant (2000) got just as much negative as positive attention when it was introduced at the fourth plinth on Trafalgar Square in 2005, and exhibited there for 18 months. The work was chosen by the Fourth Plinth project that started in 1999 to exhibit contemporary artworks (that are exchanged regularly) on the Fourth Plinth. Originally, the plinth was meant to be the site for an equestrian statue of William IV, but remained empty until 1999³². So far, nine works by national and international artists have been displayed on the plinth. Currently *Hahn/Cock* (figure 6.) by the German artist Katharina Fritsch, a 4.75 m high and intense blue rooster. Upon its unveiling she told a journalist in *The Guardian* that *Hanh/Cock* is a feminist work: "It is a feminist sculpture, since it is I who am doing something active here – I, a woman, am depicting something male"³³. It is also a small poke at the masculine sculptures already inhabiting the square. Shanti Sumartojo explains how the new contemporary works stand in contrasts to the national symbol that Trafalgar Square is, and trigger discussions about national identity in England: "(...) media commentary on the Fourth Plinth scheme demonstrated how Trafalgar Square catalysed the discussion of Britishness, and also helped to

³¹ Kiillerich, *Græsk Skulptur: fra dædalisk til hellenistisk*, 81.

³² Sumartojo, "The Fourth Plinth: creating and contesting national identity in Trafalgar Square, 2005-2010", 71.

³³ Higgins, "Big blue cock erected on fourth plinth in London's Trafalgar Square".

illuminate some of the complexity and ambiguity of contemporary British national identity.’³⁴

Alison Lapper Pregnant was the first work after the new commission was put together.



6. Katharina Fritsch. *Hahn/Cock*. Fiberglass. 2013.

Alison Lapper Pregnant is one of the best known of Quinn`s works, which can be traced to its controversial entrance into the public eye and space. Bluntly put, it was hard to miss. The statue got a completely new life on its own – from the *The Complete Marbles* – as a public statue in 2005, and later as a tribute for the Paralympics in 2012. The sculpture is to be found in a small size (smaller than life-size) and a monumental size; it was also made inflatable in order for it to be used in the Paralympics. A later sculpture has been made of Lapper after she gave birth to her son, depicting her with her son on her lap. I shall concentrate on the version placed on the fourth plinth from 2005 to 2007. In this way, I get to use the reactions from the public as part of this thesis. *Alison Lapper Pregnant* on the fourth plinth is a monumental statue, bringing references to Egyptian sphinxes. However, this sculpture is completely white and consists only of marble, giving it a neoclassical touch as I have discussed above. What

³⁴ Sumertojo, “The Fourth Plinth”, 77.

makes it striking is the big belly on a nude female figure. Female nudes are usually not pregnant, in fact quite rare (if not-existing at all) from classical and older art, no matter how full bodied they are. A contemporary and interesting addition to the rare pregnant image in sculpture is the nude sculpture of celebrity Kim Kardashian from when she was pregnant. The sculpture called *L.A. Fertility* (2013) is made by the artist Daniel Edwards as part of a series of sculptures of pregnant celebrities³⁵. *L.A. Fertility* insinuates that celebrity pregnancy is celebrated, however, the celebrities that Edwards is depicting fit within the norm of beauty. The sculpture gives clear references to *Venus of Willendorf* (figure 7.) and other fertility statues with its big belly and breast, and lack of arms. The pregnant celebrity sculptures becomes a tribute to motherhood and female sexual desirability. Kim Kardashian is celebrated for her sexuality and ability to bear children. Alison Lapper is portrayed without arms, but that is because she was born without them. This is how she actually looks like in real life, and it is not to enhance her motherhood or fertility. Whilst *L.A. Fertility* depicts Kardashian with a soft, straightforward looking and rather blank stare, and in a walking pose, Lapper`s body is portrayed sitting, with a straight back and her head turned slightly to the right and upwards. She seems to gaze at a point beyond our vision, like a victorious general in contemplation. Her appearance is less like a fertility sculpture and more like a victory sculpture.



7. *Venus of Willendorf*. Limestone. The Palaeolithic period.

³⁵ Market Watch, "Daniel Edwards Unveils Nude Pregnant Kim Kardashian 'Fertility Statue' in L.A.".

Alison Lapper is not just a subject of Marc Quinn`s artwork, but also an artist in her own right. She questions the way we look at physical normality and beauty, and uses herself as a subject. Venus de Milo is an inspiration because of the physical similarity³⁶. Lapper was born in 1965 with a condition called phocomelia, a birth defect where “the hands and feet are attached to abbreviated arms and legs. The word phocomelia combines phoco-(seal) and melia (limb) to designate a limb like a seal's flipper”³⁷. Her collaboration with Quinn started in 1999 with a body cast that Quinn then used for the colossal statue that eventually ended up on the fourth plinth. The art world was “in uproar”, as Steven Kennedy in *Evening Standard* put it³⁸, or just intrigued, when the statue was chosen for Trafalgar Square. A lot of the negative criticism against this choice involved the word “heroism”. Somehow, the body of a pregnant woman suffering from phocomelia was not a proper subject for Trafalgar Square, a place associated with “national pride and heroism.” Therefore, what was the problem the critics had when faced with the sculpture? Alison Lapper is British, thus the nationality is not the issue. Is it then the fact that she is a woman, and was portrayed naked when pregnant? Alternatively, perhaps it was the unsettling of being faced with a disability in public that challenged the audience? Equally many celebrated Lapper and Quinn for portraying another kind of heroism, not necessarily linking it to the other sculptures on the square. As with many monuments over a historical person or event, the majority of the population do not remember, or have ever known, whom or what it is built for.

Roy Hattersley, for the Daily Mail, did not appreciate what he felt was “propaganda on behalf of the disabled”³⁹, something that “looks suspiciously like an attempt to teach the uneducated and unenlightened masses a lesson in sensitivity and sophistication.” One can ask oneself why this would be a problem, does not a handicapped woman have the same rights to be proud of her body as a slender model in bikini for H&M? When we have sensitivity lessons in the military, equal rights campaigns and gay pride, a monument of a disabled, strong woman should perhaps not be as shocking or provocative. Since the fashion industry`s favouring towards beautiful, half naked, and slender women are challenged by women right`s activists and critical voices, one would think a disabled woman would gain praise for giving the public a diverse picture of how a woman can look. Quinn wants to set the spotlight on people with

³⁶ Lapper and Feldman, “Beauty Unseen, Unsung”.

³⁷ Lapper and Feldman, “Beauty”.

³⁸ Kennedy, “Travulgar Square”, in *Marc Quinn Fourth Plinth*.

³⁹ Hattersley, “Yes, she is a truly courageous woman. But the home of Nelson is no place for this statue” in *Marc Quinn Fourth Plinth*.

disabilities and promote them in the arts, “Alison's statue could represent a new model of female heroism”⁴⁰, but she could also represent a new way of representing disabilities in art and the public room.

Miss Landmine

Like Quinn, the Norwegian artist and director Morten Traavik placed his focus on people with disabilities in *Miss Landmine*. He launched his art project in 2003 (ended in 2009) with landmine victims as subjects and his motto: “Everybody has the right to be beautiful.”⁴¹ He went first to Angola where he looked for women that had lost their legs or arms in a landmine explosion. He dressed them up as beauty pageants with ribbons and tiaras, and took their picture. The public could then vote for their favourite contestant online. This is a project that got a lot of attention worldwide, from people that saluted Traavik`s way of placing the spotlight on these women and their tragic accidents to angry and disgusted people that only saw a white man “slumming” with poor, black, and disabled women. Traavik`s own mission was to empower these women through their own beauty. In this way, the focus should have moved from their disabilities to their appearance as strong and feminine women, and survivors.

The reactions were strong both ways. The focus was taken away from the women, and how they stand tall despite their handicap, over to their disabilities, roles as victims, and Traavik. For example, if Traavik had went to Angola (and later on to Cambodia) where he took pictures of women with all their limbs in order and called it Miss Angola (and Miss Cambodia), would that have been more acceptable? Would the project have gotten as much attention? My suspicions are that it would not even make the front page of *Aftenposten*, especially not *The Guardian*, whilst *Miss Landmine* was frequently mentioned in papers all over the world with titles like: *Miss Ubehag*⁴², *Miss Landmine: exploitation or bold publicity for the victims?*⁴³ and *Skønheder med skavanker*⁴⁴.

⁴⁰ BBC News, “Square's naked sculpture revealed”.

⁴¹ Traavik, *Djevelen er en Fallen Engel: Eventyret om Miss Landmine*, 11.

⁴² Traavik, *Djevelen er en Fallen Engel*, 174: Translation from *Dagbladet*: “Miss Discomfort”.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 126: From *The Guardian*.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 126: Translation from *Information*: “Beauty with defects”.

With *Miss Landmine* Traavik challenges the way we look upon disabled people, and especially how disabled women get a “double” handicap, being a woman and handicapped. He makes us look at these women as beautiful and sexual women, instead of poor victims. As he says in his book: “Bodies without limbs reminds us not only about war and horrors, but also about Venus de Milo”⁴⁵. There is one picture in particular that acts as a polar opposite of the victim role, the picture of Miss Moxico from Angola: “She spreads out along the edge of the pool in a tight fitted dress that enhances her pregnancy. Her body is a pure advertising sign of her sexuality: “I am sexual. I am fertile”.”⁴⁶ Miss Moxico`s pregnancy is an advert for her sexuality. She does not humbly accept a role as a victim, and she does not accept the society`s categorization of her sexuality as a sexual deviation or fetish. Her attitude in her pictures tells us she is a woman in her own right.

As in Miss Moxico`s case *Alison Lapper Pregnant* makes a statement that Lapper is “a productive social subject *and* a reproductive sexual being”⁴⁷. Mitoraj`s and Traavik`s art, that I have mentioned in this chapter, are two different sides to Quinn`s *The Complete Marbles*. The sculptures appears as pastiches of classical art, like Mitoraj`s *Torso Alato*, and it taps into the social situation of the disabled, like in Traavik`s *Miss Landmine*.

⁴⁵Traavik, *Djevelen er en Fallen Engel*, 203: Translated from Norwegian: “Kropper uten lemmer minner oss ikke bare om krig og grusomheter, men også om Venus fra Milo”.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 140: “Hun brer seg ut langs bassengkanten i en tettstittende kjole som fremhever hennes graviditet. Kroppen hennes er rene reklameskiltet for hennes seksualitet: “Jeg er seksuell. Jeg er fruktbar”.

⁴⁷ Millett, “Sculpting Body Ideals: *Alison Lapper Pregnant* and the Public Display of Disability”, 2.

2. Young British Artists: fast food art or mirroring society?

Contexts and theories

“In an era when anything can be labelled “art” (...) how is the perception of art as a distinguishable and unique practice sustained?”⁴⁸ Kim Toffoletti presents the question that occupied Jean Baudrillard. The question sums up one of the most apparent dilemmas when facing postmodern art, and can tell us something about the postmodernist’s attitude towards art theory. Postmodernism laid the foundation for Young British Artists and their art; it opened up for a broader view of what art can be, and in the case of *The Complete Marbles*, what art can portray and how. The inclusion of mass culture and anti-elitist attitudes towards art theory and practice gave breeding ground for a shark in formaldehyde, an unmade bed and heads made of blood. Postmodernism arose from a dissatisfaction with modernism’s narrow range of artistic values⁴⁹. The artists’ play with mass culture also made them stars in their own right as the media would refer to them as much as the artwork itself, and in some cases, the artist became more important than the artwork. There was a recession in the art market from 1989, and the artists found themselves deadlocked with a lot of art that no one wanted and galleries had to close or slow down their business. However, the galleries that had to slow down their business would turn towards local and cheaper artists instead of exhibiting famous international artists⁵⁰. These “cheaper talents” had given up old practices and found new ways to use materials and make art that would stir up the art world, and ultimately reach out to a wider audience. Julian Stallabrass writes: “there are no manifestos, no group statements, no shared style. Yet there are distinguishing characteristics,”⁵¹ I shall explore these characteristics, and therefore begin with a look into Postmodernism.

The postmodern condition

Jean-Francois Lyotard was one of the first to use the term “Postmodernism” when he published *La Condition Postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir* in 1979. According to Graham

⁴⁸ Toffoletti, *Baudrillard Reframed*, 38.

⁴⁹ Prettejohn, “Afterword”, 193.

⁵⁰ Stallabrass, *High Art Lite: The Rise and Fall of Young British Art*, 5.

⁵¹ Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, 4.

Jones Lyotard do not look at the postmodern and modern as historical periods, but closely related conditions⁵². The prefix “post” in Postmodernism connects it with modernism as a replacement or its succession⁵³. Lyotard defines the postmodern as an unwillingness to believe in metanarratives⁵⁴, which one can find in other periods in the form of Christianity or Communism. In his texts he tries to answer where we can find legitimacy (or in other words, where Postmodernism finds its authority), when we take away the legitimacy of the metanarrative. That can be considered a contradiction, since the search for legitimacy would leave Postmodernism with a metanarrative, which Postmodernism is supposed to be against. He particularly looked into small narratives that did not assimilate into the dominant narrative or controlling institutions of the western society⁵⁵. These small narratives were called pagan since they challenged and refused to give in to metanarratives, and the notion that only one narrative can explain our reality as a whole. Metanarratives are not defined by scale or size by Lyotard, he sees them as structures that “view and organise the present in relation to an envisaged future or end point”⁵⁶. Jones mentions Christianity as an example of the most enduring and influential metanarrative in western history⁵⁷. Religion has been an important legitimating factor for traditions and norms in a society, it is teleological, and large religions like Christianity manage to keep control of millions of people, across cultures, ethnicity, and borders.

Lyotard`s interest in the legitimacy of narratives came from an interest in how we manage to choose between the different assertions without any permanent criteria⁵⁸, as one would find in metanarratives. The critics of postmodern theory have argued that it “ignores history, installs a reactionary conception of subjectivity, misconstrues the mechanisms of representation, and (...) has generally acted as a surrogate discourse for the vested power interests of late capitalism”⁵⁹. However, one of the most interesting critiques against Lyotard`s “decline of metanarratives” is that Postmodernism itself becomes a metanarrative. Christopher Butler explores Postmodernism in *Postmodernism: A Short Introduction*, and states that postmodernists are ironic without knowing it. Postmodernism is resisting metanarratives,

⁵² Jones, *Lyotard Reframed*, 135.

⁵³ Woods, *Beginning Postmodernism*, 6.

⁵⁴ Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, xxiv.

⁵⁵ Jones, *Lyotard Reframed*, 130.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁵⁹ Woods, *Beginning Postmodernism*, 35.

which makes it difficult to legitimate or diagnose the “conditions of our existence”⁶⁰ and this process of trying to find the “real” conditions of our existence is exactly what postmodernists are against.

Butler points out Lyotard’s “legitimacy” problem as the main problem for Postmodernism, as it in the process of finding its “legitimacy” makes itself a grand narrative and contradicts itself. This is not plausible according to Jones, because Postmodernism, or “decline of metanarratives”, does not organise other narratives to a planned overall goal⁶¹ as metanarratives justifies their existence with being teleological⁶².

Postmodernists

Postmodernists do not believe in metanarratives of ideologies, religion or politics: “The origins of Postmodernism appear to be completely confused and underdetermined; and perhaps appropriately so, since postmodernism denies the idea of knowable origins.”⁶³ I am not going to pinpoint Postmodernism to a certain timeline, but I do define it as a period that fostered artists like Marc Quinn. To do this I shall look at Postmodernism as an attitude with different sets of aesthetic practices⁶⁴, because, as Tim Woods puts it, Postmodernism is a snakelike term “difficult to pin down”⁶⁵.

Quinn has worked with different materials, expressions and genres: ranging from his works in oil and silicon to his marble sculptures, and his own body fluids. He does not stick to one direction or aesthetic practice, which makes his work appear postmodern and anti-metanarrative. Postmodernism is primarily anti-teleological, as their stance against metanarratives suggests. The idea that there is an “overall design or universal plan”⁶⁶ does not apply to the worldview of the postmodernists. The popular cultural references and references to older art in Quinn’s work can be seen as typical for the postmodernists’ critical attitude towards “high” art and authorities. The postmodern artist should embrace the “low” culture (like gossip magazines and soap operas), which they look upon as “anti-elitist, anti-hierarchical, and dissenting”⁶⁷, and their art “often issues in pastiche, parody, and irony”⁶⁸.

⁶⁰ Butler, *Postmodernism*, 122

⁶¹ Jones, *Lyotard Reframed*, 168.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 138.

⁶³ Woods, *Beginning Postmodernism*, 3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁷ Butler, *Postmodernism*, 64.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

Postmodernism is about scepticism, about not accepting everything that history, media or science present to you:

*“Postmodernist relativism needn’t mean that anything goes, or that fact and fiction are the same as history. What it does mean is that we should be more sceptically aware, more relativist about, more attentive to, the theoretical assumptions which support the narratives produced by all historians, whether they see themselves as empiricists or deconstructors or as postmodernist “now historicists”.”*⁶⁹

Christopher Butler suggests that Postmodernism does not mean that all smaller narratives should have the same bearings, but that there should be a more selective approach towards the narratives that we are surrounded by. Quinn did that by asking himself why we regard the fragmented antique sculptures differently from the real life people with the same physical form as some of the sculptures. He questions the way classicisms have been placed on a pedestal, particularly classical fragments. With *Allanah Buck Catman Chelsea Michael Pamela and Thomas* the notion of determined genders and determined beauty rules is clearly shaken. As I have mentioned earlier I see the postmodernists and Quinn as onions, rather than as apples with cores. They have different layers that they peel away with every new artwork they make. There is usually not one specific style or genre that determines these artists’ work history. Quinn, in the works that I discuss here, is influenced by classicisms. He uses marble and he uses the human body as subject. His figures can at first glance look like classical figure representation, with his realistic and idealised bodies, but his works are most of all influenced by the time he lives in. The anti-elitist attitude makes popular culture, like films, commercials, music, and fashion good sources for inspiration. In the case of *The Complete Marbles*, Quinn does not tap into popular cultural references, but mirrors our society by taking a subject from reality. Quinn’s *Alison Lapper Pregnant* does not give us a well formed young hero or god, but a proud pregnant woman with a disability. The sculpture is realistic, but when Quinn decided to use a classicistic style, the sculpture also became idealistic.

Marc Quinn is certainly a well – known British artist, and with his artwork on the fourth plinth in 2005 he got even more attention. However, the most famous of the Young British Artist are Damian Hirst and Tracy Emin, which are not only famous for their provocative and thought provoking art, but also for their “over-the-top” behaviour. They are good examples to

⁶⁹ Butler, *Postmodernism*, 35.

explain the group and its art, but I shall also look at other artist, whom uses the body, and especially the realistic figure, as subject.

Young British Artists

The name suggests that the artists in question are young and British. Some would say it is a misleading name, considering that not all were British and young. Though the group expanded from the Goldsmiths College to include other art schools in Great Britain and foreign artist working there, Young British Artists stuck as the leading name. After all, it all started in London by graduates of Goldsmiths and friends. However, other names have been suggested, like Julian Stallabrass's "high art lite": "I hope that it captures the idea of a fast food version of the less digestible art that preceded it."⁷⁰ Stallabrass's alternative name reveals his less excited attitude towards the group, as he sees "high art lite" as a hype. Gregor Muir was among these artists, drinking with them, setting up exhibitions with them and experiencing the art from the inside. He did not write *Lucky Kunst: The Rise & Fall of Young British Artist* as a critical deduction of the group, but as a documentation of what he saw and experienced with them. Stallabrass's more critical analysis of the group and Muir's documentation therefore make a good starting point.

New York had long been the centre for new and exciting art, while many felt London had been in a standstill. When the new artists emerging from Goldsmith and other art institutions got together, they made enough racket to put London back on the art map. The YBAs "focused on the right meaning of life and death, love and sex, because it saw art as no longer being able to avoid the consistency of the real"⁷¹. Their focus on metaphysical subjects like life and death and the everyday materials like meat and plastic, made their art more available to the public. With accessible references to popular culture, like celebrity culture, glossy magazines and TV shows, the public had just as much chance to understand the artworks as art critics or art historians.

They experimented with unconventional materials (like Arte Povera before them, which is known for using "garbage" or materials considered unfit for "high" art), and in true postmodern style, a question like "is this art" may often occur in relation to their arts. The

⁷⁰ Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, 2.

⁷¹ Celant, *Marc Quinn*, 12.

YBAs took it a little bit further than Arte Povera when it came to using unconventional materials, as they often used shocking and dead materials (Damien Hirst got his breakthrough with a shark in formal hydrate and Quinn got his with a bust in blood), which made them as sensational as popular and unpopular. When the Momart fire in Leyton (2004) destroyed works by the YBAs, including Tracy Emins *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963–1995* (1995) and Jake and Dinos Chapmans *Hell* (2000)⁷², the newspaper *The Observer* wrote: “What happened at Leyton was at worst a mishap, at best perhaps an overdue act of aesthetic cleansing. . . . Fire is reliably clean and purgative. Who needs criticism when cremation is an option?”⁷³ The price for going against traditional art methods, and being loud and visible can manifest itself in bad press, as the public love to hate as much as it like to love. Criticism came from other artists as well, that wanted to lead art in another direction. Stuckism is an “anti-anti-art”⁷⁴ and international “non-movement”⁷⁵, which is against what Saatchi Gallery, the Turner Prize, Young British Artist, and especially Postmodernism stands for. The movement (or “non-movement”) was established in 1999, after the YBAs had raged around in Britain since *Freeze*, and they had one clear aim: to give art a deeper meaning and take back the term *art*. Charles Saatchi was the stuckist’s biggest “enemy” in their attempts to give art new meanings: “The Stuckists however felt that they had a battle to fight with clear goals: to break the stranglehold of Saatchi and Serota and their perceived indifference to painting (in particular figurative work) as opposed to Conceptual and Installation based work.”⁷⁶ The stuckists were too narrow to be able to “take back” the art term, as point number four in their manifest would suggest: “Artists who don’t paint aren’t artists”⁷⁷. It would seem that “all PR are good PR” as the YBAs has survived and most of the artists ended up making a good living. To be seen and sought after by the mass media and public:

*Hirst and his contemporaries cleverly nurtured their artistic image as avant-garde while jettisoning anything that smacked of theory or intentionality or critique-in particular the forbidding vocabulary and deconstructive impulses of '80s art.*⁷⁸

Freeze

⁷² Muir, *Lucky Kunst*, 236.

⁷³ Bush, “Young British art: the YBA sensation”.

⁷⁴ Childish and Thomson, “Anti-anti-art: The Spirit of what needs to be done”.

⁷⁵ Childish and Thomson, “The Stuckists”.

⁷⁶ Harvey, “Saatchi, Serota and Stuckism – The Battle for the Soul of Punk”.

⁷⁷ Childish and Thomson, “The Stuckists”.

⁷⁸ Bush, “Young British art”.

The Young British Artist group was born from the exhibition *Freeze* curated by Damien Hirst in 1988⁷⁹. It was a three-part exhibition in Surrey Docks of London, and it was the first time the original YBAs from Goldsmith came together, including: Angela Bulloch, Mat Collishaw, Ian Davenport, Angus Fairhurst, Anya Gallaccio, Damien Hirst, Gary Hume, Abigail Lane, Michael Landy, Sarah Lucas, Richard Patterson, Simon Patterson and Fiona Rae. The exhibition was inspired by Saatchi Gallery and its exhibition *NY Art Now*⁸⁰, which showed the newest and hottest from the New York art scene. Two of the best known art works from this YBAs are Tracy Emin's *My Bed* (1998), an unmade bed with underwear, bottles and generally a mess surrounding it, and Damien Hirst's *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1991), consisting of a tiger shark in a tank. These works show only a fraction of materials and expressions that the YBA works with. The group was revolutionary, and shocked London's art scene with their strange, and a lot of the time horrifying, materials and imagery that "casually presented within the framework of a white cube, would come to typify the YBA's use of shock tactics and sensationalism"⁸¹. They would court the media, drink until they passed out and drama would follow them wherever they went. In a way, they were very much living out the old cliché of drunk and eccentric artists in the pages of the tabloids. Their critical and sarcastic attitude towards the art institution can be summed up Damien Hirst's quote: "I can't wait to get into a position to make really bad art and get away with it."⁸² They were a new generation of artists that would put primarily London, but also the whole of Great Britain, on the map again, while turning away from traditional art and methods.

Working together to put up a new art scene, most of them stuck together after graduating and set up shows where they could promote each other⁸³. There were hangouts where the artists would meet, exhibit and have as their own. Saatchi Gallery and White Cube were key galleries for the YBAs as Charles Saatchi had extra fondness for them and commissioned a lot of their art, and White Cube held important openings. When Hirst first exhibited his tiger shark at the Boundary Road gallery, which later on was commissioned by Charles Saatchi, the reactions were strong⁸⁴. Debates about what art was and should be became a hot topic, as the general media frowned upon Charles Saatchi's purchase of "£50.000 for Fish Without

⁷⁹ Bush, "Young British art".

⁸⁰ Muir, *Lucky Kunst*, 19.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸² Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, 31.

⁸³ Muir, *Lucky Kunst*, 27.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

Chips”⁸⁵, with other headlines like “Is Charles Saatchi losing his artistic marbles?”⁸⁶ Their art would change the way people looked at art, and once again change the limits for what art could be.

Artist, curator and celebrity

The everyday materials, meat, silicon and magazine clippings, mixed with metaphysical questions, and clichés, simple narratives and irony, made the YBAs art more accessible and exciting for the media and the public. Their art was less influenced by art theory as their influence from mass media became more apparent. Media profile, unconventional statements, and factory production of art made Andy Warhol and his “factory” a clear inspiration⁸⁷, Jeff Koons was another. However, the metaphysical questions are very much present. Death and life, beauty and non-beauty, the individual and the masses, the big philosophical questions were just as much a part of their art as the banal everyday problems. As Quinn stated: “I think that art is a mirror of life and so it should reflect all the nuances and facets, all the paradoxes”⁸⁸. Tracy Emin’s tent *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With (1963-1995)* is about everyone Emin shared a bed with sexually and non-sexually from 1963-1995, everyone can relate to that whilst Hirst’s *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* seems more metaphysical. Certainly, that may have a lot to do with the title, which implies that there is a deeper meaning about life and death connected to a shark in a tank. However, Hirst’s shark still has a popular cultural reference, as the shark can be associated with the movie *Jaws* (and its sequels) that gave people an irrational fear of sharks in the 70s and 80s, or simple associated with the fear of sharks that these movies generated. Art becomes more accessible and comprehensible for a person standing on the outside of the art institution when there are easily available references, which again makes it more appealing to the public. What makes works like the YBAs works ironic is that the more popular cultural references and references to daily life they incorporate, the less their work is perceived like art and they are more exposed to negative attention by the public. More people might understand what it is, but it might therefore also get more difficult for to understand why.

The artists were themselves closely associated with their art. Like Andy Warhol, artist and art blends, and makes the artist and her/his life just as interesting as the art. Artists like Emin and

⁸⁵ Muir, *Lucky Kunst*, 44.

⁸⁶ Celant, *Marc Quinn*, 47.

⁸⁷ Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, 48.

⁸⁸ Celant, *Marc Quinn*, 376.

Hirst are known for their nightlife and unconventional opinions, and in some cases the artist's celebrity status puts the art in the shadow. Their art is a reflection of their lives and their interests. Hirst was interested in serial killers and his works on mortality illuminated this interest for death, gore and the darkness in humans. His works could be said to reflect his own personality: "Like Hirst's image, his work is spectacular and attention-seeking"⁸⁹ In *A Thousand Years* (1990), there are a severed cows head, a fly-zapper and millions of flies flying around in a framework with glass. Here the flies either live their short lives to the fullest and die, or they fly into the fly-zapper and die. The work is attention-seeking, hard to forget and all about the "circle of life".



8. Gavin Turk. *Bum. Wax.* 1998

⁸⁹ Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, 20.

Marc Quinn frequently uses himself, literally, in the art. His blood becomes a bust of himself, his feces become paintings and his DNA is exhibited in a steel frame. Quinn decided to look outside of himself with *The Complete Marbles* and started a new direction, which would make him explore the human body. Not the body considered “normal” or within the norm, but the body outside of the norm. Other YBA artist before him had also explored the human body as subject. Gavin Turk and the duo Jake and Dinos Chapman used the human body to shock, as the Chapmans’ “zygotic” children in *Tragic Anatomies* (1996) and strike an uncanny feeling as in Turk’s hyper real *Bum* (1998) (figure 8). In *Tragic Anatomies* we are presented with a group of children that appear to be conjoined twins, only they have grown together in (as the title suggest) the most tragic manner. The display and the way they have grown together alludes to freak shows, which was popular in the late 19th century and to the middle of the 20th century. This is a “return to the real”⁹⁰ and a renewed engagement, which came with the body’s “return” after a long period of abstract and minimalistic art in the 80s⁹¹. Some of the YBAs explored the human body with the unpleasant or odd, but it is more apparent in hyperrealism, where Ron Mueck and Tony Matelli (as Turk) takes Sigmund Freud’s “the uncanny” to a whole new level. Quinn’s *The Complete Marbles* have some of the same uncanniness as they look familiar (fragmented white sculptures), yet turns out to be something completely different when we approach them.

When Emin exhibits her unmade bed, which most of us never would let our best friends see, or Quinn exhibits his shit painting, which not only is something we all have to deal with every day and is a taboo in all social gatherings, then our perception of what is art is severely challenged. In Quinn’s paintings of shit (which I shall come back to) we are confronted with something aesthetically beautiful, but the material creates an unsettling feeling. Completely different from *The Complete Marbles* where the material is beautifying the subjects, which are not considered to be within the norm. Hyperrealism challenges us with reality like many of the YBAs or a parallel dimensional reality, which challenges whatever perception we would have about art, beauty and reality.

Contemporary Beauty

⁹⁰ An expression taken from: Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-garde at the End of the Century*

⁹¹ Moszynska, *Sculpture Now*, 14.

So what about beauty? It is clear that YBA did not concern themselves with beauty as an necessary art characteristic, but they did find inspiration in kitsch art, where we can find that “beauty” is present. Kathleen M. Higgins explains that kitsch is in fact one of the reasons for the “disappearance” of beauty in the twentieth century, because of “the seeming similarity of beauty to certain kinds of kitsch”⁹². She determines “flawless” and “glamorous” as two categories of kitsch and thus stating that the commercials, ads and other kinds of marketing with beautiful and photo shopped people are kitsch. I shall discuss the “beautiful people” that we find in commercials later on, but will not use the word kitsch there. We are confusing the commercials of beautiful people, in beautiful homes and beautiful clothes with “beauty”, Higgins believes the marketing have made us see these commercials as beautiful, but that true beauty comes from “an ideal of balance and health”⁹³. The YBA`s take on kitsch does not necessarily end up as the same kind of “beauty” we see in commercials. They are not afraid to use kitsch, to use beauty, because they are not held down by one aesthetic or one form of representation. Quinn uses beauty in his sculptures from the series *The Complete Marbles, Allannah Buck Catman Chelsea Michael Pamela and Thomas* and his sculptures of Kate Moss. He likes to make things that are beautiful, but also what makes us feel and think: “It`s very interesting when you combine the two because beauty then becomes a sugared pill.”⁹⁴. This is why it is important to find out what beauty, and especially physical beauty, is in contemporary art and culture. Higgins claims that we are misinterpreting what beauty is, because of how we are presented with “beauty” in marketing. This is a good point. We are bombarded with beautiful people in television shows, cinemas, commercials, magazine articles, products, blogs, and I could go on and on about where, when and how we are bombarded. It is becoming clear that we are living in a continuously visual society, and therefore what we see will influence us. We consider the people presented to us in glossy commercials to be the idealised beauty (I shall later on discuss how these idealised people we see in TV, commercials and so on, have similarities with a Greek and Roman beauty ideal).

“Beauty” has been linked to kitsch and classical art, which, as Higgins put it, disappear in modernism. Modernists repudiated beauty⁹⁵. Elizabeth Prettejohn claims that beauty was reintroduced to art discussions and debates in the 1990s, and rescued “from the watered-down

⁹² Higgins, “Beauty and Its Kitsch Competitors”, 87.

⁹³ Higgins, “Beauty”, 87.

⁹⁴ Celant, *Marc Quinn*, 376.

⁹⁵ Prettejohn, “Afterword”, 193.

connotations that had caused the early modernists to take issue with it”⁹⁶. This caused an interesting effect, which made beauty challenging and oppositional instead of conventional and kitsch. This effect is seen in *The Complete Marbles* as Quinn’s use of beauty creates discussions about art and beauty. Eleanor Heartney mentions an ambivalence towards beauty in today’s society that comes from social, psychological, political and biological reasons⁹⁷. This suggests that we are uncomfortable with a universal beauty ideal which excludes a large group of people, again because it is kitsch. The ambivalence is perhaps clearer in art, since there is no denying that beauty is a feature that is much valued in our society. Usually it applies to female beauty, where men are the observers and are giving the privilege of being “connoisseurs” of beauty⁹⁸. Beauty has been tied up so closely with the female body that in fact Wendy Steiner argues that to suppress beauty is like being misogynistic⁹⁹. Beauty is a word that we are more likely to use in connection with a woman than with a man, and there is a whole industry existing for the sole purpose of selling products that can make a woman more beautiful. Therefore, the sculpture of Alison Lapper and any of the other women that Quinn portrayed in *The Complete Marbles* are more likely to be judged from a beauty perspective. Laura Mulvey introduces scopophilia (a concept from psychoanalysis), the act of looking at another person as an object, in her film theory¹⁰⁰. This act of being looked at is so familiar for our culture that we do not flinch when seeing semi-nude pictures of women in public. Susan Bordo argues that men are being increasingly more subjected to the same beauty fixated reality that women has been for decades. She discovered that through a more open society and acceptance of homosexuality, men are allowed to care about their appearance and are being encouraged to do so. This comes with consequences: “All of this, as physicians have begun to note, is landing more and more men straight into the formerly female territory of body image dysfunction, eating disorders, and exercise compulsions.”¹⁰¹ Instead of objectifying women, we seem to start objectifying men as well, as if to even the score.

Beauty versus nonbeauty

⁹⁶ Prettejohn, “Afterword”, 194.

⁹⁷ Heartney, “Foreword”, xiii.

⁹⁸ Brand, “Introduction: How Beauty Matters”, 2.

⁹⁹ Prettejohn, “Afterword”, 195.

¹⁰⁰ Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, 440.

¹⁰¹ Bordo, “Beauty (Re)Discovers the Male Body”, 149.

A beauty ideal implies that there are some (actually the majority) that do not fulfil the standards, in this case the beauty standards. Kant suggests a person is beautiful as long as it is a perfect example of “the category or concept of human being”¹⁰². The counterpart of beauty is then what is not the “perfect example” of a human body. Noël Carroll calls it nonbeauty. The person or group that is implied as being nonbeautiful becomes then defective as human. Carroll explains: “the way to represent a human group as depraved is to portray it as nonbeautiful or ugly, that is, as an imperfect or defective instantiation of the category of human being.”¹⁰³ He uses the term beauty and nonbeauty in his discussion of the representation of ethnic and racial minorities in comical and horrifically images. Horror and humour responses are connected to the nonbeautiful figure, which becomes even more apparent if compared to what response beauty gets. I shall look at these terms together in my analysis of *Alison Lapper Pregnant*, since I am of the opinion that they are as relevant in relation to the presentation of disability in antiquity and today, as they are of the representation of ethnic and racial minorities. Carroll uses clowns and monsters as example, which are meant to be laughable and terrifying, but according to Carroll, they both explore ugliness¹⁰⁴. They are defined as outside of the standards of humanity and therefore beauty.

Disability studies

Negative stereotypes about people with different disabilities have been controlling how they are perceived and represented. Art history is filled with different interpretations of the human body, and bodies with physical disabilities have not come the best out of it. Robert Garland explored how disabilities were represented and looked at in antiquity in his book *The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity & Disability in the Graeco-Roman world*. He discovered firstly that the Greeks and Romans did not explore disabilities or try to describe how it was like to be disabled in antiquity¹⁰⁵, which makes it difficult to know how people with different disabilities were treated and accepted. Hellenistic and Roman art explored the human body and expressions more extensively than what Greek artists did. There are examples of portraits of flabby and wrinkled distinguished men, obese gods and emaciated old men. Especially in portraits, wrinkles, saggy eyes and double chins would be viewed as seniority, intelligence

¹⁰² Carroll, “Ethnicity, Race, and Monstrosity: The Rhetorics of Horror and Humor”, 37.

¹⁰³ Carroll, “Ethnicity, Race, and Monstrosity”, 38.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁰⁵ Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity & Disability in the Graeco-Roman world*, vii.

and gravitas¹⁰⁶. Mark Bradley looked at obesity and emaciation in *Obesity, Corpulence and Emaciation in Roman Art*, where it is clear that though ancient art (Greek in particularly) is focused on physical beauty, Hellenistic and Roman art shows that artists would explore other sides of the human physic as well. However, physical disability was still caricatured and mythologized. Dancing dwarfs, cyclops and other creatures from mythology were one way that disability was portrayed, and other was being portrayed as dependent “second-rate” citizens.

Dehumanization of people with disabilities is not an ancient Greek and Roman phenomenon. When Traavik launched his project *Miss Landmine* there were both positive and negative feedback, but the negative attention related around the “distasteful” nature of his images. Beauty contests are not the healthiest way of raising awareness around female competence and strength, but Traavik wanted to show how these women could be as beautiful as any other able-bodied person. To see women with physical disabilities in nice clothes, tiaras and poses proved difficult for many people, even though we are used to *Miss America*, *Miss Norway*, *Miss Universe* and beauty contest for girls all the way down to the age of toddlers. We are used to this image of beautiful women in beautiful clothes and with big white smiles posing at us, therefore it was not the image, but the subjects that distressed us. Beauty pageants are supposed to be ideals, as the song played during the crowning of Miss America suggest: “There she is: your ideal”¹⁰⁷. Dawn Perlmutter reveals the *Miss America* as a racist, sexist and classist contest, where the pageants must have all the “right” physical features to be able to win: “A disfigured beauty queen is unacceptable in a culture whose ideal beauty is supposed to remain intact, if only for a year.”¹⁰⁸ Why is that so, in an age where we are opening up for a more tolerant society, which is supposed to embrace individuality and diversity?

Social theories of disability have been around for decades, but according to Dan Goodley, Bill Hughes and Lennard Davis disability politics have been ignored and disability theory have not had its “global sweep” because of the stigma disabled still are facing¹⁰⁹. While queer theory and feminism have gone forward and gained in acceptance and number, disability studies are lagging behind because of the stigma the disabled body is still suffering from: “Disabled bodies are often viewed as disrupting what it means to be a natural/normal body.”¹¹⁰ One of

¹⁰⁶ Bradley, “Obesity, Corpulence and Emaciation in Roman Art”, 28.

¹⁰⁷ Perlmutter, “Miss America: Whose Ideal?”, 155.

¹⁰⁸ Perlmutter, “Miss America”, 159.

¹⁰⁹ Davis, Goodley and Hughes, “Introducing Disability and Social Theory”, 1.

¹¹⁰ Davis, Goodley and Hughes, “Introducing”, 7.

the central goals for disability studies, rights and politics have been to change the way disability is perceived, for example the perception that disability is the same as “dependency, invalidity and tragedy”¹¹¹. An activism in UK and US progressed from the 80s by disabled people, and disability scholars Barnes, Mercer and Shakespeare tells how disabled in Britain would claim that it is society that impaired disabled people¹¹², and therefore not the disability in its self. So why would the society have a problem with disabilities represented outside of the roles as amusements or monstrosities, and what feeling would that opposition come from? In my second statement, I claim that the uncanny or the abject feeling is why we make caricatures of disabled people. The question then is what are these feelings and how do they come about.

An uncanny feeling

A man seems to be floating a few centimetres off the ground, or perhaps he is falling down on the ground sleeping or perhaps he is rising from the ground. The man`s similarity to a living, breathing man is uncanny. Tony Matelli`s eye for details are amazing; there seem to be more details than what an eye can take in. He has hair on his legs, his clothes are wrinkly and his mouth slightly open. Matelli`s exhibition *The Human Echo* in 2013 gave us a view into how unsettling, or uncanny, it can be to be fronted with what appears to be real, but turns out to not be. We might feel as though we are disturbing someone when we enter a room with Matelli`s sculptures because his works are as real and lifelike that any photograph or reality itself can be. In Matelli`s works there is a surreal element that separates it from our reality, as we can see in *Josh* (2010), the sculpture described above: a man floating a few inches above the ground, sleeping or unconscious, like a human android waiting to be awaken.

Jean Baudrillard used the term hyperrealism for the first time in 1976 in the essay *The Hyperrealism of Simulation*. Baudrillard, in his exploration of art as a “unique aesthetic sensibility”¹¹³, asks how art manages to stand out in an era of hyperreality among other visual forms like advertising, films, magazines and TV programs. The same kind of discussion has been brought up earlier in this chapter, in relation to small narratives and how they can find their legitimacy in Postmodernism. Baudrillard channels the problem that YBAs art were

¹¹¹ Dodd and Sandell, “Activist Practice”, 4.

¹¹² Dodd and Sandell, “Activist”, 4.

¹¹³ Toffoletti, *Baudrillard Reframed*, 38.

often confronted with: why is x art, when y is not? Our society is getting more virtual every day and we can share information with the whole world if we want to. What Baudrillard claims, is that it becomes more difficult to separate reality and signs or reproductions of reality. Our culture is fixated on making everything visible and immediately accessible, to such a degree that the images becomes our reality¹¹⁴. The hyperreal is a reproduction of reality, and now the reproduction of reality is so good that it can be mistaken for reality, he even states, “*reality itself is hyperrealistic*”¹¹⁵. He calls our phase the fourth order of simulacra – integral reality. Take the floating man *Josh*, we know he is not real, but the realism in the work (size, attention to detail and execution) makes him as real as any other human. He can be mistaken for a real person. Hyperrealism as art is a good example of the feeling uncanny, as one can perceive a work as reality only to discover that it is a reproduction. Marc Quinn dabbles with realistic representations of extremes and otherness from reality; however, he has chosen to not make his works hyperreal and uses materials that link his work to classical idealism. Beauty is one of the tools that Quinn used when he depicted *The Complete Marbles*, and marble and neoclassical forms was the form beauty took. However, when faced with his marbles, I believe there is an ambiguous feeling. We recognize the beauty in the artworks (from a classical way of viewing what is beauty), but the subjects do not correspond with what we have learned is a beautiful body, and this is how the uncanny feeling comes in. The disabled body is stigmatized because of how able-bodied feel about looking at the disabled body.

Unheimlich

Sigmund Freud introduced the term the “Uncanny” in 1919. It is a term used for something that is familiar and yet foreign at the same time: “There is no doubt that this belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread.”¹¹⁶ Freud writes about the connection between *unheimlich* (the uncanny) and *heimlich* (the familiar, homely), and how “the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar.”¹¹⁷ Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854) is one of the theorists that Freud quotes, and the one that I think describes the atmosphere around *Alison Lapper Pregnant* in relation to our culture: “Uncanny is what one calls everything that was meant to

¹¹⁴ Toffoletti, *Baudrillard*, 30.

¹¹⁵ Harrison, Wood, *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, 1019.

¹¹⁶ Freud, *The Uncanny*, 123.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 124.

remain secret and hidden and has come into the open.”¹¹⁸ *Alison Lapper Pregnant* depicts a physical handicapped woman, a woman whose visual handicap makes her an outsider, and invisible and visible in the public room. So when Quinn puts the sculpture of her on the fourth plinth the reaction of having that, which is kept invisible presented to us, can become uncanny. When Lapper saw the sculpture of her on the fourth plinth, she said: “now I’m up there. You can’t avoid me any more.”¹¹⁹ This is a clear remark to a society that perhaps would like to not deal with exceptions from the norm of what is considered “normal”. Plato identifies the “ugly” as “that which lacks the power to attract”¹²⁰, but body fluids, darkness and that which is different have always attracted people. Like the well-used example of the car crash: when you drive past a car crash, you cannot help but to look at it. It repels and attracts. If we were to follow Plato’s line of thinking, the uncanny, scary, and what is outside of our beauty norms are not ugly. What is ugly is then that which we find boring or of no interest. *The Complete Marbles* is interesting, and *Alison Lapper Pregnant* attracted viewers on the fourth plinth. Quinn has used the beauty of marble and classicism to attract us, but we are not less attracted to the work when we discover what we are really looking at, which again do not mean that we necessarily like to be confronted with the subject. The feeling is uncanny.

“It is obvious that all these artist have spent time with Freud’s essay on the uncanny – or with the now vast secondary literature with which it is surrounded.”¹²¹ In this context the YBA’s “horror in the home” plays a big role. The uncanny does not just relate to mannequins or dolls (like Tony Matelli’s hyperreal sculptures), but can also certainly apply to art that is so horrific that it becomes beautiful, or disturbing art where you do not really understand why it is uncanny. Domestic violence, serial killers that attack people in their homes and furniture that is not what it seems, can be seen in the mass media’s keen attitude towards unmasking what seems to be perfect homes and families: “the domestic is supposed to conceal horrors”¹²².

Alison Lapper Pregnant is familiar, in that it plays on the fragments from antiquity that we are very familiar with, but brings on a new element with the subject. The realism in Quinn’s portrait is not quite what one would classify as hyperrealism, but it is realistic and true to the subject. We recognize a disabled, pregnant woman, and the reality of being faced with her can

¹¹⁸Freud, *The Uncanny*, 132.

¹¹⁹ Rogers, *Marc Quinn*, 12.

¹²⁰ Silvers, “From the Crooked Timber of Humanity, Beautiful Things Can Be Made”, 201.

¹²¹ Stallabrass, *High Art Lite*, 160.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 159.

be experienced as uncanny: “Encounter with the disabled person again produces the ambiguity of recognizing that the person whom I project as so different, so other, is nevertheless like me.”¹²³ When facing an older person we recognize that we will look like this in years to come, and when looking at a person with physical disabilities we recognize that we could have looked like that. Even though they are physical different, we recognizes them as just like us, which makes the image familiar.

Abject Art

Julia Kristeva defined the “abject” in her essay *Powers of Horror* from 1982. She explains it as something that does not fit in our sheltered and proper society. The abject is similar to the object, which means that it is opposed to the subject and the ego. The abject creates a feeling of revulsion; it is a threat against the subject because it is seen as something scary and dark¹²⁴, but the biggest treat is that it is ambiguous, because “it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it”¹²⁵. A big part of abject art is using the body and especially the body`s fluids. In postmodern art blood, urine, puss and organs are materials for installations, sculptures and paintings, which give the art something uncomfortable about it. The insides of the body are kept safe, held in place by our skin, and usually create an unsettling feeling when it is allowed outside. Hirst is known for his work with cadavers and Quinn is known for working with blood. YBA`s especially did not stray away from unconventional materials that can only be described as abject. There is no beautification of the nasty, horrible or uncomfortable. Kristeva`s “the abject” is quite similar to Freud`s “the uncanny”, something dark or hidden that comes to light or appears. It is the familiar in the repulsive that gives us the feeling of abject or uncanniness. Christian Lemmerz (1959) is a good example of an artist that is not afraid to use the visual language of abject art or explore the gruesome. He has used blood, pigs` eyes, and intestines in his earlier work, but the most relevant of his works in this context are the ones we find in the exhibition *Genferd* (2010-2011). This was a solo exhibition divided in three parts, where one of the parts showed a collection of marble sculptures. Technically these sculptures are similar to classical sculptures: white, soft marble sculptures with a flawless finish. However, the subjects of his sculptures tell another story than that of the classical marbles. A suicide bomber, a dismembered young woman, and a

¹²³ Silvers, “From the Crooked Timber of Humanity”, 204.

¹²⁴ Olsen, “En historie for halvfjerdserne, en teori for halvfemserne”, 109.

¹²⁵ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 9.

bled woman with a needle and a baby, is just some of the characters Lemmerz chose to depict. He also played with antique images, like with *Adam-Kadmon* (1998) (figure 9.).



9. Christian Lemmerz. *Adam-Kadmon*. Marble. 1998.

Untitled (Virginia) (1998) depicts a beautiful young woman with long hair and a dismembered body. She is split open from her genital area and up to her chest, or the other way around. Her insides, intestines, are literally bursting out of her body. Her right arm and left foot are severed from the body. All of this is depicted in beautiful high quality marble. The image is unsettling and grotesque. To be confronted with such an image in itself is hard, but when it comes in the form of marble, it gets interesting and/or provocative. Our classical heritage tells a tale of beautiful and heroic people embraced in marble up high on a pillar, therefore; when an artist like Lemmerz chooses to use marble as he did there is a sense of irony and provocation.

A dirty protest

Like Lemmerz Marc Quinn has dabbled with blood, meat and gore from the inside of the body. *Self* is a very good example of that, but he also made paintings with faeces – his own

faeces – called *Shit Paintings*. He calls them “a dirty protest”¹²⁶ from our society’s way of ignoring the human insides. This protest is somewhat similar to what he wants to communicate with *The Complete Marbles*, which is a protest against a culture obsessed with beauty, and therefore indirectly ignores the inside by giving the outside too much value. His thoughts around his own process of making the *Shit Paintings* shows a will to not just shock but wake up the spectator. He is not the first to use his own faeces in art. Piero Manzoni canned his faeces in what he called *Merda d’Artista* (1961); it contained 90 cans named from 001 to 090. Though his cans of his own faeces have an element of uncanniness, Manzoni was more interested in the individuality of the artist and how artists can express this¹²⁷. Blood, faeces and gore cannot be ignored (our insides are with us all the time, 24 hours a day), which makes our attempts to hide it so much sadder: “We carry around gallons of viscosity and shit and blood and yet here we are nicely dressed and drinking a cup of tea.”¹²⁸ Once we get to know that the materials used to make the paintings are faeces, we look at the pictures in a different way. They will not only be paintings, but something revolting, and we will find an urge to take a step back as though it can attack us. By using his insides as materials suggests a primal drive, something animalistic or childish. Something that the grown up society will not appreciate or accept. With *The Complete Marbles*, he does much of the same thing that Lemmerz does. He takes a material that is highly regarded (quite opposite of the *Shit Paintings*), a subject that most of the society ignore or chose not to regard, and puts them together. Just like the paintings made with faeces we are forced to look at it. With the paintings, we would look at it and perhaps admire it or at least find it interesting, before we would understand or be told what it was made of. The marble would make us look at the subject and we would recognize the material as a material with great value, which is used for certain subjects and themes. Second, we would recognize the form. Fragmented and broken sculptures of antiquity are familiar to us. The subject will only clearly appear afterwards, and leave us surprised. Political philosopher Iris Marion Young connects abjection to “the social invisibility of older people and people with impairment”¹²⁹. However, though *The Complete Marbles* can be looked at as abject, the sculpture series are not abject art.

¹²⁶ Celant, *Memory Box*, 182.

¹²⁷ Howarth, “Piero Manzoni, Artist’s Shit, 1961”

¹²⁸ Celant, *Memory Box*, 182.

¹²⁹ Silvers, “From the Crooked Timber of Humanity”, 203.

From beauty to abject, from abject to beauty

Disability studies and activism are seeing that people with disabilities are most often victimized or ignored by society, and where gay and feminist activism have gained acceptance disability activism has been in the shadows. As a result, people with different disabilities are not always given the chance to discover or play out other sides of themselves, making it surprising when artists like Quinn mixes classical art and people with physical disabilities. Silvers describes the feeling of ambiguity when faced with people with disabilities, and Young makes a link between abjection and the seemingly social invisibility of old people and people with disabilities. The feelings that emerges when faced with disabilities, or just “otherness”, suggests that the society have been choosing not to deal with individuals with physical disabilities in the same manner as what would be called “normal” people. They get another set of roles and expressions that are being found appropriate for them. They are put in boxes. In Traavik`s *Miss Landmine* the disabled women are given the chance to take on the role as sexy and/or beautiful women. The uncanny feeling emerges in the confusion of seeing and being confronted by the disabled person in a new role, a role where we have to recognize the disabled person as diverse. *Miss Landmine* portrays the women as beauty queens, sexy, beautiful and reproductive, and *The Complete Marbles* portrays the subjects as heroes, strong and independent people. The abject and the uncanny goes hand in hand, as they are two terms that essentially (in this context) explains the same feeling. This feeling emerges in the recognition of the disabled person as familiar. As “disability is closely associated with negatively value-laden states like suffering”¹³⁰, recognizing the disabled person as familiar, and similar, the uncanny or the abject emerges. However, Quinn and Lemmerz have used marble as material, which as suggested above, covers up the subject. Art can be seen to transform the “uncomely into something beautiful”¹³¹, but given that the classical is seen “as the sole and unequivocal root of all Western civilization”¹³² how does the subject of a disabled woman blend with the classical art tradition? There are two possible directions a work like this can take: first, the subject can be turned “into something beautiful”, or second, the subject will not blend but be a challenge to the preconceived notions of how a classical sculpture should look like.

¹³⁰ Silvers, “From the Crooked Timber of Humanity”, 211.

¹³¹ Silvers, “From the Crooked Timber of Humanity”, 205.

¹³² Settis, *The Future of the “Classical”*, 2.

3. The Art of the Body

Classicisms

“There is a widespread belief that the Greeks sowed the seed that would blossom much later into events and values that today we identify with”¹³³, concepts like democracy, freedom of speech and appreciation of art. Yet, is there a place for the classical aesthetic in postmodern culture? How do colourful or white idealised bodies fit in with shit paintings, unmade beds or animals in formaldehyde? Classicism is a recurring “obsession” in the European cultural history, where the Renaissance and Neoclassicism are the two best known in art history. In the case of *Alison Lapper Pregnant* the white marble makes it look like a neoclassical Venus, but there is no denying that her physical appearance is remarkably similar to an antique *Venus de Milo*. Fragmentation is a key word in this thesis, and the fragmented sculptures of antiquity the main inspiration for Quinn’s complete marbles, however, the classical statue was not meant to be fragmented and neither did the neoclassical sculptor make fragmented works. For the body to be ideal it had to be whole.

The ideal man and woman

In his book, *The Art of the Body: Antiquity & its Legacy*, Michael Squire explores the human body as perceived in Greek and Roman art, and how that perception later on shaped the body in art. The body ideal from antiquity has followed the western culture through the Renaissance and Neoclassicism up to our time. Even though our society seems more focused on individuality and diversity – like a multicultural society with different genders, sexualities and ethnicities – it is apparent that Greek and Roman body ideals have influenced us. In Paco Rabanne’s commercial for their perfume *Invictus* (2013) (figure 19.) there is a white, muscular and fair-haired man in a stadium. He is praised by the people as he goes into the stadium, blessed by the beautiful goddesses, and he wins the trophy after crushing his opponents. His body is symmetrical, his muscles are well defined and he has the V-shape on his hips that we can see in Greek and Roman sculptures like *Doryphoros* (figure 20.) and neoclassical sculptures like *Napoleon as Mars the peacemaker* by Antonio Canova. A V-

¹³³ Settis, *The Future*, 11.

shape that can be seen, not only on athletes, but also on celebrities and models as it is one feature that has become an ideal¹³⁴.

In *Invictus* a model plays the role as an athlete in the commercial, but commercials with real athletes are becoming more common, like the football stars David Beckham for H&M and Messi for Dolce and Gabbana. The shape of muscular, well-proportioned men appears before us in commercials, on TV and in films. We are familiar with this male form from classicisms, and it seems as though this is how a man should look, as more and more people in the public attempt to achieve this particular shape. A shape that is not that of Arnold Schwarzenegger's body, as his body is as "a stand-in phallus", whilst the body of a slender well-formed man seems to be made for movement and action¹³⁵. It is very much the same as one can see in *Doryphoros*: a young, slender and muscular man ready for whatever life brings him. The antique sculpted man was made for movement and vigour, as the ideal for the man in today's society. How is the ideal woman represented in our society? Commercials as well as other media present women and men differently. They are set up to hold different characteristics and roles within the society. The woman is most often portrayed smiling gently with soft eyes, non-challenging and open, holding her body in a pose that is either sexual or passive. There are always exceptions from the rule, which we can see in classical sculpture, though more often in our society, as there is an increasingly pressure for equal rights and treatment for both genders, which influences (as mentioned above with the Dove commercial) the way men and women are portrayed. Female athletes, as their celebrity lies in their works as athletes, are often portrayed in active roles (though they are also targets for gender generalisation), we can find the classical likeness in the imagery of goddess Athena whom is shown ready for battle (though she does not always directly inhabit an active role). Most of the time women are portrayed as "being", whilst men are portrayed as "doing".

The male gaze

This is one of the significant differences between the presentations of male and female subjects in art, which we can again see in commercials. Men are the ones looking and women are looked at. The man is the active one (the maker of meaning) and the woman is the passive (the bearer of meaning), and this is ascribed to a heterosexual gaze. Take *Aphrodite of Knidos*

¹³⁴ The V-shape is seen when the shoulders and upper back is wider than the lower back, and it is seen on the front as a muscular shape from the stomach down to the hips. The V-shape on the front can be seen in today's society as a sex symbol.

¹³⁵ Bordo, "Beauty (Re)Discovers the Male Body", 115.

where we see a young woman who looks like she is about to take or is done with a bath. The original work, which is assigned to Praxiteles, is lost; therefore, I shall describe *Venus Colonna*, as it is the copy that is considered to mirror the original¹³⁶. There are however, several variations of this bath scene, from Praxiteles original, like *Capitoline Venus* (figure 22.). Aphrodite is holding her right hand in front of her genital, but not hiding it, and her left hand is holding a drapery that we can assume she is going to put on. She is curvy, tall, with round breasts and full hips. Her lips and nose are small, and she is well proportioned, as the artists in antiquity used proportions as a tool for beauty and perfection. Her body type is similar to all the other Venus and Aphrodite that we have from Antiquity. The onlooker seems to be intruding on her personal space, she is trying (poorly) to cover herself up with her hand. *Doryphoros* is not trying to cover himself up, even though he is as naked as Aphrodite. The sculptures of naked male gods or heroes do not have the element of shyness or humility. When looking at the different sculptures of Venus or Aphrodite, the act of trying to cover up the naked body are characteristic of all of them. This was the proper way to depict a goddess naked in Greek and Roman art: with a narrative as alibi¹³⁷, in the case of *Aphrodite of Knido* the bath scene was the narrative. The bath scene was one of the favourite scenes, and gave the onlooker a feeling of invading or being a peeping tom and she would respond by trying to cover herself up¹³⁸.



10. *Capitoline Venus*. Marble. Roman copy.

¹³⁶ Squire, *The Art of The Body: Antiquity & its Legacy*, 89.

¹³⁷ Squire, *The Art of The Body*, 93.

¹³⁸ Spivey, *Understanding Greek Sculpture: Ancient Meanings, Modern Readings*, 174-175.

However, Squire argues that “ancient and modern “male gazes” are as different as they are similar”¹³⁹, and that if we include the element of religion the gaze is not so clear as male gaze versus female object. The fact that she was a goddess, gave her much more power as symbol in her own time than what she has now. Our modern gaze empties these sculptures of goddesses of any religious meaning, leaving nothing but the women left to be objectified. The woman as an object is not a foreign concept in our society, commercials being a clear indicator for that, but Susan Bordo explains a new concept that has emerged in our visual culture: the man portrayed as an object. This introduces women as the onlooker and introduces men to the difficult world of body dysmorphia. Bordo attributes this change to the gay male aesthetic that introduced femininity into the male sphere¹⁴⁰. When looking at the handsome male model in *Invictus* it is clear that the picture is made to make women (and men) objectify this man. He lets us objectify him, and we do not protest. Instead of stopping the act of objectifying women we start to objectify men, which could be blamed on gender equality gone wrong. Whether it is gender equality gone wrong or not, one thing is certain: “beauty seems to count more than it ever did before, and the standards for achieving it have become more stringent, more rigorous, than ever.”¹⁴¹ We have values and norms that we assume originates from antiquity, leaving it not so strange that we would adopt the idea of having a set of rules for what beauty is, like a slender and muscular man or a slender and curvy woman.

Hubris

Bordo points out that according to the Greeks “anyone who tries to overcome” our natural state of imperfection “is guilty of hubris”¹⁴², a fear that is not present in our society. The gods and goddesses would strike down on their people if they felt they were wronged, overlooked or outshined. One example is the story of Myrrha and Aphrodite, where one source tells the story like this¹⁴³: Myrrha was the daughter of Cinyras, the King of Cyprus, and believed to be a very beautiful woman. Unfortunately, for Myrrha, her parents committed hubris when they claimed that Myrrha was more beautiful than Aphrodite. Aphrodite became furious and punished Myrrha with a lust for her father, which made Myrrha trick her father into sleeping

¹³⁹ Squire, *The Art of The Body*, 88.

¹⁴⁰ Bordo, “Beauty (Re)Discovers the Male Body”, 122.

¹⁴¹ Bordo, “Beauty”, 144.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁴³ Miles, “Venus and Adonis”, 184.

with her. She became pregnant and her father chased her from the house, trying to kill her. The gods spared Myrrha, and they turned her into a myrrh tree before her father could kill her. This story clearly points to an important side of the Greeks worship of the gods; trying to be better than the gods would make them commit hubris, and the gods would punish them.

The western society has gone further than any society when it comes to achieving a certain idea of beauty or ideal, because we have the tools to do it, the money to do it and the means to spread the ideals through body modifications, technology and mass media. However Nigel Spivey, points to another reason for our beauty obsessed society, namely the principle of exaggeration. He claims that Greek men took an “obsessive shameless pride” in their bodies “to an extent that would strike us today somewhat bizarre”, and linked this “obsessive shameless pride” to how we focus on the body today¹⁴⁴. While Bordo believes that we are more occupied with the body in our society than they were in ancient Greece, Spivey and Ramachandran claims that we are hard-wired to exaggerate¹⁴⁵. In ancient Greece they admired athletes, therefore they exaggerated athletic features, like removing the coccyx bone from the sculptures so “to improve the line of the back”¹⁴⁶. In our culture a related admiration for athletes, health and fitness has occurred, and we exaggerate the qualities we like in a body: defined muscles, slender bodies, flawless skin. However, Bordo has a point; we have more means of achieving perfection now than they had then, which can only make the pursuit of perfection more intense.

Nudity, pose and naturalistic appearance

The classical ideal has especially been related to sculpture. A life size and three-dimensional figure has been the best way to portray the human form. It can be hard not to look at a sculpture of the human body without having an image of a Roman marble copy in mind to compare. There are three characteristics that are particularly apparent with Greek and Roman sculpture: “Indeed, each of the three characteristics described above has its origins in the arts of Greece and Rome: the statue’s nudity, its pose and the “naturalistic” appearance.”¹⁴⁷. I have been looking at the “perfect” and idealized bodies of antiquity and today’s commercials, which inhabits the nudity, pose and “naturalistic” appearance. *Alison Lapper Pregnant* made

¹⁴⁴ Spivey, “How Art Made the World”.

¹⁴⁵ Professor V. S Ramachandran explained the neurological principle of exaggeration from an experiment with baby seagulls called *The Herring Gull Test*. Ramachandran claims that we are hard-wired in our brains to focus on the parts (for example, the body) that matters the most for us.

¹⁴⁶ Spivey, “How Art Made the World”.

¹⁴⁷ Squire, *The Art of the Body*, 4.

in a classical form also has a naturalistic appearance, is nude and is portrayed in a pose. The artwork has a pose similar to what we can find in Greek and Roman art; however, it is not in the contrapposto that was intended in the citation. Her head is held high and slightly to the side, which indicates victory, pride and perhaps certainness, three characteristics that can be considered male qualities and be found in representations of victorious men. The sculpture of Admiral Nelson is an example of a sculpture where these qualities are supposed to shine through, and a good example of how we are used to see this way of portrayal executed. *Alison Lapper Pregnant* inhabits this masculine pose, instead of trying to cover herself up or gazing softly towards the observers, she is confidently looking beyond the observers.

Squire points to a good reason for “the lack of clothing” in classical sculptures: “[it] accentuates a second feature besides: the recognisable pose”¹⁴⁸. Nudity allowed the sculptor to show his skills and knowledge of anatomy in different poses that would other ways not have been visible under a lot of clothing. One had to be a skilful sculptor to be able to accentuate the body under drapes, as we can see with the Greek sculpture relief *Aphrodite untying her sandal*. Aphrodite is leaning down to put on or take off a sandal and the drapery is following every contour of her body as she is moving down. Even though she is dressed, the flowing movements of the drapes make her body visible. Nudity can be a doubled-edge sword in today`s visual culture. We are accustomed to nudity, it has to be provocative to have any meaning on its own, and it can be either strengthening or demeaning. Especially in the case of female nudes, nudity can turn them into sexual objects alone while most male nudes are associated with confidence. In *Alison Lapper Pregnant* nudity accentuates the confident and victorious look on her face and in her upright pose. In her case as physical disabled, the nudity is unexpected as nudity in our society is for the people we see in commercials, on TV and adult movies. Nudity has a sexual component, and is usually limited to those who are considered beautiful and sexually desirable. With *Alison Lapper Pregnant* the pose and nudity together creates an imagery that we associate with a certain set of sculptures: victorious imagery.

Squire states that the *Doryphoros*, ascribed to Polyclitus, “supplied the canonical schema for all subsequent images of the western male body.”¹⁴⁹, and that *Aphrodite of Knidos*, ascribed to Praxiteles, is viewed as the quintessential “female nude”, making every Aphrodite and Venus

¹⁴⁸ Squire, *The Art of the Body*, 1.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

interpretations of this sculpture¹⁵⁰. *Doryphoros* stands in contrapposto: with the weight on the right leg placed in front of the left, as if he is about to take a step, his left arm is raised (and would probably have been holding a spear) while his right arm is relaxed. The oldest version after Polyclitus's bronze, is a Roman marble now in Naples¹⁵¹. *Aphrodite of Knidos* is one of Praxiteles's most famous sculptures. The sculpture stands in a contrapposto with one arm in front of her genital area and the other holding a drapery, and as mentioned before, she looks like she is portrayed before or after her bath. Going from Squire's statement, *Alison Lapper Pregnant* should be compared to *Aphrodite of Knidos*, as she is supposed to be the mould from where every female nude should be formed. However, I shall use the *Belvedere Torso* and *Venus de Milo*, because these two sculptures are more relevant in my discussion – and more visually known – than the artworks Squire mentioned. *Venus de Milo* is an artwork that Alison Lapper familiarized with herself¹⁵² and the *Belvedere Torso* is a good example of a fragmented, yet celebrated artwork from antiquity. We can find their impact in commercials and artworks from different periods. I shall look at how these works in their fragmented state achieved the popularity that fragmented works from antiquity have in our culture (considering Greek and Roman sculptors would never make a fragmented work like that on purpose), because this is what made Marc Quinn wonder why we perceive people with disability different from these figures in art.

Reception Theory

In true postmodernistic spirit, reception theory does not believe in one truth or one correct answer. There can be many possible readings into a fragment from the past, its meaning and function can vary drastically from culture, education, age and general life experience. “Antiquity and modernity, present and past, are always implicated in each other, always in dialogue – to understand either one, you need to think in terms of the other.”¹⁵³ Winckelmann wanted his contemporaries within the arts to look for inspiration and meaning in the antique arts, just as the Renaissance man and many others before him. Only through antique art could the artist seek the truth¹⁵⁴. Marc Quinn opens up a discussion of our perception of ancient art

¹⁵⁰ Squire, *The Art of the Body*, 72.

¹⁵¹ Kiilerich, *Græsk Skulptur*, 112.

¹⁵² Lapper and Feldman, “Beauty Unseen, Unsung”.

¹⁵³ Martindale, “Thinking Through Reception”, 5.

¹⁵⁴ Honour, *Neo-classicism*, 61.

and postmodern art by using the classical form onto a modern subject. We perceive classical art in a certain way and with certain standards, which makes Quinn's *The Complete Marbles* an interesting discussion not only of how people with disabilities are perceived but also how classical art is perceived. The past is always present in what the artists make.

In *Reception and Ancient Art: the Case of the Venus de Milo* Elizabeth Prettejohn introduces reception theory onto the study of classical art: "If we find we can make no progress in establishing about the statue itself, then perhaps we should reorient the inquiry, to explore instead the responses of the statues viewers."¹⁵⁵ She feels that there is not enough physical evidence and that it is too difficult to "establish origins or provenances"¹⁵⁶. By looking at the references Quinn has used in his complete marbles I shall look at the response classical art and its classicisms have got and how we can see its impact in today's society.

Venus de Milo and Belvedere Torso: fragmented ideals

Plato is seen as starting the discussion around beauty in western philosophy. He does not come up with a definition, as we can see in *Hippias Major* where Hippias fails in giving Socrates a definition of beauty and in *Symposium* where examples of why beauty cannot be defined are given to the reader¹⁵⁷. Plato's texts of Socrates and his discussions with the ones he meets gives a good insight into how beauty was perceived. *Hippias Major* is a good example of how difficult it can be to explain a term like "beauty". However, in *Hippias Maior*, *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* there is a notion that "the first and most fundamental experience of beauty that we have is of *beautiful people*."¹⁵⁸ Hippias mentions "a beautiful maiden" as the example of this beauty, in *Phaedrus* "a beautiful boy" is mentioned and in *Symposium* it is not specified (though the weight is on male beauty). This tells us that the human body was important as an aesthetic object. It did not necessarily mean an appreciation for diversity:

(...) in the major arts the Greeks and, to a lesser degree, the Romans present to the outsider's gaze an image of physiological perfection which is so consistent and so

¹⁵⁵ Prettejohn, "Reception and Ancient Art", 231.

¹⁵⁶ Prettejohn, "Reception", 228.

¹⁵⁷ Hyland, *Plato and the Question of Beauty*, 3.

¹⁵⁸ Hyland, *Plato*, 14.

unwavering that it virtually denies the possibility of the accidental and true-to life deficiencies of authentic human anatomy.¹⁵⁹

Disability in Greek and Roman society



11. *Dancing dwarf*. Bronze.

The body was highly appreciated, which we can see in the execution of antique sculptures, and the bodies we see in the antique sculptures seems to be all within one norm. Especially the Greek works, since the Romans became more adventurous in their expressions and ventured beyond the calm idealized bodies, and on to more dynamic and expressive bodies. Physical disability or deformity were never depicted in early Greek art (or depicted as monstrous creatures, like Cyclops), because physical defects were seen as almost unhuman and certainly not the mark of the cultural elites. However, in Hellenistic art we see a change taking place. The appreciation for realism is shown in sculptures of men and women with wrinkles, double chins and emaciated eyes. They also made sculptures of mythological creatures; dwarfs, fauns and Cyclops, which is how disabilities were portrayed, as creatures other than humans. These physiological diversities manifested itself mainly in terracotta sculptures (or other media like vase painting), while “high-grade sculpture was more subtle and elegant in its iconography”, intergrading classical aesthetic with the image of

¹⁵⁹ Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity & Disability in the Greco-Roman World*, viii.

exaggerations and caricatures¹⁶⁰. Aphrodite and Venus were depicted as fleshy and curvy, but far from the overweight shape that *Venus of Willendorf* was depicted as. It seems that artists let their imagination roam when making terracotta figures, exaggerations and caricatures would be good descriptions of these figurines. Dancing dwarfs (figure 11.), obese men and women, and emaciated old people that look like they are going to fall apart, all of these characters were made to amuse, so that their otherness would not scare or frighten. Examples of life-size round sculptures with the same subjects usually were of gods like flabby Dionysus and Silenus or portraits of Roman men and women depicting them with their characteristics.

Robert Garland asserts that the Greek and Roman response to disabilities originated from their religion “since beauty and wholeness were regarded as a mark of divine favour, whereas ugliness and deformity were interpreted as a sign of the opposite”¹⁶¹. It also was a social problem, as people with disabilities were not seen as useful to their environment. Sparta is the most extreme example of an antique culture where disabilities were not tolerated. It was a legal requirement to get rid of an infant with what they perceived as a physical deformity¹⁶². The elders of the tribe would inspect the newborns, and if the newborn was not seen fit for their society there would be no reason for the newborn to live on. There is no reason to believe that other societies in antiquity were this harsh on physical disability (or other non-physical disabilities), but it is clear that they had a more cruel attitude towards people with disabilities. The importance of physical beauty and wholeness made the disabled second-hand citizens. Their emphasis on beauty and wholeness makes our admiration of fragmented remnants from antiquity ironic. They would not have appreciated these fragments the way we do.

The appreciation of beautiful bodies is also a part of our beauty obsessed culture, which I discussed earlier in this chapter. The *Belvedere Torso* and *Venus de Milo* are two examples of beautiful representations of bodies that have survived from antiquity to the present day. That these two are among the most admired ancient artworks in our time is interesting given the importance of wholeness in ancient time and our own attitude towards people with the same physical features.

Belvedere Torso

¹⁶⁰ Bradley, “Obesity, Corpulence, and Emaciation in Roman Art”, 12.

¹⁶¹ Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 2.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 14.



12. Apollonios. *Belvedere torso*. Marble. Dated to around the 1th century B.C.

The *Belvedere Torso* (figure 12.) is interesting in this context, because it is a good example of a fragmented work from the antique period, which has been an inspiration and celebrated since it was first spoken of in 1432-34. Cyriakos of Ancona then described it as “singularissima figura”, a unique figure¹⁶³. Since then it has been looked upon as the ideal of all male figuration and “a model for all good art”¹⁶⁴. Why is this sculpture looked upon as the symbol of “good” art? It is a fragmented figure, clearly worn down by climate, time and human touch, and we have examples of other whole sculptures from the same time, surely they as whole figures would be more celebrated. However, this figure keeps fascinating people even today. Perhaps the fragmented state of the *Belvedere Torso* is what makes it such a good piece of antique art, because even in its worn down state we can see the potential. Acknowledging that its maker is a Greek sculptor named Apollonios from Athens¹⁶⁵, gives it an extra advantage among all the Roman works. A Greek original tends to have more prestige than a Roman copy, as a Roman copy is often seen as just that – a copy of a Greek work.

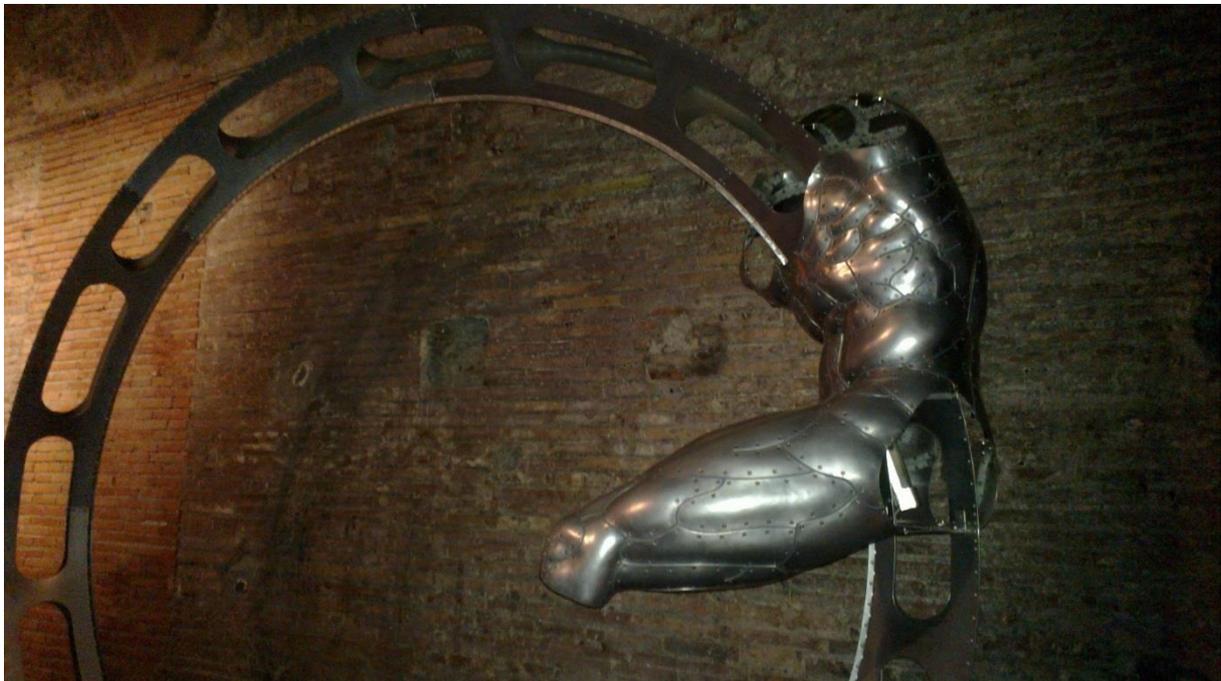
A fragmented piece gives the viewer a chance to imagine what the sculpture was portraying and how it was portrayed. In the mind of the viewer, the fragment gets a new life. One can

¹⁶³ Nielsen, “Belvedere-torsoen: Symbol og forbillede”, 12.

¹⁶⁴ Translated from: “forbillede for al god kunst”. Nielsen, “Belvedere-torsoen”, 9.

¹⁶⁵ Wünsche, “Belvedere-torsoen: Interpretation ved rekonstruktion”, 25.

imagine that as a whole figure, the *Belvedere Torso* would not be as exciting or inspiring as it is now. The torso is perhaps most famous for inspiring Michelangelo Buonarroti. The inspiration can be seen in the frescos of the Sistine Chapel in a figure series called *Ignudi* (1511-12)¹⁶⁶, depicted twenty times in different poses. The torsos of the figures are shown turned and rotated to show the intricate play of the muscles, in a similar way to the *Belvedere Torso*. The work has inspired artists of our time, for instance, the work of Christoph Bergmann called *L'invenzione della ruota* (2003-4) (figure 13.). The torso is made in aluminium and is a part of an aluminium wheel with neon lights. The sculpture was part of an exhibition called *Le Sculture* (2004) in Trajan`s marked and in Musei dei Fori Imperiali.



13. Christoph Bergmann. *L'invenzione della ruota*. Aluminium, neon lights. 2003-4.

An element of exaggeration is present in the *Belvedere Torso*. We can see the perfectly shaped muscles flexed, yet the figure is seated in a relaxed position. The muscles cannot be this distinct in a pose like that, it is simply not possible for a well-trained person to sit in that position and flex his muscles¹⁶⁷. In addition, the muscles seem too fit and the sculpture is not entirely anatomical correct (like the deep cavity in his back, which is too deep to be realistic).

¹⁶⁶ Nielsen, "Belvedere-torsoen", 12.

¹⁶⁷ Wünsche, "Belvedere-torsoen", 33.

It is important to remember that these sculptures are not of real persons, and they are meant to be idealized, even though they are realistic. The *Belvedere Torso* is a Hellenistic sculpture, Hellenism being a time in sculpture where they would explore emotional expressions more than what had been done before. The excessive flexing of the muscles when the man was in a relaxed state could be an exploration in how a tense and pensive man would look like. From the pose of the torso we can imagine a tense facial expression or a thoughtful one. Antique art had an element of exaggeration – idealized, extreme emotions – that made the sculptures of the human body “more human than human”¹⁶⁸, but the athletes of that time were not expected to conform to these ideals, according to Bordo. Whether or not our obsessive thinking of bodies stems from a hard-wired desire to exaggerate or not, it is clear that men have bigger chance today to achieve the muscular “god-like” body that *Belvedere Torso* possesses than what the antique man had (as discussed earlier in the thesis).

The torso was long believed to be Hercules seated on a lion skin, in contemplation or catching his breath after the difficult trials he have been through. However, it was discovered in 1887 that the man is not sitting on a lion skin, but the skin of a panther¹⁶⁹. Alfons Neubauer and the Glyptothek in Munich did some reconstructive work to find out whether the torso could be *Aias Brooding*.¹⁷⁰ The reconstructive work after images on coins, bowls and lamps gave them reason to conclude that it was in fact Aias on a panther skin. It is not generally agreed that this is Aias, for example, German Hafner has suggested that it is Polyfem looking and waiting for Galathea¹⁷¹. Therefore the image is open to many readings.

Venus de Milo

However relevant the *Belvedere Torso* is, *Venus de Milo* (figure 14.) is a work that Alison Lapper personally related to, and it is more relevant to her as it is a female representation. *Venus de Milo*, also known as *Aphrodite from Melos*, was found on Milos in 1820. It is a 2.04 m high nude woman without arms and a drape around her hips. There is no textual evidence from antiquity mentioning this statue at all, so the first documents of this statue started in 1820 when it was found. The fact that it was found on Milos suggests that it is Greek¹⁷², and it

¹⁶⁸ Spivey, *How Art Made The World: More Human Than Human*.

¹⁶⁹ Nielsen, “Belvedere-torsoen”, 9.

¹⁷⁰ Wünsche, “Belvedere-torsoen”, 34.

¹⁷¹ Nielsen, “Belvedere-torsoen”, 9.

¹⁷² Prettejohn, “Reception and Ancient Art”, 230.

is dated around 150-50 B.C.¹⁷³. The statue was found with other fragments that could help with the identification, but it seems that the fragments “differ in grain of marble and quality of workmanship”¹⁷⁴ so it is hard to establish whether they are from the same statue or not. This also makes it difficult to determine whether it in fact is a Venus. However, the island where it was found, Melos, means apple in Greek¹⁷⁵, which would allude to Aphrodite winning the golden apple. One of the fragments found with the sculpture was a plinth with an inscription on it, that can be interpreted as “(...) Agesand[ron?], son of Henidos, from the city of Antioch”¹⁷⁶, or “Andros of Antioch on the Maeander”¹⁷⁷.



14. *Venus de Milo*. Marble. 150-50 B.C.

This statue is probably more famous than the *Belvedere Torso*. The Venus sculpture can be found in commercials, copied and as inspiration for new artworks. Commercials like the Kellogg`s Cornflakes commercial ca. 1910 plays on her missing arms: “If Venus Had

¹⁷³ Kousser, “Aphrodite in the Gymnasium: The Vénus de Milo”, 29.

¹⁷⁴ Prettejohn, “Reception and Ancient Art”, 230.

¹⁷⁵ Kousser, “Aphrodite in the Gymnasium”, 30.

¹⁷⁶ Arenas, “Broken: The Venus the Milo”, 37.

¹⁷⁷ Prettejohn, “Reception and Ancient Art”, 230.

Arms”¹⁷⁸. She is used to raise the product’s value with her classical beauty. In modern art she has been used and reused. The statue intrigued surrealists, like Salvador Dali that made paintings and sculptures of *Venus de Milo* with drawers in her body and furry knobs. Artists in Arte Povera used classicisms as inspiration and Michelangelo Pistoletto gilded his *Venus with an apple*¹⁷⁹ and placed it in front of a pile of rags. *Venus de Milo* has been twisted, turned and rearranged, but we can still recognize the figure as *Venus de Milo*. The sculpture was mainly copied and reproduced as small plaster sculptures after it was rediscovered in 1820, so that everybody could own a *Venus de Milo*. It can also be seen as interior decoration in paintings. The image of Venus was popular in antiquity as well: the number of Venus and Aphrodite sculptures in museums around the world (as the *Capitoline Venus* in the Capitoline museums or the *Venus de Medici* in the Uffizi Gallery) suggests that the image of the love goddess was a very popular one in the antique world. *Venus de Milo* is certainly the most popular as the most beautiful of them all, despite there being Venus figures in various states and poses. “If most Venuses are too damaged to compete with the Venus de Milo, those that remain unharmed are, in a sense, not damaged enough.”¹⁸⁰, writes Amelia Arenas to explain why this particular Venus has acquired such a role in our society. It simply seems that, despite there being more intact sculptures from the same period depicting the same image, “her superb presence was intact.”¹⁸¹ However, Prettejohn claims that within the academic environment *Venus de Milo* has “fallen out of favour” as we lack documented evidence of it from antiquity. She calls this “a persistent prejudice against the visual”¹⁸², which tells us how a work can fall from its pedestal without a “pedigree”. Even so, it is and has been a very influential piece in popular culture where it is not looked down at for not having the right credentials, but celebrated for its recognizable pose. As the *Belvedere Torso*, *Venus de Milo* is a piece that makes an impression.

Wholeness and beauty in neoclassical art

Antonio Canova (1757-1822) was the most skilled and famous sculptor of the neoclassical style. His sculptures have since been, even more so than Greek and Roman sculptures, a

¹⁷⁸ Kiillerich, “Vénus de Milo – brug, misbrug og genbrug”, 45.

¹⁷⁹ Pistoletto’s *Venus with an apple* is a copy of Bertel Thorvaldsen’s work *Venus med æblet*

¹⁸⁰ Arenas, “Broken”, 36.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 36.

¹⁸² Prettejohn, «Reception and Ancient Art», 231.

trademark for beauty. His sculptures are easy on the eyes, the marble seems soft and makes the sculptures approachable, but they are also unreachable as the marble and execution gives them an unapproachable touch. The sculptures have introvert, almost empty eyes. They are never fixed on the viewer, but on something beyond what we can see. These traits are what make neoclassical art criticized as well, as fascism has used the form and visual expression in their art to depict what they believed to be “Übermensch”. The white marble, perfect execution and introvert eyes can be perceived as cold and unhuman. The perfection of neoclassical sculptures and idealism they portray, excludes more than it includes, which is what ideals do. Italian marble was considered the most beautiful of all materials, a material worthy of heroes and gods. Marble from Italy is still used in contemporary art, as we can see in Igor Mitoraj`s work and Quinn`s sculptures. Quinn made the cast of his subjects before he sent the casts to Italy for them to be made by Italian stonemasons. The fact that the sculptures were made in Italy of Italian marble gives *The Complete Marbles* a closer tie with neoclassical sculptors like Canova, and closer to the idea of there being an ideal perfection.

Canova had sculptors and stonemasons working for him, but he always took care of the finish himself. He gave his sculptures a smooth, soft-like surface, and he could reproduce texture for different materials in marble. Canova was not only a restorer of the classical arts, but also a continuer of the classical aesthetic¹⁸³. He had his studio in Rome and was surrounded by artists and intellectuals of his time. One of the most influential intellectuals in Canova`s life was Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849), a French theorist with passion for antiquity and art. Quatremère de Quincy was in particular interested in the polychromy of ancient art, and he did research on the temple of Giants in Agrigento, which he published in *Sur la restitution du temple de Jupiter olympien à Agrigente*. His findings included discovering that whole temples, not just sculptures and décor, had been coloured. He also did research on chryselephantine sculptures, which are sculptures consisting of different materials, like gold, ivory, bronze and wood, such as the cult statue of Zeus at Olympia, which he wrote about in *Le Jupiter Olympien* (1808)¹⁸⁴. Through correspondence between him and Canova, ideas and thoughts were exchanged, and Quatremère de Quincy inspired Canova to experiment with gold gilding. Quatremère de Quincy recognized neoclassicism as an own visual style, and he did not intend the artists to paint their sculptures, as the sculptors did in Antiquity. Neoclassicism was for him more a continuation of classical art¹⁸⁵, than a full

¹⁸³ Honour, *Neo-classicism*, 39.

¹⁸⁴ Luke, “Quatremère de Quincy`s Role in the Revival of Polychromy in Sculpture”, 3.

¹⁸⁵ Panzanelli, “Beyond the Pale”, 8.

worthy restorer of Antiquity. The white marble became the trademark for neoclassical sculpture, as it adopted large parts of the visual style from classical art: mythological characters nude or in drapes standing in contrapposto. No wonder an untrained eye can confuse neoclassical sculpture with Greek and Roman sculpture.

Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) was a neoclassical theorist and is best known as the father of art history. He became known for inventing a new kind of history of art, “providing a fuller historical reconstruction of the antique ideal and its rise and decline than anyone before him.”¹⁸⁶ His publication *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (1764) was not just an archaeological or antiquarian study of Greek art, but it also was a “new historical and theoretical framework for reconstructing the antique classical ideal”¹⁸⁷. “The only way for us to become great or, if this be possible, inimitable, is to imitate the ancients.”¹⁸⁸, this sentence sums up Winckelmann’s ideas about what art should be. For him, classical art was the yardstick that all art should compare itself to. He explained that the reason Greek and Roman art becomes the most beautiful of all arts, lay in the climate, and the ideological and cultural conditions¹⁸⁹, where individual freedom within a democracy was the essence¹⁹⁰.

Winckelmann was in favour of the naked, and especially the male, body. The male naked body inhabited something more than the female nude: “its [Greek arts] greatest beauties come more from our than from the other sex.”¹⁹¹ To Winckelmann Canova’s neoclassicism was a “radical renovation or revival of art based on a return to a true classic ideal.”¹⁹² Though Quinn’s marbles has an edge and are more realistic than what Winckelmann would have appreciated, he has done what Winckelmann thought was the only way for an artist to become truly great. He found his inspiration in the classical fragments and the naked body.

Chromophobia

David Batchelor defined the term “chromophobia” as a “loathing of colour” and a fear of its corruption¹⁹³. As a writer and artist, he has explored the western civilisation’s relationship (an often quite strained relationship) with colour, and especially bright colours. A chromophobic attitude can be found in neoclassical thinking about arts, which formed the style’s visual

¹⁸⁶ Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the origins of art history*, 7.

¹⁸⁷ Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal*, 11.

¹⁸⁸ Honour, *Neo-classicism*, 61.

¹⁸⁹ Bukdahl, “Det Hvide Europa”, 17.

¹⁹⁰ Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal*, 55.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁹³ Batchelor, *Chromophobia*, 22.

language, for example, Johann Gottfried Herder that “(...) represented the exclusion of color from sculpture as a categorical imperative”¹⁹⁴. Sculptures and paintings are separated by colour, where paintings use colour to point out the tactile, sculptures are urged to only use the surface of the material. That is perhaps one reason why neoclassicism, despite being a “revival of the arts”¹⁹⁵, chose to not use colour. There was no colour on the fragments from antiquity and the marble was beautiful as it was. The exclusion of colour as secondary to the material and ignoring the evidence of a polychromic antiquity, gave the neoclassical style an aura of something exclusive and it became the definition of “High art”. Quinn decided to use white marble, if he had used colours on his marbles the sculptures would have had a completely different appearance, and it would not be linked to classicism in the same way that it is now.

Victorious Venus

Paolina Borghese come Venere vincitrice (1804-1808) depicts a beautiful young woman declining on a couch, half-naked with an apple in her left hand. Her right hand is behind her head, holding her up in a comfortable position. This work is an example of an idealized female figure in the classical tradition and a good example of the neoclassical tradition that Quinn puts *Alison Lapper Pregnant* in when he uses the white marble in classical manner. However, there is a difference in how Canova depicted his female subjects and the way Quinn has depicted Lapper. Quinn portrayed Lapper in a heroic attitude, with her stern face slightly tilted upwards; Canova gave his female subjects what would be called a “feminine” attitude. The sculpture is a portrait of Napoleon’s sister Paulina Borghese, a notorious society woman. She is portrayed as Venus victorious after Paris has given her the golden apple as a sign of her beauty. Canova did not like to make portraits (as other artists in his time he found portraits less important than other genres¹⁹⁶), so he used a mythological cloak to cover up the immediate similarity between the subject and the portrait. Portraying Paulina Borghese as the victorious Venus also gave the sculpture an ambiguous side, which could be an advantage. Depicting a noble woman naked in the 19th century would be problematic, unless the artist covered her up as a goddess. A goddess like Venus can be seen naked in many Greek and Roman sculptures and would not create controversy naked. Canova also protected himself politically by doing this. He lived in a difficult time in Europe, and Napoleon was not very

¹⁹⁴ Potts, “Colors of Sculpture”, 84.

¹⁹⁵ Honour, *Neo-classicism*, 14.

¹⁹⁶ Johns, “Portrait Mythology: Antonio Canova’s Portraits of the Bonapartes”, 116.

popular, so by disguising his portraits in mythology they were less likely to be destroyed if the artworks landed in different hands¹⁹⁷. One might say that Canova used mythology to cover up his portrait, whilst Quinn used classicism.

To restore or not to restore

One might ask why *Belvedere Torso* and *Venus de Milo* did not get restored. Firstly, in the case of *Venus de Milo*, it might not be quite as strange in a feminist perspective. Look at *Venus of Willendorf*, or any other later fertility sculpture, from the Palaeolithic period. They have no arms, or very small arms, while their breasts, stomach and hips are exaggerated. *Venus de Milo* may not have had her arms restored simply because there was no need for it. She was a full-worthy representation of the female sex just as she was. As love goddesses, Aphrodite and Venus have physical attributes as perky breasts, round hips, soft and flawless skin, but their arms are not important for them as a symbol of love and fertility. They are a fetish for the male gaze. They are an object to be looked at and desired, and they do not need their arms for that. “Scopophilia” is the desire/pleasure to look at somebody and objectify him or her, and this usually happens to the woman, as she has a passive role and the man an active role. Mulvey introduces another form of scopophilia, the fetishistic scopophilia, which transforms the physical beauty of an object into something satisfying in itself.¹⁹⁸ *Venus de Milo*, being both a sculpture (a passive object to be looked at) and a goddess for love and beauty, is an easy victim for the fetishistic gaze of the viewer. Looking away from the feministic perspective (as it does not apply to works as *Belvedere Torso*) the Enlightenment and Neoclassical thought of wholeness introduces an interesting aspect to the fragments that we have left from antiquity.

Venus de Milo was found in 1820, a time when whole sculptures were more appreciated than fragmented ones. The Neoclassical period indicates how the late 18th and early 19th century person liked his sculptures: in white and “soft” marble, with all of the limbs on the body intact. There was an ambivalence towards the fragmented sculpture as the romantics looked at the fragmented sculpture longingly as remains from an nostalgic era, but preferably, (in the philosophy of Enlightenment) the sculpture should be whole and flawless¹⁹⁹. For the real beauty to show the sculptures had to be whole, and they would restore as many sculptures as they could. Otherwise, the sculptures would only be a nostalgic memory over a long gone age.

¹⁹⁷ Johns, “Portrait Mythology”, 120.

¹⁹⁸ Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, 444.

¹⁹⁹ Søndergaard, “Da fragmentet blev moderne” 76.

However, as the case were with the *Belvedere Torso* and *Venus de Milo*, the sculptures from Parthenon (ca. 438-423 B.C.) (figure 15.) are still as fragmented now as they were when Lord Elgin brought them to the British Museum. Antonio Canova was asked to restore them, being the most respected and skilled sculptor of his time, but he turned the offer down because he considered it a desecration²⁰⁰. He admired the fragments as they were. Not only did the figures lack their arms, legs and/or heads, but the sculptures were also “amputated from their architectural base”²⁰¹. This respect for the fragments could give one explanation for why there are a great deal of unrestored fragments left.



15. Young man reclining. Detail for the Parthenon sculptures. Marble. 5th century B.C.

Venus de Milo had one of her arms sent with her to Louvre. An arm with an apple, which suggested she was Aphrodite triumphant after winning the beauty contest judged by Prince Paris. The arm went missing, and: “Rumor has it that a noted curator made the fragments disappear, because they contradicted his reading of the work’s iconography.”²⁰² This is another interesting explanation for why *Venus de Milo* and *Belvedere Torso* were not restored: if the works were restored, they might not fit into the reading of their iconography. There were different readings of *Venus de Milo*. Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy interpreted the statue as part of a sculpture group with Mars, based on the way she is looking

²⁰⁰ Gurstein, “The Elgin Marbles, Romanticism & the Waning of 'Ideal Beauty'”, 93.

²⁰¹ Millett, “Sculpting Body Ideals”, 4.

²⁰² Arenas, “Broken”, 37.

to the side and how the drapery does not appear to be finished²⁰³. *Belvedere Torso* was thought to be Hercules resting after his trials, because he was sitting on a lion's skin, until it was discovered that the torso was sitting on a panther skin. One change in the reading of a work could, and can still, affect the whole interpretation. This can be one reason why so many fragments have not been restored: 1. There are not enough original pieces to make a whole figure, in some cases there are only a torso or only a head left. 2. There are not enough evidence for it to be one image over another image. 3. The mystery that a fragment gives is far more exciting than a whole and complete figure: "To discover the supposed "truth" about the statue would be to foreclose further interpretation – our own, as well as that of others."²⁰⁴ Alternatively, as Quinn simply stated: "(...) if the Venus de Milo had arms it would probably be a very boring statue."²⁰⁵ For example, *Venus de Milo*: the record says that she had an arm with an apple, making her Aphrodite, but what about the other arm? Did it rest on a pillar in a triumphant pose? Alternatively, was she covering up her breast while she was holding up the garments as we can see in *Venus Capitoline*? Her arms are gone, which makes our interpretation diverse, and by keeping the antique sculptures in a fragmented state they created "a new taste for the fragmentary and time-worn."²⁰⁶

When the fragment became autonomous

Nochlin gives the French Revolution the credit for making the fragment a positive form: "It is the French Revolution, the transformative event that ushered in the modern period, which constituted the fragment as a positive rather than negative trope."²⁰⁷ The fragment was used as a powerful message, as through destroying the old traditions one could build up a new society from the ruins. The fragment came to symbolize liberation. Yet, sculptors did not explore the form of the fragment, but it was explored in the paintings of painters like Théodore Géricault. He created several detailed paintings of severed limbs. The new taste for the fragmentary in sculpture was perhaps first truly shown in the works of Rodin as he contributed to give the body fragment its "autonomous aesthetic" at the end of the 19th century²⁰⁸. Sidsel Maria Søndergaard recognizes his fragmented sculptures as a break with neoclassical aesthetic and idealism. The fragment became modern, and modernistic artists played with fragmentation by

²⁰³ Prettejohn, «Reception and Ancient Art», 233.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 249.

²⁰⁵ Celant, *Marc Quinn: Memory Box*, 219.

²⁰⁶ Prettejohn, "Reception and Ancient Art", 235.

²⁰⁷ Nochlin, "The body in pieces", 8.

²⁰⁸ Søndergaard, "Da fragmentet blev modern", 81.

giving snapshots of events instead of carefully placing every element in its place as in a history painting or they presented a limb as a metaphor for the whole body. Modernism, from Romanticism and onwards, was “indissociable from the notion of the fragment”²⁰⁹. The fragment got an aesthetic value in itself, instead of being a nostalgic reminiscence of classical art, as the fragment no longer depended on the whole to make sense or exist. However, Valerie Reed and Max Statkiewicz points out a problem: “It is difficult, and perhaps impossible, to think the fragment apart from the whole. More often than not it is conceived either as a ruined part of a vanished unity or as one piece of a whole to come (...)”²¹⁰. If the body fragment was truly seen as autonomous, we would still have to see it as its own whole, and then the idea of wholeness and completeness would remain.

New subjects in Classical guise

The visual language of Greek and Roman art and Neoclassicism gives Marc Quinn a context to bring up questions about beauty, normality and the ideal. His choice of material, execution and subject together with the public platform that *Alison Lapper Pregnant* resided on from 2005 created an interesting discussion about our perception of antique marble fragments.

If we look at *Alison Lapper Pregnant*, we first notice that she is pregnant. This is highly unusual and not at all comprehensible with the classical body type for women in sculpture, and is more customary with elder fertility statues. Her legs are shortened and she has no arms, which certainly can fit the more modern appreciation of antique statues, like Winckelmann`s love for the *Belvedere Torso*, a fragmented body that invites the viewer to explore and interpret the sculpture in another way than it would have been if it was whole. However, unlike *Belvedere Torso*, which lost its feet and arms through rough treatment (by human hands or nature), the statue of *Alison Lapper Pregnant* was made like this on purpose. *Torso di Ikaros* by Mitoraj, is another sculpture that is made physically fragmented on purpose. Mitoraj recreates the antique aesthetic (as the modern viewer perceives it); Quinn on the other hand, recreates the classical ideal. Even though Quinn`s subjects are considered fragmented, the title of the sculpture series *The Complete Marbles* tells us that they are complete. Quinn`s subjects do not want to be seen as fragmented humans, but as I discussed above, when we are faced with a fragment or something that appears fragmented we will be seeing in as

²⁰⁹ Reed and Statkiewicz, “Shattering Beauty: Rilke`s Aesthetic of the Fragmentary”, 85.

²¹⁰ Reed and Statkiewicz, “Shattering Beauty”, 88.

something that used to be whole or something that will become whole. In the case of Alison Lapper, there has not been a loss as she is born the way we see her. She has to be seen as an own wholeness.

The marbles` title also alludes to *The Elgin Marbles*, which are culturally understood as complete. Our understanding of the fragments from antiquity as aesthetic “whole” should make Quinn`s marbles whole as he is drawing his inspiration from them²¹¹. In *The Elgin Marbles* the poses are dynamic, and Quinn has chosen dynamic poses for his marbles. *Helen Smith* is seen boxing in the air and *Stuart Penn* is seen kicking out in the air. They are both showing an active and dynamic role, that we can see in the Parthenon sculptures.

Alison Lapper was born with a physical deformity putting her in the group of divergent people like dwarfs, dumbs, blinds and giants, if we see it from a Greek and Roman perspective. Her birth would have been a sign of the gods` wraths towards her parents and even as an omen. *Alison Lapper Pregnant* received a lot of attention and criticism when it entered the public sphere on the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square. I would say that many reasons for the negative response towards the sculpture lies with Alison Lapper`s physical features, not the features alone, but also how Quinn had presented them. She is pregnant and disabled in a nude pose. Three features that we are familiar with one by one, art is filled with nudity, pregnant women are not a common subject in art but we have fertility statues from different cultures displaying pregnancy, and disability can, for example, be seen (as mentioned above) in Greek and Roman art. However, when all of these features are brought together, and in an idealised form, the work becomes harder to accept. In the Neoclassical manner that the work is created, Quinn casts aside the usual roles that not only society, but also art have given people with disabilities. In western culture deformity or disability have been given a symbolic function as moral corruption and degeneracy²¹², among other things, giving them roles as scapegoats, villains and victims. They are rarely given the chance to be complex people that change and evolve with challenges. They were simply dehumanized in Greek and Roman literature and art. Quinn presents an alternative way to look at people with disability using the well-known form of classicism. In *Miss Landmine*, Traavik challenges us to look at handicapped women as beautiful and sexual women, and thereby dissolve the notion that disabled people are either sexless or a fetish. Quinn mainly plays out another side and crushes the aspect of disabled people as weak and dependent. Alison Lapper is neither;

²¹¹ Millett, “Sculpting Body Ideals”, 4.

²¹² Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 87.

she is independent and strong, and in her portrait these qualities comes clearly forward in Quinn`s choice to use the Neoclassical aesthetic and play on how we perceive antique fragments. He also tells the viewers that the subjects are whole, through the series title, thereby actually creating an interesting contradiction: they look like and are inspired by Greek and Roman fragments, but they are executed in a neoclassical manner and we are told in the title that they are whole.

4: *Alison Lapper Pregnant: How Beauty Matters Today*

How to take the body back

Pictures of beautiful people surround us in the shopping mall, on Television, on the internet and in magazines. In art, “beautiful people” are usually associated with kitsch or classicism. Contemporary art is rarely concerned with superficial beauty without a sarcastic, ironic tone or another ulterior motive. There are several examples of protests against our increasingly beauty obsessed society that are considered harmful to the young and impressionable. One recent example in Norway is the “campaign” VG published against body pressure called *Vil Ta Kroppen Tilbake*²¹³. They had “ordinary people” take off their clothes and tell why they are happy with their body as it is. There are several other examples of people taking their clothes off for the media to put the spotlight on an issue, and thereby creating an interesting counterpart against the “beautiful people”. Media are governed by how many copies they sell or how many viewers they have, which will influence their angle and presentation of the subject and therefore do not necessarily make them the best medium to protest against superficial beauty ideal. Especially not since they are responsible for distributing these ideals themselves. Art is considered to be raised above concerns like reaching as many people as possible, selling as much as possible and being as popular as possible, which makes art a different platform to bring up social and political questions. Beauty has been closely connected with art, especially now that beauty has come back to the art field and art is not bound to beauty in the same way it has been. So how can art raise debate about beauty and the body in present society?

Alison Lapper is one of the people that wants to make a difference with her art and her body: “Hey, I’m Alison Lapper and I’m differently beautiful, because my body looks very different to other people’s.”²¹⁴ Lapper is not shy about her body, and uses her nude body as subject in her own art, trying to make us think differently about beauty and disabilities. In some of her black and white photos she positions her body to look like *Venus de Milo* (figure 30.) much the same way that artist and disabled activist Mary Duffy (born without arms) did when she draped herself in a cloth and posed like the same figure in *Cutting the Ties that Bind* (1987). Disabled artists work with their own body and classical fragments, which indicates that people with physical disabilities would relate (in some way) to fragmented sculptures like

²¹³ VG 05.04.14.

²¹⁴ EqualityHumanRights, “Alison Lapper”.

Venus de Milo and *Belvedere Torso* for their physical similarities. Moreover, in the case of artists like Mary Duffy and Alison Lapper, they can use these similarities to stir up discussions about beauty and disability. The disabled themselves are the best artists to capture the complexity of what it means to be disabled, and express their different perspectives. Duffy believes that disabled people themselves can use art to challenge prejudices, but that it can be hard to release this creativity practically²¹⁵, depending on what kind of disability they have. It is however not impossible, as Duffy and Lapper have shown us. A reappearing question in this thesis is how we react to physical disability in reality as opposed to when it appears as fiction, which is opened up with *Alison Lapper Pregnant*, but perhaps more so, with Duffy's photos of herself as *Venus de Milo*. *Venus de Milo* is celebrated as a beautiful piece of art, Mary Duffy with the same physic will not necessary get the same treatment, even though she is physically the same and poses in the same posture.

I have stated that we live in an excessively beauty-fixated world where the western ideal of how a man and a woman should look is more dominating than the belief that we come in all shapes and sizes. The norm is limited to a certain set of physical features, which excludes the majority. Here the focus will lie on people with visible physical disabilities, and how they are excluded from the created norm, like Lapper's congenital disability phocomelia or Alexandra Westmoquette²¹⁶ that lost her arm and both legs in an accident. Physical disability is probably the handicap that is easiest to discriminate since it is visible and/or hard to hide (many choses to not wear artificial limbs since they get by without them and feel just as complete). In addition, in a beauty-fixated society being physically different can prove to be very difficult, especially if these physical features are filled with negative symbolic meaning. What is important to remember is that the people Quinn asked to sit as models for him said yes, and were not exploited, because they were completely able to make the decision themselves. Traavik was accused of exploiting the women he photographed in Angola and Cambodia, since he targeted poor women that had been injured by mines and therefore were considered victims, Quinn chose resourceful people that cannot be accused of being "just victims".

Beauty Matters

In the introduction to *Beauty Matters*, Peg Zeglin Brand distinguishes between "matters" in the headline as a noun and "matters" as a verb. As a noun, it describes things that are used or

²¹⁵ Northern Visions NTV, "Mary Duffy: Unarmed and Dangerous".

²¹⁶ Alexandra Westmoquette is one of the ten disabled that Quinn chose to portray. She lost her limbs in a car crash and has said that it was a positive thing to sit as a model for Quinn. Garratt, "Body of Work".

talked about in the process of beautification, and as a verb “matters” states that beauty has a significance, historical and philosophical.²¹⁷ Beauty does matter, especially for women, as beauty for a long time was one of the few characteristics that they could be measured by and beauty was often linked with the female figure alone. When beauty has been connected with being good and having good morals, as the Greeks believed²¹⁸, being “ugly” or deformed could be fatal. Humans are visual and we tend to use people’s appearances to describe their personality: if a person is obese we often expect them to be a joyful person that loves food, if a person is thin we think they are healthy or have an eating disorder. Physiognomy is an example where these prejudices and other assumptions of physical features are used as pseudo-science. Physiognomy is the evaluation of human appearances (especially the facial features) to determine his or hers personality and character. This science has been popular since antiquity and is still used, though not as diligently as before. Mark Bradley explains how physical appearances like being obese or emaciated were seen as descriptions of a person in the Roman Empire: “The integration of the emperor’s corpulent appearance into the invective that legitimized his execution attests to the significance of the physical body as an index of behaviour, morals and ethics in Roman politics, (...)”²¹⁹. Especially fatal could these notions of physical features be to a woman with disability. The female body has been giving the central role as “the beautiful”, and therefore the passive and “object of all who gaze.”²²⁰ *Alison Lapper Pregnant* has to be looked at in light of the female nudes and the role of women’s bodies in art and other images, since beauty has been closely connected with the female figure. Men are however, more and more targeted by beauty ads, fashions and trends almost as much as women are. A natural by-product of a society that increasingly considers beauty a natural aim. My focus in this analysis shall be on the way physical disabilities are portrayed and how beauty (or lack of beauty, non-beauty) is viewed in this context, but since my analysis is on *Alison Lapper Pregnant*, the female body and beauty is most important here.

We are surrounded by commercials of beautiful people in beautiful houses and beautiful clothes. The implication that if we can achieve the perfect physic we can also get the perfect life, becomes apparent if we use commercials as source. By looking at art we can observe how different beauty ideals that have passed down through history: long swan necks in

²¹⁷ Brand, “Introduction”, 5.

²¹⁸ Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 88.

²¹⁹ Bradley, “Obesity, Corpulence and Emaciation in Roman Art”, 2.

²²⁰ Brand, “Introduction”, 5.

Mannerism and long, wavy red hair with the Pre-Raphaelites. Different cultures means different beauty ideals: foot binding was a beauty ideal in China until the 1920s²²¹. It began in the Sung dynasty, and was considered a desire for men and was a sign of social status²²². In today's society, bracing and binding one's own foot to make the smallest foot possible are for most women unthinkable and grotesque. However, many would not think twice about putting themselves under the knife if they had the chance to change something on their body. Yet, what is interesting is that the ideal to have small feet still exists (for women). For practical reasons (somehow, there seems to be a greater variety in shoes for women with small feet) and beauty reasons (small feet seem to be looked at as a feminine feature). The tradition is perhaps dead, but the ideal of having small feet is still alive. The same can be said about the Greek and Roman ideals for physical beauty.

When we look at idealized sculptures from this period and compare them with today's standards, we can see similarities, even though beauty trends have changed: flawless skin, young look and slender limbs. Feminine women with long hair, long and curvy bodies, and men with short hair, long and muscled (too much muscles is however not a positive feature) bodies fill the commercials as well as museums with Greek and Roman sculptures. Especially male bodies that are seen in Greek and Roman idealised sculptures can be said to still be the ideal for a man's body, which would suggest that how we view a man physically has not changed much in over 2000 years. I have looked at the athletic perspective in relations to, particularly male ancient aesthetic, and have through examples seen that there certainly is a connection between the way the Greek (and to a lesser degree the Roman) portrayed an ideal body and the way we do it now. I have also looked at how these Greek and Roman focuses on beauty originate from religious beliefs; a religious belief that does not control us today, like the birth of a healthy, "whole" and physically beautiful child was a sign of good-will from the gods, while the birth of a deformed child was a sign of ill-will²²³. However, the flawless beauties that were portrayed in bronze and marble were not obtainable for the ordinary Greek and Roman citizen, unlike in our society that are filled with different options to fulfil our ideals. Surely the idea of an ideal is that it is not supposed to be obtainable for all (if any at all), but that does not stop us from trying. Our society is filled with easy fixes, procedures, drugs and products that promise us to make us our best and better than best. We are not driven by a religious belief about physical beauty and wholeness bringing us closer to the gods, but

²²¹ Newham, "The Ties That Bind".

²²² Man, "Female Bodily Aesthetics, Politics, and Feminine Ideals of Beauty in China", 177.

²²³ Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 59.

perhaps the lack of religious belief and metanarratives makes it easier to focus on other, less important, things in life. Since our beauty ideal can be seen as originating from the Greek and Roman beauty ideal, is then the way we perceive physical anomalies similar to the way Greek and Roman societies viewed physical disabilities?

Beauty outside of the norm

The Complete Marbles depicts persons that often are invisible in public. They are not within the norm of what makes a “normal” or “beautiful” person (it can be argued that nobody really fit in the norm of what is a “normal” or “beautiful” person), and they are often overlooked because most people find it hard to familiarize with them or are simply told from childhood not to stare at people that are different. Alison Lapper tells of a harsh story of a home for handicapped children. Children that usually were not wanted by their families or had families that were not able to take care of them. Different schools and homes for people with disabilities can be a positive and a negative thing. They get the chance to learn different set of skills that they need in what is supposed to be a safe and encouraging environment. However, at the same time it hides them from the rest of society, which only makes the void between physically able-bodied and physically disabled people bigger. In the arts, physical handicaps have not been much represented, and if it has, it has been as a symbol for something else. As in antiquity where deformities were a sign that the gods were unhappy with the parents of the child with disabilities or the disabled person. The disabled person was therefore represented as either a monster or a comical figure. Anita Silver explains this phenomenon: “(...) art presents disagreeable things as something other than themselves, thus distracting us from the unpleasantness of images of impairment by assigning the representations a meaning that transcends disability.”²²⁴ One example, which can be seen in Greek and Roman art and down to neoclassical art, is how lame or crippled people are portrayed as beggars, and beggars are often used in art to show the generosity of the wealthy. *Belisarius Begging for Alms* by Jacques-Louis David is probably one of the most famous pictures depicting a disabled beggar, however, Belisarius was a veteran unjustly blinded and forced to beg. A story that most would sympathise with, as he was a hero and once had been able-bodied. The disabled beggar Belisarius is thus transformed from being a mere beggar into becoming an unfortunate hero. In Greek and Roman art, small figures of dancing dwarfs had a comical effect, which transformed little people into amusing characters. When disabilities, like blindness, being

²²⁴ Silvers, “From the Crooked Timber of Humanity”, 205.

lame and other physical hardships are portrayed as punishments, warnings or caricatured, people with disabilities do not get the chance to express themselves as multifaceted and evolving personas. Greek and Roman take on dwarfism was a playful, quick-witted and cunning character often portrayed dancing²²⁵, and the blind would be given special powers like the gift of poetry: “The blind have a better memory (...)”²²⁶. Similar stereotypes can be recognized in how we see and portray disabilities today.

Venus de Milo may not have her arms now, but she was made with arms, and one can see the signs from where her arms were cut off. We know that *Venus de Milo* is not supposed to be disabled, and we recognize the form and her status as a love and fertility goddess with older fertility sculptures. In Trafalgar Square, there is a statue of Admiral Horatio Nelson, he lost his right arm and an eye in battle. Losing them in battle gives him the title of a hero: he lost his arm and his eye for his country, which would then transform his disability into heroism. *Alison Lapper Pregnant* was situated in Trafalgar Square, a place associated with heroism, but she was “not male, not wearing a uniform and not dead”²²⁷. Lapper was given the form and placement to be conceived as a hero, but the transformation did not hide the disability, it (in many ways) only made it more visible.

When Quinn was chosen to exhibit his work on the fourth plinth, Lapper became visible and the public had to interact with his piece, as they had with the statue of Admiral Nelson: “now I’m up there. You can’t avoid me any more.”²²⁸ She is now very much visible and she can be heard through interviews and documentaries. The fact that people with physical handicap is underrepresented in media and the arts, is an indicator that they are not considered to be within the norm of what the society sees as “beautiful” or “normal”. More importantly, their exclusion from a visual culture can damage not only our perception of people with disabilities, but also how they perceive themselves. I have already argued that our increasingly visual society has a limited image of what is “normal” and “beautiful” (which is similar to the Greek and Roman portrayal of male and female bodies), and this image continues to exclude people like Alison Lapper. In addition, when they are portrayed they are often dressed in clichés (or go through a “transformation” that hides their disability), much the same we can find in antiquity. Alison Lapper, however, does not need our pity, she is strong physically and mentally, and she is pregnant (which signifies that she is sexually active and

²²⁵ Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 87.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

²²⁷ Rogers, *Marc Quinn*, 41.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

therefore desirable). Her portrait alludes to heroes and leaders before her that were portrayed in much the same manner. The sculpture does not give us a chance to pity her or put her in a limiting caricature: “The belief that so far has dominated the new field of disability studies is that disability is used in literature and the arts to signify something other than itself.”²²⁹ This transformation, to make all little people cunning and malicious or all blind people either a soothsayer or a physic is a generalization that makes the uncanniness of being presented with disability easier. They lose their power as individual persons with their own needs and desires:

Disabled people throughout the world are engaged with a long and complicated struggle with the way we are portrayed and the meanings attached to these portrayals that include disability as stigma, as a sign of a damaged soul, as being less than human, as dependent, weak, sexless, valueless²³⁰.

Marc Quinn did not resort to caricaturizing when he made *Alison Lapper Pregnant* and *The Complete Marbles*. In *The Complete Marbles*, he has depicted his subjects in dynamic poses, very similar to classical postures, and he has depicted them as realistic as the material allows him to. The titles for each artwork are the names of the subjects (*The Kiss* is the only work which is not called by the subject's name). They are not seen as weak or less than human, but proud and capable. In *Alison Lapper Pregnant* Lapper is also seen as desirable through her growing belly, another indicator towards her being seen as an adult, instead of as dependent (much like we would see a child). There seems to be a misinterpretation of disabled people as almost children or incapable adults instead of seeing them as capable adults.

Alison Lapper Pregnant raises questions about beauty, and especially challenges the classical notion of beauty in art. Quinn's sculptures in *The Complete Marbles* challenge our perception of what a beautiful, heroic and nude sculpture is, and can be. They can raise questions about beauty, because beauty is valued as a physical feature in our society. However, “beauty can be a double-edged sword” and in relations to art, “beauty” as a feature has become derogatory²³¹. Heartney mentions that we have an ambivalence towards beauty. In art physical beauty is not necessarily valued as it is in the rest of our culture. As mentioned above, Prettejohn claims that “beauty” had a comeback in the 90s, where beauty would once again be discussed in relations to art. The resistance against “beauty” can still be seen in contemporary art, where

²²⁹ Silvers, “From the Crooked Timber of Humanity”, 206.

²³⁰ Sandell and Dodd, “Activist”, 5.

²³¹ Heartney, “Foreword: Cutting two Ways with Beauty”, xiv-xv.

the idea behind and the execution is more important than the result. Take Hirst's *A Thousand Years* or Jake and Dinos Chapman's *Tragic Anatomies* (1996), "beauty" is hardly a word that would be used to describe these works, and it is not a word that is necessary to be used either to describe them. "Beauty" is not necessary as a measurement on contemporary art. Quinn especially chose to use beauty as a tool in *The Complete Marbles*, and therefore it is an important element to discuss.

Siren: an idol in gold

*Statuephilia*²³² an exhibition by British Museum in 2008 took works by contemporary artists working in England and put them together with the permanent objects in the collection. Marc Quinn was one of the exhibitors with his *Siren*, a gold sculpture of Kate Moss. Quinn has used Kate Moss's face on a complex pose performed by a yoga expert and made a gold statue out of it (he made several other sculptures like this in marble and in different poses). As the title might suggest, Moss is presented as a seducer or icon of the masses. She is expected to be idolised. Kate Moss is one of the best known fashion models in the world, which her title "supermodel" is indicating. "This sculpture isn't a sculpture of Kate Moss the person"²³³, which tells us it is the brand "Kate Moss" and the culture around Moss that are represented. Moss has an exterior that is considered normal and beautiful, but it is an ideal and it is unobtainable for most people. Mostly Moss would be represented in magazines and on the catwalk in a disguise consisting of make-up, flattering clothes, body enhancement, and Photoshop. Moss is represented as the perfect woman, "that we have all agreed to create as a cultural hallucination rather than Kate as a woman of flesh and blood."²³⁴ Compared to *Alison Lapper Pregnant* the sculpture of Moss had the least realistic and obtainable body, the sculpture of Lapper is a far more realistic representation of a woman, since *Siren* is a constructed woman and *Alison Lapper Pregnant* represents a real woman as she is. The difference in how we would react to these two artworks shows us our society's perception of how a body should look. *Siren* would be the most realistic sculpture, being of an abled-bodied person and what most consider normal (and beautiful), whilst *Alison Lapper Pregnant* would be considered almost like a mythological creature bearing a similarity to ancient fragments.

Kate Moss is an example of a person that is considered to fit within our beauty ideal, and she lives of her beauty and her perceived perfection. Quinn chose Moss because she is a celebrity

²³² The British Museum, *Statuephilia*.

²³³ The British Museum, *Marc Quinn's Siren at the British Museum (Kate Moss)*.

²³⁴ Celant, *Memory Box*, 21.

that does not say much herself, but is constantly spoken about, which he then found made her like a classical divinity²³⁵. This also makes her perfect as a mute idol for the masses. *Alison Lapper Pregnant* generated controversy when it entered the fourth Plinth, which is interesting since the sculpture gave a realistic representation of Alison Lapper, making *Alison Lapper Pregnant* more within the norm than *Siren*. Catherine Long was one of the ten handicapped people that Quinn represented in marble. She hoped that the sculpture of her would “evoke and challenge people’s perceptions of what they see as beautiful or not beautiful.”²³⁶. In his project *Allanah Buck Catman Chelsea Michael Pamela and Thomas* (2000) he takes the beauty problematic further. He brings together people that stand-outside of what is considered normal. Plastic surgery and body modification is the common denominator. Plastic surgery has become a legitimate process, but there are various types of body modifications that are still taboo, like sex changes. Quinn likes to use our beauty perceptions to shake our views: “I like to use a kind of visceral beauty to get under the viewer’s skin and into the subconscious before conscious thought can intervene.”²³⁷. With *Siren* one would think that he was celebrating Kate Moss and her beauty, but in fact he points to a social problem: the constant obsession, not just with perfection and beauty, but also with how we single out a few “lucky” people to stand as symbol for these qualities. *Siren* is an idol in solid gold, which alludes to Egyptian sculpture like the sphinx. She is like a siren; she is luring us towards her with beautiful golden skin and piercing eyes. Her contorted posture does not look comfortable, but as long as she is beautiful it does not matter. *Siren* enhances what Quinn conveys in *The Complete Marbles* and *Allanah Buck Catman Chelsea Michael Pamela and Thomas* that Alison Lapper, Thomas Beatie and the others are “normal”, they are more like us than what we see in *Siren*, which is only a fantasy: “The sculpture is really about whether we make images or they make us. It’s about trying to live up to impossible dreams and immortality.”²³⁸ Quinn tells how he sees *Siren* as the opposite to *Alison Lapper Pregnant*. In *Alison Lapper Pregnant* he has a body that is perceived imperfect and make us see it as beautiful, whilst in *Siren*, he has used a body that is perceived as perfect and shows us how that body is not a real person, only a created image²³⁹.

²³⁵ Celant, *Marc Quinn*, 314.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 188.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 223.

²³⁸ Simpson, “Kate Moss gold statue unveiled at British Museum”.

²³⁹ Celant, *Marc Quinn*, 314.

Creating physical beauty

Orlan is a controversial French performance artist, who explores beauty concepts²⁴⁰. What makes her interesting in this contexts is her attempt to show how there are “no one (universal) ideal of beauty, yet (...) we are bound to beauty in how we see ourselves and our relationship to others.”²⁴¹ She did this through a series of nine plastic surgery operations (from 1990), which she called “aesthetic surgeries”, as they were not an attempt to become beautiful but to become art. The idea that the body can achieve idealization is not possible in her eyes. With her aesthetic surgery she used standards of female beauty found in art “combining the chin of Sandro Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus*, the forehead of da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa*, the lips of Gustave Moreau’s *Abduction of Europa*, the eyes of a Fountainebleau School *Diane Chasseresse*, and the nose of Gerard’s *First Kiss of Eros and Psyche*.”²⁴² These are all beautiful women, however, to merge all of these beautiful features together in one face do not necessarily make an ideal beauty. The current western ideal of a slender, feminine, tall, long-haired beauty like the image of Kate Moss is not obtainable for all women (not even for Kate Moss herself). Even celebrities and supermodels in front of the covers have often had surgeries and/or been photo-shopped. This especially occurs when they are getting older. The illusion of a perfect unobtainable ideal is thus maintained. In addition, one of the most celebrated models for female clothes right now is male. Andrej Pejic has the face of a woman and the body of a boy, which apparently makes him the perfect model for women’s clothes. This has caused an outrage, even been called “an act of abject misogyny”²⁴³, but to change the mind-set of a whole culture is not easy. In fact, it is a reminder of Winckelmann’s beauty ideal, the young fit man as more beautiful than what a woman could ever be, making it ironic that beauty mostly have been connected with women.

(Non)Beautiful Alison

Carroll uses the term “nonbeauty” to explain the opposite of beauty. Ugly is by Plato defined as something that does not interest us, which makes nonbeauty a good term to explain how we see disabled since disability have been and still are a source of interest either in form of fascination or horror. Carroll uses the term to explain how ethnical and racial minorities have been ridiculed and made monsters by the ethnical majority. When a group of people are

²⁴⁰ Brand, “Bound to Beauty: An Interview with Orlan”, 289.

²⁴¹ Brand, “Bound to Beauty”, 291.

²⁴² Ibid., 289.

²⁴³ Platell, “Fashion’s ultimate insult to women: The latest way of demeaning real women is a male model dressed as a girl”.

defined as nonbeautiful they are standing outside of the norms of what a human is. People with disabilities have been seen transformed into mythological creatures, warnings and sources of amusement. The element of humour and monstrosity is clear when we look back to antiquity. Garland explains how disability, and especially physical disability, was not generally tolerated in Greek and Roman societies, but it did not stop them from telling stories about mystical creatures and oddities or depicting them. However, real people with physical disabilities were seldom depicted. Emperor Claudius is referred to as deformed, disabled and his family despised him. Exactly what kind of disability he was born with is not known, but there are some indications: “as partial paralysis of the legs, trembling of head and hands, slobbering, stuttering, partial deafness, indigestion and chronic conjunctivitis, is the opinion that he was born prematurely.”²⁴⁴ One thing is certain; his disability was visible, because there are sources telling how the family tried to hide him by covering him up when he was out in public. Even so, he became emperor, and like any other emperor, he needed to establish his rule through imagery. He is not depicted with his disability or any indication that he was physically different from any other rulers before him. In a sculpture from ca. 41 AD, he is shown standing up, muscular and half-naked with a drape around his hips and over his left shoulder. He stands in contrapposto with his left arm raised holding a spear and his right arm lowered and holding a plate. By his right side there is an eagle, the iconography tells us that he is depicted as Jupiter. This is a classical portraiture of a ruler, which can be seen in the artworks depicting Emperor Augustus and much later on Napoleon by Antonio Canova. This was the reality of portraiture of disabled, any noblemen or rulers with disability would be idealized (as they could not let themselves be depicted with disability) and other people with disability would not be depicted, but their disabilities would be depicted with amusement and horror.

We would think that in today’s society we do not resolve to these limiting representations of people with disabilities, but the disabled are still working for new ways to be presented, or perhaps the better word for it is: a broader way to be presented. Our way of seeing people as either beautiful or nonbeautiful, and even worse, seeing a whole group of people as beautiful or nonbeautiful is the same as limiting the ways we perceive and depict these groups. It is therefore important that artworks by artists with disabilities are lifted up, as they will show us how people with different disabilities see themselves. Alison Lapper compares herself to *Venus de Milo*. She uses black and white photos to give the illusion of white marble skin and

²⁴⁴ Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 189.

poses as if she was a Greek or Neoclassical statue. She shows us a beauty that we would necessarily not have seen if these photographs were made by someone other than herself. *Alison Lapper Pregnant* was not made by Alison Lapper herself, but by an “abled-bodied” artist. It has proved difficult for nondisabled artists to depict disabled persons, as can be seen in the reception of *Miss Landmine* and *The Complete Marbles* have gotten. The negative response that clearly points to a problem for nondisabled artists depicting disabled people is the argument that the artists are exploiting their subjects. Traavik was exploiting poor, disabled, African and Asian women, and Quinn was exploiting British disabled citizens. Even if the subjects pointed to the fact that they had signed up for this themselves (and were quite capable to do so), the allegations of exploitation very much stuck. It is good that people would stand up against what they believe is injustice, but in these cases, there seems to be something else behind. After centuries of unjust representation, the public would rather not have any imagery of disability than to risk showing a “wrong” image: the image of disability unsettles the viewers. *Alison Lapper Pregnant* is a much better weapon against nonbeautiful representations, than not showing any depictions of disabled. Through new and different imagery (or old forms with new subjects), disabled activists can build up several different ways for us to look at disability, and perhaps put aside the crude and limiting caricatures of the past.

Beauties in marble

Alison Lapper Pregnant is made of marble, a material associated with “beautiful” art: “Traditionally marble is the medium of cultural and social acceptance and celebration.”²⁴⁵ It is a classical material for gods, goddesses, heroes and leaders. When Quinn made his “complete marbles” and Alison Lapper with this material, he gave them the same status as heroes of their time: “Their free will has conquered biological destiny and so they become celebratory.”²⁴⁶ He places them, ironic and not ironic, on a pedestal as artists before him have done with their heroes and leaders. He gives them the power of heroes through our perception of classical beauty: “I wanted to celebrate them and use the medium in its original way as well.”²⁴⁷ However, he does not idealize them more than he has to. The sculpture is still true to his subjects, as it is realistic.

²⁴⁵ Celant, *Memory Box*, 123.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 222.

²⁴⁷ Celant, *Memory Box*, 123.

Marble, being a material related with classicism and beauty, is target for the ambivalence we have when perceiving beauty. Marble is a material that is limiting in its way of expressing its image, and its clear associations with classicisms limits it even more. Quinn was aware over the heritage that follows when using this material, and therefore used it deliberately: to challenge and continue its heritage. Christian Lemmerz uses abject and gruesome situations as his images in marble, but essentially is doing the same as Quinn: using beauty as a tool. By portraying a suicide bomber, a murder victim and prisoners from the Abu Ghraib prison (in a humiliating position) in marble he wants to give back the dignity to his subjects²⁴⁸. Lemmerz believes that films, news and other media have emotionally blunted us. To wake us up he uses marble, and at the same time restored their lost dignity. We have seen hundreds of gods and goddesses showing off their beautiful bodies in various situations, therefore the associations slow our recognition when we are looking at marble sculptures. It takes a few seconds before we actually recognize the image, and when we do the image and the material creates an oxymoron. The gruesome incidents that lead a young girl to be brutally murdered are safely packed in marble, which creates a buffer between the brutal image and us. However, is this not what art has done for a long time, beautifying the world and its actions? In an interview with the Danish newspaper *Information* the journalist asks Lemmerz if it is alright to beautify “the gruesome”. Lemmerz answers by telling the journalist that his art does not provide answers but raises questions, and creates space for reflection. His most striking answer comes from his anecdote about one of his idols: “One of my heroes, Heiner Müller (German dramatist and writer), was once confronted with a similar question. It sounded like this: “Is the mushroom cloud from an atom bomb beautiful or not?” He answered: “It depends on the distance.”²⁴⁹ I think his answer sums up the feelings we might have about Lemmerz` marble sculptures. The image is horrific, but there is a distance between the gruesome situation and us: marble. It makes us feel safe when the image that creates an abject feeling in us is obscured or covered up. Lemmerz plays with that feeling when he scares us and reassures us at the same time.

Marble has the same role in Marc Quinn`s sculptures. Marble becomes a buffer between the spectator and the subject. He does not depict gruesome incidents, just real people considered abnormal or outsiders. Quinn has said that he likes working with materials that have meaning

²⁴⁸ Sørensen, “Massebord i marmor”.

²⁴⁹ Sørensen, “Massebord i marmor”. Translated from Danish: “En af mine heroes, Heiner Müller (tysk dramatiker og forfatter, red.), blev engang bedt om at tage stilling til et lignende spørgsmål. Det lød: 'Er paddehatteskyen fra en atombombe smuk eller ej?' Han svarede: 'Det kommer an på afstanden'”.

in themselves, and marble, being the material for sculptures of gods, heroes and royalty has its own meaning. Marble's own significance is one of the reasons why we get so many associations when first meeting the sculptures in *The Complete Marbles*. We are accustomed to seeing marble being used in a certain way, and it takes a few seconds to realize what we are actually looking at.

An abject body

I suggested that being confronted with physical disabilities, exaggerated physical attributes or the lack of certain physical attributes promotes an abject or uncanny feeling. Artists in the late 20th and early 21th century are more likely to use the body as something shocking, unlike the idealized bodies of classical art, which in many ways were supposed to be soothing and create admiration. Quinn has explored the body and the limits that we surround ourselves with against our insides. *Alison Lapper Pregnant* and *The Complete Marbles* explores another side; how we feel when faced with people that are different from society's norms. This does not mean that different body types cannot be beautiful, but it does point to a fear of the unfamiliar. Young explains the abjection as a realization that one could become like the person one is seeing²⁵⁰. That the fear or repulsive feeling originates from another fear, the fear of, for example, losing a limb. The disabled body reminds us of how fragile our own body is. An accident or an illness can hurt us and could cause amputation. As mentioned above, if people (or a group of people) do not conform to the idealized body type they can be seen as nonbeautiful, and the representation of nonbeautiful bodies often resulted in ridiculous or monstrous images. Especially the comical aspect is there to cover over the uneasiness that "normal" people, or simply the majority, would feel confronted with a body type different from the norm. Turning disabled people into comical characters, and even monstrous characters, would relieve oneself from a confrontation with the "self" or the ego. Kristeva tells us that laughter is a way to place or displace abjection. Caricaturing is thus a way to displace our own feelings in meetings with otherness. Again, Quinn's representation of *Alison Lapper Pregnant* does not caricaturize or generate laughter as he has not caricaturized Lapper.

²⁵⁰ Silvers, "From the Crooked Timber of Humanity", 205.

A political artwork?



16. Marc Quinn. *Alison Lapper Pregnant*. Marble. 2005.

Some of the criticisms towards *Alison Lapper Pregnant* (figure 16.) have been its political aspect. Opinions that the work is “ugly” and only serves a political agenda are interesting. There is no doubt that there is a political dimension in this work, which can particularly be seen in the way Quinn without irony gives Alison Lapper the role as a hero through the form of classicism and site. It can be seen as propaganda for disabled people, but the question then is why that is negative? After being seen as horrors and amusements for the able-bodied from antiquity²⁵¹, and, one could say, all the way through the 20th century, we should look at this work with interest instead of discharge it as “not proper” to be shown in public. Clearly, the outbreaks of this negativism towards *Alison Lapper Pregnant* becomes part of the political statement in the artwork. It points out that we do not treat or perceive people with physical disabilities (and other disabilities) the same as able-bodied, when we cannot accept seeing a disabled bodied person exhibited proudly as art in a public space. Alternatively, that we simply are not accustomed to seeing disability in public. The public is confronted with its own prejudices or feelings towards disability in public art.

Placing *Alison Lapper Pregnant* in Trafalgar Square is a political statement in itself. Hilda Hein argues that an artwork “does not derive its identity from the character of the place in

²⁵¹ Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder*, 179.

which it is found.”²⁵² However, *Alison Lapper Pregnant* clearly makes a statement when placed in Trafalgar Square, a statement that would not have been as clear (or it might have been a different one) if placed somewhere else. Trafalgar Square was constructed as a memorial for Admiral Nelson and named after Spanish Cape Trafalgar where Admiral Nelson won his last battle²⁵³. The column with Admiral Nelson on top is the centre of Trafalgar Square and there are sculptures of other British military heroes around him. When *Alison Lapper Pregnant* was placed among them, Lapper became a hero in her own right. Through disability studies, disability politics and disability rights activism there have been a demand for a more diverse image of disabled people in public art and a change in how the disabled are presented to the public: “Central to the achievement of disability rights has been a desire to bring about a widespread and radical shift in the way disability is conceived (...)”²⁵⁴. Trafalgar Square has been “the city’s most popular rallying point”²⁵⁵, a site for political activism, which makes *Alison Lapper Pregnant* fit in as a political statement. Ann Millett calls *Alison Lapper Pregnant* an “anti-monument” and “anti-ideal” because the body depicted is the opposite of “traditional subjects of public monuments”²⁵⁶, which makes her “anti” what Admiral Nelson and the other British figures in Trafalgar Square stands for. Alison Lapper becomes a hero for others with disabilities and the statue of her is a tribute to the difficulties that people with disabilities have to go through. She becomes a hero for people that have won inner and personal battles. Even though the sculpture is “anti-ideal” and “anti-monument” when compared with the norm, which in Trafalgar Square are the British military heroes. The site of heroism and the form of classical beauty makes *Alison Lapper Pregnant* a tribute to a hero, and at the same time an anti-monument.

Quinn states that Lapper and the other subjects in *The Complete Marbles* are heroes because of the personal battle they have won. Despite their disabilities they have become a part of society, they have “overcome” their disabilities. Such arguments would also imply that we have low expectations for disabled people in society by making their life about pursuing one goal: to become as “normal” as they can. It is a stereotype, “the stereotype of “overcoming”²⁵⁷ their disability so that they can become valued members of society. A stereotype like this reduces Lapper to a secondary citizen that has to overcome her physic in order to become as

²⁵² Hein, “What is public art?: Time, place and meaning”, 4.

²⁵³ Millett, “Sculpting Body Ideals”, 9.

²⁵⁴ Dodd and Sandell, “Activist”, 4.

²⁵⁵ Millett, “Sculpting Body Ideals”, 10.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁵⁷ Millett, “Sculpting Body Ideals”, 6.

“normal” as possible. Then her abilities as a “normal and contributing” citizen will decide whether she is a hero or someone for others in her situation to look up to. Lapper has overcome her disability by being independent and becoming a mother (which as I have stated before is a sign of her desirability and fertility). Therefore, she could be called a hero for being someone to look up to. Whether or not she has done a truly courageous thing or not, she is an example for other with disabilities, because she shows them it is possible to be visible. The most important element about *Alison Lapper Pregnant* was its visibility on the fourth plinth. After years as sub characters in paintings and being depicted in small figurines for comical effect, *Alison Lapper Pregnant* comes as a fresh (and huge) contribution to the representation of disabled people to the public.

Public art has always been a way for the government, monarchy and dictatorships to influence its people. It has changed through the times and in western society, thus now public art is not necessarily about gathering people for the same cause with hard propaganda, but it has still an important role since it reaches out to many people. Therefore, it is important that works as *Alison Lapper Pregnant* is shown in public and not limited to museums and galleries. Public art has a duty, it is there to instruct, educate and inform²⁵⁸. *Alison Lapper Pregnant* gives us another look into the disabled`s world, and forces us to think about our own prejudices. Quinn has been criticized for attempting “to teach the uneducated and unenlightened masses a lesson in sensitivity and sophistication.”²⁵⁹ However, if this were the case then Quinn was doing exactly what public art is “supposed to do”: instruct, educate and inform. If public art do not present a diverse and positive image of the people living in our society, then who will? “What, then, remains to render an object a work of public art, if neither collective origin nor spiritual cohesiveness nor central placement nor even popularity serves to determine it?”²⁶⁰, we can ask ourselves when looking at *Alison Lapper Pregnant*: What deserves to be public art? *Alison Lapper Pregnant* is not a religious piece, it was neither collectively a popular work nor it is not one of the British military heroes that populates Trafalgar Square. A panel of specialists decided that Quinn should get to exhibit his piece in Trafalgar Square, so *Alison Lapper Pregnant* was carefully chosen for aesthetic reasons. When she entered the Fourth Plinth she was transformed into a highly politicised and social work, which can be interpreted to have an informative, educative and instructive character.

²⁵⁸ Millett, “Sculpting Body Ideals” , 7.

²⁵⁹ Hattersley, “Yes, she is a truly courageous woman. But the home of Nelson is no place for this statue” in *Marc Quinn Fourth Plinth*.

²⁶⁰ Hein, “What is public art?”, 2.



17. Marc Quinn. An inflatable version of *Alison Lapper Pregnant* at the Paralympics in 2012.

5. Conclusion: A sugar-coated pill

Three statements and a conclusion

I started this thesis with three statements that have been the basis for my research. My first statement was “1. Western society has a much narrower norm for beauty now than before, and this is similar to Greek and Roman beauty ideals. The ideals are not the same now as they were then, which is only natural considering the centuries that have gone by, but there is a similarity in the way they had ideals that they stuck by and reproduced in sculptures and paintings. There still are aspects about the antique ideals and the present ideals that are similar, like the focus on young people and flawless skin. This is also, what limits the visibility of the disabled in our society”. Through looking at commercials (as it is my indicator for what we perceive beautiful) and looking at Greek and Roman sculptures I found similarities in the way beauty is perceived, and the same tendency to making beauty ideals, which is limiting. However, sculptures like *Aphrodite of Knidos*, *Venus de Milo* or *Belvedere Torso* were not necessarily supposed to inspire the onlooker to emulate the physic. Spivey explains how the Greeks believed that gods took human form and had beautiful bodies, and therefore the more beautiful one could make oneself the more like a god one would look²⁶¹. However, Greek literature is filled with stories of gods punishing humans that think they are better than the gods. Bordo, unlike Spivey, explains how we are more prone to obsess over physical beauty and our own body than the Greeks, because they would be seen to commit hubris, and we do not have any limits like that²⁶². We also have the money, time and means to do it.

My second statement: “2. Our caricatures of disabled people originate from an abject or an uncanny feeling when faced with disabilities” was my basis for looking at how disabled people have been represented in art. I found that there are two ways in particular that have been used to depict people with disabilities. Carroll finds that horror and humour are the antitheses of beauty²⁶³, and the comic and horror responses are often the way that otherness or nonbeauty are dealt with. The abject and the uncanny feelings are related, and appears when something familiar is discovered in the dark or the unfamiliar. As when we realize that we

²⁶¹ Spivey, “How Art Made the World”.

²⁶² Bordo, “Beauty”, 150.

²⁶³ Carroll, “Ethnicity, Race, and Monstrosity”, 39.

could end up with an amputated limb if we were unfortunate to be in a car accident, or when we are at a wake and realize that we will too die. The familiarity of a disabled person or a dead person places us in their situation, and that is unsettling. Presenting a disabled person as a comical or horror amusement displaces the abject feeling and frees us from the association. A clown or a monster are harder to associate with than the person that only has one arm sitting next to you on public transport.

The third and last statement: 3. “Quinn`s choice of form and material makes an opening to redefine our perception of the disabled” points to the core of this thesis. Quinn uses beauty as what he calls “a sugar-coated pill”, beauty as a cover for something more meaningful or important. In the case of *The Complete Marbles* marble is the sugar and the subjects are the pill. Lemmerz equally uses marble to put a distance between the viewer and the object in question. Beauty is used as a tool, or perhaps more fitting, as a buffer in the work. Marble is associated with classicisms and beauty ideals. However, there is one flaw in this statement. Greek and Roman art were not limited to the young and beautiful. Garland and Bradley give us plenty of examples of old, obese, deformed or emaciated persons and creatures. Marble was not limited to the beautiful as it was also used to make realistic portraits and images of mythological creatures. Like the dancing dwarfs with enlarged phalluses and portraits of politicians with double chins and wrinkles. Still, the execution was refined and beautiful, and marble have been and is associated with beauty.

Re-representing disability

My main concern through this thesis has been how an artwork like *Alison Lapper Pregnant* changes the visual representation of physical disabilities, which is still considered limiting and damaging to the image of people with disabilities. Firstly, Quinn did not resort to caricatures when he made *Alison Lapper Pregnant*, instead he used a form we are accustomed to seeing, but not on the subject he used. He expanded the classical form of ideal beauty to include more than a limiting norm. When the artwork was placed on Trafalgar Square the new role as a hero and idol was amplified, as the exhibit place in itself was a site for British heroes. Secondly, when *Alison Lapper Pregnant* was placed in Trafalgar Square Alison Lapper became visible and made physical disability visible to the public. The image that Quinn has created, not only creates debates about representations of disabilities, but it also introduces a new way to do so.

In 2012, *Alison Lapper Pregnant* was used as part of the opening ceremony of Paralympics in London (figure 33.). The work had been replicated into an enormous inflatable sculpture, and she stood tall over all of the participants as an icon. Using *Alison Lapper Pregnant* as part of the ceremony in Paralympics, the greatest sporting event for disabled, Lapper was elevated even further as a role model for all disabled.

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Samandrag/Abstract Norwegian

Denne masteroppgåva undersøker korleis menneskjer med fysiske handikapp har blitt framstilt, og blir framstilt, i kunsten. Då *Alison Lapper Pregnant* blei utstilt på Trafalgar Square opna verket for ein diskusjon om skjønnheit, ideal og normer for menneskekroppen. Marc Quinn har undersøkt gjennom skulpturseriar, som *The Complete Marbles*, korleis ein ser på kroppen og fysisk skjønnheit, men og korleis me opplever dei fragmentariske etterlevingane frå antikken. *The Complete Marbles* blei laga i 1999-2000, etter inspirasjon frå gresk og romerske fragmenter som han hadde studert i The British Museum. Skulpturanes framtoning liknar på fragmenter som Partenon skulpturane, men han har valt å utforma dei i ei nyklassisistisk form. *Alison Lapper Pregnant* var ein del av denne skulpturserien, men blei eit sjølvstendig verk då den blei utstilt på Trafalgar Square. Responsen verket fekk då det blei offentleg kunst kan sei noko om kvifor framstillingar av menneskjer med fysiske handikapp har vore mangelfult og snevert. For å undersøkje om det ligger noko bak at handikappa ikkje er representert på same måte i vårt samfunn som andre grupper, tar eg ein titt på «the abject» av Julia Kristeva, «the uncanny» av Sigmund Freud og «nonbeauty» av Noël Carroll. Ettersom masteroppgåva er ein diskusjon om skjønnheit og korleis våre normer for skjønnheit ekskluderer grupper av menneskjer som handikappet, går masteroppgåva inn i samtidas visuelle uttrykk (reklamer) og samanliknar dei med antikkens ideal for skjønnheit gjennom greske og romerske skulpturar.