Title: Perfection and Restriction

Sijia Li
Konstfack
Craft ! Department
Master 2
Spring 2020

Tutors
Anders Ljungberg
Birgitta Burling
Andrea Peach
Abstract

The paper talks about the topic of pursuing the perfect body and how we are controlled by the standards of perfections. I chose this topic because of the development of the Chinese gym industry and personal experience. Many people try to pursue the standards of perfect bodies and use these standards to define themselves. Most people take it for granted that our bodies should look a certain way. In this paper, I want to question these standards and raise people’s awareness of the image of their bodies. I will also talk about my opinions about bodies.

In my practical work, I mix different metals with different values into one piece and shape the material into vessel forms. I use the material and the forms to question perfections and the attitude towards bodies in the society. Then I make the vessels into jewelry pieces to discuss how our bodies are treated as jewelry. I use my jewelry works to question what our bodies are and help people see their bodies in a different perspective.

KEY WORDS

Perfection
Restriction
Body Image
Alloy
Mixing Metal
Vessel
Jewelry
Index / Contents

chapter 1 Introduction Page 4
chapter 2 Background Page 8
chapter 3 Theory and Context Page 16
chapter 4 Method Page 31
chapter 5 Discussion Page 40
chapter 6 Conclusion Page 41
chapter 7 References Page 42
chapter 8 Appendix Page 44
chapter 9 Reflection Page 46
1.1 Introduction

Introduction
Female bodies are constantly being observed. In the European oil paintings, nude women were a repeated subject, where female bodies were seen as objects of display and ornament. I would argue that there is always a certain kind of body image that women are increasingly turning to to feel better about themselves. They may choose to diet, exercise or do plastic surgery to be the way they think they should look like\(^1\). How women appear to others is of crucial importance: it might increase and achieve a sense of success and satisfaction of women’s lives.

Image1 Titian, Venus of Urbino, 1532 or 1534

With the development of social media, our bodies identify who we are. Shaping our bodies and pursuing the standards of the perfect bodies is quite common in our daily lives.

How the Chinese treat their bodies is hugely affected by the western world. The gym industry is developing quickly because of the desire and need to pursue the perfect body. The coaches and the social media keep telling people how they should look like. Many people take it for granted that these standards of bodies are the only way they should look like. To meet these standards, they spend a lot of time, money and energy to achieve the perfect body. Some people may have body dysmorphic disorder, which is a type of mental illness where the affected person can't stop thinking about a minor flaw with their appearance, so that the negative thoughts affect their daily lives.

These standards defined by the society restrict us when we try to pursue them. All we can see is the perfect body image. We neglect the existence of our own bodies and lose the control of our own bodies. We let these standards control our bodies.

I want to use my works to question these perfect standards of bodies and raise people's awareness of their bodies. I want to let people see that they are controlled by these perfect images. They need to find their own bodies back.

To get a deeper understanding of the body, I interviewed my friends about how they think about their bodies. In these interviews, I could see how society shaped our ideas about perfect bodies and most of us can't let these perfect images go out of our minds. We are controlled by these standards without realizing this problem, we lost the freedom of our bodies.
I want to use my works to talk about this problem that I have seen around me, and I will use my experiments of metal and jewelry to discuss the perfect body standards. My research question is:

How can I use the method of jewelry to question the beauty standards in the body in the society and express my own attitudes towards bodies?

I chose jewelry as the format of my works. I argue that bodies have been treated as ornaments that needed to be polished and perfect. People wear jewelry to decorate their bodies but the body itself has already become a piece of jewelry. The body is an object that is being seen by others. I want to use the jewelry format to discuss what our bodies are and to help people see their bodies in a different perspective.
1.3 Overview of the paper
There are 7 chapters in this paper. In the first chapter introduction, I will talk about the research question and why did I choose to do this project. The second chapter background mainly talks about how I started this project and the experiments that I tried and how did I change my ideas and works. Chapter 3 theory and context is about the research that I made for my project, the books and key writer I found. Chapter 4 method is about the methods that I used in my works and the processes of my practice and how these processes influenced my decisions.
I started this project because of my personal experience. I used to work out a lot in the gym trying to reach the standards of perfect body that the social media told me. I could see the advertisements about abs, long legs, buttocks and off shoulder all the time. It seems that I could become a better person if my body became that way. To reach the goal of a perfect body, I spent a lot of time, money and effort in the gym. I was so into the perfect body that it seriously affected my life and my studies. I even sacrificed my health to reach the goal. My body had to be like that otherwise my life had no point.

It was really frustrating when I could not meet the standards. I kept blaming myself for not having a perfect body shape. I struggled with the body image for a long time. I was really tired of it and asked myself: What is a perfect body? Why was I so obsessed with the perfect body image? Am I a “better” person when I had “better” body image? Who am I with an imperfect body?
I realized that I was restricted by the standards of the perfect body when I read the book: The Golden Pavilion written by Yuki Mishima. He talked a lot about absolute beauty and how we were controlled by these absolute beauties in the book. The monk in the novel thought the golden temple was the most beautiful thing in the world. The existence of the golden temple kept reminding him that he was ugly. His life was controlled by the golden temple. He had to burn the temple in the end so that he could keep on living in this world. Yuki Mishima also trained his body to be strong and perfect. When he was a kid, he was very skinny. His classmates laughed at his body. He started to work out when he grew up. But the changes of his body still could not make him feel complete in his life. He chose to kill himself in the end.

I could connect my personal feeling to the story of this novel and the experience of Yuki Mishima. The perfect body image was my golden temple. These images kept telling me that my body was ugly. I had to be like that otherwise my body had no value.

This project is also a journey for me to answer the questions in the beginning of this paper. When I kept working with this topic I found that the perfect body issue was not only my own problem. So many people were seriously affected by these beauty standards and we always want to be a certain way to be accepted in the society. I was a small part of this problem. I also wonder how the ideal body image was constructed in our society. Why do we want to be the ideal image? What does it mean to be the same body image in our lives? Who are we with different shapes of bodies? There were so many questions that I could not understand. I needed to work with the topic to help me understand my behavior and what happens in the society that makes me act this way.
In the beginning of the project, I was focused on the value of bodies. When I worked out in the gym, I always calculated the percentage of muscle and fat in my body. I would be very happy if the muscle percentage increased. I would hate myself if I gained fat. The attitude towards muscle and fat in our bodies remind me of the way of treating silver and copper in craft. Craftsmen are careful and serious when they work with silver. But when it comes to copper, they never care too much and they don’t worry about mistakes. Copper is something that could be thrown away easily. Therefore, I melted silver and copper as my material to materialize our bodies.

Image 3, measurement of bodies, 2018
As I kept on working with this material: the mixture of silver and copper. I wanted to develop other techniques of mixing silver and copper, then I chose Mokume Gane, a perfect technique that mixes silver and copper. It is a technique in which each step has to be perfect to get the final result. Metals need to be perfectly clean, perfect together and then put into the oven at the perfect temperature where it has to be taken out with the perfect timing. Otherwise you can’t get the material. The whole process was tedious and frustrating because it is so easy to fail at any step. The patterns on the surface of the Mokume Gane are absolute beauty to me. It is a material that almost everyone thinks is beautiful. You would never doubt its beauty. When the perfect Mokume Gane image came into my mind, I couldn’t get rid of it. I had to work with this material. The whole processes of getting
Mokume Gane reminded me of the processes of getting a perfect body, where one was controlled by the perfect image. I had a lot of failures during the processes. If I only want the perfect Mokume Gane, it is so easy to think that these failure pieces were ugly. How should I look at these failures?
of Mokume Gane in my works. Are they ugly? Why can’t I say they are beautiful?

After having the material - the mixture of silver and copper - I shaped the material into vessel shapes. The forms of my vessels are connected to the vessels in Xi Zhou and Chun Qiu era in ancient China. During the era in Xi Zhou (BC1046-BC771) the craftsmen didn’t have the right to do the forms they wanted because of the power of the government. The centralization of authority was too strong. The emperor had the right to decide almost everything. Craftsmen could only work on certain forms and patterns of the vessels, otherwise they would be killed. But in Chun Qiu (BC770-BC476) era, the centralization began to weaken. Craftsmen finally had the right to express their ideas about beautiful forms of vessels. There were different kinds of forms of vessels in Chun Qiu area while there was almost one certain form in Xi Zhou era. Craftsmen were restricted in Xi Zhou era. The standards of vessels at that time were the same as the standards of bodies. When our bodies only have one certain standard to

![Image 7](image7.jpg)  
**Image 7**: Mao Gong, Duke Mao Tripod, BC256
be prefect, we don’t have the right to express our own beauties. Thus, I want to include the history of vessels in Xi Zhou and Chun Qiu era into my works.

Another reference of my vessel is the diamond sutra (Buddhist Bible). In the book, it says that you should not be persistent on anything. All the images that we pursue are illusions. We are restricted by the illusions that we desire. The monks use bowls to beg for food and they are humbled at the vessel, the food. I want to use their bowl shape to express my opinions about bodies: to be aware of our bodies and to be grateful to have our bodies to keep on living in this world instead of being stubborn about the perfect image.
Theory and Context

Throughout history, the body has been an area of consideration. A key thinker about bodies is Chris Shilling. He discusses how we treat bodies in the book: “Changing bodies Habit, Crisis and Creativity”. He argued that the body modification and transformation have grown quickly in contemporary consumer world. The businesses designed to decorate bodies have made body modification into a greatly profitable industry. But these industries raised some problems about the impact that bodily change has on people’s identities and capacities for action. In the book, Chris Shilling said that: “The popularity of this cultural phenomenon raises a number of questions about the impact that bodily changes has on people’s identities and capacities for action. It also raises wider issues concerning the morality of social orders in which so much money, time and energy are devoted to the aesthetics of embodiment. These are important matters, but it would, I think, be an error to restrict discussion of them to be the most visible or novel ways in which bodily modification occurs. Bodily change sometimes occurs as a result of consciously formulated actions undertaken in situations of considerable autonomy, but it also happens frequently in circumstances over which individuals have little control.”

Bodies are increasingly treated as ornaments. With the development of science and technology, it’s much easier to change our bodies. Body modification has become a hugely profitable industry like the gym industry, cosmetics surgery industry. We use our bodies to identify ourselves. It is hard to distinguish naturalistic bodies and sociological bodies. Sarah Nettleton discussed in the article “The Sociology of the Body” what constitutes a pure human. She said that we are born to have a natural body, but the social regulations of the body have lead our bodies to a certain way. We think that we own our bodies and have control of our bodies. But our bodies are mostly controlled by the social rules. The developments of technology have made the boundaries between the natural and social body become less clear. She said in the book: “Ironically, the more sophisticated our medical, technological, and scientific knowledge of bodies becomes the more uncertain we are as to what the body actually is. With the development of assisted conception, when does birth begin? With the development of life extending technologies, when does the life of a physical body end? With the development of prosthetic technologies, what constitutes a “pure” human? It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that attempts to understand the social and ethical significance of the body have become central to recent sociological debates.”

John Berger redefined the concept about the nude and the naked in his program “the ways of seeing” in 1972. Kenneth Clark first raised these two words in his book *The Nude: a study in ideal form*, where he said that being naked was being without clothes, the nude was an art form.⁵ But John Berger disagreed with him. He thought that “to be naked was to be oneself, to be nude was to be seen naked by others and not recognized oneself.”⁶ Bodies have been more important for women than men in the history. Women kept on shaping their bodies to meet the standards at that period. In the writings of Simone de Beauvior’s book: The Second Sex, she argued that girls were encouraged to care about their appearance and were lead to things that made them to the objects of men. But boys were encouraged to take sports, to be risky and to be confident and to take control of their own lives.⁷ Women used corsets to shape their waist in the western world. In China, women were forced to bind their feet so that women could be the accessories for men.

---


The key thinker about Chinese attitudes towards bodies is Xun Jiang, a writer from Tai Wan. In his book cisheng, roushenjuexing (the awareness of bodies). He said that in ancient China people didn’t care about their bodies that much. For example, in Chinese paintings, people were very small parts. Bodies are such a small part compared with nature and the universe. Ancient Chinese people thought bodies were not that important. People thought caring too much about your appearance and body was a bad thing. Beautiful women were always believed to be bad. He also talked a lot about the attitudes towards bodies in other cultures. In ancient Greek, bodies were treated as art works. There were a lot sculptures that memorize the perfect body at that time.

Image 8, Zerui Zhang, Qingming shanghe tu (Ascending the River at Qingming Festival), era BEISONG

In another book of Jiang Xun: Shen Ti Mei Xue⁹ (the beauty of bodies), he expressed his opinions towards bodies. He believed that each body had its beautiful parts. We should care and love the body that we have. He criticized the blind pursuit of muscle in the society.

The main object in my project is vessel and the vessel is based on the vessels in ancient Xizhou and Chun qui era. The main thinker about the vessels is also Jiang Xun. He discussed about the differences of vessels in ancient Xizhou and Chunqui era and the reasons behind them. I used the shapes at that time to talk about the beauty standards nowadays.

⁹ Jiang, Xun, 2008, Shen timeixue, Rangnide shenxin longyuan songrongzide (The beauty of bodies, to be comfortable of your own body), Chicago:University of Chicago Press.
There are a lot female artists who use their own bodies to discuss the issue of female bodies. Hannah Wilke used her own body in photography. Her poses exaggerate cultural values of feminine beauty and fashion.

She was a body artist and feminist sculptor. She used her body as part of her art works. Her works were very feminist and she criticized how men treated female bodies when she was young. When she had cancer, she used her dying bodies as art works. The body that was tortured by cancer showed us the reality of a female body. Instead of a sexualized female body, Wilke wants to tell us that female bodies have other sides except young, beautiful and sexualized bodies. Women have to face aging, disease, death. She debunked the myth of women in our society with her own experience. I think she wanted to show the audience what the natural and naked bodies look like, not the socially regulated nude bodies.

These are points that I am trying to make in my own work looking at female bodies. There are too many perfect female bodies in the social media trying to tell us that female bodies have to be young, beautiful and sexualized. But women have to face aging, disease. They also need to face the imperfect parts of their bodies.

Hannah’s pictures were very proactive and shocking to me. She was quite critical about the attitudes towards female bodies.
In my project, my focus is not about men’s attitudes towards female bodies. I mainly talk about women’s attitudes towards their own bodies. But the standards of female bodies were largely dependent on men’s gazes. Women always meet the glance and judgments from men. Women also constantly judge themselves and most judgements are based on men’s gazes. Women also judge each other and themselves based on these standards. Their also meet a lot gazes from other women. I want to talk about these gazes from themselves. How do they feel guilty about themselves.

Another artist used her body to discuss beauty standards is Amalia Ulman. She uploaded photos in Instagram. Ulman showed every moment of her life: waking up in a boutique hotel, dressed up for a party. With blonde hair and a beautiful young body exposed to the camera from time to time. Ulman looks like a typical American It Girl.

After "playing" in the Instagram for more than five months, she told her followers that everything they saw was a fake. These were all her online performances called "excellence & perfections". Ullman uses hot topics to draw attention to a girl who doesn't exist. She used Instagram to create a stereotyped image of it girl. Her works discussed a lot about the perfect image of women. These images were created to be perfect. Ullman’s work demonstrate how we construct our identity through the social media platform. Our image can make others believe who we are. Ullman had thousands of fans on Instagram when she pretended to be a perfect girl in the society. She showed us that these perfect images were illusions. They were usually made up by others but illusion could make the audiences fall into it and dream of these perfections and excellences.

Image 11. Amalia Ulman, Excellence & Perfection. 2015

After Ulman exposed that the Instagram account was fake,
people were quite angry about what she did, even now there are still some people couldn’t understand what she did. They thought these was a lie and they couldn’t accept it.

I chose jewelry as the final format of the vessels. Jewelry always connects with bodies. It is an art form that interact with the body. There are so many different meanings and understandings behind jewelry pieces. Jewelry could mean control, restrictions, ownership, honor, acceptance, sex feminism and acceptance.

Jewelry can function as a symbol of physical control and ownership.

In the book of: Jewelry and Gender, it discussed a lot about the usage of jewelry that restricts female bodies:

“jewelry usages have frequently developed to effect this metamorphosis, functioning as a means of incapacitation or a symbol of ownership, often simultaneously, this can take place through external ornaments like headdresses or rings that can be removed, ornaments that permanently change the body like stretched piercings, or those that span the ambiguous space between, like iron ankles hammered onto the body for life.”


Image 12, unknown, Niger Anklet, unknown, photography
The Niger iron anklets were a symbol of wealth and prestige for women. They desire to wear the anklets even though these ornaments caused considerable pain and physical incapacitation. It is the same with the Chinese binding feet. Even though it is painful to bind the feet.
Women with these feet were believed to be beautiful and good. Women wanted these deformed feet as jewelry pieces to prove that they were good. These ornaments were restrictions of the body but women can not get rid of them.

The perfect body image is the same as these jewelry pieces. Women believe that they could be attractive if they had the perfect body. Even though they need to pay a lot to get that perfect body image. They just can’t let it go anyway. I argue that the body itself has become a piece of jewelry that restricts us. We need this body jewelry to show that we are good enough as a women or as a human being.

Besides physical control jewelry is also a way of acceptance. People put something on their body because they accept that object. Traditionally, jewelry was an object that meet our needs to appear pretty. But in the contemporary jewelry, it has become something to discuss problems in the society and oppose them. There are many jewelry artists that use jewelry to discuss the questions in society.
Otto KUNZLI, his work: Gold Makes Blind shrouds gold ball in a black rubber tube. He used the value of material to criticize the way we look at gold.

I also want to use the value of the material as well to question the perfect body in our lives.

The material of my jewelry piece is the combination of silver and copper because of the value behind these two metals. Most people like silver and take it seriously compared with copper because silver is much more expensive than copper. It is the same when we look at muscle and fat in our bodies. I wanted to use the value of metals to make people see the value of their bodies.

A piece of jewelry is incomplete in itself. It is complete when you put it on the body. If our bodies were pieces of jewelries then our bodies were also incomplete. How can we make our bodies complete? What kind of jewelry can we accept to put on our bodies? How can we accept our bodies as complete?
Gerd Rothmann is a good jewelry artist to look at as a reference. He used different bodies into his works. He has made a series of jewelries that casted the heel, skull, elbow, mouth and other parts of the human body.

Image 15, Gerd Rothmann, Achilles’ Heel, 1978
He wanted to pay attention to the physiological and psychological needs of people through jewelry and explore the relationship between the human body and jewelry. For example, one of his work: Achilles’ Heel. He used beautiful silver metal that was casted and wrapped around the feet to cover up the defects of the body and increase the beauty of the body. The purpose of the work is to make jewelry that achieve perfect human body. He hopes to use this work to make up for the shortcomings of his short legs and to make himself more confident by wearing this jewelry. Jewelry could be used in different meanings. Gerd wanted to use jewelry to make body perfect and make people feel good about their bodies. But I think his works still make bodies the same as jewelries, something that needed to be looked at. An object that needs decoration to make it complete. I am more curious about bodies themselves. Can bodies themselves be complete without jewelries? Can we accept these not so good parts in our bodies? I want to use jewelry in this framework to critique and explore these body problems.

14 Achilles' Heel. 1978. photography. Germany
Method

I first melted silver and copper together as my material. As I kept on working with alloy, I tried to shape the alloy into vessels and casted the alloy into different shapes. The casted alloy of silver and copper is too hard and fragile. Every time I shaped it, it cracked. I was very disappointed with the cracks in the beginning. The shapes and cracks were not what I wanted. Then I realized these cracks were just like the imperfections. The perfect shape was the perfect image in my mind. If I only cared about the vessel without cracks, I would neglect the beauty of the cracks. Then I started to look back on these cracks. Are they just failures that I should throw away? Or do they have their special meanings?

Image 16 cracks of alloy, 2019
I wanted to develop a different technique to work with alloy. I found a technique called Mokume Gane. It is a technique from Japan, it takes a lot of time and effort to work within. It is a technique that fused different layers of silver and copper. (one layer of silver and one layer of copper). After fusing these layers together, I will drill holes to make the inner silver and copper come to the surface, so that there are different patterns of silver and copper on the surface of the material. It is a very hard technique. Everything had to be perfect to reach the final goal. When I was struggling to get the perfect Mokume Gane, the feeling of pursuing the perfect body came back. I was very frustrated with all the failures and I could not see the value and beauty of all the failures. Mokume Gane became my perfect image and I was restricted by the perfection again.

When I was shaping the material I was quite confused about the shapes of vessels. I could not find a perfect shape. I couldn’t find the definition of perfect shape. The standards of perfection are made up by the society. The standards of perfect body that I used to believe in: low fat, high muscle, long legs, small waist, these standards are just made up by this society.

When I looked back on the Chinese history of vessels, there was one period in Xizhou era. All the vessels were almost the same shape with the same pattern. Because of the strong power of the government, craftsmen at that time only allowed to do that form and pattern otherwise they would be killed. That shape was the perfect shape at that time.
I decided to use the shape and patterns at that time in my works. After Xizhou, in Chunqiu era craftsmen had the right to work with the shapes that they want. There was no perfect shape any more. I could see all kinds of different shapes during that period. The developments of beauty standards of vessels are just like body beauty standards in my works. I think that if there were only one standard of perfect body we would be restricted by it and neglect other possibilities of beauty.
The processes of my work: striving for perfection are also part of my work. Instead of the final work the processes and all the failures are very important. I record the process and the failures of trying to achieve perfection. All the struggle of getting perfection and the failures are a strong evidence for me of showing the restriction of perfection. In the book Diamond Sutra (Buddhist Bible) the bowl is something that the monks used to beg for food. Monks always hold the bowl with both hands to beg for food to express their humble feeling about the vessel and food they had. When I was holding the bowl waiting for food from my classmates in a class, I suddenly feel the humble feeling for getting food from others. The feeling reminded me of bodies. To be humble about our bodies. I started to see that I neglected the existence of my own body for a long time, I let the standards of perfection control my own body, I had no idea what was my own body.
Our bodies are also vessels to contain something for us to use. We tried to make the bowl perfect. But we might forget that we could get food from the bowl. We could use our bodies in so many ways. It is important to be humble about our bodies instead of pursuing the perfect body image in our mind.

Jewelry is an important method in my work. I use jewelry to talk about restriction and acceptance of our bodies. I also use jewelry to question what our bodies are? I used to make jewelry pieces. I feel proud when others can wear the jewelry pieces that I made. The jewelry and the person completed each other to me. But it seems that a piece of jewelry can never be complete in itself. It needs to be worn by someone to find its meaning. When I started to work with the perfect body project, I see a huge connection between a jewelry piece and body. Body modification is just like the process of making a perfect jewelry. It has to be polished and shiny otherwise we can’t wear it on our bodies. I could not help wondering what does our bodies mean to us? Are bodies also jewelry pieces that are incomplete in themselves? I decided to use the method of jewelry in my work to discuss this topic. I was inspired by the works of Lauren Kalman. She investigates the wearing of jewelry as a performative act. She includes her bodies in her works. She said that as a metalsmith making jewelry, there was a logical transition for her from body as site to body as subject.
Her projects come from personal origin or conflict that arises from insecurities or questions about the relationship of her body to consumer culture, sexuality, and gender.

I believe that bodies are a very good background for jewelry pieces to talk about this perfect body issue. How our bodies are restricted by the standards? How can we accept our own body and take control of the body? I was trying to play with different ways of wearing a piece of jewelry on our bodies. How to wear the piece and why to put it on certain parts of bodies?
Image 20 experiment with wearing the piece, 2020
Image 21, experiment with wearing ,2020
Image 22 Experiment with wearing ,2020
Discussion
My feelings about bodies have changed during the process of working with the project. In the beginning I was quite critical about the phenomenon that we judge others based on their bodies. I thought that was superficial and not fair to others. I believed that how our bodies look like was not that important. I changed my way of looking at bodies when I interviewed my friends. Hearing their stories about bodies I realized that bodies were very important in our social life. Bodies affect our confidence and our way of looking at others. The book of Chris shilling: The body, a very short introduction helps me to see the body in a broad perspective. Bodies are very important to us. We need to care about our bodies but not try to meet the perfect standards that the society tells us. I could not help asking: what does it mean to take care of the body that we all have? I believe the first step to take care of the body is to accept and realize that we have this natural body and that we have to be humble about it.
Conclusion

My main method is jewelry. In the beginning, I questioned a lot about the forms of jewelry. In the end, I decided to use the most simple form of jewelry. To use chains and safety pins to make necklaces and brooches. Jewelry is a method, I don’t need to complicate the forms of jewelries, putting them on is enough for me to talk about my attitudes towards bodies.

I questioned the perfect body standards in the society nowadays using the mix of silver and copper. I put the failures of a perfect technique mokume gane in my works to talk about the imperfections of bodies. The history of chinese vessels is my ground to talk about the restriction we had nowadays. The craftsmen were restricted because of the power of the emperor. Nowadays, there is not any emperor to control us. But we are still controlled by the social regulations of the perfect body.

I saw the restrictions of my own bodies. I realized these restrictions and I will be restricted in my entire life. It is hard to get out of it but I think it is important to realize these restrictions instead of taking these standards of perfect bodies as the only way our body should look like.

I want to reach more people in the next step. I have interviewed my friends to see their perspectives of bodies. I want to interview more people from different backgrounds to talk about this topic. I want to open the discussions around the topic of perfect bodies in different countries and people from different backgrounds.
Reference


Image References

Image 1 Titian, Venus of Urbino, 1532 or 1534
Image 2 Image 2 unknown, pictures of Yuki Mishima, unknown, photograph
Image 3, sijia li, measurement of bodies, 2018
Image 4, sijia li, Mokume Gane vessel, 2019
Image 5, sijia li, failures of Mokume Gane vessel, 2019
Image 6, sijia li, failures of Mokume Gane, 2019
Image 7, Mao Gong, Duke Mao Tripod, BC256
Image 8, Zerui Zhang, Qingming Shanghe Tu (Ascending the River at Qingming Festival), era BEISONG
Image 9, Hannah Wilke, Starification objects series, 1975
Image 10, Hannah Wilke, intra-venus, 1992
Image 11, Amalia Ulman, Excellence & Perfection, 2015
Image 12, unknown, Niger Anklet, unknown, photography
Image 13 unknown, Chinese binding feet, unknown, photography
Image 14, Otto Kunzli, Gold makes blind, 1980
Image 15, Gerd Rothmann, Achilles’ Heel, 1978
Image 16 cracks of alloy, 2019
Image 17 unknown, vessel in Xizhou era
Image 18 unknown, vessel in Chunqin era
Image 19 Lauren Kalmen, Composition with ornament and object, 2014
Image 20 sijia li, experiment with wearing the piece, 2020
Image 21, sijia li, experiment with wearing, 2020
Image 22, sijia li, Experiment with wearing, 2020
Appendix

interviews
To see a different perspective of how people look at their bodies, I interviewed my friends to talk about their relationships with their bodies. These interviews helped me to get a deeper and more aspects of bodies. I took some quotes from these interviews.

Interviewee 1
Wei Huang, gym coach aged 30

For ordinary people, health is more important, I don’t agree to use medicine to change your body shape, because we can do much more.

Interviewee 2
Mr. Ren, professor in art university aged 35

In China, marriage is not about two people, it is two family. We consider a lot, then the body shape is not that important. That’s why some women are not beautiful and not in a good body shape, but they can marry a good husband. That’s because her beauty is not in their body or face, her beauty is that she can build a family with that man.
Interviewee 3
Yi Yao, a skinny girl age 24

I am not fat, I can’t say how will I react upon these criticism about bodies. Maybe they are really ill and anxious, so I don’t think I can judge them about their behavior.

Interviewee 4
Li Jia, a chubby girl aged 24

The most stupid thing is to be fat. We just couldn’t control our desire to eat. Though I am fat, I think fat people have some problems and I looked down upon them because I am Chinese and live in this society.

Interviewee 5
Iars, baker from Denmark
If you accept yourself and you don’t care about what people think about you. People think you are fat, ok, I tell you, I feel good, then, you can ask, how do you feel about it?
Reflection

This year the examination, the exhibition have changed greatly. It was a good way to learn how to cope with different situations. Online examination was not a good way to have a good communication with the audience and the opponent. There was a huge barrier for me to communicate with my opponent. It seemed that we couldn’t really understand each other without face to face. The exam exhibition we had this year was really a good reflection to me. Most exhibitions are intended to be looked at. How many audiences you have in the exhibition is very important. But this year, we could not have any audiences, this became an exhibition without being noticed. I couldn’t help asking myself how important it is for my work to be noticed, to get the attention? Would my works have more value if more people know it? Especially in the social media era, how many people follow you, how many people like you almost determine your personal value. What about the exhibition, the works? Do we still value the exhibition according to how many audience we have? This is the question that came to my mind during the exhibition.

Personally, I am not that interested in online exhibition. I think it is so easy just to notice the appearance, the look instead of what the work really wants to communicate. But it becomes the only way at this period. I want to develop more with the film to tell the story. There are many things to develop with how to tell your story behind the work with the film.

I think the real communication with the audience is more important for me than trying to show my works. I want to find a place that real conversation is possible. Gallery could be part of the place but I think there is something missing behind the gallery. Most people come to the gallery have their artistic background. I wish I could reach people without artistic knowledge. I want to develop some public places like the gym, garden etc.

This situation helps me to think more about the relationships between the works and audience. I don’t think I know the exact answer for this, but it was a good starting point for me to find my own answer for it. At this period, we rely on the internet so much. Online world becomes the reality, the reality seems a fictitious world. I want to find my balance between the online and real world.