

bodyfuture - Say "good bye" to the terrestrial body

Launching spacecraft is an everyday event seen on the TV in morning news shows. In a story on Mars exploration, a CBS newswoman asked, "Now, are we going to Mars?" as if she was talking about going to Manhattan or Florida. Few are bewildered by this kind of things. Given the biological and nonbiological evolution to come, almost every form of fashion is trivial. Fashion appeals to us only when we are attached to our bodies that have evolved within the confines of terrestrial ecology. We have already set out for the direction toward abandoning the terrestrial way of being. The old astronaut John Glenn returned to the space not because of the countdown to "space travel for everyone" in the near future, but because of the striking similarity between aging --physiological decline of the human body-- on the earth and the degeneration of muscles and bones in the space. There's a great concern about the fact that our bodies -- our long companions -- are not spaceworthy. We are pressed to decide when and how we should have done with ourbodies, which are going to be useless.

Human beings are still on the way of evolution. The enormous length of time required for biological evolution is beyond the perception of ordinary people. On the other hand, human "history" is nothing but millenniums. The makeup of our minds have hardly changed in the last 30,000 years. The people who lived in caves and hunted for their day's games are not much different from modern "civilized" people with respect to the mental elements. The only difference maybe the ability to understand vaguely the status of our unchanged self.

The last fashion is for us the people feeling shame for the second time since expulsion from the paradise. It provides us a guise to conceal our bodies, and also an attire for the ceremony of departure from the gods and spirits associated with terrestrial ecosystems.

Some entities in our neighborhood continue to evolve at a great speed incomparable to that of living organisms. They are machines. Mathematician von Neumann, the father of computers, stipulated that machines can self-reproduce and satisfy basically all requirements for living organisms. The processing capacity of the central processing unit, sitting at the center of the machine's brains, is growing exponentially. The capacity of machines will soon match the human brains and then excel. As Hans Moravec, who created the Robotics Institute at Carnegie Mellon University, said, machines are our future "mind children."

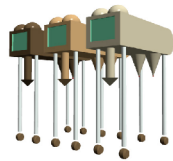
Marshall McLuhan saw the extension of the human body in the way media developed in the latter half of the 20th century. However, his discourse of extension applies only to the body undergoing the short transient phase from that time to the near future. Nowadays, 30 years after McLuhan, our focus is gradually shifting from extending the body to breaking out of the body. To separate the consciousness from the body means putting an end to the historical controversy about "body and mind." Somewhere in the future, human beings will have to decide whether they should upload their consciousness into machines, or they should surrender the role as the master of the world to machines that are superior to them.

This is not a cyberpunk story. Felix Guattari, already in 1987, foresaw that the subjectivity of machines would not be placed under the reorganized subjectivity on the part of human beings, but there would be the subjectivity of machines created anew. Unfortunately, his heart stopped beating before he told this in detail.

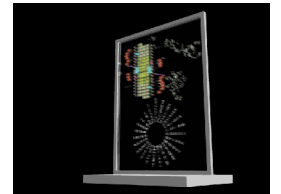
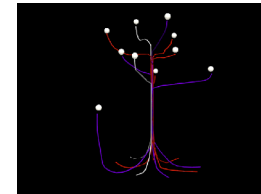
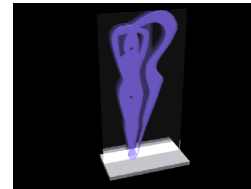
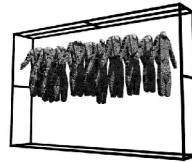
Let's talk again about more physical (nearer to the body) things. The life span of human beings will soon be twice as long as it is. We have much to do, and we must do it making use of our bodies that are going to be useless. Given such missions, the parts of the body losing functions may need to be supplemented mechanically or biologically, and this notion, if you think over it, is taken for granted by many. If you acknowledge this notion, you should be able to understand the themes that must be developed in arts and fashion in the coming age of apprehension for "the Storm and Stress," waiting for the demise of the terrestrial body.

Mapping of the human genome allows us to understand what programs are the basis for the constitution of our bodies. The completion of the whole process of this decoding is now a question of time. After all, we'll have another trifling thing to worry about, dragging the burden of the "obsolete body" (Stelarc).

When their DNAs are compared, chimpanzees and human beings are virtually similar. Despite this fact, many unenlightened people, imprisoned in the darkness of the body, want to emphasize the absolutely insignificant differences in the color of the skin or hair or in gender. At the same time, some people tries to create human sperms of murine origin. Conventional values are being challenged by extremely radical technologies. Feminism, as well as antiracism, seems to suffer difficulty in forming a common front because of ideological conflicts among the groups that once pursued a common cause. Our conceptual understanding of self still impedes the insight that our body is not much different from a computer bought at a shop, in the sense that it is an assembly of separate parts. The situation resembles the belief in the concept of a state or nation as communal illusion, and this also will undergo a process of deconstruction in the same way as the globalization in economy and politics is gradually annihilating international borders and even nationalities.



A	T	C	G
T	C	G	A
C	G	A	T
G	A	T	C



Explanation on the "bodyfuture" installation

informationbody

This database for future human bodies is indexed by three skin colors: BODY-W, BODY-Y, and BODY-B. Each body on the screen is painted in one of the three common skin colors, and, having both the breasts and the penis, symbolizes androgyny. At the start-up of the program, the touch-screen monitor shows breasts of women with light, medium, and dark skins. An access to the data is provided by the touch on a nipple, which is the organ each of us must find out first thing after birth.

The informationbody software consists of 15 separate programs; five of which are games featuring interactive operation, two are databases, and eight are images and messages. See "How to use informationbody" for instructions and description of programs.

ATCG floor

"ATCG" stands for adenine, thymine, cytosine, and guanine -- the four types of bases comprising DNA and coding for amino acids. When we try to understand the human body as a set of program data, we are astonished by the remarkable resemblance to the transaction of information taking place in our computers, including errors that may occur during the registration of data. The lighting on the floor is controlled by a relay system. Relays are the electric elements used in earlier computers before the invention of transistors or vacuum tubes. Alan Turing, who devised the concept of a Turing machine, worked on relay-based computers during World War II. Relays can be regarded as the prototype of the logic of computers.

datobody

According to an estimation, the amount of the DNA shaping the human body is about 23 megabytes. Here's a piece of silicone, on which we have printed the contour data from digital measurement of human bodies. The contour data have been provided by Human Science Research Institute, Wacoal Corp., where researchers have accumulated the physical data covering 30,000 women. These data only describe the surface morphology of the body, and they are intended for use in developing and designing of products worn on the body. However, future body designers who will design the shape of the body itself may also benefit from this collection, as they are the precious records of the body shapes in the 20th century. In future, people will choose a body design before choosing an apparel design.

Naomi scale

Always in the history of the pop culture, there has been an image of a woman body symbolizing the particular time. Marilyn Monroe in the 1960s, Grace Jones in the '70s, Madonna in the '80s, and Naomi Campbell in the '90s all had the physical body representative of their times. The relevance of their bodies to the pop culture is undeniable. Although international beauty contests can provide "global standards," these are more like industrial standards and their cultural impact is weaker. Aside from the internationally admired bodies, there are various scales for measuring the body -- during various historical periods and in various geographical areas -- attracting the attention of cultural anthropologists. Here we present a scale based on the body of the super-model Naomi Campbell.

Wig tree

The wigs in various colors symbolize the future body concept, where people will no more be obsessed with the skin color or the hair color. In addition to the replaceability of internal organs, we'll be able to replace more and more freely the parts decorating the body surface. Piercing, tattoos, and other body decorations will develop into new tribal cultures such as mechanical parts projecting from the skin or organs.

Large Glass

The Large Glass by Marcel Duchamp was an instrument for semiotically deciphering the relationship between things and words. Duchamp denied art work to be appreciated on the retina, but advocated the art of thinking over things and meanings. We, however, more than suspect that the process of "thinking" taking place in our brains is very fragile. Either we can't get out of the nested thought of "how do we think about thinking?" or we'll need in future an external intellect to judge on the transcendent thought. Here The Large Glass, in the sense that it interprets the body essentially as a data set, stands for the age of super-dadaism -- more dadaistic than dadaism.