TOO H±MAN
THE IMAGE OF THE HUMAN BODY IN DESIGN

Author: Mariane El Ghrayche

ABSTRACT

Purpose This research is a thorough investigation into the image of the human body in design, it probes into the paradigms of viewing the body, in order to trace the image's headway and challenge the conventional 'Universal Body' mindset.

In view of a body suspended within an open system of natural, artificial and technological entanglements, this study posits the role of quantification and measurement in building the body image and fostering the human's aspiration to know, control and alter themselves through numbers. On the basis thereof, the thesis proposes 'self-tracking' as an empowering design methodology through which quantifed bodies can be qualifed.

Taking the 'Quantifed Self' movement as a case study, we will explore its obstacles and chances in enabling a fair understanding of the bodily experiences and paving the way for new perception(s) of the body.

Design/methodology/approach

The argument is made through an overview on the historical and contemporary paradigms of viewing the body in relation to design and through critical, design analysis and argument, with close examination of a case study.

Findings

The argument reconceptualises the area where design, quantification and technology inform each other to better situate the body in the built environment. Due to the limited timeframe the research implications are not yet explored: the argument attempts to lay the groundwork for later practical implementation.

Originality/value

The argument establishes a design discourse where the agency is granted back to the human, enabling his agonistic activity within a democratic process.

Keywords Human Body, Design, Projection, Representation, Image, Normalization, Interface, Body entanglements, Self, Self knowledge, Selftracking, Quantification, Qualification.