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Be Fu**ing Perfect:

An archive of enhancement practices in Portugal

Visual Ethnography

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Synopsis

this documentary is a short compendium of a vast investigation conducted in the Lisbon Grand Area during the years of Covid about body modification practices, enhancement of beauty and construction of aesthetics in modern Western society. The author likes to think of it as a canva opened by a cut by Lucio Fontana: a wild unexpected gush of red lipstick on a pristine white washed sheet of paper which opens the door to another dimension which has been silenced and now wants to scream its opinion to the top of its lungs. Personal trainers, poets, professors, tattoo and make-up artists are just a few of the voices which will open the pandora box on how heinous the social pressure about «being perfect» has been built and is perpetrated nowadays.

The author

Francesco was lucky enough to be introduced to the arts at a very young age. Around the same time he discovered how harsh life can be. He therefore decided to navigate it despite being mostly lost in the fog with a few clear lighthouses sparking their lights in the distance. Sincerity, curiosity and determination guided his route thus far. He then continues to travel the world while trying to faithfully portray whomever entrusts him with his story. He holds a Post Graduation in Visual and Digital Cultures from ISCTE-IUL (2011) and a M.A. in Visual and Media Anthropology from Freie Universität Berlin (2013). He has a very peculiar style which respects the academic background which forged his critical thinking, while also embracing a more intuitive and direct approach. It seems like people keep wanting to work with him because of those characteristics and his unique way of doing documentaries.

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Methodology: In the mind of the author it was very difficult to synthesize a few years of research in a short documentary commissioned to him just a handful of months before the years-long process was coming to an end. He ended up choosing a work of subtraction where the main topics were given by the researchers and then he delved into it while asking questions to the participants who agreed to be interviewed. The kaleidoscopic portrait that came out of it is a sincere portrayal of the artists, scholars and research informants who shared the varied layered and multifaceted world of body modification that the project aimed to investigate.

(HD, 30' 18" Portugal and Italy, 2022).
<https://vimeo.com/804598652>



When I was contacted by Prof. Chiara Pussetti to create “visual clues” to disseminate the EXCEL project I felt humble and scared: was I the right person? Would I be able to do so in a faithful way towards her research’s informants? I decided I would accept the challenge - as I did with past projects - convinced that my contribution could at least spark more interest about the project and elicit a fruitful conversation. I ended up learning a lot, getting to know interesting people and creating a documentary that exceed my expectations in terms of depth and density.

This documentary opened the doors to the more curious and attentive audience of both the academic and the artistic world that investigate the use of the body, for those who put to the test the meaning of hegemonic beauty and question what to age means. The publication you are reading helps to rethink what “perfection” means and brings back to the center the importance of inner happiness and peace first, highlighting how all this crosses our bodily experience first and foremost.