Body, flesh, skin, canvas: Black/Queer/Women and Tattoos as Diasporic Art, Reclamation, and Performance

Abstract
Body, Flesh, Skin Canvas: Black/Queer/Women and Tattoos as Diasporic Art, Reclamation, and Performance concerns black/queer/women’s participation in tattoo culture in the United States. Considering the relationship between Tattoo, Diaspora, Gender and Sexuality, and Performance studies, Body, Flesh and Skin Canvas works to reveal the critical possibilities that emerge from centering the narratives of black/queer/women who participate in tattoo practices. Through the study of the first noted black tattoo artist Jacci Gresham, artist-activist-scholar Karmenife, and my own autoethnographic accounts, I intend to explore the various ways tattoo culture has been used as a method towards, and expression of reclamation, self-possession, and self-fashioning for a group that has historically been relegated to the margins of a heteropatriarchal, white supremacist society. Using black feminist theory, visual analysis, and performance studies methods, I interrogate the ways black/queer/women are signifying on the practice of tattooing through fleshly concepts of diaspora. Ultimately, this paper shows how black/queer/women’s participation in tattoo culture generates a potent discussion on how one can utilize the body, skin, and flesh as an artistic surface and canvas, that has the power to express, heal, and reaffirm individual and communal identity.

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So the risk that The Queer Art of Failure takes is the risk of condescending dismissal by the Real Men of the Left and of the Academy (some of whom are
women and gay people, of course). But here we have a challenge to that kind of dismissal issued from the quarters of queer masculinity, from someone not
interested in competing in the manufactured shortage economy of smartness. The piece was developed and performed with her goofy band of male hipsters
Future Wife. You can watch the entire performance on line at Lee's website; I especially recommend fast forwarding to the rousing final number, the song "I'm
Gonna Die." Start the video at the 39:50 mark and listen to the way Lee sets up the song. Compared to full body tattoos, ordinary tattoos seem a bit like child's
play. This is not to downplay their importance to the owners of the tattoos, but the realm of full body art is a completely different sphere where the intensity of
art takes on new dimensions. Source. Full body tattoos are simply masterpieces done by kings and queens of the needle using live human skin as their
canvases. In most cases, a great percentage of the body is covered by one enormous, highly detailed tattoo. The extent of the coverage has always been
variable as different body suits came with different purposes. L