

**58 - DOVE'S REAL BEAUTY: HEALTH CONCERN OR ADVERTISING STRATEGY?**

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**The woman and Aesthetics**

Regarding beauty, every moment, even without noticing, aesthetic judgments are made on what is seen in the woman. That is a historical question, for in the path of humankind, there are records that the woman could be seen in diverse forms, according to time and space.

During many centuries, beauty was a concept linked to Geometry. There were, at the time, the mathematical ideals of beauty, a notion that it's connected to unity, spatial organization and order. These premises were originated in Ancient Greece, and Castilhos (2001) refers that the conception of Greek beauty included the exterior of the individual, as well as his or her inner qualities. This occurred, partly because beauty included the fact of being in good physical shape.

Castilhos (2001) defines that the ideal female trunk at the time was that in which the distance between the nipples, the distance between the inferior limit of the navel sinus, and the distance from the navel to the groin were of identical lengths; however, Romans, on the other hand, were more interested by the rarity of certain people or faces in particular. It is known that they give value to thinness, disliking obesity and so, after feasts, they used the bulimic practice of the induced vomit, so they wouldn't gain weight, a legitimate practice and socially accepted. The author points out the figure of the Middle Age woman and describes her as burly. In those days, fat was considered erotic and seductive. However the 19<sup>th</sup> century woman starts to exist in two physical types: the first characterized for being delicate, fragile and beautiful; the second, heavy and sensual, owner of larger breasts, wider hips and thicker legs.

About 19<sup>th</sup> century women, Iwanowicz (1994) refers the use of tight corselets, in the name of fashion and of a cultural image which establishes the model of ideal body at that time. In this perspective, women changed the whole physical structure of the body to have a thin waist and a large hip. They tighten the stomach, the lungs, changing the distribution of their bodies' internal organs.

One can notice that, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century the woman has got undressed. The nude presented by the media, on televisions, on magazines and at beaches, has motivated the body to show itself in public, becoming banal sexually. The solution was covering it with lotions, vitamins, silicon and collagens. The toned, smooth, clean skin is ideally presented as a new way of dressing, that will never wrinkle or crumple. One can notice that, in this century, women have adopted a sports aesthetics turned into the body cult, an inexhaustible source of anxiety and frustration, showing an advantage regarding the imaginary and symbolic sensuality. Differently from their grandmothers, women, today, aren't worried about saving their souls. On the contrary, they intend to save their bodies from the social rejection disgrace. The torment isn't the fire of hell, but the scale and the mirror, emerging a new image of the ideal feminine body, which has become part of the imaginary.

And the communication means growth has become common the occidental fashion models, standardizing them, and reinforcing the suggested beauty ideal. It's intended to draw here, some changes in the aesthetical body preferences throughout the century, according to the study of Castilho (2001).

From 1920 on, cultural beauties like actress Kay Francis have appeared on the cinemas' screens. The movies and the press have widespread, more and more, information on beauty standards for an increasing number of men and women from high and middle classes. The linearity standard has fallen and the narrow waist was back. The female secondary sexual characteristics were revalorized, as well as the desire for large breasts.

However in the 50's, there was a slim beauty ideal and another voluptuous. Marilyn Monroe was an example of that time. Since 1950, almost every Miss America's winner presented a breast-hip symmetry. During this period, the waist size has diminished in a way that the body could exhibit more pronounced curves. A memorable fact in Brazil, which illustrates such demand, was Maria Martha Rocha's disqualification from 1954's Miss Universe Contest, because of some extra inches at her hip measure. This tendency entered the 60's. However, a 17 year-old English girl with 44 kilos, Leslie Hornby Armstrong, nicknamed "Twiggy", has emerged in the American fashion environment. Presented by the pages of Seventeen and Vogue, she showed her thin body shapes. Nowadays, many feminist magazines associate Twiggy's debut in the fashion scenery with the great increase on feeding disorders.

From 1969, the voluptuous figures from Miss America and Miss USA started to vanish away. The measures for breast and hip were still symmetrical, occurring an increase in height and a decrease in the contesters' weight. Twiggy, by her turn, was rapidly losing weight and, in 1976, her 41 kilos won number one position. Andrade (2003) mentions that the female body representations, throughout time, sometimes remain the same; in other moments, they have suffered ruptures and reformulations regarding the aesthetical standards from each time.

Today, in the imaginary of many social groups, being overweight or obese is having to accept a singular position in our society, at any age of life. The singular stereotype of overweight people may affect, in a negative way, the individuals' professional and educational opportunities. It is possible to realize that obesity is associated to a prejudiced social contact among women, and this condition seems to affect more females' than males' social relationships.

Our society, not in an excluding manner (which is good to mention), aims more to youth related values. At the same time when the importance of health as source of pleasure is known (and Medicine has made innumerable advances for humanity with welfare), all efforts are invested in dissolving old age. The increasing in life expectancy has become a problem, for women don't want to change, transform, that is, they don't want to grow old. Old age acts on the skin showing drastic changes emerging from aging. At the first signs of wrinkles, people feel devalued before society, with their vanity hurt, psychological effects are deep, especially in loss of self-image and sudden changes in social interactions (Barros, 1998).

The 90's marked down the obsession for the perfect body; a period when women search, at all costs, to fit in beauty standards, as if this were an attempt to regain self-esteem lost through the comparison with the aesthetical standards themselves. This way, the inferiority feeling seems to disappear. As Contursi apud Novaes (2001) refers, regarding the representations of the body, in the 90's, the ideal female biotype is athletic, with a well defined and worked out muscular system. It's noticed, in addition, that hygiene and sports have rehabilitated first male bodies, but women rapidly followed men. Currently, the identity of the female body responds to the equilibrium among the triad beauty-health-youth, and women are influenced to identify the beauty in their bodies with youth, and youth with health.

In the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, one can realize that women are far from getting rid of traditional schemes. They are moving away, therefore, from the 70's liberation propaganda. More than ever, women have prescriptions, not from the husband, priest or doctor anymore, but from the journalistic and advertising discourse which surrounds them. Nowadays, women are seen, almost in a mandatory way, putting themselves to their own bodies' indulgence. This is, without any doubt,

another way of subordination. A subordination, one may say, worse than that suffered before, because differently from the past, when the husband was in charge, today the torturer has no face, it's the media, street posters, magazines, television image raids. It is still talked about prototypes like "spoiled rich girl" and "overdressed woman" terms that refer to Brazilian women's body transformations and which are fairly evidenced and emphasized by media. Such references present the woman as beautiful, young and healthy.

But, after all, what's the difference between health and aesthetics? The increase of muscular strength has a narrow relation with performance, health and quality of life. It is relevant yet to point out that aesthetics enhances self-esteem, improving, thus, health and quality of life. In a certain way, one provides improvements to the other, and what it's, especially in this research, is when one of the aspects is taken into consideration. In this case, aesthetics.

Nowadays, it seems that women live a moment of great dissatisfaction regarding the body. It is common the fact that people try to modify it. They often go through unnecessary surgeries, or end up unhappy by thinking their beauty is not within the pre-existent standards. The female beauty discourse as a promise for prestige, happiness and social ascension, repeats a passive representation of "being feminine". According to Goellner (2003), this representation "satisfies both men and women, either because it mobilizes passions, affection, sensuality, or because, in its essence, it doesn't break with conventions socially constructed and accepted", to which being a target for the pleasure of others seems a way of affirmation of the feminine.

Wolff apud Goellner, (2003) point out that, unfortunately what imprisons the woman to the embellishment myth is not the fact she wants to take care of her appearance, but the representations that this myth creates and makes her to feel invisible or incorrect if she doesn't reach out for the established standards for her time. Valorized by the appearance of her body, it is to the pleasure of the other she must please. And, from these evidences one observes the arising of a new beauty, health and aesthetical standards approach. This approach has been used on the site of Dove company, through the "Campaign for the Real Beauty", this article's object of analysis. It's important to observe that the treatment Dove gives to beauty and health in the mentioned campaign seems to attempt a change, especially in the current aesthetical and beauty imaginary.

### Dove's Real Beauty Campaign Firming

The current campaign of Dove company *Real Beauty Firming*, is being broadcast on the electronic media and press (women magazines). On both means, the same models are presented. On television there's a commercial which suggests the making of the campaign, showing women being prepared and posing for a photo session, which culminates with the image reproduced below and shown on the published magazines. The result of this photo session, with seven women expressing joy, happiness, satisfaction and informality, dressed only in underwear.

Dove's campaign for the *Real Beauty* started in Brazil on September, last year, showing Brazilian women they could be considered beautiful even being far from the aesthetical standards highly spread on means of communication. This is a campaign broadcast in other 10 countries, involving surveys, discussions. According to Patrícia Aversi, Dove's marketing manager: "We want to make women feel more beautiful daily, widening the limited view of beauty that there is today, inspiring them to take care of themselves. Finally, we want them to valorize their own features and stop suffering to get to a beauty standard practically unreachable." Another information given is that Dove "went to the streets" to use their campaign on "real women". And, to complement the campaign, the company has released a competition entitled: *My curves, my story*. To participate on that campaign, women have to send good stories about their curves, to the company's electronic mail. The campaign's intention is showing that women feel good with the bodies they have, pointing to a new beauty standard, and to the acceptance of their "curves".

### Campaign analysis

The selected campaign analysis will be performed from Thompson's Depth Hermeneutics (2000), once the texts to be discussed may be characterized as cultural phenomena, which, to this author, constitutes in actions, objects and significant expressions, which the author has named as "symbolic forms".

And, before this consideration, the three stages suggested by this author will be used, which, are, initially, the social-historical analysis, following, then, the formal or discursive analysis and, finally, the interpretation/reinterpretation of the observed text. To the author, there's the necessity of an analysis that explores the various sides of a same symbolic production, for it is not possible to perform the analysis of one aspect only, because the object will bring in itself elements belonging to the moment of its, which create meaning, besides the possibility of the reader himself or herself establishing his or her own, from the elements left available by the author of the "symbolic form".

The first phase suggested by the author is the social-historical analysis, because, according Thompson, the symbolic forms, as the advertisements are produced, transmitted and received in specific social and historical conditions, that is, the productions reflect the spatial-temporal situations, its interaction fields, its ideology, to analysis legitimation. This process goes through, first, the analysis of the spatial-temporal situations in which the works are produced and received. The author asserts that it's important the reconstruction as well as the critical analysis of these moments, in order to achieve a structured analysis.

According to Thompson (2000), Hermeneutics reinforces the fact that individuals are linked in a social world, historical traditions and both their rationality and their ideology are part of history. And their considerations are based on pre-existent constructions, that is, on what has come before, even in order to recognize what's new, opposed to what's already been seen. And, to this author, it's the analysis that should relapse upon this important aspect, providing legitimacy to History itself.

The campaign analyzed is a recent production, for in Brazil it's been broadcast since September, 2004. And it comes in a historical moment that values a certain beauty standard, which doesn't respond to the one it's being suggested in the campaign in question.

The present day woman much desires the approximation of her physical features to the ones of the models of great fashion shows or actresses, so they try to reproduce the same body seen in these models. However, it is known that more than 32% of the Brazilian adult population is at some degree overweight at all ages and social levels. So, before these numbers, it really seems that the company wants to take out of the border those female costumers that might be far from the aesthetical standard currently imposed by society. A standard which presents strict rules, which demand from women a commitment with miraculous diets, plastic surgeries, and other miracles, that apparently may solve their problem.

Because:

Society, more and more, is interested by the mediations which contemplate the exaggerated consuming of the body training in an attempt to retard body aging with plastic surgeries, silicon implants, aesthetical skin, hair and face treatments, besides the exercises on parks and on gymnastics and working out gyms (Garcia, 2005, p. 25).

What's interesting to be observed is that, whether the woman achieves or not the perfect body that is sold in most of ads, she has to try, because she's got resources that can help her to reach the ideal presented on the media, the slim, skinny, long-legged, toned muscles belly body, that is, a fat free body.

The rules are clear, and society charges them, for the aesthetical ideal is pointed at innumerable products

advertisements, selling, mostly, the body instead of the product. And such rules are valid for any age, either a child or an elder lady, the important is having the perfect body, because this will be accepted by society.

Another relevant aspect to be analyzed is the formal or discursive, in which the researcher may take in consideration an analysis that passes through the fields of conversation, syntax, narrative and argumentative elements. The observation of the mentioned aspects "(...) may help to point out some ways how meaning is constructed within everyday discourse forms" (Thompson, 2000, p.373).

The observed campaign has as models seven women with "real curves", wearing only white underwear. They are young women, who might be considered overweight, for having thick thighs, prominent abdomen. These women are on a light background, in a row, side by side, all expressing joy, or satisfaction, because on their faces there are wide-open smiles.

On the left side of the page there's the presence of the following text "Opposite to other models on this magazine, we are here to show real curves. Dove's firming system. Tested on real curves." On the left lower corner the packages of the announced products are presented. The ad doesn't present any sophisticated resource, the women are displayed, side by side, what emphasizes the idea of normality, of acceptance of every models' body.

The models' framing is centralized, the plan is general, allowing the reader to see the women on full body. The illumination is natural, favoring the models visibility, for there's no kind of shade, that is, there's nothing to hide.

The chosen women have different hair colors, but varying only between brown and reddish, one can notice the hair treatment, for they're all neat. These women's skin tone also varies from a fairly light tone to a pronounced tan. At the back you can notice the presence of a banner, similar to that on the product packages, and which resembles a curve, but in a softer way. This "wave" is behind the models showing, actually, partly.

And, finally, the last analysis level presented by Thompson is the interpretation/reinterpretation, which suggests the possibility, from the observations of the results from both previous phases, "a new movement of thought", the revealing of new meanings of the symbolic production.

According to the author himself, the interpretation isn't extinguished in itself, because it transcends into what he calls reinterpretation, once the object was already interpreted in a previous moment, even by the producer himself or herself. In the analyzed campaign it is possible to realize a new concept of beauty that Dove is presenting, a "real" beauty, which doesn't fit the current aesthetic standards. The presence of "real" women points to that fact, that is, every woman can be beautiful, valorizing her own body.

The joy and informality visible on the image may be considered as a reflection of the well-fare of that woman who's not scared of accepting the shapes of her body naturally, because the "real beauty" comes from inside. Although the campaign insists on the "real beauty", one can notice the concerning of selecting models that have a fairly evident exterior beauty, they are not displaying any women, they are very beautiful women, but who are over the expected weight for a professional model.

Another aspect to be considered is that, actually, these women aren't being exposed in a full manner, for they are one behind the other, the model in front always hides a part of the body of model who's behind her. Thus, what is shown is what the model has as most beautiful feature, one may even say, in addition, that among the chosen women only one can be considered out of the current aesthetical standard. The model who has her whole body revealed, for she's the one who stands out among the others, and is also the thinner, getting close to the image of what is expected of a model.

Besides that, it is important to mention also the purpose of the product's sale, which is making women's curves firm. Therefore, the real beauty isn't the natural beauty, because women need, at least, to have firm thighs. That means, even though the campaign tries to demystify the need for every woman to possess nowadays body standard, she shouldn't forget her body is public and that, at least, he must be firm.

### Final Considerations

Throughout the construction of this article, it was possible to realize that the campaign for the *Real Beauty* from Dove company tries, in a very cutting way, to install a new beauty female body concept, which it calls real beauty, that is, it denotes that the current female imaginary has to be reviewed. This is a purpose for valorization of the woman's body as it is, that is, with its imperfections.

However this attempt meets various years of aesthetical orientation, that, although being considered as an imprisonment, and even as a huge weight that the Brazilian woman must carry, it's so embedded in that woman's imaginary, that it seems that this new standard won't be accepted, or even immediately reproduced by Brazilian women. Observing the campaign of another company, Natura, which in 1996 released a campaign for the female interior beauty, and had little impact upon the female behavior regarding the acceptance of their body as it is, one can jeopardize the assertion that such a campaign will serve, in fact, to increase the public consumer of the product announced, for it's intended to a part of society that is forgotten, for having a different body from that imposed by society.

And it is interesting, yet, to observe that the woman can "be herself", can worship her curves, as long as such curves are firm, so, one more aspect that must be observed, if the campaign is for the *real beauty*, what does it matter if women's thighs are firm or not? Thus, the possibility of considering this campaign actually isn't worried about the acceptance of this new female profile, which would be the real, but about selling more products, to a part of population that is often set aside for being overweight emerges.

Therefore, in spite of the attempt of building a new beauty ideal, a more natural beauty, probably this campaign will not be able to make the Brazilian woman take on this new posture, for the search for the "built" body is intense. And, not only that, but also the charging of society regarding the aesthetical standard is very intense.

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**DOVE'S REAL BEAUTY: HEALTH CONCERN OR ADVERTISING STRATEGY?****Abstract**

Many are the themes approached and the attitudes suggested by advertisement campaigns, but those directed to the female population bring about some singular aspects, especially regarding behavior, taste, nimbleness, ideals, the female appearance. In various moments, the woman may feel as if oriented by a manual of social behavior, a role now played by advertising. And, in this search, the woman wants to assimilate standards that are familiar, that are part of the culture she is inserted to. The campaign analyzed in this article, entitled *Dove's Real Beauty*, proposes a rearrangement of the female imaginary or, simply, points to another consuming strategy? That is the problem this article tries to solve.

Key words: female body; advertising; Aesthetics.

**VRAIE BEAUTE DOVE: INQUIETUDE DE LA SANTE OU FAISANT DE LA PUBLICITE STRATEGIE?****Résumé**

Beaucoup sont les thèmes approchés et les attitudes ont suggéré par les campagnes de la publicité, mais ce ont dirigé à la population féminine provoquent quelques aspects singuliers, surtout concernant comportement, goût, agilité, idéaux, l'apparence féminine. Dans plusieurs moments, la femme peut sentir comme si orienté par un manuel de comportement social, un rôle maintenant joué en faisant de la publicité. Et, dans cette recherche, la femme veut assimiler des niveaux qui sont familiers, que fait partie de la culture à qu'elle est insérée. La campagne analysée dans cet article, la Vraie Beauté de Colombe intitulée, propose un nouvel arrangement de la femme imaginaire ou, simplement, points à un autre qui consomment la stratégie? C'est le problème que cet article essaie de résoudre.

Mots-clé: corps féminin; faire de la publicité; Esthétique.

**¿REAL BELEZA DOVE: PREOCUPACIÓN CON LA SALUD O ESTRATEGIA PUBLICITARIA?****Resumen**

Muchos son los temas tratados y las sugerencias de actitudes para las campañas publicitarias, pero aquellas direccionadas para la población femenina traen algunos aspectos muy marcantes, principalmente en lo que dice respecto al comportamiento, al gusto, a la desenvoltura, a los ideales, y a la apariencia femenina. En muchos momentos, la mujer puede sentirse como siendo orientada por un manual de comportamiento social, rol ahora vivido por la publicidad. Y, en esta búsqueda, la mujer desea asimilar los padrones que le son familiares, que hacen parte de la cultura en la cual se inserta. ¿La campaña analizada en este artículo, intitulada "Belleza Verdadera de la Paloma, propone una reorganización de lo imaginario femenino u, simplemente, señala hacia otra estrategia de consumo? Este es el problema que este artículo busca a solucionar.

Palabra-clave: cuerpo femenino; publicidad; estético

**REAL BELEZA DOVE: PREOCUPAÇÃO COM A SAÚDE OU ESTRATÉGIA PUBLICITÁRIA?****Resumo**

Muitos são os temas abordados e as atitudes sugeridas pelas campanhas publicitárias, mas aquelas dirigidas para a população feminina trazem alguns aspectos bem marcantes, principalmente no que diz respeito ao comportamento, ao gosto, a desenvoltura, aos ideais, a aparência feminina. Em muitos momentos, a mulher pode se sentir como que orientada por um manual de comportamento social, papel agora exercido pela publicidade. E, nessa busca, a mulher quer assimilar padrões que lhes são familiares, os quais fazem parte da cultura na qual ela está inserida. A campanha analisada neste artigo, intitulada *Real beleza Dove*, propõe uma reestruturação do imaginário feminino ou, simplesmente, aponta para outra estratégia de consumo? Este é o problema que este artigo busca resolver.

Palavras-chave: corpo feminino; publicidade; estética.