

# TERROR OF BEAUTY

the Power of Aesthetics and the Female Face as Battleground of Beauty

*TERROR*

*OF*

*BEAUTY*

*WILLEM DE KOONING ACADEMY*  
*UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES*  
*ROTTERDAM*

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BA LIFESTYLE DESIGN & VISUAL CULTURE  
SOCIAL PRACTICE

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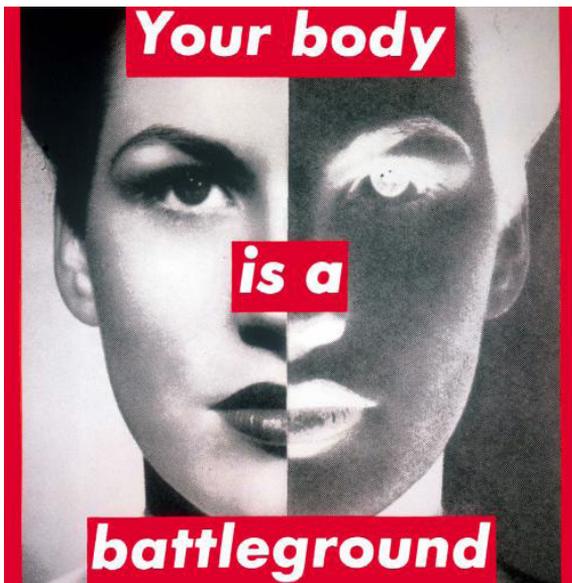
# **TERROR OF BEAUTY**

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## CONTENT

6	Introduction
12	Chapter 1 <b>The Face: Construction of Beauty</b>
	1.1 Formula of Beauty
	1.2 Beauty Scale of Breslin
	1.3 Dream of Beauty 2.0
	1.4 The Mask of dr. Marquardt
	1.5 Anaface.com
	1.6 Reconfiguration of my Face
26	Chapter 2 <b>The Face: Mask of Beauty</b>
	2.1 Cosmetics vs. Cosmetic Surgery: Strategies used in the Battle of Beauty
	2.2 Beauty Vlogs: the Face as Battleground of Beauty
	2.3 Power of Aesthetics
	2.4 Performativity of Beauty
36	Intermezzo chapter 1 and 2
38	Chapter 3 <b>The Face of the Cyborg: Icon of Female Beauty?</b>
	3.1 Beauty and the Cyborg
	3.2 Beauty and Technology: Virtual Cosmetics
	3.3 Designed Beauty
	3.4 Cyborg Aesthetics
	3.5 Hyper Real Beauty Ideal
	3.6 Terror of Beauty
58	Conclusion
62	Bibliography



**fig.1** Barbara, Kruger, photographic silkscreen on vinyl, 'Untitled (Your body is a battleground)', 1989.

## INTRODUCTION

As the Dutch saying goes, "*wie mooi wil zijn moet pijn lijden*", there is no beauty without pain. I say this has become a fact for most women as is suggested by the title and work of Barbara Kruger: "*Your Body is a Battleground*". (fig.1)

For my graduating project I am focussing on the female face as battleground of beauty. In my research I approach the face as pars pro toto of the female body because I have noticed a shift in how the face is presented more often as embodiment of idealised beauty. This is highly visible and demonstrated in today's beauty tutorial videos and they serve as starting point and (research) material for my research to eventually support the visual part of my graduation project.

I have been observing the visual language of beauty vloggers on Youtube. By watching their tutorials, you (the viewer) get instructed what steps to take to beautify yourself by beautifying your face. Popular videos to watch are the endless number of makeup tutorials in which beauty vloggers show you their make-up routines.

The result: a perfectly polished face like you see in cosmetic advertisements. The face of the beauty vlogger is their signature, because "*the succes of an online youtube beauty channel is largely dependent on the face of the beauty guru behind it.*"<sup>1</sup>

I have observed a shift in the way the face of the 'beauty guru' is beautified in these videos: besides watching makeup trends tips and tricks, I have now also become spectator of the beauty vlogger visiting cosmetic surgery clinics to beautify their face by using fillers, botox or even surgery. I am fascinated by this phenomenon because of how it is simply presented as a new lifestyle, a new beauty tutorial on how to actually perfect your face. In a way these videos expose the influence and power of aesthetics on the viewer. From this fascination with the cosmetic surgery vlog videos, I started asking myself what these beauty vloggers propagate: are they presenting a new kind of female 'Icon' by forcing a universal beauty image upon us? (fig.2)

I look at the cosmetic surgery vlog videos as a trend that glamorises and normalises surgical manipulation in order to enhance perfection and beauty of the face. Through this research I want to analyse how designing the face is getting a more normalised standard of beauty. Therefore I will look at how these standards are defined and eventually how the face is becoming a designed mask of hyper real facial aesthetics. Having said that, I formulate my research question as follows: ***How is the female face used as battleground of beauty to define a (universal) beauty ideal and what role do beauty tutorial vlog videos play in this battleground?***

With the title of my project, Terror of Beauty, I refer to the abuse, the terror, that is done to the face in order to achieve an utopian ideal of beauty and the fascination we have for this terror. These aspects are both present in the beauty vlog videos. The abuse, or terror that is done to the face is created by the strategies of beautification, cosmetics and most of all cosmetic surgery.

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<sup>1</sup> Hughes, Akila. "When beauty gurus talk about their plastic surgery". published at fusionnet.com, 5 June 2015

Before I come back to how I will conduct my research, I firstly want to get more into detail about the beauty vloggers and roughly define this trend of young girls vlogging and sharing online their cosmetic surgery experience. I will now define this trend by specifying the beauty vloggers and their target group, the viewers.

Of most of the videos I have watched I could say that there is an unspoken agreement on what is perceived as beautiful by these beauty gurus. Dr. Dian de Vries, who researches the effects of social media on body image, states that the beauty vloggers are responsible for propagating the stereotype of the plastic synthetic female look.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, this look is what the beauty gurus all aim for. The most corresponding reason to undergo these facial procedures I have heard in the videos is because 'it looks beautiful'. The beauty vloggers are often young females in their mid twenties. The viewers of their vlogs are mostly young girls between 16 and 24 years old. Most of the videos I watched were from Dutch beauty vloggers, but to approach this as a global trend, I compared the Dutch beauty blogs with videos from the United States and South Korea, the most popular country for cosmetic surgery in Asia.

First, what I noticed as similar in the presentation of these vlogs, is that they all start off their video with giving advise on whether you should consider cosmetic procedures or not. They talk about their personal reason to 'do something' about their face and take you as a viewer with them to the clinic. Halfway through the video you witness the procedure and afterwards there is a moment of reflection on how happy they are with the result. Finally they try to convince the viewer how beautiful they have become by showing a before and after picture of their new lips, nose, face. What specifies the beauty vloggers within this trend based on their geographical and cultural location is the extent of how extreme the procedures are. The Dutch beauty bloggers keep it subtle and simple by only applying botox and some lip augmentation.<sup>3</sup> In the US nose jobs are more common and in South Korea its taken to the next level where young girls undergo a complete facial re-construction.<sup>4</sup> Popular are the Blepharoplasty procedure (double eye-lid correction) and the V-line surgery (jaw slimming). **(fig.3)**

After watching these videos, I conclude that this trend of online sharing of how to beautify the face through cosmetic procedures, is global. All videos demonstrate how designing the face result in meeting certain accepted aesthetics, and you can wonder whether or not you as a viewer feel compelled to take a critical look at your own face. Therefore, I state that in this trend the face has a crucial role and is used as battleground of beauty. In this battle to perceive the state of (universal) beauty, different strategies are used. In my research I will be focussing only on the female face. To research the outcome of the face as battleground of beauty I will therefore focus on three elements in particular: the face and construction of beauty in general, strategies of beautification: cosmetics vs cosmetic surgery and in the last chapter I will discuss and question the cyborg as future icon of universal beauty.

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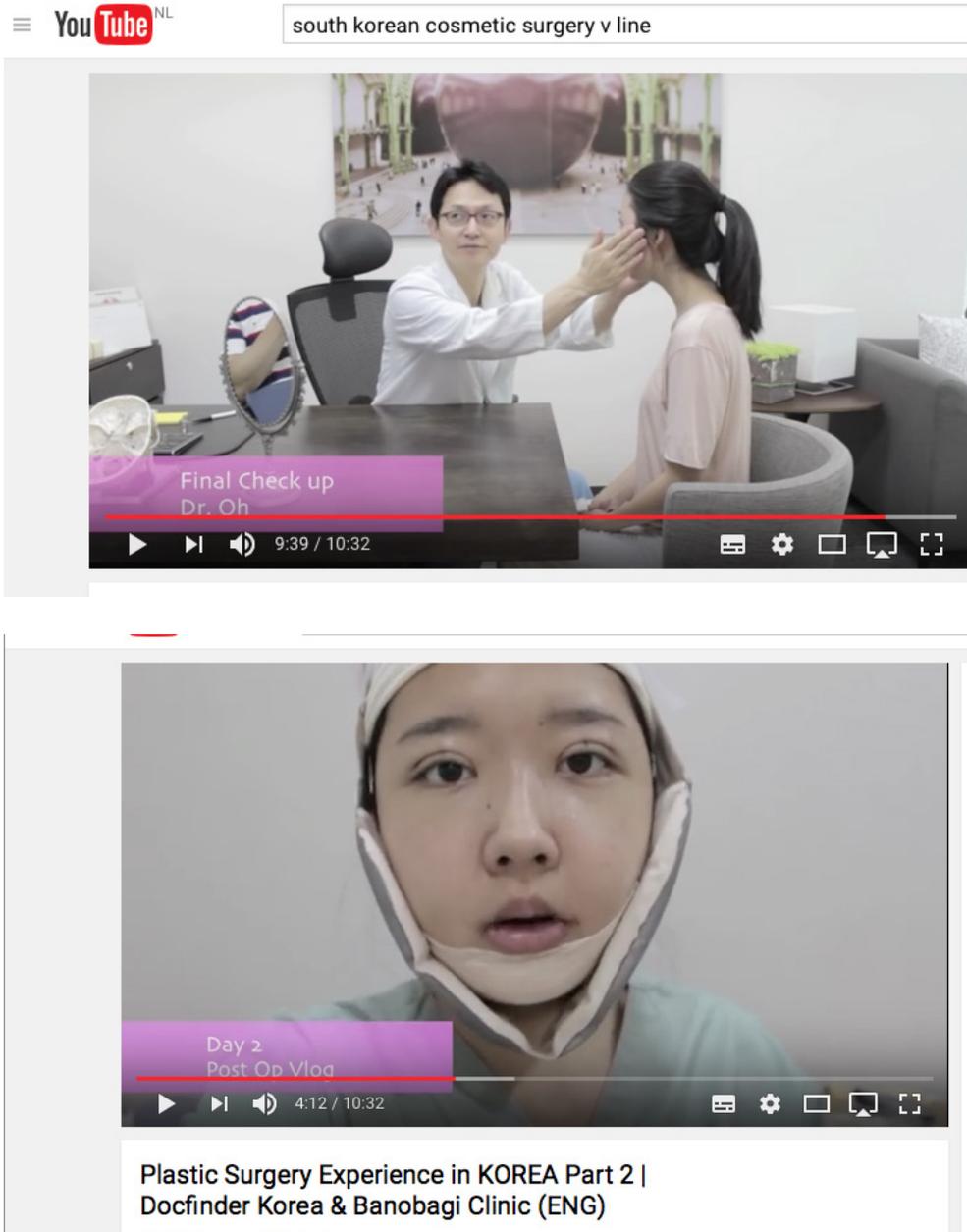
<sup>2</sup> de Vries, Dian. "Het leven van een influencer: kopen, opmaken en inspuiten." *de Volkskrant*, 16 December 2016

<sup>3</sup> Manon Tilstra: 'Lippen laten opspuiten' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XOf29fnBn3I>

<sup>4</sup> Carmen Layrynn: 'My plastic surgery experience in Korea' : [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_cmKubddK88](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cmKubddK88)



fig.2 A selection of screenshots of different beauty vlog tutorial videos on YouTube, showing their cosmetic procedures and sharing their experience online.



**fig.3** Screenshot of a tutorial vlog video about the vlogger’s cosmetic surgery experience in Korea: V-line surgery.

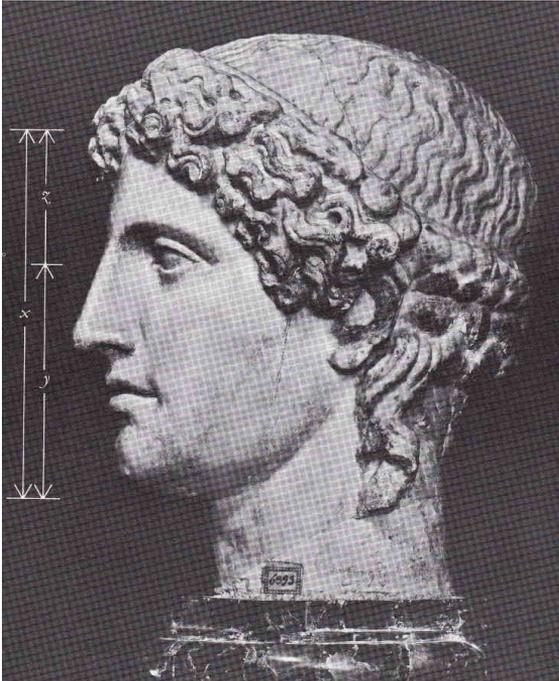
The structure of my research paper is as follows. In chapter one I will focus the face and construction of beauty: when is a face perceived as beautiful, what is the formula of beauty and is there an archetypical face of feminine beauty? In this chapter I will discuss anaface.com. This software program gives you a beauty score based on a facial analysis of the profile picture you upload. I contacted the company of this software program to discuss their vision behind this service. Using anaface.com will be an important part in my research. I will use this program to document my search for universal beauty as well as to show the power of aesthetics.

In chapter two I will discuss cosmetics and cosmetic surgery as two strategies used in the face as battleground of beauty. I will again refer to beauty tutorial videos and I will focus on the difference between applying makeup as a temporarily mask of beauty or choosing cosmetic surgery as a permanent and irreversible mask of beauty. Subsequently, I will discuss the artists Orlan and Cindy Sherman who investigate the act of performing beauty through their art by using their own face as battleground. After a brief intermezzo in which I look back on the first two chapters, I will continue my research and focus more on the speculative side of my venture. In this final chapter I will question the cyborg as future Icon of universal beauty and I will discuss how the cyborg is considered as beauty example by professor Anneke Smelik. Is the cyborg the most radical form and outcome of cosmetic surgery? By looking at the cyborg facial aesthetics often visible in cinematic references, I will discuss the face of the cyborg as ultimate form of designed appearance. However, when high demands are made to meet an ideal, a terror of beauty might be the result.

During my research and visualisation process of my graduation project I will consult two external partners. For the theoretical part of my research, I contacted Roline Smeele, who is a BA graduate of the Liberal Arts and Sciences studies at University College Utrecht. With a major in psychology and a minor in anthropology, it might be helpful for my research to discuss the psychology behind using strategies of beautification and the role of social media in influencing our perception of beauty. For the visual part of my graduation project I will discuss my material with Sabrina Chou, alumni of the Piet Zwart fine arts department. I choose these external partners based on their educational background because I am interested in applying for a masters program that is either a research master or a master in fine arts.

To summarise this introduction of my research project: based on my observation of beauty vloggers, who are sharing their cosmetic surgery procedures online, I signalise a global trend with local specifications. However, a corresponding fact in this trend is the act of designing the face through physical interventions, presented as a normalised form of beautification. I argue my research project as relevant because of this normalisation and the aesthetic judgment that comes with it, because it might influence our behaviour and perception towards beauty. Because, the produced image of beauty shown in these vlog videos becomes a compelling standard to meet. The result: an obsession with a hyper real beauty image of the face. This obsession with a hyper real beauty ideal is visible in the beauty vlogs when different and more extreme strategies such as cosmetic surgery are performed to pursue this hyper real ideal.

The impact I want to create with my graduation project is to show the face as battleground of beauty and the obsession with a hyper real beauty ideal. I want to analyse this phenomenon and question a possible designed prototype of the face that represents, and is propagated as option to perceive the 'universal female beauty' ideal.



**fig.4** John Liggett, the Human Face, p.138. head of Apollo. Greeks believed that beauty resulted from 'golden' or 'ideal' proportions. this is demonstrated in this image where the ratio of the whole (x) to the larger part of (y) is equal to the ratio of the larger part (y) to the smaller (z) in the formula:  $x/y = y/z$



**fig.5** John Liggett, the Human face, p.139. Head of Botticelli's Venus, divided into the classic 'sevenths' exemplar for many mediaeval artists.

## CHAPTER I

### THE FACE: CONSTRUCTION OF BEAUTY

I always thought I had a quite symmetrical face, but apparently according to the facial analysis test of *anaface.com*, this is not quite the case. I have been trying to correct my own face based on the feedback given by *anaface.com* and I will discuss this software program as a strategy of beautification later on in this chapter. With my graduation project I have become more aware of my facial appearance and when I have finished this project I might have even become a little obsessed like the beauty guru's in their beauty tutorial videos.

In my introduction I stated that the face has a crucial role in today's beauty vlog videos and that it has not only become a trend to show the strategy of cosmetics to create beauty, but also to show physical interventions in the face by using the strategy cosmetic surgery. Before I go further into detail about cosmetics and cosmetic surgery used as strategies in the face as battleground of beauty, I will first focus on when a face is even perceived as beautiful. In this chapter I will mainly discuss the face and construction of beauty in general. Therefore I will start off this chapter by discussing the golden ratio: formula of beauty. I will then discuss the beauty scale of Breslin, the Mask of Marquardt and *Anaface.com* as methods of measuring beauty. I will briefly refer to the work of artist Kirsten Geisler and finally I will discuss how I used the results of *Anaface* to correct my face to get a higher beauty score.

#### 1.1 Formula of Beauty

The golden ratio is also known as the 'Sectio Divina'. This is literally translated as a divine ratio which is visible in almost everything we see around us. It is a mathematical ratio that contributes to our perception of beauty. The philosopher Plato was convinced of the possibility of one certain standard of beauty, being universal and timeless.<sup>5</sup> For the ancient Greeks, beauty was defined based on harmony and proportion. The essence of beauty lay in the 'golden ratio'. This could be applied when a subject is divided and the smaller part is to the greater part as the greater is to the whole. **(fig.4)**

Therefore the ancient Greeks believed that a perfectly beautiful face was one which has perfect symmetry. To measure the beauty of the face, the brow would be one third of the way down the hairline and the mouth one third of the way up from the point of the chin. Mediaeval artists would for example divide the face into sevenths but were also looking for symmetry and harmony.<sup>6</sup> **(fig.5)** It is interesting how long this search for the 'mathematical secrets' of beauty has persisted and how we are still obsessed with it. This obsession with beauty is almost as universal as the idea of universal beauty. In the beauty tutorial videos, the vloggers don't analyse their faces based on mathematical ratios. However, they do focus on the proportions of their faces. Often you hear the beauty vlogger talk in her video about how she thinks her lips are too small for the width of her face, or her nose is too big for her face. I believe that the obsession with beauty is only becoming bigger because we are constantly confronted with ways to scale our beauty. By measuring our beauty we are looking for a norm we want to fit into, in order to be perceived as beautiful. This was for example also the aim of the Beauty Scale of Breslin.

<sup>5</sup> Snijders, C.J en Gout, M. De Gulden Snede, Den Haag, Uitgeverij Synthese, 2008. p.12

<sup>6</sup> Liggett, John. The Human Face. New York, Stein And Day, 1974. p.140



**fig.6** Kirsten Geisler, digital image, *Touch me - Dream of Beauty 2.2.*  
What is the ideal woman of the future? Geisler proposes an artificial generated face as prototype of this ideal future woman.

## 1.2 Beauty Scale of Breslin

American psychologist Breslin put together a beauty score based on a survey he made in the nineteen sixties. To get a high score with the Breslin test, the face must have an oval shape, the nose straight and a 'diamond shape when viewed from the front. Breslin's beauty score did not only take into account the separate features of the face but also the overall proportions.<sup>7</sup> Later on in this chapter I will discuss a contemporary version of the Breslin beauty test: a software program designed to rate your beauty. Different to the Breslin test is that this software program is more based on mathematics and algorithms to measure beauty.

Having discussed so far the formula of beauty, the universal beauty ideal of Plato and the Breslin test, I would say that over a long historical period of time there has been a continuous aim to find and understand beauty based on mathematical measurements and ratio. This understanding seems so important that beauty might be considered to have a function. On the website [natuurinformatie.nl](http://natuurinformatie.nl) I got informed how most theories about how we understand and perceive beauty, all base their conclusions on the perspective of evolution. To explain this connection between the function of beauty and evolution a bit more: someone who looks beautiful and attractive shows to be healthy and to have good genes. These aspects are both considered important factors to find a suitable partner. John Liggett discusses in his book, 'The Human face', the American sociologist Frumkin who takes a similar point of view on how beauty is judged by the 'potential function' of what is seen. *"A female is judged beautiful or not according to her 'sexual aptitude. She is beautiful not only because of the symmetry or proportions or features of her face but also because of the potential sexual functions suggested by this face."*<sup>8</sup>

What I find interesting about this, is the idea that symmetry (form) is equal to beauty and therefore sexual attractiveness. Both elements are two important visual aspects in the idea of pursuing infinite youth.

The combination of beauty and the suggestion of infinite youth is also highly visible in the appearance of the face of the cyborg. As I have mentioned before, in chapter three I will go more into detail about the appearance of the cyborg as future icon of beauty. However, to illustrate this thought about beauty, attractiveness and infinite youth, I think it is important to already make a brief reference to the work of Kirsten Geisler.

## 1.3 Dream of Beauty 2.0

Kirsten Geisler is an artist who focusses in her work on the representation of the three dimensional female face in virtual space, and the construction and manipulation of beauty. She states that " the dream of beauty has not been fulfilled" and that nobody is in the position to actually state what this "ideal" might be.<sup>9</sup>

However, Kirsten Geisler suggests this ideal as a designer of female models based on an artificially generated beauty. Her series of work "Virtual Bodies" deals with the manifestation of feminine beauty ideals and reflects on the obsession with beauty women have nowadays in our digitised and virtualised society. The head of the "beauty" models is oversized, bald and shows a sterile ideal corresponding with the ideal of a perfect computer generated new reality: a hyper reality. In for example her work 'Dream of Beauty 2.0' (**fig.6**) the artificial generated face suggests infinite youth and beauty in its optima forma. In chapter three, I will discuss how this visually relates to the face of the cyborg.

<sup>7</sup> Liggett, John. The Human Face. New York, Stein And Day, 1974. p.145

<sup>8</sup> Liggett, John. The Human Face. New York, Stein And Day, 1974. p.150

<sup>9</sup> website Kirsten Geisler artist statement: <http://www.kirstengeisler.com/en/vita/biografie/>

The virtual constructed female models of Geisler correspond are based on the ideals of the fashion industry and plastic surgery, ideals presented to us by the media. What I find really interesting about this work, is how Geisler reflects on a contemporary beauty ideal and uses technology to construct virtual female prototypes that are based on perceptions and idealisations women experience in real life.

Having already discussed the Beauty scale of Breslin as a method to measure beauty, I will now discuss two examples that are created from the idea that we are in the position to fulfil 'the dream of beauty', which is in contrast with the artist statement of Kirsten Geisler, who states that dream of beauty has not been fulfilled and never will be because nobody is in that position.

I will first discuss the Mask of Marquardt and secondly I will discuss the software program Anaface. Both are designed to measure beauty as part of research studies in analysing, measuring and enhancing beauty of the face by using the formula of beauty.

#### 1.4 The Mask of dr. Marquardt

Based on the golden ratio you can create so called 'golden' mathematical figures. For example a triangle of which the ratio between length x height is equal to 1: 1,618 also known as the number of pi.<sup>10</sup>

The Mask of dr. Marquardt is based on these golden mathematical figures.

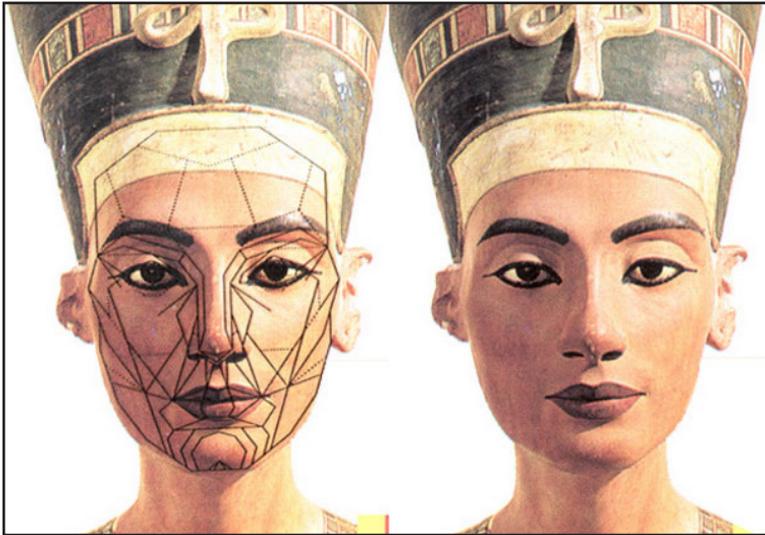
Dr. Marquardt is an American surgeon currently retired from his surgical practice and now CEO of his company 'Marquardt Beauty Analysis' that focuses on research on human attractiveness. In his research on female attractiveness he applies a golden ratio mask as a prototype of the ideal female face. **(fig.7)** With the use of mathematics, computers and massive databases of 'attractive faces', dr. Marquardt was able to quantify facial attractiveness in this consistent mathematical computer model of a female face.

In his research to define beauty, dr. Marquardt states that beauty transcends eras, culture and race. To prove this, he applied the graphical mask on the faces of a number of 'classical beauties' such as historical figures like Egyptian queen Nefertiti and contemporary actresses to conclude that there is indeed a common ideal of beauty. **(fig.8)** But what are the aesthetics of this universal beauty? In his research to define a universal beauty ideal dr. Marquardt uses the theory of archetypes. On his website he refers to the philosopher Plato and his idea of 'Forms'. This concept describes how all objects have an 'ideal' 'form' or structure. Plato believed that these 'original' and 'ideal' forms only existed in the realm of knowledge and concept and never in the reality of everyday life. In the realm of appearance things are only considered beautiful when they approach in structures these universal 'Forms' of Beauty.<sup>11</sup> Dr. Marquardt believes that the image of the 'ideal' human face is indeed an 'archetype': a subconscious image that could be defined as a universal beauty ideal. To look for the the female archetype face he designed his 'universal' prototype face mask.

The Mask of dr. Marquardt illustrates a method to measure beauty by using a facial prototype as measurew example. In the next paragraph I will discuss the example of Anaface where beauty of the face is not only measured, but the result of your beauty score is also supported by feedback.

<sup>10</sup> Het perfecte gezicht: <http://www.natuurinformatie.nl/ndb.mcp/natuurdatabase.nl/i000788.html>

<sup>11</sup> The Mask of Marquardt: [www.beautyanalysis.com](http://www.beautyanalysis.com)



**fig.8** The Beauty Mask of Marquardt applied on Queen Nefertiti 1400 B.C. from the Marquardt Beauty Analysis Research.

**anaface**  
FACIAL BEAUTY ANALYSIS - SCORE YOUR FACE

**Facial Beauty Analysis - Score Your Face**

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**Upload face and specify gender**  
For the most accurate results, please provide a frontal face photo with minimal rotation that has a clear view of the ears, face, chin, and forehead.

Show Numbers Hide Numbers

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fig.9 Anaface, Facial Beauty Analysisitest on www.anaface.com

## 1.5 Anaface

The software program and website Anaface shares the same aims as dr. Marquardt addresses in his research for universal beauty.

Anaface which stands for "analyse face" is an online facial beauty analysis software program founded by the ATAMA GROUP LCC, a private firm that is specialised in providing high-end consulting services to enterprise customers and next generation research labs. Innovation is key for this company and they are driven to push the boundaries of technology to create products and services to help people enhance the quality of their lives. Anaface is designed to help people enhance their lives by giving advise on how to enhance their beauty. This software program gives you a personal beauty score based on a profile picture you upload. By giving you a grade it tells you how beautiful you are and it also tells you why. (fig.9)

Bryan Cooley, CEO of this company and who created the application, says in Forbes: that Anaface computes a facial beauty score based on the geometry of a person's face, and it is based and substantial scientific research and statistical analysis.<sup>12</sup>

In an interview with PRWEB online newsfeed, Cooley talks about how Anaface can benefit users: "If you know what features of your face detract from your facial beauty, you can make corrections." "Or you can accentuate certain features through cosmetics and in the more extreme case plastic surgery. This can have direct impact on your love life, job performance, promotions and interviews."<sup>13</sup>

Besides enhancing people's lives in this way, it is also interesting to think about the possibilities of Anaface from a business perspective. Because, Cooley speculates in this interview also how for example modelling agencies could use Anaface to select their models, or how a plastic surgeon could use the facial analysis from Anaface to immediately show potential patients how their looks could be enhanced by changing for example the shape of their nose.

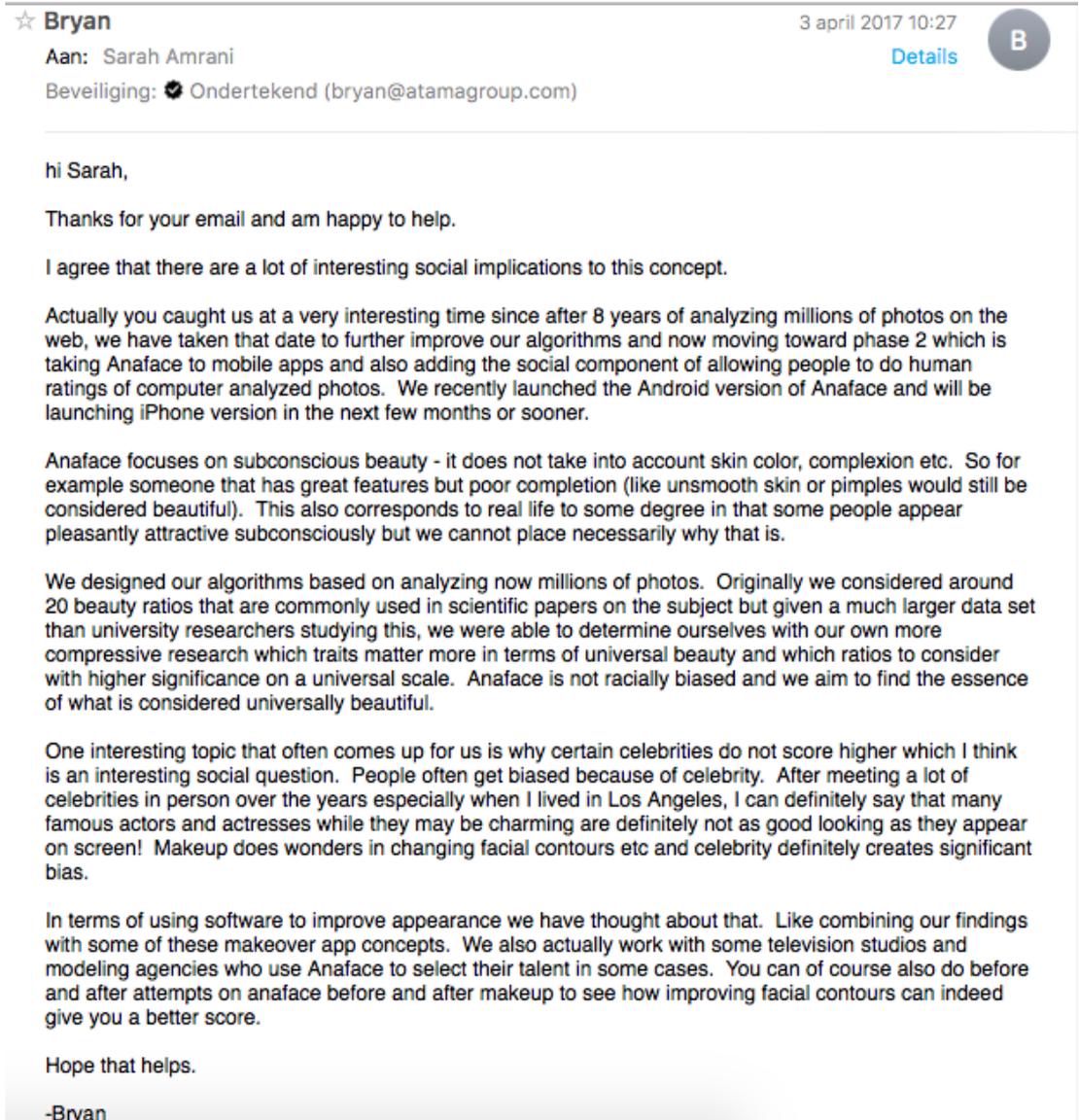
After I found the contact details of ATAMA GROUP LCC, I emailed Bryan Cooley to ask him for more information about what the analysis of Anaface exactly is based on. Because, After reading the interviews I was interested in the 'substantial scientific research' and 'statistical analysis' he talked about. I was wondering if Anaface could for example read skin colour to define beauty and what example or prototype the results are based on to measure the symmetry of the face. I concluded my email with the question if Anaface is an example of how technology is shaping our perception of beauty and instructing us how to improve our facial appearance in the future.

### (fig. 10)

Bryan Cooley responded with some interesting things about how to look at and use Anaface. Cooley confirmed in his email that Anaface is indeed already used by television studios and modelling agencies to select their talent based on their looks. To my question what the analysis is based on and if it reads for example skin colour, Bryan Cooley stated that the Anaface analysis focuses only on subconscious beauty. But what is meant by subconscious beauty? Cooley defines this as when we account people that appear pleasantly attractive subconsciously but we cannot place necessarily why that is. He explains that the ('subconscious') analysis is based on algorithms based on millions of photos. Starting off with 20 beauty ratios commonly used in 'scientific papers', the company was eventually able to develop a more compressive research which traits matter more in terms of universal beauty. Because, in the end that is the aim of Anaface aim: to find the essence of what is considered universally beautiful.

<sup>12</sup> Hill, Kashmir. "Free computer analysis of your beauty. What's the catch?" Published at forbes.com, 1 July 2009

<sup>13</sup> "New Anaface Facial Beauty Analysis Software Calculates Looks Instantly", published at prweb.com, 13 May 2009



**fig.10** Email contact with Bryan Cooley, CEO and Founder of Anaface.com about the strategy behind Anaface as a service to help people enhance their beauty

Cooley also explained to me why many celebrities do not necessarily get a high score with the analyse beauty test, although we all think of them as perfect beautiful people. People get biased because of being a celebrity and although makeup can change facial contours, Anaface can see through all of that. This emphasises the importance of Anaface as a service to help you to apply your make-up in the right way, and if that doesn't help it can advise you to think about cosmetic surgery.

Furthermore, what I found really interesting was how Cooley suggests a link between subconscious beauty and the idea of universal beauty, which he attempts to prove through Anaface. Based on the interviews and email contact with Bryan Cooley, I can conclude that Anaface is said to be designed as a service to help people enhance their lives, and to find universal standard of beauty, but at the same time it is also a service to select people based on their beauty.

For the visual part of my graduation project, I am interested in how the beauty tutorial videos and Anaface are contributing to normalise designing your face through cosmetic surgery, and how it is promoted as a way to enhance your life. I believe it is creating a more extreme obsession with beauty by confronting people with defects of their face and therefore with their lives. To experience this confrontation enhanced my face through photoshop based on the results I got from Anaface, which I will discuss in the next paragraph.

### **1.6 Reconfiguration of my face**

Based on the feedback Anaface gave me on my first uploaded portrait photo, I started experimenting with correcting my face. I adapted myself in photoshop and uploaded this second version again on Anaface. I repeated this a couple of times and documented this by making screenshots. **(fig.11)** The more terrible I started to look in my opinion, the higher score I would get from Anaface. I choose to use my own face to experiment with to refer to the 'selfie culture' that is part of the beauty vlog culture. I consider these beauty vlogs as a narcissistic act: looking in the mirror and trying to achieve an beauty ideal that is based on others doing exactly the same thing online. With these videos you can follow your beauty example / icon online and take their advise on how to create not only a look but to become a more perfect version of yourself.

For the visual outcome of my graduation project I am researching different elements of the process of the face as battleground of beauty. Besides experimenting with correcting myself based on the feedback and results of Anaface, I also experimented with the beauty prototype of the Mask of Marquardt by projecting this mask on a female face. **(fig.12)** With these visual materials and footage, I am working towards a video-installation. From these experiments of enhancing my face, I became interested in collecting the different results I got on every new photoshopped portrait of myself that I uploaded and to document this as a soundscape. I will come back to this in the conclusion of this research paper.

Before closing this first chapter of my research paper I want to discuss one other example in which measuring beauty defines your personal value in society. As I discussed with the example of Anaface, this beauty analysis software is presented as a way to select people based on their beauty, such as models for example. This selection based on beauty is a phenomenon that is increasingly becoming more important. The example I want to discuss is 'The Inner Circle', an exclusive dating-app that works with the idea to select people based on their beauty. You can only use the app when you get 'accepted' as a beautiful and therefore successful person. This app experiments with an algorithm that can measure peoples attractiveness, just as is done with Anaface. With the beauty results, a suitable match can be found for every user of this app. Moreover, the app tells every person that gets accepted, how successful they will be based on the analysis of their profile picture.<sup>14</sup> In this way services like Anaface and The Inner Circle dating-app are creating an exclusive group of beautiful people that confirm with the beauty ideal.

Having discussed in this first chapter the face and construction of beauty in general, I also focussed specifically on different methods used to measure and analyse beauty in the face. I discussed how these methods of measuring beauty are important elements in working towards the visual outcome of my graduation project, in which I want to make a visual statement about the face as battleground of beauty.

To continue my research about this battle of beauty and how a terror of beauty might be created by the power of aesthetics, I will therefore discuss in chapter two the face as mask of beauty in which I will focus on two strategies I believe are crucial in this battle of beauty. By discussing the strategies of cosmetics and cosmetic surgery applied to beautify the face, I will analyse the power of aesthetics and its influence on women when they consider one of these strategies to pursue beauty by re-constructing their face.



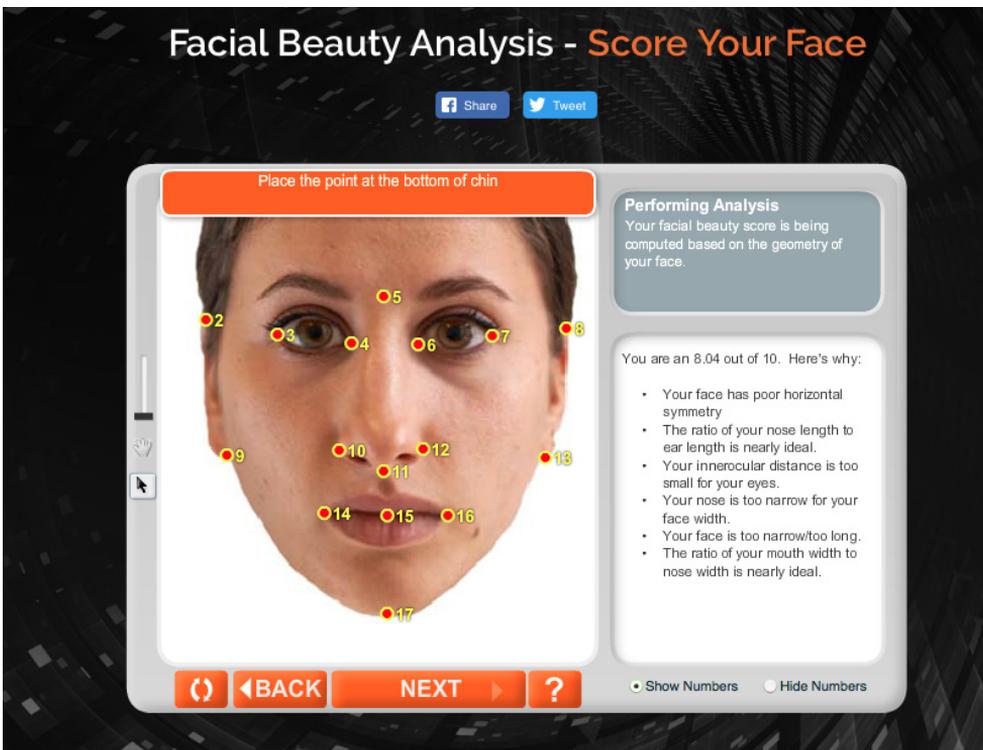
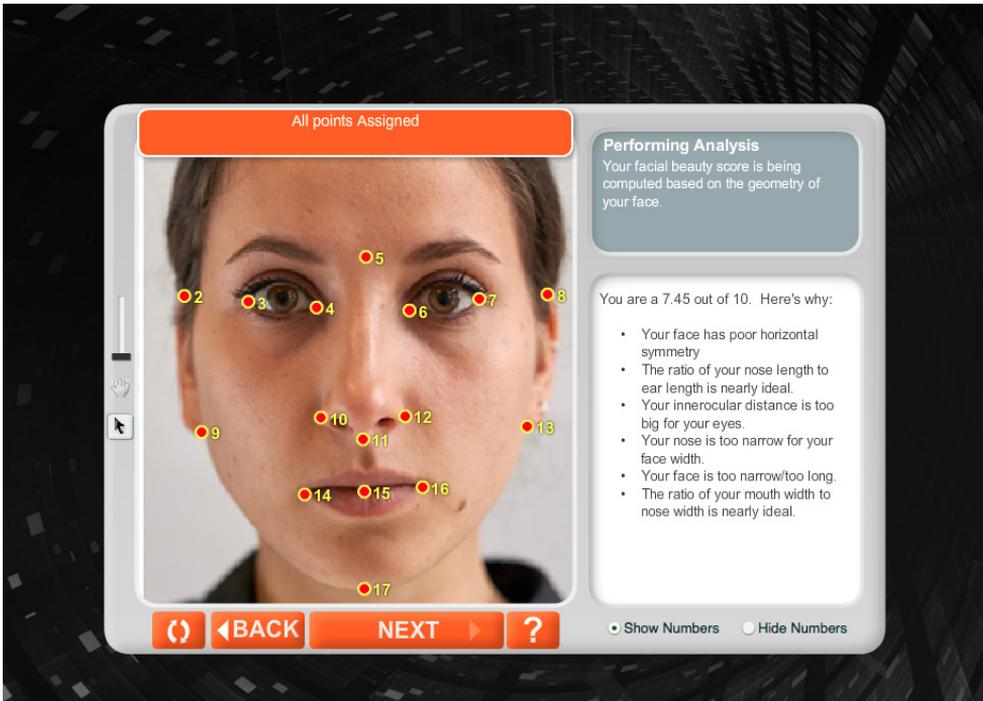
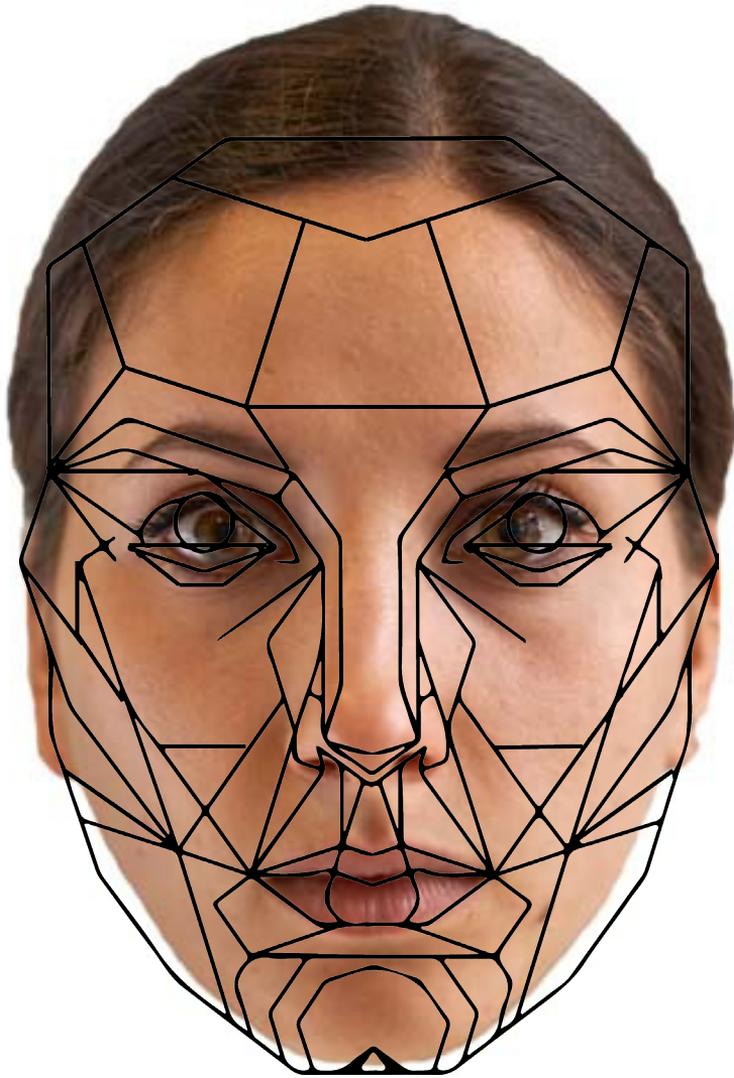


fig.11 Left: reconfiguration of my face with Photoshop, based on the feedback of Anaface (above).





**fig.12** Left: Beauty Mask of Marquardt digitally applied on my own face. Above: Beauty Mask of Marquardt projected on female face, film still of projection mapping test video.



## CHAPTER II

### THE FACE: MASK OF BEAUTY

When I was little, my grandmother used to say every morning: "I'm gonna put on my face". Without her make-up on she would refuse to leave the house. I would always watch her doing her morning beauty routine and since I started this project, I often have to think about her saying this every morning. This anecdote illustrates the essence of this chapter. Because, my grandmother was creating a temporary face by applying make-up as a strategy of beatification.

Having discussed the face and construction of beauty in general, in this chapter I discuss and wonder what it means if you create a face you can't take off anymore. I will therefore focus on the face as battleground of beauty by discussing two strategies that are used within this battle: cosmetics (make-up) and cosmetic surgery. Both strategies contribute to the power of aesthetics in the face. However, an important difference between these strategies I want to discuss, is the temporary act of applying make up and the irreversible act of using cosmetic surgery in order to create a more beautiful face. To summarise, in this chapter I will discuss first the strategies of cosmetics and cosmetic surgery used in the battle of beauty, then I will discuss the power of aesthetics and finally I will close this chapter with considering beauty as an performative act. Before moving on to the third and final chapter of my research paper, this chapter will be followed up by a brief intermezzo of the first and second chapter.

#### **2.1 Cosmetics vs Cosmetic Surgery: Strategies used in the Battle of Beauty**

John Liggett describes in his book *The Human Face* that even before the Ancient Greeks would use 'cosmetics' in their celebrations to the gods and in their theatrical performances, the Ancient Egyptians would use earth and clay to protect their faces from sand, insects, wind and weather as a first 'cosmetic product'. Liggett describes later on how this function of protection became a way of decorating the face with the same substances.<sup>15</sup>

I think we are now all familiar with using make-up as a strategy to decorate the face. However, as visible in the makeup beauty tutorials where there is often shown a before and after image of the beauty vlogger, I could say that makeup is now used to create a temporary mask of beauty. By applying makeup on the face, the beauty vlogger has the full agency in creating a facial 'mask' that meets the idealised beauty image. By wearing this 'mask' she performs a temporary beauty and identity because the face with make up on shows a different, more beautiful persona than she naturally is. Cosmetics as a strategy is in this case creating an artificial yet perfect suggestion of reality. It is interesting to think about this as being able to 'wear' your beauty as a mask. However, wearing a mask is ambiguous: by taking the mask off you expose your true identity, but by putting the mask on you can perform another identity. This was exactly why my grandmother would wear her 'mask' before she would go out, even if it was just to go to the neighbours.

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<sup>15</sup> Liggett, John. *The Human Face*. New York, Stein And Day, 1974. p.63

When make up serves to create an temporary artificial suggestion of reality, cosmetic surgery serves to create a permanent alienation of the natural by designing and constructing an artificial reality. Moreover, I believe that cosmetic surgery is at this moment the most extreme strategy in the battleground of beauty to enhance beauty, visible in the beauty blog tutorials. When chosen for cosmetic surgery, the agency of the beauty vlogger becomes limited and is handed-over to the cosmetic surgeon. As earlier discussed in the previous chapter, 'methods' such as the Beauty Mask of Marquardt and Anaface.com are specifically designed to give advise on which parts of the face need to be enhanced to become more beautiful. They support the idea that strategies of cosmetics and even cosmetic procedures are needed to meet the beauty ideal that is presented as the norm. Therefore, I argue that these methods promote the use of these strategies and map the territory of the face as battleground of beauty.

## 2.2 Beauty Vloggers: the Face as Battleground of Beauty

In the previous paragraph I discussed the strategies cosmetics and cosmetic surgery used in the face as battleground of beauty. These strategies illustrate the power of aesthetics because of the possibility to perform a temporary or permanent mask of beauty on the face. In the next two paragraphs I will focus more on how the power of aesthetics influences and affects our behaviour towards using the strategies of cosmetics and cosmetic surgery.

I consider the female face as a 'mask' of a constructible and designable ideal of beauty. By making again a reference to the example of the beauty vlogs tutorial videos, I now want to analyse how the line between the *temporary mask* when using cosmetics and the *permanent mask* when using cosmetic surgery is getting smaller. A popular cosmetic surgery that is often discussed in the beauty vlog videos is lip augmentation. Doortje Smithuijsen writes in Dutch newspaper NRC that women get inspired by celebrities and beauty vloggers to do something about their lips. It might not be the most radical 'operation' but because it is done in a part of the face the results can be extreme. Lip-fillers are more popular than ever and at the moment the most chosen cosmetic procedure. It is especially becoming more popular among teenage girls and young women in their twenties. They use social media to discuss these cosmetic procedures such as lip augmentation by using lip fillers.<sup>16</sup> Last year, there has even been an online trend of enhancing your lips by making them bigger and fuller.

This trend has started with the lips of tv-celebrity Kylie Jenner as example of beautiful and sexy lips. I could say her lips have gained almost an iconic status and are a contemporary example of the beauty ideal of female lips. With the social media hashtag (#) challenge: #kyliejennerlipchallenge, girls from all over the world filmed their own 'challenge of getting 'Kylie Jenner Lips' and posted this on social media. In this challenge, girls showed how they would use different objects as lip enhancer, such as a cupping-glass, bottle-caps, or anything round to suck on for a couple of minutes to get the result of bigger, swollen and fuller lips. **(fig.13)**



**fig.13** #KylieJennerLipchallenge, DIY beauty vlog video showing how to use objects as lipenhancers to get fuller and bigger lips.

I think this example is interesting because it is somewhere in between creating beauty through the strategy of cosmetics and the strategy of cosmetic surgery. With the #KylieJennerlipchallenge there is no permanent change, but there are objects used to create an augmentation of the lips. Of course there are also a lot of beauty video tutorials in which you get instructed on how to use different lipsticks and lipgloss to create the optical illusion of fuller lips. But the #kyliejennerlipchallenge shows a shift in the trend of beauty tutorial video's giving make-up advise. Besides discussing cosmetics to create a temporary result in these videos, tools such as the DIY lip enhancer are now also being discussed and demonstrated in these videos. The biggest shift in the beauty tutorial trend as a result of the #kyliejennerlipchallenge are girls going to a cosmetic surgeon to have lip-fillers in order to get the lips of Kylie Jenner. **(fig.14)** This example makes me wonder about what could be next. Would it be only a matter of time before we can expect Do It Yourself Botox tutorial videos online? Well, actually these vlog videos already exist. **(fig.15)** Executing your own lip augmentation might officially be illegal, but it is already possible to buy your own lip-fillers online. Since this is online available I could say that the agency of self-reconstruction is handed over back to the women instead of the cosmetic surgeon. I can only wonder what this would mean for future developments concerning cosmetic surgery and beauty tutorials and how cosmetics as strategy to create a temporary enhancement will become less popular than cosmetic procedures to create a permanent beauty enhancement of the face.

### 2.3 Power of Aesthetics

When a cosmetic procedure is chosen over the strategy of cosmetics, what is the aesthetic norm that is so compulsory for women to choose for cosmetic surgery? What makes them accept this act as the last option to retain or achieve their beauty? What is the power of aesthetics? The example of lip-fillers I discussed in the previous paragraph is a clear example social media being used to distribute, discuss and get confronted with unrealistic artificial beauty ideals. As a result you can't help but to compare yourself to others. Because in the end we all want to fit in and be part of this 'beauty norm, we are all looking for confirmation.<sup>17</sup>

Feminist Naomi Wolf discusses in her book *The Beauty Myth* how images of women are used against women. In her book Wolf strives to overthrow the beauty myth: the idea of a universal beauty ideal women have to fit into, in order to be a more 'successful', 'better' and 'healthier' person. Because according to Wolf this ideal consists of unrealistic and impossible standards of female beauty.

This myth of female perfection and beauty is according to Wolf created by the media, fashion and cosmetic industry. They present to us the idea that cosmetics or cosmetic procedures will make you more beautiful and therefore will make you feel a better person. Because, as Wolf describes in her book this is exactly why women choose surgery: it is the moment when they are convinced they cannot be who they really are without it.<sup>18</sup> This quote defines exactly the power of aesthetics and its influence on our behaviour towards beautifying ourselves through cosmetics and eventually cosmetic surgery.

<sup>17</sup> Smithuijsen, Doortje. "Allemaal Angelina", NRC, 9 September 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth*, Vintage, London, 1991. p. 258

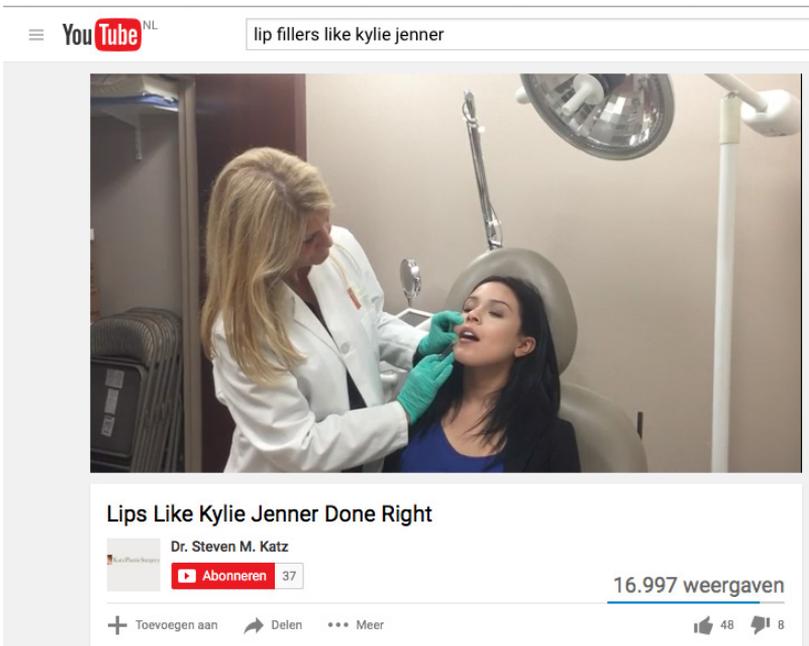


fig.14 'Lips like Kylie Jenner done right' beauty vlog video in which this girl vlogs about her lipfiller procedure to get the perfect Kylie Jenner face.

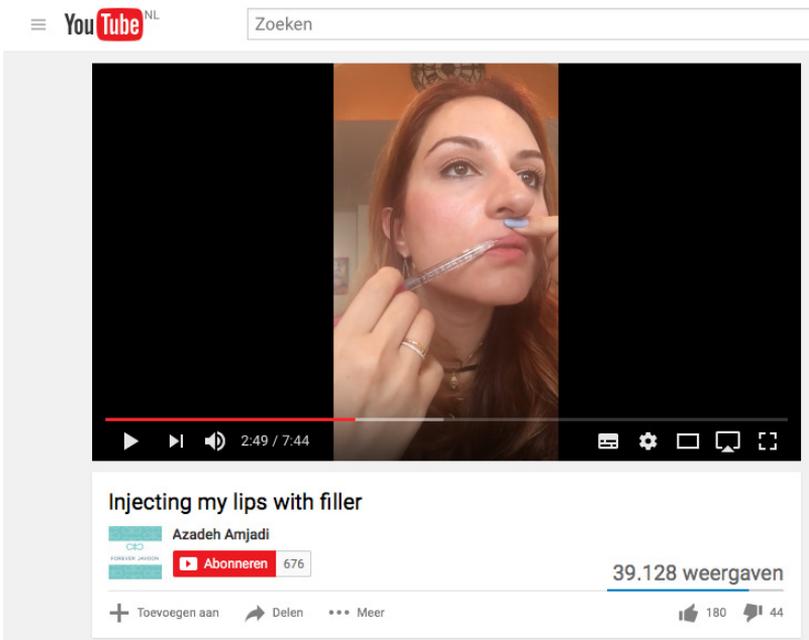
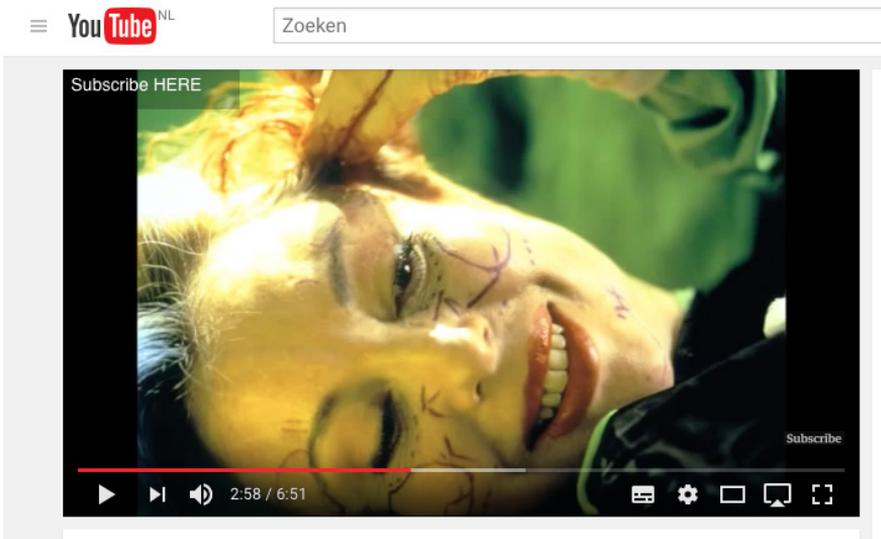


fig.15 Example of a Do It Yourself lip enhancement beauty vlog video, in which this girl is injecting her lips with fillers she ordered online.



**fig.16** Above: screenshot of one of the operation performances of Orlan. Below: Dutch beautyvlogger *Beauty Gloss* getting botox injections. Both presented as an online spectacle of facial reconstruction but with different goals and context.

Journalist Xandra Schutte supports the thought of Naomi Wolf about the pressure women experience from the power of aesthetics. Schutte writes in her essay 'Your own Pygmalion' about the dilemma of cosmetic surgery women experience. She believes women are both victim of the beauty myth as well as that they have full agency over the metamorphosis they undergo: women are both sculptor of their own body as object.<sup>19</sup> To explain this a bit more, Schutte describes the dilemma of cosmetic surgery as a battle between the artificial and the natural, the ideal vs. the real. The desire to reconstruct the body or the face is based on a woman's self-image. This self image is built upon endless comparisons between yourself and others in which they (the other women) are perceived as the 'norm', the beauty standard, and the self is failing to do so. Within this reasoning, Xandra Schutte states that applying cosmetic surgery on the face is actually similar to making a psychological self-portrait. The intervention with the face (body) is an intervention with the identity.<sup>20</sup> In order to specify this intervention it is important to discuss two female artists who demonstrate this so called intervention with their identity through the intervention with their face (body). Therefore, I will close this chapter by discussing the work of the two female artists Orlan and Cindy Sherman who both apply the strategies of cosmetics and cosmetic surgery, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, in their work and show how beauty is performative and practising its power.

## 2.4 Performativity of Beauty

In this paragraph I will first discuss French based artist Orlan, secondly I will discuss American artist Cindy Sherman in order to analyse the intervention with identity through the intervention with the face (body).

As part of her intervention, artist Orlan has been using cosmetic surgery as permanent and more extreme strategy in the battle of beauty to re-construct her face. These cosmetic procedures have been filmed and documented and are presented to the public as her 'operation performances'. The footage has been broadcasted live by satellite and are not only sometimes creepy to watch but also disturbingly uncanny: during the operation Orlan is laying fully conscious. She contributes to her performance by reading poetry, the manifesto of her carnal art or answering questions from her interactive audience that is watching her being operated and re-constructed.

Orlan is re-constructing her face with these operations, and I think it is interesting to look at these operation performances of Orlan as an early version of today's beauty tutorial videos. As a viewer you are in both cases witnessing the transformation, the before and after and you get informed by the artist or beauty vlogger on the procedure and how they feel. **(fig.16)**

However, unlike the beauty vloggers, it is not the aim of Orlan to become more beautiful. Yet she is re-creating herself based on 'classical' images of women from historical Western art, and these women are often perceived as beautiful. She underwent nine surgery operations, in one of them her forehead was changed to mimic the brow of the Mona Lisa of da Vinci. In another operation her chin was altered to look like that of the Venus of Botticelli.

<sup>19</sup> Schutte, Xandra. *Maskerade*. Amsterdam, de Bezige Bij, 1999. p.92

<sup>20</sup> Schutte, Xandra. *Maskerade*. Amsterdam, de Bezige Bij, 1999. p.94

In an interview with *The Guardian*,<sup>21</sup> Orlan says she is not sure if she can change the idea of beauty but she believes she is able to produce a beauty image that is different from those we find in the media. Her goal is to sculpt her own body and to reinvent the image of women, and perhaps as a result even reinvent the image of beauty by disrupting the standards of beauty through her operation performances. By means of cosmetic surgery, Orlan is reconstructing herself by activating multiple beauty ideals and showing that eventually it might not make us more beautiful at all. Paradoxically, this very strategy is exemplar of the terror of beauty.

The intervention with the face (the body) as an intervention with identity is also visible in the work of artist Cindy Sherman. Like Orlan, but in a completely different way, she is also using and referring to multiple representations and beauty ideals women are confronted with. In her work though she, in contrary to Orlan, creates a temporary mask to 're-construct her face and identity by using the method of cosmetics and masquerade. **(fig.17)**

Sherman creates photographic series of (self)portraits in which she uses herself as model to embody and perform different women in front of the camera. "Every woman has a relation with the mirror, she relates to the 'catalog' of examples."<sup>22</sup> This illustrates the work of Sherman. She produces images of women that are not based on one original but are constructed from her 'archive of images of women'. She is re-creating a face she has seen in commercials for example and that has also been based on a type of woman. In this way Sherman contributes to the reproduction of stereotypes and images of women, all inspired on the stereotypical archetypes that mass culture and society offer to us.<sup>23</sup>

With this strategy of reproducing copies of archetypes, Sherman emphasises that the female appearance is artificial, an image, and that femininity is a role you may play. This is exactly what Sherman does when 'masking' her face with not only cosmetics but also facial prosthetics. Her work is an example of using the face, and changing it into a psychological self-portrait. By making use of masquerade, her portraits are like Orlan's work a performance of re-constructing the face.

Having discussed in this chapter the strategies of cosmetics and cosmetic surgery, the power of aesthetics and the performative methods of Orlan and Cindy Sherman to recreate the female face, this brings me back to the beginning of this chapter when I discussed cosmetics as temporary mask of beauty, creating a persona and the mask itself as being ambiguous. I can now link this to the work of Cindy Sherman: In her work, Sherman's true identity stays invisible, she is performing another woman without exposing her true identity. She is like my grandmother literally putting on a face. There is only one difference, it is not the 'better version' of her face she puts on, but it is the mask of the many the faces of women.

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<sup>21</sup> Jeffries, Stuart "Orlan's art of sex and surgery", *The Guardian*, 1 July 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Schutte, Xandra. *Maskerade*. Amsterdam, de Bezige Bij, 1999. p.75

<sup>23</sup> Schampers K. and Schoon, T. et al. *Cindy Sherman*. 1st ed., Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans-Van Beuningen, 1996. p. 24



**fig.17** Cindy Sherman, Untitled #458, 2007–2008. Sherman uses cosmetics as a strategy of re-constructing the face and reproducing the female face as being an artificial appearance.



## INTERMEZZO

### CHAPTER I AND CHAPTER II

Before moving on the next and final chapter of my research paper I need to consider what I have learnt so far about the face as battleground of beauty.

Although beauty is subjective, based on the previous chapters I can conclude that there is a need to research and define a universal beauty ideal. How we perceive beauty is subconsciously defined by mathematical proportions, because we are attracted to symmetry and harmony within a face.

This research for a universal beauty 'prototype' is closely related to the cosmetics and cosmetic surgery industry, two important strategies used in the face as battleground of beauty. Designed services such as Anaface and the Mask of dr. Marquardt are methods to help you enhance yourself by enhancing your beauty. They are designed to help you see and improve the parts of your face that are not perfect according to the prototype they use to measure and rate beauty.

I have been discussing the face as battleground of beauty through the examples of beauty tutorial video's online. These videos demonstrate the strategies used in this battle of beauty: cosmetics creating a temporary result of a 'wearable' beauty mask, and cosmetic surgery procedures creating a permanent result of a artificial re-constructed face. By applying these strategies to the face in order to enhance beauty, it can be suggested that the face serves as battleground and enhance beauty. The face becomes a designable mask and beauty becomes a performative act. Artists Orlan and Cindy Sherman I discussed in chapter two, both illustrate this in their work by working with masquerade and cosmetic procedures to transform their face and question the artificial appearance of women and the role they may play.

So far, I can also conclude that social media has an important role in contributing to the power of aesthetics. The beauty tutorial videos I discussed are keeping the beauty myth, to fit into an ideal, alive. Moreover, social media has also made it possible that beauty has now become available for almost everyone, for every social class: beauty has been democratised. Although you can now 'choose' your beauty by using cosmetics or even create your beauty by using surgery, Naomi Wolf states in her book *The Beauty Myth* that beauty has not just become a choice but has now even become a must. Because she argues that without beauty you will eventually perish in society. This means that if becoming more beautiful can only be achieved by cosmetic procedures, then you have no other choice then to do so. This illustrates the Surgical Age we find ourselves in, where all limits have broken down and everything is possible. But, new possibilities for women quickly become new obligations. From "anything *can* be done for beauty" becomes "anything *must* be done".<sup>24</sup> Wolf describes the power of aesthetics and the pursuit of a hyper real beauty ideal we all fit into so we will not perish in society. The face is now more than ever becoming a mask of designable beauty. But "*whatever the pressures of the present, the surgical future is one without choice.*"<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth*, Vintage, London, 1991. p.254

<sup>25</sup> Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth*, Vintage, London, 1991. p.260

This surgical future indicates what I will discuss in the next and last chapter of my research paper. In the next chapter I will question if technology is going to define beauty for us in the future. With this question in mind, I am interested in looking at the facial appearance of the cyborg figure, a figure of the present and future. I find the appearance of the cyborg interesting because its body is often robotic while the face remains often human-like. The facial skin seems to be the only human 'authentic' part left. Though it is always a hyper-real and perfect version of a human face. This I why I wonder if the cyborg could be a future icon or prototype of female beauty. Moreover, the facial appearance of the cyborg might even be the most radical outcome of our need to enhance our beauty through cosmetic procedures. Are we creating our own repulsive beauty and is the cyborg the embodiment of the sublime? Perhaps the battle of beauty is determined in the face of the cyborg.



**fig.18** Film still from *Ghost in the Shell*, 2017. A human brain is transplanted in a synthetic body.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FACE OF THE CYBORG: ICON OF FEMALE BEAUTY?

I recently saw the new release of *Ghost in the Shell* (2017), a film based on a Japanese anime, sharing the same name. In short, the story is set in the near future in which the protagonist is the first of her kind: a cyber enhanced woman. She is designed to be a soldier to eliminate dangerous hackers.

What fascinates me most about this heroine, is the way she is cyber enhanced: the film starts off with seeing how a human brain is transplanted into a fully synthetic body to combine the strongest attributes of human and robot. (fig.18) Of course her designed appearance is not just about her face but about her whole body. However, there is one scene that got my attention in which a reference is made to her face and how beautiful it is. This happens when she is trapped and confronted with the enemy who pulls off a part of her face, examines it and puts it back onto her face. It is this moment in the film where it is shown how the human skin as mask covers up the robotic body.

In the intermezzo chapter, I introduced the idea of the cyborg as most extreme outcome of the Surgical Age we now live in. I wonder if this would mean that the battle of beauty is determined in the face of the cyborg, and what this outcome would look like: is the face of the cyborg the future prototype of female beauty or is the face of the cyborg example of a terror of beauty we are creating by enhancing our faces through cosmetic procedures?

In this third and last chapter of my research paper I will discuss the face of the cyborg as possible future Icon of female beauty. However, I will first briefly discuss a few more cinematic references to illustrate the connection between beauty and the female cyborg figure. I will discuss how our beauty ideal is becoming more and more a designed example. Furthermore, I will go more into detail about this designed example and discuss the cyborg aesthetics and the hyper real beauty ideal that is created. I will mainly focus on the face of the cyborg, however it is sometimes necessary to refer to the cyborg body. I will also keep referring to the beauty tutorial videos. Finally, I will end this chapter by discussing how a terror of beauty evolves from the power of aesthetics and how this is visually suggested in the female face. Therefore I will refer to the work of several artists.

#### 3.1 Beauty and the Cyborg

As I have said in the intermezzo chapter, I am interested in the facial appearance of the cyborg, because its body is often robotic while the face often remains human-like. The facial skin seems to be the only human 'authentic' part left of the robotic body. However, this face is mostly visualised as a hyper real and perfect version of a human face. The face of the cyborg has everything we, humans, try to achieve through the strategies of cosmetics and cosmetic surgery: a smooth plain face with no wrinkles, no sign of transience or the possibility to age. This is visible in almost every female cyborg movie character. I have become used to link beauty and perfection with artificiality and therefore with artificial figures such as the cyborg. This is especially confirmed when watching films in which a female cyborg is present. Steve Rose writes in *The Guardian* that looking back over movie history, it is difficult to find a female cyborg who hasn't been created in the form of an attractive and beautiful young woman.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Rose, Steve. "Ex Machina and sci-fi's obsession with sexy female robots" *The Guardian*, 15 January 2015.

A recent cinematic example besides Major in *Ghost in the Shell* (2017) is Ava in *Ex Machina* (2015). Ava is a humanoid robot with artificial intelligence. During the film she becomes aware of her consciousness and eventually uses her beauty to seduce her male opponent in order to escape the place where she was created. Visually interesting in Ava's appearance is that her whole body is robotised, yet her face has a hyper real human appearance. **(fig.19)** The robot Maria in *Metropolis* is also depicted as a highly seductive figure, an erotic dancer and a femme fatale who provokes the male workers in order to bring down civilisation. The Fembots of *Austin Powers* with their weaponised breasts (1997), the *Stepford Wives* (1974 and 2004) and Pris from *Blade Runner* (1982) as a 'pleasure model' all embody the idea of the perfect woman who is subservient and sexually obliging. Though being literally objectified women, objects of seduction, Rose remarks that most of the time in these films the female robots leads to chaos and destruction.

I find it interesting how the artificial and beauty is in these cinematic references suggested to always end in a form of destruction and perhaps even terror. It almost seems that behind the surface of the perfectly beautiful face of the cyborg something destructive is hidden, that there is something quite disturbing about their beauty. I will come back to this later on in the chapter when I go further into detail about the cyber aesthetics and the terror of beauty.

### 3.2 Beauty and Technology: Virtual Cosmetics

Before focussing on the cyborg aesthetics I first want to discuss how our example of beauty is more often a designed prototype. Moreover, not only is our example of beauty designed, but technology is, to my opinion, increasingly becoming more important in defining the beauty ideal we want to conform with. To support this thought I will discuss two recent examples in which technology and beauty are integrated in the face.

In the US the beauty and cosmetics company Sephora recently opened a new beauty shop called TIP: Teach, Inspire and Play. With this concept, technology and beauty merge. This beauty store has a beauty workshop where women can learn new beauty techniques via online tutorials. With the help of technology, women can even virtually test their make up in this store. With a special app customers can upload a selfie and digitally test the products on their photo on big screens in the store. Director of Saphora Calvin McDonald says that Sephora will continue to innovate by creating a customers experience through technology.<sup>27</sup> This example also shows how a service is designed to help women enhance their face and to advise them to beautify themselves by using the strategie of cosmetics as temporary mask of beauty. Moreover, it shows a new way of how technology contributes to the influence of the power of aesthetics by making this new phenomenon quite accessible for women to use.

The other example is the work of media artist Nobumichi Asai. This example is as an art work, slightly less accessible for women to use but it does visually supports the digital make up beauty workshop example of Saphora's. Asai collaborated for this project with a team of creative developers and they visualised a realtime face tracking and projection installation. In this installation make up is technologically applied onto the face with use of projection mapping. The effect that is created is transforming the natural face into new re-interpretations of the human form. In a review at designboom.com it is said that Asai has discovered the potential of digitally rewriting of what we traditionally understand and perceive the face to be.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> "Virtueel contouren en digitale make-up lessen is dit de toekomst van de beauty winkel?", Vogue, 18 November 2015.

<sup>28</sup> The work of artist Nobumichi Asai discussed in online article at: [www.designboom.com](http://www.designboom.com)



**fig.19** Film still from Ex Machina 2015. A robotic body yet a hyper real human face.



**fig.20** Nobumichi Asai, 'Omote', 2015. Face tracking and projection mapping on a real woman's face to create a virtual reconstruction of the female face.

In one of these projection videos Asai projects a digital visualisation of a cyborg onto the human face. By using the technology of face tracking and projection mapping, Asai refers both to the strategy of cosmetics to create, in this case virtually, a beauty mask, as well as to the face of a cyborg. This really intrigues me about this work. It shows a futuristic form of applying the strategy of cosmetics as a temporary mask of beauty: to virtually project cosmetics onto the face. **(fig.20)**

This video installation of Asai makes me feel the same as when watching the beauty tutorial videos: the face is the focal point of beauty and you watch the face being transformed on your computer screen into another persona. The work of Asai also demonstrates that besides finding ourselves in the Surgical Age, as described by Naomi Wolf I mentioned in chapter two, we also find ourselves in a Digital Age. The aim to define a universal beauty ideal and to reconstruct ourselves so we can conform to this ideal, is in both examples the case. With digital manipulation, every image can be reproduced infinitely. You could think of cosmetic surgery in the same way. Hence, in the Age of Surgery as well as in the Age of Technology infinite reproduction of an ideal is possible and the difference between what is natural (the original) and the artificial (the copy) disappears. I consider the cyborg figure as an example in which both the digital as the surgical reconstruction to perceive beauty is applied and defines the cyborg aesthetics. In the following paragraphs I will further discuss this, but to do so it will be sometimes necessary to also discuss the body of the cyborg. This is important when talking about the face as focal point of female beauty. Because in order to discuss the artificial hyper real aesthetics visible in the face of the cyborg, it is for me helpful to understand the aesthetics of the cyborg figure as a whole.

### 3.3 Designed Beauty

If the cyborg is an example of digital and physical reconstruction, how is this important for us when designing our beauty through technology and surgery? Donna Haraway, American sociologist and professor at University of California, introduces in her seminal *Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) the cyborg not being a fantasy figure from the future, but us being already all cyborgs. We are already organic artificial hybrids, when applying synthetic materials into our natural body when using botox, silicone, lip fillers and even cosmetics. The cyborg symbolises the end of this dichotomy.<sup>29</sup> According to Haraway, the cyborg is a metaphor for the postmodern human, its identity is flexible: it has a hybrid identity. However, from discussing the cinematic references earlier, it becomes clear that we still create and design the cyborg in fixed stereotypes and gender forms. The female cyborg figure has become another archetype of idealised perfection and beauty. We create an artificial ideal based on what we are naturally lacking, and longing for to have.

With this in mind I would like to refer to the first semi-autonomous android called Erica. She has been recently created in Japan by Hiroshi Ishiguro and Dylan Glas who both are interested in redefining what it means to be human. In the released video in which Erica is interviewed, she gets introduced as Erica, 23 years old, with a beautiful and neutral face.<sup>30</sup> What I am interested in of course is, based on what example or prototype her face is designed, and if this would be an example in which something like Anaface could be used to design the most beautiful robotic face. After all, Erica was given a female gender and therefore a female face. It is prerequisite that she must look feminine and beautiful so that people can accept her as a humanoid and to make it easier to identify ourselves with a machine that can talk to us.

<sup>29</sup> Ruyters, Jan. Jan Ruyters herleest 'Een Cyborg Manifest', Trouw, 24 April 2004

<sup>30</sup> video Erica: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/ng-interactive/2017/apr/07/meet-erica-the-worlds-most-autonomous-android-video>

She looks human so we can relate to her and have a conversation, as is the aim of the creation of Erica: to have a new generation of designed humanoids with more autonomy to have interaction with humans. She is like the heroine in *Ghost in the Shell*: the first of her kind, an archetype of an idealised autonomous humanoid.

**(fig.21)**



**fig.21.** Erica: Man Made. 2015-now. Close up of her face.

To put the artificial female figure in perspective, I would like to make another reference to the work of Cindy Sherman, only this time to her 'Sex Pictures' series. Sherman's work has always been influenced by the recurrent stereotype of the female body in the media. However, in these series instead of presenting her masked face, she now used naked doll body parts as artificial surrogates for the female body. Margrit Brehms describes when discussing this series of Sherman, how the imagined artificial body not only served as a surrogate or a replacement for the real body, but was regarded as an improved version: to conceive a true ideal.<sup>31</sup> "The production" of the ideal woman was main focus of interest for male artists in the 18th and 19th century. However, as I said before based on the cinematic female artificial figure, the cyborg, I would say the stereotypical production of the ideal woman is still ongoing. Furthermore, when thinking back about the beauty tutorial videos, the production of the ideal woman is now more and more taking place online and a recurring subject visible on social media. Especially in these beauty tutorial videos the face has become the pars pro toto of the female body in which the production of beauty and perfection takes place.

This brings me to the next paragraph, where I will discuss the aesthetics of the cyborg and the possible iconic status the cyborg face could have as prototype of an idealised and universal beauty ideal.

### 3.4 Cyborg Aesthetics

As I have said before, I am primarily interested in the facial appearance and aesthetics of the cyborg figure. The face of the cyborg often has a human 'authentic' facial appearance, while the body is robotised. However, it is always a hyper-real and perfect version of a human face. The face of the cyborg has everything we try to achieve through the strategies of cosmetics and cosmetic surgery: a smooth plain face. The facial appearance of the cyborg shows an artificial suggestion of human identity. Professor of Visual Culture Anneke Smelik describes in her book *I, Cyborg* how the image of the cyborg, its appearance and aesthetics, influences our perception of our appearance. According to Smelik the most important visual element of the cyborg aesthetics, we humans try to achieve is the hairless and the smoothed body.<sup>32</sup>

Because having hair distinguishes us visually from the artificial appearance of the cyborg. However, in the Digital and Surgical Age we find ourselves in, the hairless body is becoming more and more the normative ideal. It is either visualised digitally, with a computer generated body, or it is modified through surgery. Similar in a digital and physical modification to create this aesthetic, is the idea that the body, and therefore also the face, can be transformed, designed, and enhanced. This thought embodies the new beauty ideal in today's society.

To argue this further, I notice a development in how the female face is more often mirroring the cyborg as example of ideal beauty. Because the tension between our natural appearance and an artificial enhancement becomes visible in the face when the strategy of cosmetic surgery is applied to create a more beautiful appearance, as is also demonstrated in the beauty cosmetic surgery vlogs.

Donna Haraway discusses the cyborg as an appealing image for women to identify themselves with because it is creating new possibilities because of its hybrid form. Haraway says that the cyborg breaks down the line between the natural and the artificial, the physical and psychological.<sup>33</sup> This hybrid form is another visually acclaimed element of the cyborg that is important to discuss when thinking of the cyborg aesthetics. Because this hybrid form of the cyborg visually suggests infinite youth. The cyborg figure, is reproducible and repairable when being injured. This is also a recurring element in film scenes. For example in *Ghost in the Shell*, when part of the heroine's face is taken off and the robotic design underneath the surface of human skin is exposed. These scenes are a way to visualise the hybrid form of the cyborg.

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<sup>32</sup> Smelik, Anneke. *I, Cyborg*. Delft, Eburon, 2012. p.157

<sup>33</sup> Bell, David and Kennedy, M. Barbara, editors, *The Cybercultures Reader*, 'Donna Haraway. A Cyborg Manifesto'. Routledge, London, 2000. p. 291.

To come back to the hairless skin as cyborg aesthetic, I explained so far how this is achieved by digital manipulation and cosmetic surgery. Anneke Smelik notes in her book *I Cyborg* that removing body hair is not only done to accentuate the smoothness skin but also emphasise the infinite youth we are longing for. I believe this longing for infinite youth is also visible in the beauty vlog tutorials. Here it is demonstrated how the cosmetic procedures are not done to remove wrinkles, these girls are all in their twenties, but the cosmetic procedures are done to prevent possible visibility of ageing. Having said that, the cyborg could be seen as beauty icon because its appearance corresponds with our ideal, and moreover it is our example of having control over our appearance and therefore our lives. This control over our appearance is important for us in pursuing infinite youth. However, the cyborg being our beauty icon, Smelik states that by enhancing our beauty through cosmetic surgery we are becoming the cyborg but in a monstrous form. I say this is happening because of the clash between the artificial and natural, becoming visible in our face when for example a lot of botox is used. In this case we don't really confirm with the cyborg ideal, but we become a bad 'copy' instead.<sup>34</sup> Smelik teaches us that the cyborg as beauty icon is presenting us a hyper real beauty ideal we try to achieve. To discuss the hyper real beauty aesthetics of the cyborg appearance in more detail, I will in the next paragraph briefly discuss what is meant with the term hyper reality in this context of creating a hyper real beauty ideal. Furthermore, I will refer to the work of the artists Inez van Lamsweerde, Kirsten Geisler and Micha Klein.

### 3.5 Hyper Real Beauty Ideal

Having already discussed in the previous paragraph some elements of the cyborg aesthetics and how this relates to our beauty ideal presented in beauty tutorial videos, I will now discuss the term hyper reality. This is one of the most important visual aspects of the cyborg aesthetics: a presentation of a hyper real beauty ideal, an ideal based on artificiality. In this paragraph I will refer to the work of philosopher Jean Baudrillard, the work of Anneke Smelik and I will discuss the work of three artists.

French sociologist, philosopher and cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard discusses the term hyper reality in his book *Simulacra and Simulation*. Baudrillard's simulacrum theory is about questioning the perception of images as being real and authentic and therefore being true. More specifically, Baudrillard discusses how we see and understand images as a representation of reality. Based on images we see in the media, we define our perception of reality. Baudrillard considers these images produced by the media as a simulation of reality. When we imitate what we consider as being real, we create an illusion of reality: an artificial simulation of reality.

This artificial simulation of reality is then perceived and describes as hyperreality.<sup>35</sup> To Baudrillard, the hyper-real is 'the universe of simulation', when the real is no longer what it was.<sup>36</sup> This 'universe' is defined by reproducing copies without one original image, based on how we simulate the real. We perceive the real and the artificial no longer as separate elements, because we mostly only experience images through the media. Having said that, the philosophical theory of Baudrillard is helpful in considering what is at stake when looking at the beauty blog tutorials.

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<sup>34</sup> Smelik, Anneke. *I, Cyborg*. Delft, Eburon, 2012. p.175.

<sup>35</sup> video: Baudrillard- ideas and concepts: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80osUvkFlzI>

<sup>36</sup> Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*, The University of Michigan Press, Michigan, 1994. p.125.

When watching these videos, the produced images by the beauty vloggers are presented and perceived as hyper reality: a true representation of beauty. Because we consider these images as real, we imitate and recreate them. The result: a reproduction of the artificial beauty ideal, that is visible in the increasing number of beauty vlog videos and a growing obsession with enhancing our beauty to the standards of a hyper real beauty ideal.

Anneke Smelik refers in her book *I, Cyborg* to the sociologist Manuel Castells who describes our contemporary visual culture a culture of real virtuality. With this term he indicates a culture in which reality is completely submerged in the media. Where fictional and artificial images influence our perception of reality and meaning has become destabilised because we do not longer know what is real and what is not real.<sup>37</sup> This also relates to the beauty vlog videos in which the real and the fictional, the natural and the artificial become more interwoven with each other and become specifically visible in the face.

In the works of artists Mischa Klein, Kirsten Geisler and Inez van Lamsweerde I observe this merge of the artificial and natural and a hyper real beauty ideal as visual outcome. Artist Micha Klein made for example the Artificial Beauty Series. A series of portraits of hyper realistic women, created by merging the portrait of his wife with artificial images of other women collected from the media. With this method he refers to the Italian Renaissance artist Raphael who attempted to paint the ideal woman in the 16th century by combining the most beautiful parts of different women to create one perfect ideal version.<sup>38</sup> (fig.22) Klein is simulating the ideal female (face) based on 'copies' of the ideal woman, creating an hyper real image based on images he perceives as reflecting reality.



fig.22. Micha Klein, digital photographs, 'Artificial Beauty Series', 1998.

<sup>37</sup> Smelik, Anneke. *I, Cyborg*. Delft, Eburon, 2012. p.54.

<sup>38</sup> Video: Micha Klein - Artificial Beauty Series: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPu0RqHLiI4>



**fig.24.** Inez van Lamsweerde, digital photograph, 'Thank you Thighmaster', 1993.

The virtual women of Kirsten Geisler are on the other hand no longer a combination of natural and artificial. Yet a hyper real image of a female body and face is created: a symmetrical and smooth hairless face.

Because the artificial figures of Geisler refer to an image from reality, a female face, we are still able to identify ourselves with this completely artificial appearance.

The computer generated women of Geisler are a simulation of reality and show the illusion of a most perfect appearance. **(fig.23)** Compared to the work of Klein and Geisler, the work of Dutch photographer Inez van Lamsweerde is more directed towards alienating the female face and figure. Her work 'Thank you Thighmaster' shows a woman with a perfect yet unrealistic body and face. She has been completely photoshopped and with this digital manipulation and alienation of reality, Van Lamsweerde refers to the physical intervention of cosmetic surgery to reconstruct the body and face. **(fig.24)** Moreover, she refers to the possibilities of simulating the real by reproducing copies without one specific original.

The digital work of these artists show the possibilities of artificially simulating reality in the Surgical and Digital Age. With their works they reflect on contemporary behaviour towards beauty and visualise a future outcome in which an extreme degree of control over the body in order to perfect it is demonstrated.

Yet, I wonder how realistic it is for us to eventually confirm with the cyborg aesthetics? I discussed earlier in this chapter how we identify ourselves with the cyborg as icon of beauty based on the beauty ideals we pursue. However, we do not have infinite youth and therefore only a temporary simulation of the cyborg appearance is possible. We are becoming more hybrid, enhancing ourselves with artificial strategies, but I wonder if by doing so we are really creating a more beautiful appearance. If there is one universal beauty, visualised in the facial appearance of the cyborg, does this mean there must be one universal face and our faces are eventually becoming all identical? On the other hand, we might be creating a terror of beauty when the face keeps being used as battleground by applying artificial strategies in our face.

In the following and last paragraph of this chapter I will discuss if our pursuit for beauty by enhancing and modifying our face might result in a contemporary sublime. Moreover, I will discuss at what stage in beautifying our face we could speak of terror of beauty. Therefore, in the following paragraph I will discuss the connection of sublime and the terror of beauty.



**fig.23.** Kirsten Geisler, 'Dream of Beauty 5.1' and 'Maya Brush,' computer generated female figures.

### 3.6 Terror of Beauty

The previous paragraph discussed how power of aesthetics create and increase an obsession with a hyper real beauty ideal. I will now discuss how the hyper real aesthetics of the cyborg are an example of contemporary sublime and how the strategies of beautification, cosmetics or cosmetic surgery, used in the battleground of beauty may result in a terror of beauty.

The concept of the sublime became important in the 18th century, and was used in philosophy and literature to describe intense experiences which lay beyond conscious control.<sup>39</sup> The sublime is the the quality of greatness beyond all possibility of measurement, calculation and representation. Therefore, the sublime lays beyond beauty. It is a disturbing yet fascinating kind of beauty and can therefore be experienced as terror of beauty. The sublime became closely associated with the Romantic movement to embody the feeling we experience when we encounter something that exceeds our comprehension. The philosopher Immanuel Kant wrote that the feeling of the sublime is at once a feeling of displeasure and pleasure. The sublime, according to philosopher Edmund Burke, was the strongest passion. Moreover, Burke believed that experiencing the sublime has the power to transform the self.<sup>40</sup>

Having said that, how does the sublime relates to the cyborg as beauty icon? The hyper real aesthetics of the cyborg exceeds our beauty appearance. The cyborg figure is beyond human, and it fascinates and terrifies us at the same time as is often reflected in cyborg movies. In our attempt to mirror our appearance to the face of the cyborg as example of ideal beauty, it becomes only possible to meet the ideal beauty image by choosing extreme strategies of beautification. When these strategies are becoming more violating, it could be said that there is an excess of beauty resulting in an abuse, a terror of beauty. As visible in the beauty tutorial videos I discussed so far, these strategies are already becoming more extreme and are specifically taking place in the female face. This phenomenon of facial beautification through extreme strategies such as surgeries, juxtaposed to the cyborg aesthetics, suggests the idea that the battle of beauty might be determined in the face of the cyborg. Therefore the cyborg suggests a contemporary experience of the sublime, because its artificial aesthetics are beyond our natural appearance. 'Experiencing the sublime has the power to transform the self' as Edmund Burke described. This thought brings me back to the operation performances of the artist Orlan, I discussed earlier in chapter two. Orlan approaches her face with the idea that it is like the cyborg, a hybrid and flexible form that can be reconstructed and enhanced to create the best of human and cyborg in one body. Although Orlan models her face to the example of female beauty icons from art history, the result is rather monstrous.<sup>41</sup> Her performances consist of multiple operations in which she sculpts her face based on several examples, that do not necessarily create one ideal. Therefore, the excess of creating beauty in her face eventually results in her face as example of terror of beauty. Because of approaching her face and body as being a hybrid like the cyborg, Orlan stimulates and criticises at the same time our attempt to mirror ourselves to the cyborg aesthetics.

With the title of my project, *Terror of Beauty*, I refer to the abuse and terror that is done to the face in order to achieve a utopian ideal of beauty. However, this terror being about pain and abuse is also about fascination. Terror is besides being painful also fascinating, as is the sublime. These two aspects of terror of beauty are present in the beauty vlog tutorial videos.

<sup>39</sup> Morley, Simon. *The Sublime*. 1st ed., London, Whitechapel Gallery, 2010. p.15.

<sup>40</sup> Morley, Simon. *The Sublime*. 1st ed., London, Whitechapel Gallery, 2010. p.16.

<sup>41</sup> Smelik, Anneke. *Ik, Cyborg*. Delft, Eburon, 2012. p.37.

Somehow, there is a certain longing to experience the pain, and to abuse the face in order to enhance beauty. In a way it is for some women even satisfying. This fascination for the terror of beauty is visible in the beauty vlog tutorials when you see the beauty vloggers take the pain for granted, because they are willing to make this sacrifice to eventually achieve the result of this pain and abuse: a more beautiful face. Not only the willingness of their actions show the fascination of terror, but also the fact that these beauty tutorial videos are watched all over the world. The viewers of the tutorial videos also hold a fascination for terror of beauty. This is visible in the degree of popularity of the beauty vlog videos.

The utopian beauty ideal is visualised by the hyper real cyborg aesthetics. The abuse, or terror that is done to the face is created by the strategy of beautification cosmetic surgery. Because we aim to enhance ourselves based on the hyper real aesthetics of the cyborg, I consider the cyborg's appearance as an example of the sublime and as most extreme outcome of the strategy of cosmetic surgery. It is the most extreme outcome because it is the most perfect and hyper real beauty ideal to achieve and because it is created through violating the face. Moreover, it is becoming more and more possible for us to reconstruct ourselves into this hyper real image due to technological, surgical and digital innovative strategies of enhancing our beauty.

However, if the cyborg aesthetics are the most extreme outcome of surgical interventions to enhance beauty, does this also mean that the battleground of beauty is determined in the face of cyborg? I believe that the cyborg visualises an ideal outcome, we can simulate by applying the strategy of cosmetic surgery in the face. Therefore, the battleground of beauty might eventually be determined in the face of the cyborg because a complete alienation of our natural and less perfect appearance compared to the ideal of the cyborg, might eventually be achieved in the Surgical and Digital Age we now live in.

When we succeed in enhancing our face to meet the standards of a beauty based on the artificial and hyper real aesthetics of the cyborg, would this eventually result in identical faces as I earlier proposed. Will we eventually all look the same if unique elements of our face, and therefore our identity, are eliminated in order to conform with the beauty ideal? These questions relate to some experiments of the visual part of my graduation project in which I created facial masks made of latex and filmed different girls wearing them as a suggestive army of beauty cyborgs. In the conclusion of this research paper I will further go into detail about this visual material and how I will develop this for the video installation I want to make for my graduation project. **(fig.25)**

Having discussed in this final chapter the cyborg as beauty icon and how the cyborg aesthetics relate to battle of beauty in the female face, I conclude that the face of the cyborg demonstrates a complete alienation of the human natural face because of its artificiality. However, it is a simulation of a human face, visualised as a hyper real beauty ideal we are trying to pursue by beautifying our faces through cosmetic surgeries. The artificial aesthetics of the cyborg are our beauty ideal and therefore suggest a visual outcome of the female face in the battleground of beauty. We are striving for a hyper real ideal, choosing for extreme strategies of beautification. Therefore, at some point in beautifying our face by violating it, when an excess of creating beauty results in abusing our physical appearance, we can speak of terror of beauty.

**fig.25.** A selection of images of my visual research and experiments in the face as battleground of beauty. Working towards a video installation in which the face of the beauty tutorial vloggers have been enhanced extensively and has become completely artificial. The natural face has been eliminated and identical beauty face masks are the extreme future outcome.



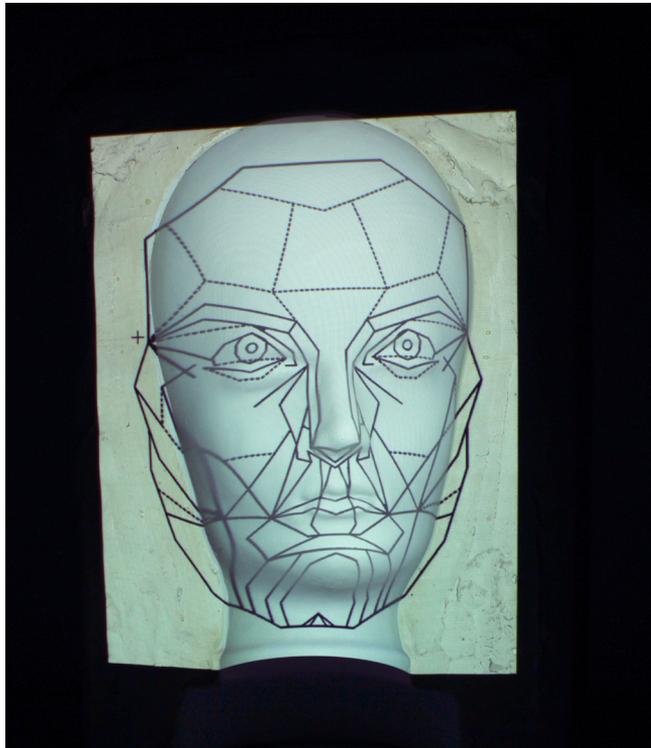
**25.1**

Experimenting with latex face masks made from a plaster mold based on an artificial porcelain female head.

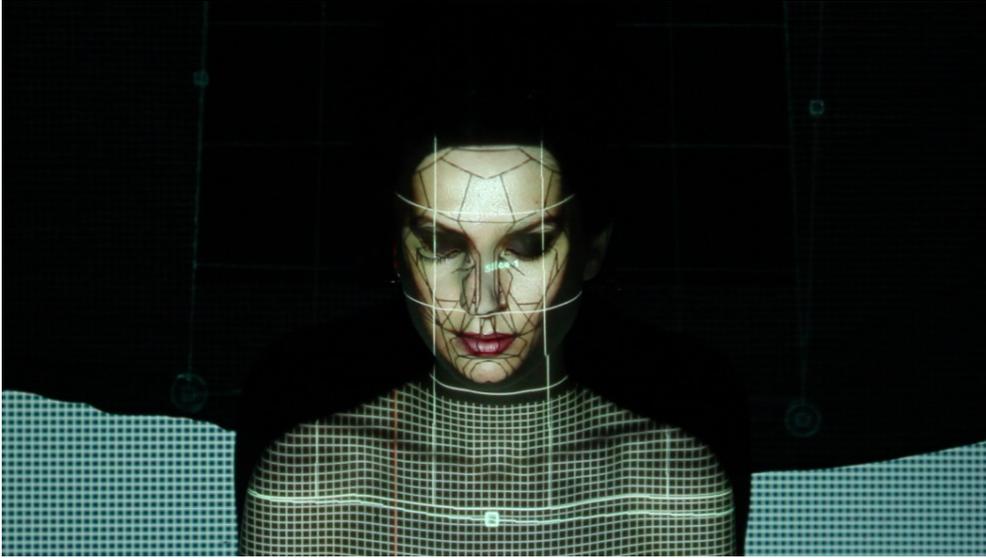




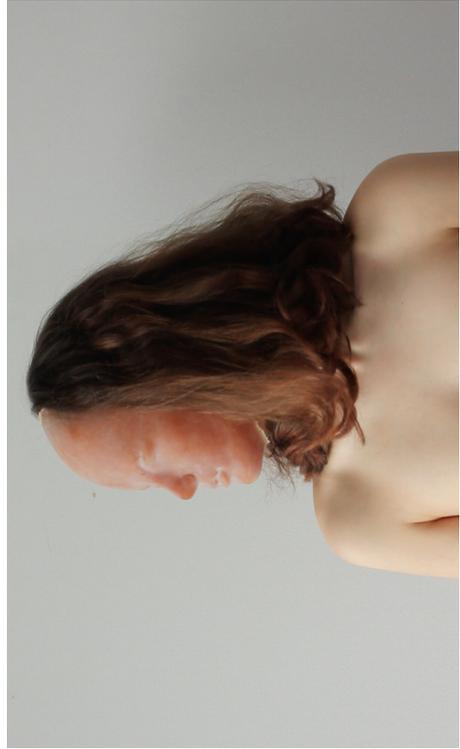
**fig.25.3** Test with latex face mask and projection of Beauty Mask of Marquardt, measured on the face with projection mapping.



**fig.25.2** Test with plaster mold and projection of Beauty Mask of Marquardt.



**fig.25.4** Test with projection mapping, constructing the Beauty Mask of Marquardt on a real female face, working with a grid to measure the facial construction.

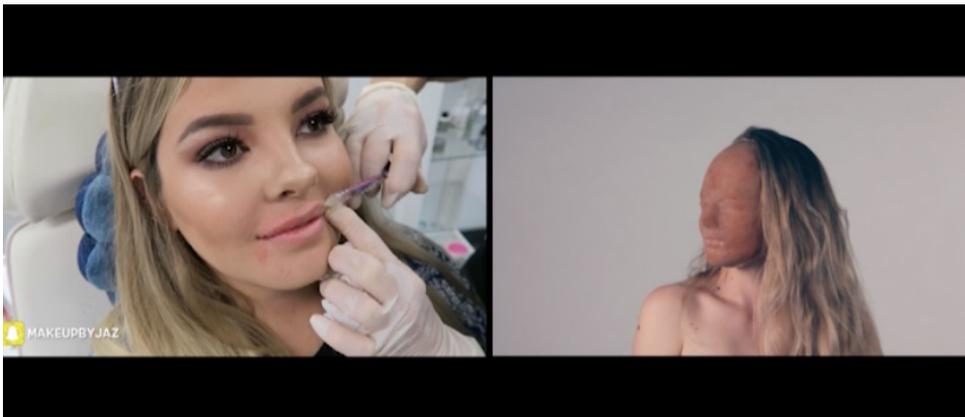




**fig.25.6.** A selection of film stills: testing with two models wearing the identical beauty face mask as a metaphorical suggestion of the most extreme outcome of the female face as battleground, where identity is completely alienated from the face and artificiality is the base of an exclusive group of women that confirm with a universal beauty ideal.



**fig.25.7.** Diptych of two models wearing the beauty face maks. Testing the narrative with projecting two screens.



**fig.25.8.** Diptych of footage beauty vlog tutorial video in which vlogger gets lipfillers vs. the specalutive outcome of the face as battleground as shown in the vlog videos.

## CONCLUSION

In this research paper for my graduation project *Terror of Beauty*, I have discussed the female face as battleground of beauty. In order to do so, I have been observing the visual language of beauty vloggers on Youtube where I have noticed a particular shift in the way the face of these beauty vloggers is beautified in these videos. Besides watching makeup trends, it has now also become normal for most viewers to watch the beauty vlogger visiting cosmetic surgery clinics to beautify their face by using fillers, botox or even surgery. I became fascinated by these cosmetic surgery vlog videos because it is simply presented as a new lifestyle, one that glamorises and normalises surgical manipulation in order to enhance perfection and beauty of the face.

After watching these videos, I concluded that this trend of online sharing of beautifying the face through cosmetic procedures is global. All videos I watched demonstrate how designing the face results in meeting certain accepted aesthetics. Therefore, I stated in my introduction that in this trend the face has a crucial role because it has become focal point of female beauty, and is thus used as battleground of beauty. In this battle to confirm with an ideal and universal beauty, different strategies are used as I indicated in chapter two. The image of beauty shown in the vlog videos, becomes for the viewer a compelling standard to meet. The result: a growing obsession with the hyper real beauty image of the face, as I discussed in chapter three. This obsession with a hyper real beauty ideal is visible in the beauty vlogs when different and more extreme strategies such as cosmetic surgery are inserted to pursue this hyper real ideal.

For the visual outcome of my graduation project it was important to research the strategies and the processing of the face as battleground of beauty. Hence, I focused my research paper on three elements in particular: the face and construction of beauty in general, cosmetics and cosmetic surgery as strategies of beautification and in the last chapter I discussed and questioned the cyborg as future icon of universal beauty.

By now it has become clear that for me in my graduation project these discussed elements have become important in realising the visual part of my graduation project. In the introduction of this research paper I formulated my research question as follows: *How is the female face used as battleground of beauty to define a (universal) beauty ideal and what role do beauty tutorial vlog videos play in this battleground?*

I can now conclude that the value of beauty, determined in the face, forms the focal point of female beauty. Moreover, this value is based on beauty measurements such as facial analysis tests like Anaface for example. This affects our perception of beauty and our personal value in society.

The value of beauty determined in the face is becoming greater and more important. It influences our behaviour in pursuing beauty in a more extreme way: we are ready for violating the face by inserting abusive strategies to create and meet an idealised norm of beauty that is defined by hyperreal aesthetics. This is supported by the beauty vlog tutorials that demonstrate this in a daily life context.

This context, of watching and online sharing beauty tutorials in which the face is violated, are contributing to normalising the act of artificially reconstructing the face to create beauty. Hence, these vlogs show and propagate the idea of beauty as a choice, but also as an obligation. Though there is no profound reason given by these beauty vloggers for their choice of surgery, except that it is 'beautiful', almost every well known beauty vlogger has done it. Furthermore, these beauty blog videos instruct their viewers the process of beautification by inserting these strategies. To confirm with the standard of beauty, as a beauty vlogger these days it is normal to have at least tried a cosmetic procedure or your beauty blog does not really matter. An aesthetic judgement and the need to measure beauty are becoming more important because based on beauty, our value in society such as our degree of success will be determined. Because this aesthetic judgment is influencing our personal value it therefore also affects our behaviour. We are becoming obsessed with our face in such a way that this results not only in using more extreme strategies, but also in consistently recreating our face. Artist Orlan, as I discussed in chapter two, has already been confronting her public with obsessively redefining beauty in her operation performances.

This confrontation of aesthetic judgement, the obsessive pursuit of a (unrealistic) hyper real beauty ideal and the alienation of the natural by artificial interventions are elements I want to bring forward in my video installation, which will part of the visual part of my graduation project. My intention with the video installation is to visualise the process of the face as battleground of beauty and to show a speculative outcome of this battle of beauty. This outcome is based on the behaviour I defined in my research: using artificiality to enhance the female face in order to confirm with the beauty ideal that is based on the hyperreal aesthetics of the cyborg figure. I hold that an aesthetic judgement presented by for example Anaface, manipulates our perception and behaviour towards beauty: subtly turning us in an army of beauty cyborgs in which identity in our faces is eliminated so we all can confirm with the ideal universal beauty norm.

Having said that, the aim of my visual project indicates how contemporary behaviour towards female beauty in the face, (beauty tutorial vlog videos) influence our behaviour (using extreme strategies of beautification: surgery) and eventually affects our appearance (face as designed mask of beauty).

As part of my graduation project I made beauty masks that are an alienated instances of a female face to suggest a speculative outcome of the face as battleground of beauty. With these masks I want to refer to the artificial appearance of the cyborg, icon of universal beauty, and to the clash of the artificial and the natural body that is created when these cyborg aesthetics are being pursued. I portrayed different women wearing these identical, non expressive facial masks while their bodies are still unique.

Because, if the degree of beauty of our face determines our personal value in society, are we creating an exclusive group of beautiful people that confirm with the beauty ideal determined by beauty measurement tests. If people get selected and valued based on their beauty how far will we go to enhance our face to become part of this exclusive group of beautiful people.

Besides these visuals I have also been working on a soundscape: a digital voiceover reading the aesthetic judgments based on results of Anaface. I want my audience to experience the feeling of aesthetic judgement as well as show them the processing of the face as battleground of beauty as I have researched in my research paper. Eventually, I want to present these footage and sound materials in the context of the beauty tutorial vlog videos on YouTube, to create a feeling of being instructed to enhance your beauty. Because besides showing an ideal version of reality, giving instruction to create this ideal is also the purpose of these beauty tutorial videos.

During the research and visualisation process of my graduation project I have consulted two external partners as I mentioned in my introduction. For the theoretical part of my research, I have been discussing my thoughts and my writing with Roline Smeele, and for the visual part of my graduation project I have discussed my material with Sabrina Chou, alumni of the Piet Zwart fine arts department. I experienced these consultations as very helpful because I could consult two people from a different background but both related to the social practice and contemporary visual culture. For example, with Roline Smeele I reflected mainly on the psychological effects and power structures of aesthetics, how this is influencing our behaviour and shaping our perception towards beauty as I discussed in chapter two. With Sabrina I discussed my visual materials and which elements to consider when working towards the final presentation to create an experience and to communicate my artistic vision based on this research.

I want to show and question my audience how far we are willing to go to violate the female face for beauty and how this would affect a next generation of girls and beauty vloggers. Because by now, I can say that the face as battleground of beauty has its momentum yet to come.



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## Websites

www.natuurinformatie.nl (about the perfect face) (accessed on 17 March 2017) <http://www.natuurinformatie.nl/ndb.mcp/natuurdatabase.nl/i000788.html>

www.beautyanalysis.com (about the archetype theory and the biology of beauty) <http://www.beautyanalysis.com/research/perfect-face/archetype-theory/>

www.designboom.com (about the future of face hacking) <http://www.designboom.com/technology/nobumichi-asai-explores-the-future-of-face-hacking-01-05-2015/>

Kirsten Geisler: [www.kirrtengesiesler.com](http://www.kirrtengesiesler.com)  
<http://www.kirstengeisler.com/en/vita/biografie/>

## Online videos

Baudrillard - ideas and concepts:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80osUvkFlzI>

Erica: Man Made:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/ng-interactive/2017/apr/07/meet-erica-the-worlds-most-autonomous-android-video>

Misha Klein - Artificial Beauty Series:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPu0RqHLiI4>

### **Selection of Beauty Tutorial Videos:**

Beautygloss; 'lets aan mijn gezicht laten doen':  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQR7gmCzlQY&t=1740s>

Carmen Layrynn: 'My plastic surgery experience in Korea':  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_cmKubddK88](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_cmKubddK88)

Jill Vlog: 'Ik word geopereerd!':  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WGyNutEojhw>

Manon Tilstra: 'Lippen laten opspuiten':  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XOf29fnBn3I>

Manon Tilstra: 'Huid wegschrappen?!':  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJ9fpLv118k&t=329s>

Monica Geuze vlog: 'De behandeling':  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTDWufVl1G8&t=200s>

Selina Christoforou vlog: 'Lip injections + Botox with dr. Voss':  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjVCWacOliw>

Lilith Moon: 'Nose job without surgery - nose contouring tutorial':  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldjLDhjFmp4>

Azadeh Amjadi: 'Injecting my lips with filler':  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VC-BIS4z80k>

Jasmine Hand: 'Lip injections Vlog':  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPF7XxzuxCQ>

### **Documentaries**

www.npo.nl. [Beperkt Houdbaar](#). ( documentaire over vrouwelijke 'houdbaarheid' en cosmetische chirurgie) in regie van Sunny Bergman, 8 maart 2007.

