



IDEALIZED GAY MALE BODY TASTE IN BANGKOK: CONSTRUCTING A PROTOTYPE
THROUGH DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



By
MR. Ekathep MICHAELS

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for Doctor of Philosophy Design Arts (International Program)

Silpakorn University

Academic Year 2024

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Through Digital Photography

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-



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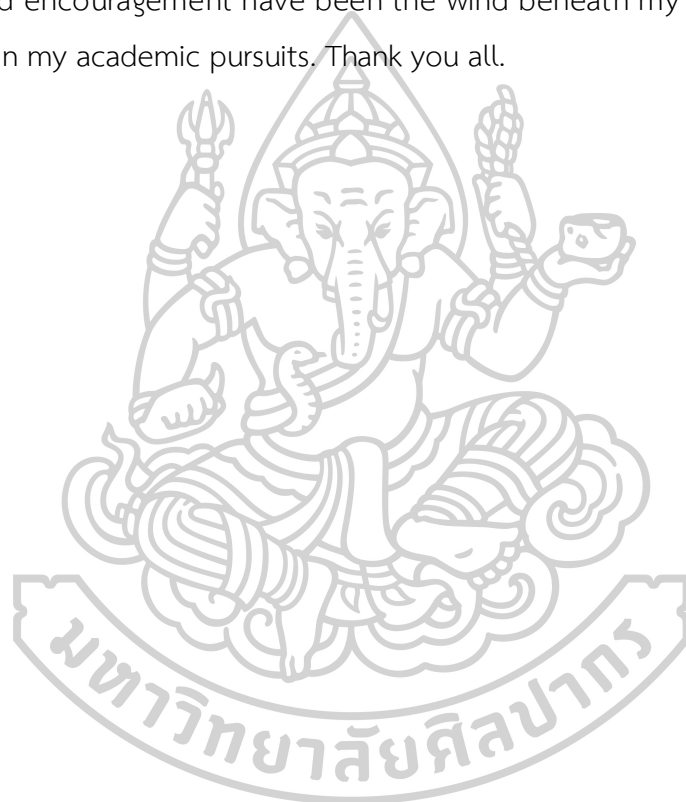
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	D
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	E
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	G
LIST OF TABLES.....	M
LIST OF FIGURES.....	O
Abstract	1
CHAPTER 1.....	2
INTRODUCTION	2
1.1 Background of The Research.....	3
1.2 Statement of the Problem	5
1.3 Significance	7
1.4 Research Objectives.....	8
1.5 Research Questions.....	9
1.6 Research Methodology	9
1.7 Research Scope.....	12
1.8 Research Methodology	14
1.9 Definition of Terms	17
1.9.1 Gay Men	17
1.9.2 Taste.....	18
1.10 Research Hypothesis	20
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	21

Part 1: Defining Beauty	24
2.1 Subjective Meaning	24
2.2 Objective Meaning.....	27
Part 2: Human Attractiveness	28
2.1 Overview.....	28
2.2 Evolutionary	29
2.3 Sociocultural	30
2.4 Body image Approaches:	31
2.5 Cross-cultural standards of beauty	32
2.6 Personal Benefits	33
Part 3: Body Classifications.....	33
3.1 Somatotyping.....	34
3.2 The Heath-Carter Anthropometric Somatotyping System	35
3.3 Body Classifications and Proportions in Fine Arts	36
3.4 The Muscle Silhouette Measure Test (MSMT).....	37
3.5 The Figure Rating Scale.....	39
3.6 The Adonis Ratio (Application of the Golden Ratio to the proportions of the human male body).....	40
Part 4 Sexual Aesthetics.....	41
Part 5 Ideals of Male Beauty In Greece	43
Part 6 : Gay Attractiveness	59
6.1 The Modern Gay Standards of Beauty	60
6.2 Gay Gym Culture	60

6.3 Media Representations of Gay Men	62
6.4 Media Representations of Gay Beauty in Thailand	63
6.5 The Modern Gay Standards of Beauty	63
Part 7 Photographing the Body	67
7.1 Theories and Lighting that affect photographic visualizations of the body	68
7.2 Flash Lighting	70
7.3 Chiaroscuro lighting.....	74
7.4 Split Lighting.....	76
7.5 Rembrandt lighting	77
7.6 Homoerotic -Photography.....	78
Tom Bianchi.....	81
Robert Mapplethorpe.....	82
Herb Ritts.....	84
Pierre et Gilles	86
Bruce Weber.....	89
Wilhelm von Gloeden.....	91
George Platt Lynes	93
Part 8 Synthesis of Literature	95
8.1 Sexual Aesthetics	95
8.2 Ideals of Male Beauty in Ancient Greece	96
8.3 The Evolution of Male Beauty Standards.....	96
8.4 The Impact of Media on Male Body Image.....	96
8.5 Photography's Role in Depicting the Male Body	97

8.6 Gay Men's Perception of Masculine Beauty	97
8.7 Synthesis of Literature.....	97
CHAPTER 3.....	98
METHODOLOGY.....	98
3.1 Studio Exploration and Artistic Inspiration	100
3.2 Image Creation and Categorization	100
3.3 Data Collection, Sample Size Calculation, and Participant Selection.....	101
3.4 Data Analysis and Visualization	102
3.5 Validation through Exhibition and Feedback	102
3.6 Synthesis and Findings of Prototype	102
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS.....	104
4.1 Descriptive and Preliminary Inferential Findings.....	105
4.1.1 Summary of Descriptive and Preliminary Inferential Findings	110
4.1.2 Correlation Analysis: Relationships Between Body Attributes and Satisfaction	110
4.2 Factor Analysis Application in Research	111
4.2.1 Purpose of Using Factor Analysis	112
4.2.2 Findings of Factor Analysis	113
4.2.3 Findings of Rotated Factor Matrix	116
4.3 Summary of Descriptive and Preliminary Inferential Findings	117
4.4 In-Depth Interview Questions:	119
4.5 Drawing Parallels from Thematic Analysis from In-Depth Interview of Male Beauty Standards and Current Literature	122
4.5.1 Integration of Masculine and Feminine Traits:	123

4.5.2 Fitness and Realistic Body Images:	123
4.5.3 Symmetry and Proportion as Health Indicators:.....	123
4.5.4 Subtle Contours Reflecting Contemporary Aesthetics:	124
4.6 Studio Work	125
4.6.1 Visualization of Responses of Preferences in 3-Dimensional Form..	128
CHAPTER 5.....	132
UNRAVELING RESEARCH QUESTIONS “TENSIONS”: A DISCUSSION ON AESTHETICS, IDENTITY, AND THE HOMO-GAZE	132
5.1 Introduction to Discussion: Analyzing the Layers of Visual and Cultural Tensions	133
5.2 Analysis of Aesthetic Tensions in Gay Male Beauty (Research Question 1)	135
5.2.1 Tension of Silhouette	136
Tension of Silhouette, Implications for Design and Art	137
5.2.2 Tension in Form	139
Impact on Local Art and Media.....	140
5.2.3 Tension in Contraction	142
Impact on Local Art and Media Practices	143
5.2.4 Tension in Texture.....	145
Impact on Artistic Practice and Media Representation.....	146
5.3 Visualization of Aesthetic Tensions (Research Question 2)	147
5.3.1 “Tension of Silhouette” Visualization.....	149
5.3.2 “Tension of Form” Visualization	152
5.3.3 “Tension of Contraction” Visualization	155
5.3.4 “Tension of Texture” Visualization	157

CHAPTER 6 REFLECTION ON THE ARTIFACT	159
6.1 Introduction to the Artifact.....	161
6.2 Viewer Engagement and Interpretation	163
6.3 Feedback from the Community and Art Professionals.....	164
6.4 Reflections on the Exhibition Experience.....	165
6.5 Limitations and Future Directions	166
REFERENCES	169
VITA	180



LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1 Preferences for Pectoral Size Among Participants	106
Table 2 Preferences for Pectoral Shape Among Participants.....	106
Table 3 Preferences for Buttock Shape Among Participants.....	107
Table 4 Preferences for Buttock Size Among Participants	107
Table 5 Preferences for Thigh Shape Among Participants.....	107
Table 6 Preferences for Thigh Shape Among Participants.....	107
Table 7 Preferences for Torso Shape Among Participants.....	107
Table 8 Preferences for Torso Size Among Participants	108
Table 9 Preferences Calves Shape Among Participants.....	108
Table 10 Preferences Calves Size Among Participants	108
Table 11 Preferences of V Line Visibility Among Participants	108
Table 12 Preferences of Abdominis (Abs) Shape	109
Table 13 Preferences of Abdominis (Abs) Appearance.....	109
Table 14 Preferences of Body Satisfaction	109
Table 15 Body Preference Source.....	109
Table 16 Rotated Factor Matrix Table (showing factor loadings)	112
Table 17 Thematic Analysis of Preference Grouping	122
Table 18 3Dimensional Visualization Response Progression, Ekathep Michaels 2024)	
.....	129
Table 20 Aesthetic Measurements for Tension of Silhouette	150
Table 21 Aesthetic Measurements for Tension of Form	153

Table 22 Aesthetic Measurements for Tension of Contraction	156
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Table 23 Aesthetic Measurements for Tension of Texture.....	158
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LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1 Research Methodology Framework	14
Figure 3 The Somatoform Classification (diaz, 2018)	34
Figure 4 Study of Human body's Proportions (Bernhard, 2006)	36
Figure 5 Body Silhouette Scale (Frederick, 2007)	37
Figure 6 The Stunkard figure rating scale.(A. Stunkard, Sorensen, T., & Schulsinger, 1983).....	39
Figure 7 The Adonis Ratio Illustration (Quaintance, 1957)	40
Figure 8 Male Harp Player of the Early Spedos Type (Unknown, ca. 2700-2300 BC) ...	44
Figure 9 David by Michelangelo, Florence, Galleria dell'Accademia, 1501-1504	45
Figure 10 Andokides, amphora with gym scene, Attica 530-525 BC, from Vulci.....	47
Figure 11 Eromenos with Hoop and Stick (Macron, circa 470 BC)	48
Figure 12 Painter of Louvre((Anonymous), circa 540 BC)	49
Figure 13 Ephebe of Kritios (Nesiotes, circa 480 BC)	51
Figure 14 Attic Red Figure Amphora (Euthymides, circa 510-500 BC)	52
Figure 15 Kouroi Sculptures(Unknown, Circa 530 BC)	54
Figure 16 Apollo Belvedere (Leochares)	55
Figure 17 Riace Bronzes, Statue A, Statue B.....	57
Figure 18 Barberini Faun, Unknown Circa 220 BC (Ribeiro, 2017)	58
Figure 19 Mark Puglise photo of Rick Valente	64
Figure 20 Tom Hintnaus Calvin Klein Times Square, 1982.....	65
Figure 21 Nu masculin assis de face, les jambes écartées	68

Figure 22 Muscular definition in male bodies is similarly influenced by lighting. (Isom, 2015).....	69
Figure 23 Different Types of Soft Boxes.....	71
Figure 24 Strobe Lighting Equipment	72
Figure 25 Light Traveling (Vanon, 2016).....	73
Figure 26 Male Model With Chiaroscuro Lighting (Pexels, 2024)	75
Figure 27 Chiaroscuro Lighting Set Up (EDU)	75
Figure 28 Split Lighting Set Up (Commons, 2024)	77
Figure 29 Albumen Print of Photographic Figure Studies by (Calavas, 1865)	79
Figure 30 Photograph of George Hackenschmidt, Wrestler and Bodybuilder (c. 1900 (Unidentified, 1900).....	79
Figure 31 On The Couch - Tom Bianchi.....	81
Figure 32 Charles (1985), Mapplethorpe.....	82
Figure 33 Ajitto (1981), Mapplethorpe	83
Figure 34 David Bowie (1987) Herb Ritts.....	86
Figure 35 Le Printemps arabe (modèle Tahar Bouali),(Gilles, 2011)	87
Figure 36 Saint Sébastien (Blanchard), 1987)	88
Figure 37 Running at Point Conception, California (Weber, 1987)	90
Figure 38 Le Grand Faune (Faune, 1898).....	92
Figure 39 Three Male Nudes (Lynes, 1940–1949)	94
Figure 40 Synthesis of Literature Review	95
Figure 65 Analyzing Tension in Silhouette, Ekathep Michaels, 2024	136
Figure 66 Analyzing Tension in Form, Ekathep Michaels, 2024	139
Figure 67 Analyzing Tension in Contraction, Ekathep Michaels, 2024	142

Figure 68 Analyzing Tension in Texture, Ekathep Michaels, 2024.....	145
Figure 69 Tension in Silhouette, Ekathep Michaels, 2024	149
Figure 70 Analyzing Tension in Form, Ekathep Michaels, 2024	152
Figure 71 Analyzing Tension in Contraction, Ekathep Michaels, 2024	155
Figure 72 Analyzing Tension in Texture, Ekathep Michaels, 2024.....	157
Figure 73 “Tension” Exhibition at “Substance and Form” Exhibition at Bangkok Art and Culture Centre.....	160
Figure 74 “Tension” by Ekathep Michaels	161
Figure 75 Sketch Up of “Tension” Exhibition Set Up at BACC	163
Figure 76 “Tension” Exhibition Opening Day at BACC	164



Abstract

This research, "Idealized Gay Male Body Taste in Bangkok: Constructing a Prototype Through Digital Photography," investigates the intricate aesthetic preferences and idealizations of the male body within Bangkok's gay community, with a focus on the concept of "tension" as a critical factor. Employing a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and digital photography, this study explores how visual aesthetics shape perceptions of male beauty. Tension is examined as a dynamic interaction between traditional and contemporary beauty standards and among various intersecting gazes (mainstream, male, female, and homo-gaze). This research emphasizes how visual aesthetics are paramount in defining the ideals of male attractiveness, manifesting in preferences for specific body types and attributes, and contributing to the construction of a localized archetype of male beauty. By transforming these findings into photographic representations, the study not only visualizes these idealized forms but also stimulates community engagement and discussion around body image, masculinity, and aesthetic appreciation. The insights derived from this research provide substantial contributions to the fields of gender studies, visual culture, and sociology of body image, particularly enhancing the understanding of visual aesthetics as a fundamental aspect of academic discourse and practice within these areas.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



1.1 Background of The Research

The ever-evolving nature of beauty ideals has long fascinated both scientific and artistic communities. Throughout history, scholars and artists alike have sought to capture and depict the "ideal" human form through a variety of research methods and artistic mediums. Notably, many depictions of male beauty in fine art have been inspired by scientific and mathematical principles, such as the use of geometrical proportions to depict the male form in works such as the Vitruvius man by Leonardo Da Vinci, and the classical Greecian beauty depicted in Michael Angelo's David (Elizabeth, 2008). Ancient Greek and Roman art often presented the male form as idealized, highlighting physical perfection and muscularity like the Doryphoros statue by Polykleitos, which portrays a perfectly proportioned male physique. These portrayals of beauty have played a crucial role in defining the taste and aesthetic preferences of various cultural groups throughout history.

The connection between admiration of the male body and homosexuality has been documented as far back as Ancient Greek gymnasium culture, where the idealization of the male form was central to the culture of learning and physical activity. In this context, homoerotically oriented relationships were not uncommon among participants, and depictions of strong, athletic male figures were common in art and literature of the period (Alvarez, 2008)

Male-male eroticism has also been a subject of artistic representation throughout history, particularly in cultures where same-sex relationships were more accepted or celebrated. In some cases, male-male relationships were depicted in ways that emphasized the physical beauty and desirability of the male body

Although the relationship between homosexuality and admiration of the male form has shifted over time, it remains an important and well-documented aspect of the history of LGBTQ+ people. Alvarez, 2007 argues that this connection between the appreciation of the male form and attraction to people of the same sexual orientation is an essential part of LGBTQ+ history and goes on further by stating that the study and portrayal of beauty ideals and aesthetics offer a fascinating glimpse into the intersection of science, art, and culture throughout history.

The subculture of gay men is subject to beauty ideals that are different from those constructed from the perspective of heteronormativity. While men are typically concerned with the functionality of their bodies, women tend to evaluate their appearance (Quittkat, 2019). Therefore, development, self-assessment, and the perception of beauty within homosexual men are particularly vulnerable to judgment in both domains. The perception of beauty within the gay community is shaped by the male and female gaze, which can sometimes be contradictory. This duality contributes to the establishment of certain beauty ideals within the community itself.

Gay men occupy a marginalized position within the hierarchy of masculinities. They are often stereotyped as feminine and less masculine compared to straight men, and this stereotype has historically given rise to a hyper-masculine gay male identity, which seeks to distance itself from the stigmatized effeminate stereotype. This phenomenon was described by (Francisco J. Sánchez, 2009) as a response to the societal pressure on gay men to conform to heteronormative ideals of masculinity.

The display of beauty in the contemporary era is done on the platforms of social media. “Beauty trends” are “influenced” by mass groups by sharing “selfies” and photographs of bodies which are seen in an instant and can be accessed anywhere in the world. With the advancement of technologies that allow images to be manipulated, personal ideals of beauty are portrayed by altering body parts to align with the user’s desire. This phenomenon allows the study of beauty sets a standard of beauty that is a continuum.

The gay community has its standards for defining beauty which is derivative of social, psychological, and cultural aspects. However, the attempt to visualize the “David,” or the archetypal beauty ideals of gay men, ceases to exist in creative literature to prove whether existing literature on social, psychological, and cultural aspects contributes to the definition of beauty is valid.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

1.2.1 Lack of an established archetype for the ideal male body form within the gay community

1.2.2 Limited attention on the impact of mass media and advertising on men's body image

1.2.3 Need to understand how the media influences male body image and how it shapes aesthetic taste and preferences

1.2.4 Importance of exploring how gay men perceive and internalize masculine ideals and how this shapes their preferences for the male body

As the number of gender identities and expressions continues to increase, it is vital that the gay community comprehends an understanding and standard for the ideal male body type. This study seeks to address this deficiency by investigating the preferences of gay men in Bangkok for the ideal male body shape and developing an archetype using digital photography. The impact of mass media and advertising on men's body image has received less attention than that of mass media and advertising on women's body image. Furthermore, while there is a significant body of literature on the treatment of the female body in various media during various historical periods, the impact of mass media and advertising on men's body image has received less. Although some scholars, such as Jean Kilbourne (Kilbourn, 1979) argue that the media's proliferation of images of the "ideal" female body leads to negative self-image and body dysmorphia in women, few studies have examined how this type of media impacts men. As noted by Jeannie Banks Thomas in her book *Naked Barbies, Warrior Joes, & Other Visible Forms of Gender*, the association of aggression with masculinity and the absence of a substantial critique of this association are of particular concern.

“I find the pervasive association of aggression with masculinity particularly disturbing, as is the lack of a significant folk critique of this linkage. Although there is folk criticism of Barbie's unrealistic 'body beautiful,' I did not see a parallel folk critique of the association between G.I. Joe and the 'body violent.’” (Thomas, 2003)

This study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of how the media influences male body image and how the art and design academic community can provide a more inclusive and diverse representation of the male body that transcends limited heteronormative norms and preferences.

In addition, the purpose of this study is to investigate the preferences of homosexual men in Bangkok regarding the ideal male body type, recognizing the unique experiences and perspectives of gay individuals. As a marginalized group within the hierarchy of masculinities, homosexual men are frequently stigmatized and stereotyped, with their masculinity and body image scrutinized and evaluated in accordance with societal norms and expectations. This study aims to shed light on how gay men perceive and internalize masculine ideals, as well as how this affects their aesthetic preferences and desire for the male body. This research has the potential to contribute to the ongoing discourse about body image and its impact on diverse communities through the creation of an archetype of the ideal gay male body form and a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to it.

1.3 Significance

The representation of the male body in art and design has historically been influenced by heterosexual norms and preferences. By exploring the bodily preferences of gay men, the field of art and design academia can transcend these limited norms and provide a more inclusive and diverse representation of the male body. This has the potential to foster new and innovative approaches to representing the male body, as well as a more comprehensive understanding of how the body is perceived and experienced across various cultural and social contexts.

Furthermore, exploring the bodily preferences of gay men can contribute to a more profound comprehension of how gender and sexuality intersect with artistic

and design practices. By challenging conventional gender norms and heteronormative assumptions, this knowledge could result in novel insights and approaches to artistic and design practices that better reflect diverse gender and sexual identities. Designers, for instance, could investigate how their work's representation of gender and sexuality could appeal to a wider range of audiences, including those who identify as LGBTQ+.

Additionally, understanding the bodily preferences of gay men can enhance our comprehension of the social and cultural factors that influence artistic and design practices. By acknowledging the role of gender and sexuality in shaping cultural values and beliefs, art and design academia can become more aware of the complex and dynamic ways in which art and design are intertwined with society and culture. This has the potential to encourage a more nuanced and critical approach to artistic and design practices, as well as a deeper understanding of how these practices shape and are shaped by social and cultural norms.

1.4 Research Objectives

The research intends to identify the tastes of ideal body forms that gay men of Bangkok, Thailand prefer, to create an archetype and benchmark as a representation of beauty to contribute to the study of aesthetics in the art and design discipline. The study also strives to cultivate new knowledge and understanding of the perception of the body and its influences in the contemporary era.

1.5 Research Questions

1.5.1 What aesthetic qualities are most valued in the gay male physique by Bangkok's gay community, and how are these perceived through the homo-gaze?

1.5.2 How can photography be used to visualize and represent the contemporary archetype of the ideal gay male body as defined by the preferences of Bangkok's gay community

1.6 Research Methodology

This research employs a mixed-methods approach to elucidate the aesthetic preferences and idealized perceptions of the gay male body within Bangkok's gay community, drawing from the theoretical framework of digital photography to construct a contemporary archetype. The methodology integrates quantitative analyses with qualitative insights, offering a comprehensive understanding of how physical attributes align with cultural and personal ideals of beauty perceived through the homo-gaze.

Quantitative Analysis:

The study began with a detailed survey involving 400 participants who provided data on various body attributes and their personal satisfaction with these features. The quantitative aspect included the use of descriptive statistics to manage and analyze data collected from scaled responses concerning body preferences and satisfaction levels. Advanced statistical techniques like correlation analysis and factor analysis were applied to identify and interpret the relationships and underlying patterns among the different body attributes, leading to a nuanced understanding of aesthetic preferences within the community.

Factor Analysis:

A pivotal component of the quantitative methodology was the employment of factor analysis, which helped in distilling the vast amount of data into coherent groups or factors that illustrate the significant dimensions of body aesthetics as appreciated by the participants. This analysis provided a structured way to simplify the complexity of perceived physical beauty and to highlight the most influential attributes that define the ideal gay male physique in Bangkok.

Qualitative Insights:

Complementing the quantitative data, in-depth interviews and thematic analysis provided qualitative insights into the nuanced perceptions of beauty. These sessions explored the symbolic meanings attached to different body attributes and

how these reflect broader societal norms and personal aspirations. The thematic analysis revealed prevailing themes such as balance and proportion, muscularity, and the integration of masculine and feminine traits, enriching the understanding of how aesthetic preferences are culturally and personally framed.

Photographic Visualization:

An innovative aspect of the methodology was the translation of these findings into visual representations through digital photography. This artistic endeavor was not merely illustrative but a methodological tool to capture and reflect the essence of the findings. The photographs were used to validate and refine the quantitative and qualitative data, offering a tangible depiction of the idealized forms that resonate with the aesthetic values of the community.

Exhibition and Feedback:

The final phase involved the exhibition of these photographs to a broader audience, allowing for community engagement and feedback. This not only provided a platform for public validation but also engaged the community in a dialogue about the representation of gay male beauty, ensuring that the research remains grounded in the real-world perspectives and experiences of its subjects.

The research methodology crafted for this study effectively bridges empirical data collection with creative expression, offering a robust framework for understanding the intricate dynamics of beauty, identity, and representation in the context of Bangkok's

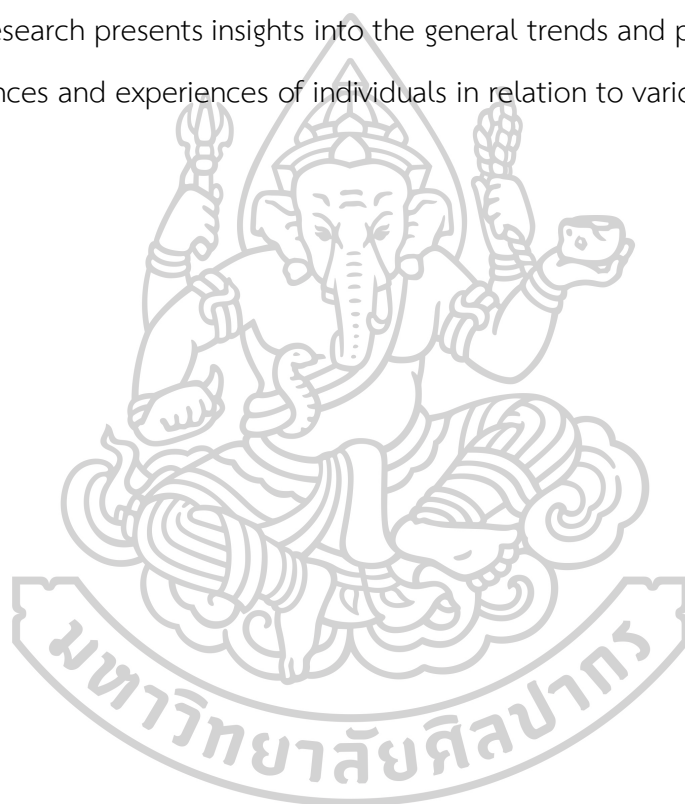
gay community. This approach underscores the potential of interdisciplinary methods in capturing the complex interplay of aesthetic appreciation and cultural expression.

1.7 Research Scope

This research seeks to investigate the ideal body form that gay men in Bangkok prefer in the digital age, specifically through the medium of digital photography. The study aims to construct an archetype of the ideal gay male body form in the contemporary era in Bangkok, exploring the influences that contribute to it. The research will establish a contemporary benchmark and visualization of the body form of the desired "perfect" body in the medium of digital photography. It also aims to examine the impact of hyper realistic values on the idealization of the male body and how it shapes the perception of the ideal male physique. However, the study has some limitations, such as its narrow focus on a specific demographic and cultural context, as well as the subjectivity of preferences and the lack of representation of diverse perspectives.

These limitations highlight the need for further research that takes into account the complexities and nuances of body image and its impact on diverse communities in Bangkok and beyond, using a variety of media and methodologies. It is important to acknowledge that this study only focuses on the current ideals during the research period, and that beauty ideals are constantly changing over time. The research's narrow focus on a specific demographic and cultural context may not account for variations in the preferences and influences on body image among gay men in other regions or cultural settings. Moreover, the study is only focused on people residing in Bangkok for more than 5 years and does not take into account the whole country, which may result in a limited representation of the diversity of preferences and perceptions of the ideal male physique in Thailand. These

limitations underscore the need for further research that considers a broader range of cultural and social contexts and takes into account the evolving nature of beauty ideals over time. It is worth noting that aesthetic taste is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that is difficult to capture in research fully. However, this study focuses on the most commonly reported findings and aims to provide a representative understanding of the factors that contribute to the aesthetic taste of a specific group or population. While acknowledging the subjective and diverse nature of aesthetic taste, the research presents insights into the general trends and patterns that shape the preferences and experiences of individuals in relation to various art forms and genres.



1.8 Research Methodology

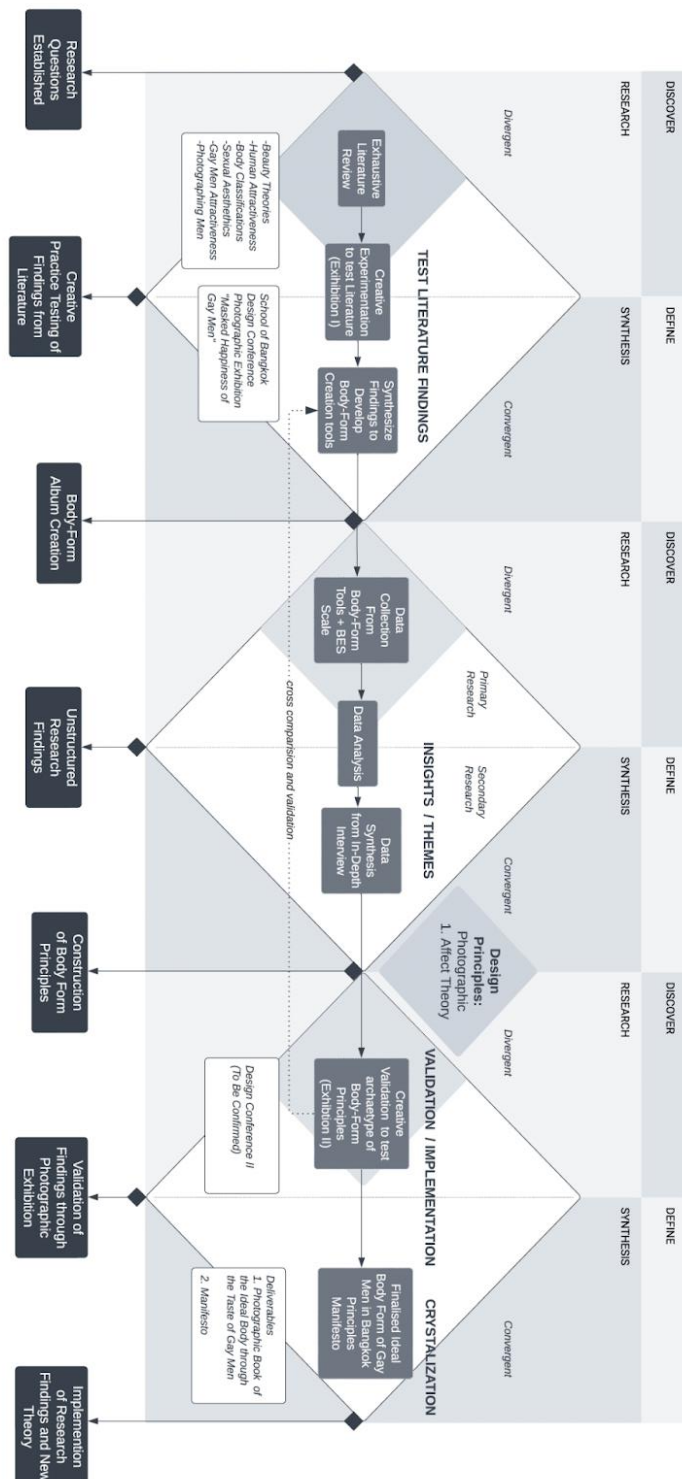


Figure 1 Research Methodology Framework

This research employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative research methods to explore the bodily preferences of gay men in Bangkok, Thailand. The study involved six main parts, shown in (Figure 1) : an extensive literature review, the summation and testing of the literature into visualized photographs, the creation of the Body Form Album through digital photography, the administration of a questionnaire to collect data on body preferences, the construction of the ideal body form archetype, and the validation of findings through gallery viewings.

The literature review involved synthesizing existing research on beauty ideals and aesthetic preferences, with a particular focus on the representation of male bodies in art and design. To validate the findings from the literature review, the researcher visualized data into photography and exhibited the images of male body ideals at a Design Conference. The findings of the conference and literature review were used to establish inclusion criteria for the creation of the Body Form Album, which was a collection of digital photographs of gay men's bodies. The photographs were taken to capture a range of body parts that could potentially be selected by participants in the subsequent questionnaire.

The study employed a structured questionnaire to gather data on body preferences, showing participants several images of body parts from the Body Form Album. Participants, who were stakeholders within the gay community in Bangkok, rated each image based on size, angle, shape, and form. This method was selected to accurately assess body part preferences and the self-perception of participants' bodies.

Participants' ratings were recorded and analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify the most frequently preferred body parts. The results were then synthesized to construct a prototype of the ideal male body form for gay men in Bangkok, Thailand.

To further understand the perceptions and ideals of the body, a subset of participants was randomly selected through convenience sampling for in-depth interviews. These interviews aimed to elucidate the reasons behind their choices during the Body Form selection process.

The final stage of the research involved a retest through small gallery viewings. During these viewings, a majority of the guests, who were gay men residing in Bangkok, were invited to validate the findings by viewing and providing feedback on the photographic set of images representing the proposed ideal male body form. This feedback was used to refine the prototype further.

The mixed-methods approach utilized in this study provided a comprehensive understanding of the bodily preferences of gay men in Bangkok, Thailand, and contributed to the development of a prototype of the ideal male body form for this population. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods allowed for a more nuanced and multifaceted understanding of the research questions.

1.8.1 Variables:

Independent Variable: The selection of body parts by participants from the photographs taken by the researcher.

Dependent Variable: The resulting archetype or prototype of the ideal gay male body form in Bangkok, constructed based on the frequency of selections made by participants.

Other Variables: Individual differences in personal preferences, cultural background, and potential biases in the selection process. To address these sources of variation, carefully designed inclusion criteria were implemented to ensure participant representativeness. The BES Scale Questionnaire was included to gather additional information on individual preferences and self-perceptions.

The data collected from this study were analyzed using statistical methods to determine the most frequently selected body parts and construct a prototype of the ideal gay male body form in Bangkok while accounting for potential confounding factors.

1.9 Definition of Terms

1.9.1 Gay Men

“The term “gay” is used to refer to all people, regardless of sex, who have their primary sexual and or romantic attractions to people of the same sex. The term can also exclusively refer to men who are emotionally, romantically, sexually, affectionately, or relationally attracted to other men, or who identify as members of the gay community.”

(<https://www.montclair.edu/lgbtq-center/lgbtq-resources/terminology/>) The American Psychological Association, (Dellar, May 20, 2022) defines gay men as “men who are attracted to men”. Amnesty International Thailand defines gay men as “...men who have love for one another. Physically, gay men are men who love and desire individuals of the same sex. Romantic or sexual relationships (sex) between two men do not necessarily require one partner to be the giver or receiver, but both roles can be fulfilled.” Therefore, in this study, “gay men”, “gay males”, mentioned refers to biological male individuals who are primarily sexually and/or romantically attracted to other men.

1.9.2 Taste

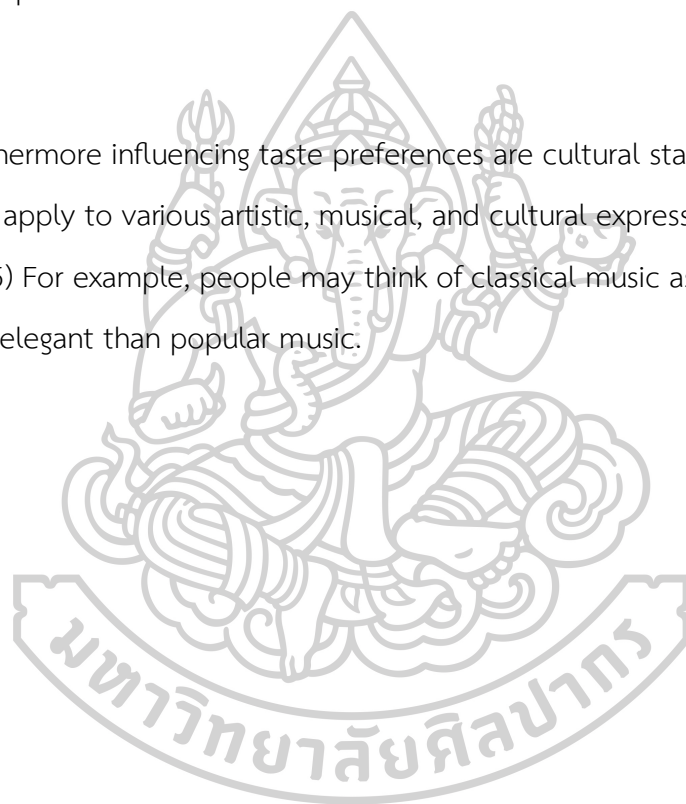
(Hume, 1757), poses that taste is a subjective feeling with a standard found within the beholders. According to (Gerard, 1759), taste involves an act of imagination. In contrast, (Kant, 1790) considered taste to be subjective, yet also believed that beautiful objects possess a universal appeal. For this study taste is a subjective feeling based on past choices and experiences that involve imagination, and is defined by a personal standard while also recognizing the universal appeal of beautiful objects.

According to Dissanayake (2015), exposure plays a crucial role in determining a person's sense of taste. A given stimulus gets more familiar the more frequently it is exposed to, increasing the possibility that one may learn to appreciate it. However, it's crucial to remember that individual circumstances and feelings can also have a big impact on taste preferences (Dissanayake,

2015) An advantageous propensity towards a certain genre of music, for instance, might arise as a result of pleasant connections with that genre.

Moreover, the influence of social variables in determining taste preferences is crucial. Peer pressure, for instance, may have a significant influence on what individuals favor and reject (Bourdieu, 1984). This may be seen in numerous subcultures that deviate from the mainstream in terms of their particular taste preferences.

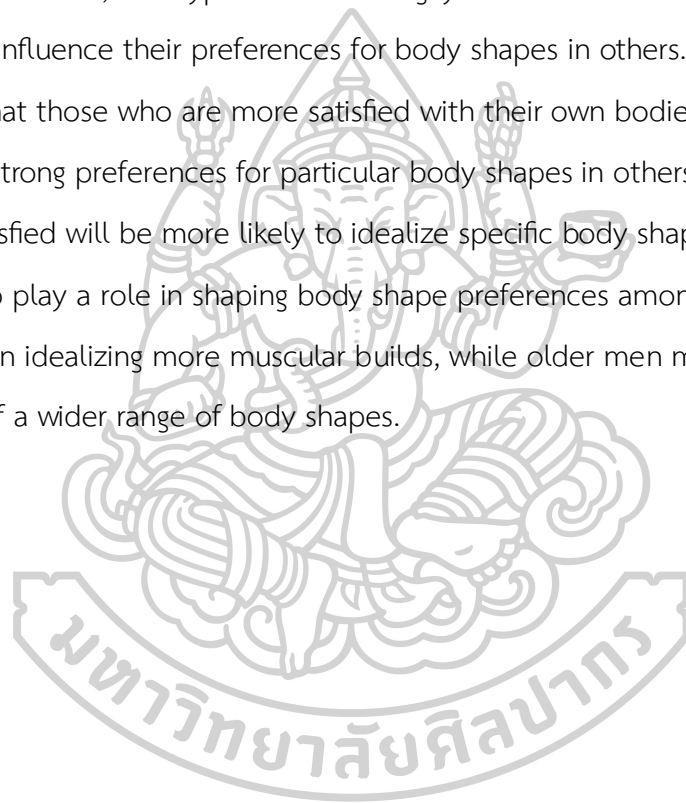
Furthermore influencing taste preferences are cultural standards and ideals that apply to various artistic, musical, and cultural expressions (Dissanayake, 2015) For example, people may think of classical music as being more mature and elegant than popular music:



1.10 Research Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that the ideals of body forms gay men in Bangkok Thailand contains both qualities of male and female bodies. Additionally, it is hypothesized that there will be variation in body shape preferences among subgroups of gay men, such as those who identify as “bear” or “twink”, or those who are more or less interested in physical fitness.

Furthermore, it is hypothesized that gay men's satisfaction with their own bodies will influence their preferences for body shapes in others. Specifically, it is expected that those who are more satisfied with their own bodies will be less likely to express strong preferences for particular body shapes in others, while those who are less satisfied will be more likely to idealize specific body shapes. Finally, age is expected to play a role in shaping body shape preferences among gay men, with younger men idealizing more muscular builds, while older men may be more accepting of a wider range of body shapes.



CHAPTER
2 LITERATURE REVIEW





This chapter offers a thorough literature review of the factors that influence the bodily preferences of gay men in Bangkok, Thailand. Each section of the review focuses on a distinct aspect of bodily preferences. The first section analyzes various historical and contemporary perspectives on beauty ideals and their impact on artistic and cultural practices. The second section examines human attractiveness, including the influence of facial symmetry, body proportions, and skin tone on perceptions of beauty. The third section examines the impact of body categories and classifications, including somatotypes. In the fourth section, the relationship between erotic aesthetics and bodily preferences is examined. The fifth component investigates the historical and cultural development of male and masculinity beauty ideals. The sixth section explores the historical and cultural contexts that have influenced gay men's perceptions of the masculine body as attractive. The seventh section analyzes photography's role in capturing and depicting bodily preferences, specifically focusing on the male body.

The eighth and final section serves as a synthesis of the literature review, integrating the various perspectives and findings discussed in the previous sections. This synthesis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of masculine beauty ideals and their representation in art and media.

. Through this exhaustive literature review, a deeper understanding of the complex and multifaceted factors that influence the bodily preferences of gay men in Bangkok, Thailand is attained. This information can contribute to the study of gender and sexuality studies, art and cultural studies, and social psychology. The literature review ultimately contributes to a better comprehension of how beauty ideals, human attractiveness, body types and classifications, sexual aesthetics, male and masculinity beauty ideals, gay attractiveness, and photography influence the bodily preferences of gay men.

Part 1: Defining Beauty

There are many different theories that attempt to define beauty. These theories can be grouped into two broad categories: objective theories and subjective theories.

Objective theories of beauty propose that beauty is an inherent, objective quality that exists independently of human perception. According to these theories, certain things are considered beautiful because they possess certain objective qualities that make them aesthetically pleasing. For example, the Golden Ratio, which is a mathematical ratio found in many natural forms, has been proposed as a measure of objective beauty.

Subjective theories of beauty, on the other hand, propose that beauty is a subjective quality that is dependent on the individual perceiver. According to these theories, something is considered beautiful if it is pleasing or attractive to the person perceiving it. There are many different versions of subjective theories of beauty, including psychological, cultural, and individualistic approaches.

2.1 Subjective Meaning

Articulating the definition of beauty can be both objective and subjective.

Subjectively, beauty could be defined as a judgment only when there is a shared agreement of beauty in aphoristic terms,

“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” (Hungerford, 2015)

Margaret Wolfe Hungerford (cited in Wood, 2005) This quote effectively summarizes the fundamental principle of subjective beauty theories, which posit that beauty is determined by an individual's personal perception and can differ from person to

person.

(Hume, 1757), Scottish philosopher, projected that Beauty could be derived from a personal experience that evokes emotion which is defined as “aesthetic emotion.”

“Beauty is no quality in things themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty. One person may even perceive deformity, where another is sensible of beauty; and every individual ought to acquiesce in his own sentiment, without pretending to regulate those of others.” (Hume, 1757)

(Hutcheson, 1725) Scottish philosopher, proposed that there are two types of beauty, “Absolute Beauty;” the kind of beauty to be found in nature, and “Relative Beauty;” the beauty that characterizes art.

(Bell, 1914), the English art critic, asserts that the foundation of any aesthetic theory lies in personal experience. In his work *The Aesthetic Hypothesis*, he states

“The starting-point for all systems of aesthetics must be the personal experience of a peculiar emotion. The objects that provoke this emotion we call works of art; this emotion is called the aesthetic emotion -- It will be said that the objects that provoke this emotion vary with each individual, and that therefore a system of aesthetics can have no objective validity. However, we have no other means of recognizing a work of art than our feeling for it. I have no right to consider anything a work of art to which I cannot react emotionally; and I have no right to look for the essential quality in anything that I have not felt to be a work of art. All systems of

aesthetics must be based on personal experience - that is to say, they must be subjective."

According to Clive Bell, the first step in any study of aesthetics must be the individual's encounter with a unique feeling he refers to as the "aesthetic emotion." He admits that different things may elicit different emotions in different people, but argues that this emotional reaction is the only way we can identify a piece of art. He claims that because all aesthetic systems must be founded on human experience, they are all fundamentally subjective.

One's own experiences have a significant impact on how they perceive beauty.

"No object is so beautiful that, under certain conditions, it will not look ugly"
(Wilde, 1891)

This demonstrates how our encounters have an impact on how we view attractiveness. What we consider lovely today might not be the same as what we consider beautiful tomorrow or even today.

Positive feelings like pleasure, admiration, and affection are frequently linked to beauty. It's not always clear, though, how aesthetics and feelings are related. According to (Keats, 2006), "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" there are instances when something's beauty can be found in its sincerity or genuineness. Accordingly, something may be deemed lovely not for its aesthetic appeal but rather for what it symbolizes as being genuine and true.

Defining beauty in the perspectives of Subjective Meaning summates beauty as a highly individualized and elusive notion. The quotations examined in this article perfectly encapsulate arbitrary theories of beauty. Beauty is not a universal standard;

rather, it is a result of individual experience, feelings, and perspective. (Kant, 1790) once said ;

"Beauty is a subjective judgment, but not a private one"

We are all connected to the world around us through the common experience of beauty.

2.2 Objective Meaning

Objective theory of beauty is the concept of "perfection" or "ideal form." This theory proposes that beauty is determined by how closely something conforms to an ideal or perfect form. This ideal form may be based on mathematical principles, such as the Golden Ratio, or it may be based on cultural or artistic conventions.

Symmetry and proportionality form the basis of one standard description of attractiveness. People typically find symmetrical features to be more appealing than asymmetrical ones, (Langlois, 1990) This is due to the fact that symmetry is linked to stability in growth, genetic integrity, and good health. In a similar vein, the golden ratio, a natural mathematical ratio, has been used to describe elegance in both art and building (Seshadrinathan, 2009) The Parthenon temple in Athens, Greece, is one example of an object that adheres to the golden ratio and is thought to be visually appealing.

Complexity and variety are the foundation of another objective meaning of beauty. Participants were shown paintings with various levels of intricacy in a research by (Berlyne, 1971) and they were asked to evaluate their beauty. The findings revealed that moderately complex paintings received the highest ratings for beauty, while low

and high complexity paintings received lower ratings. This implies that there is a sweet spot for intricacy that the eye finds pleasing.

Part 2: Human Attractiveness

Numerous studies have been conducted in a variety of academic disciplines, including psychology, biology, and society, on the multifaceted and complicated topic of human attractiveness (Feinberg, 2018). The capacity of someone to arouse favorable emotions in others—such as joy or desire—through their bodily characteristics, actions, or character traits is known as attractiveness (Feinberg, 2018).

2.1 Overview

Across countries and eras, the value of physical attractiveness has been generally acknowledged. According to studies, people who are viewed as beautiful are frequently thought to possess more favorable characteristics, such as intellect, compassion, and social skills, than people who are viewed as less attractive (Langlois, 2000). Additionally, it has been discovered that attractive people enjoy a number of societal and financial benefits, including increased employment possibilities, higher pay, and a higher likelihood of meeting a romantic companion (Furnham, 2017). Human beauty is influenced by a number of variables, such as face symmetry, body type, and skin tone. Particularly, facial symmetry has been found to be a significant indicator of beauty because it is linked to genetic fitness and good health (R. Thornhill, & Gangestad, S. W., 1999). Additionally, it has been discovered that a woman's physical form, such as her waist-to-hip ratio, plays a significant role in her beauty because it is linked to fertility and reproductive success (Singh, 1993).

However, bodily beauty is not the only factor in attractiveness. It has also been discovered that certain personality characteristics, such as assurance, humor, and compassion, are crucial components of human beauty (Back, 2011). In fact, studies

have shown that people who exhibit these qualities are frequently viewed as more appealing than those who do not (Montoya, 2008).

Studies of Human Attractiveness are divided into eight major research categories; sociocultural, body image approaches, cross-cultural standards of beauty and it's factors on, effects, personal benefits and media representations (Holman, 2011).

2.2 Evolutionary

From an evolutionary perspective, human attractiveness is thought to be a trait that has developed over time in order to help individuals find and choose mates. It is believed that certain physical characteristics, such as symmetry and facial structure, are associated with good health and genetic fitness, and therefore are considered attractive to potential mates.

In humans, as in many other species, males and females have different criteria for what they consider attractive in a potential mate. For example, males may be more attracted to females who have a certain waist-to-hip ratio, as this is thought to indicate fertility. Females, on the other hand, may be more attracted to males who have strong facial features and a muscular physique, as these characteristics are thought to indicate good health and the ability to provide for a family.

Facial symmetry is one bodily quality that has been discovered to be universally appealing (Rhodes, 2006). Because it indicates that a person has correctly developed and is therefore more likely to have excellent health and successful reproduction, facial symmetry is a sign of genetic fitness. Additionally, due to their associations with vitality and fecundity, face characteristics like clear complexion, full lips, and a well-defined jawline are also thought to be appealing (Fink, 2002).

Human beauty can also be influenced by behavioral characteristics. For instance, people who are confident and dominant are frequently viewed as more attractive because these characteristics imply high standing and the capacity to offer resources and security (Buss, 1989). Similar to this, showing warmth and generosity can be appealing as they signify a desire to work with and commit to a long-term partnership (Buss, 1989).

It's essential to remember that views of attractiveness can also be influenced by cultural variables. For instance, in some societies, having a fuller figure is appealing, whereas in others, having a thin figure is favored (Regan, 2000). Nevertheless, in spite of these cultural differences, there are some physical and behavioral characteristics that are constantly regarded as attractive in all societies, indicating that they may have a biological origin.

2.3 Sociocultural

From a sociocultural perspective, human attractiveness is a complex and multi-dimensional construct that is shaped by a variety of social and cultural factors. These factors can include norms and standards of beauty, the media, and individual experiences and perceptions.

One of the main ways that sociocultural factors influence human attractiveness is through the establishment and reinforcement of norms and standards of beauty. These norms and standards can vary widely among different cultural, social, and geographic groups, and they can shape how people perceive their own attractiveness as well as the attractiveness of others. For example, in some cultures, there may be a strong emphasis on being thin and toned, while in others there may be a preference for a fuller or more curvaceous body type.

The media also plays a significant role in shaping modern perceptions of human attractiveness. Through the images and messages that they present, the media can

establish and reinforce certain beauty standards and ideals. For example, the media often portrays a narrow range of body types, facial features, and skin tones as beautiful, and this can influence how people perceive their own attractiveness and the attractiveness of others.

Individual experiences and perceptions also play a role in shaping human attractiveness from a sociocultural perspective. Each person has their own unique experiences and perspectives, and these can influence how they perceive their own attractiveness and the attractiveness of others. For example, a person who has experienced discrimination or body shaming may have a different perception of their own attractiveness than someone who has not experienced these things.

2.4 Body image Approaches:

A theoretical paradigm known as the "body image method" is used to comprehend how people view and assess both their own bodies and the bodies of others (Cash, 2002). This strategy highlights the significance of taking into account both internal and exterior variables that affect how one feels about oneself. This, in my view, is a crucial idea to comprehend because it enables us to handle body image issues more comprehensively.

One internal element that affects one's perception of their physique is cognitive function. People who have a poor perception of their bodies, for instance, might use the term "fat talk" or have unfavorable thoughts about their appearance (Tiggemann, 2014). This, in my opinion, emphasizes how much influence our ideas have on how we view our bodies. Additionally, a person's psychological characteristics, such as neuroticism or perfectionism, may affect how they feel about their bodies (Sowislo, 2013). This implies that psychological inclinations more generally may be connected to body image problems.

The media and cultural standards of attractiveness are examples of outside influences on body image. The media frequently presents a limited, unrealistic ideal of attractiveness, which can cause people to feel unhappy with their own bodies (Fardouly, 2015). This demonstrates the need for media to portray attractiveness in a more varied and inclusive manner. In a similar vein, social demands to meet these beauty standards can have a detrimental effect on body (Swami, 2012). This indicates that in order to redefine beauty standards and lessen the detrimental effects of these demands, society must change.

2.5 Cross-cultural standards of beauty

It is extensively debated and studied how different civilizations and geographic areas have different standards of beauty. Social, societal, and historical variables strongly impact the idea of beauty, which is subjective. Many physical characteristics, including skin tone, body form, hair texture, and facial traits, are regarded as essential elements of attractiveness in different societies. In the West, masculine beauty is frequently associated with muscularity, whereas in some South American and African societies, a larger body size is viewed favorably (Swami, 2012). According to the study conducted by (Frederick, 2014) males who have a more muscular build are seen as attractive, healthy, and powerful. However, other studies show that certain cultures, like East Asian cultures, tend to find males with a more androgynous body form to be more appealing (Li, 2015). Another element of attractiveness that varies across countries is hair texture. While natural hair is frequently viewed as more attractive in African countries, straight hair is typically favored in Western societies (Hall, 2014). A study (Wong, 2016) found that in some societies, having facial hair is seen as more attractive and powerful. Therefore, it is essential to recognize and value the diversity of beauty standards that exist across countries.

2.6 Personal Benefits

A theoretical framework known as the "Personal Benefits Approach" bases its definition of attractiveness on the advantages that a person experiences as a result of it. With in-sentence sources, this article will explore the "Personal Benefits Approach" ideas of aesthetics.

According to this perspective, an item or a person's attractiveness is decided by the advantages it offers the person witnessing it. Pleasure, contentment, or higher self-esteem are possible outcomes. This method emphasizes how subjective beauty is because it has various meanings for different people.

(Hamermesh, 2011), a researcher who concurs with this theory of beauty, asserts that people who are regarded as physically beautiful typically make more money than those who are not. According to Hamermesh's study, one advantage of beauty is that it significantly affects one's ability to make money. This suggests that there are important economic consequences for the idea of beauty that cannot be disregarded.

(Etcoff, 2011), a researcher who supports the Personal Benefits theory, contends that a person's mental health can be significantly impacted by attractiveness. Etcoff asserts that people who believe they are attractive typically have better self-esteem and are less likely to suffer from mental illnesses like melancholy and anxiety. As a result, the idea of attractiveness may have an impact on a person's emotional health and wellbeing.

Part 3: Body Classifications

The classification of body types has been a topic of interest among researchers and fitness enthusiasts for decades. The concept of somatotyping,

introduced by Dr. W.H. Sheldon in the early 20th century, was one of the first classification systems based on physique (Carter & Heath, 1990). Since then, several other classification systems have emerged, each with its own set of characteristics and (Fields, 2018)

3.1 Somatotyping:

Somatotyping (Fig 2) is a classification system that categorizes individuals into three body types based on their physique: ectomorphs, endomorphs, and mesomorphs. Ectomorphs are characterized by a thin, lean build and have difficulty gaining weight, while endomorphs tend to have a higher body fat percentage and are more prone to gaining weight. Mesomorphs, on the other hand, are athletic and muscular, with a relatively low body fat percentage.

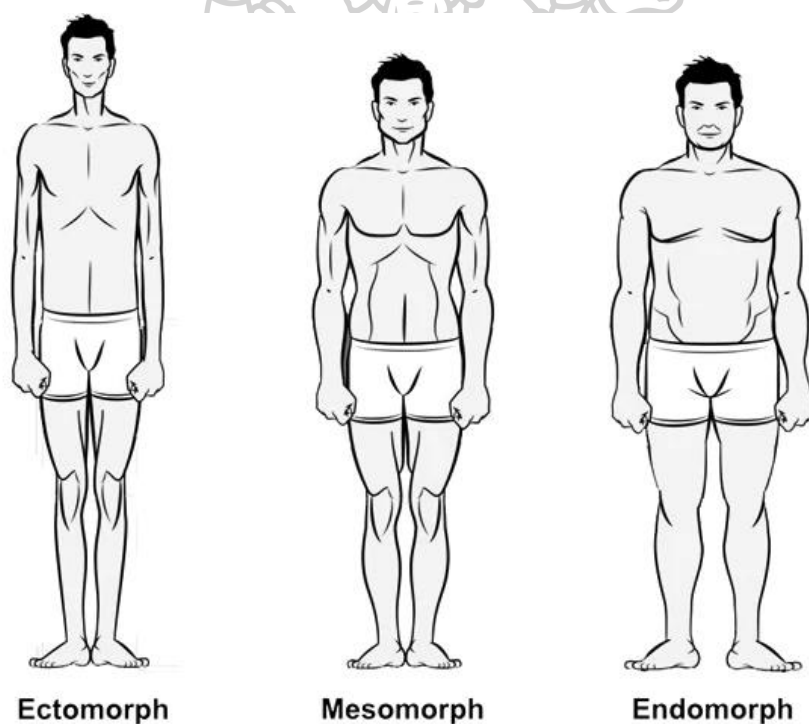


Figure 2 The Somatoform Classification (diaz, 2018)

According to studies, gay men's sexual preference and somatoform body categories may be related. In particular, studies have shown that heterosexual males

are more likely to identify as ectomorphs while homosexual men are more likely to identify as mesomorphs or endomorphs (Lippa, 2007). This finding raises the possibility of a connection between sexual preference and body shape.

Social variables might be a contributing element, even though the precise causes of this correlation are still unknown. Gay males may experience pressure from the Gay community to adhere to particular body standards, which may affect how they view their own body type. Furthermore, homosexual men may identify with the mesomorphic body type, which is usually linked to conventional manly standards, due to social expectations of manhood.

3.2 The Heath-Carter Anthropometric Somatotyping System

The Heath-Carter Anthropometric Somatotyping system is a more recent classification system that incorporates 35 different measurements to determine an individual's body type. This system classifies individuals into seven body types, including endomorphic, mesomorphic, ectomorphic, endomesomorphic, mesoendomorphic, ectomesomorphic, and balanced (Carter, 1990)

Another popular classification system is the Body Mass Index (BMI), which determines an individual's body type by calculating their weight in kilograms divided by their height in meters squared. Based on the resulting BMI score, individuals can be classified as underweight, normal weight, overweight, or obese (Organization, 2000)

3.3 Body Classifications and Proportions in Fine Arts

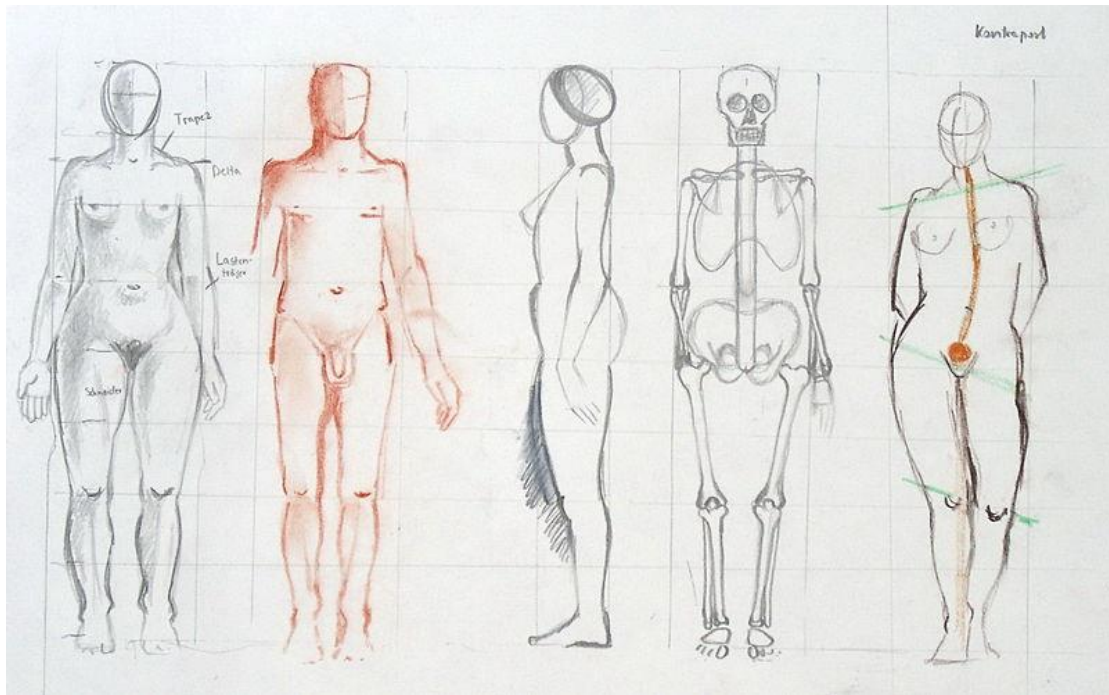


Figure 3 *Study of Human body's Proportions (Bernhard, 2006)*

When it comes to the art of drawing, an essential skill that an artist should possess is the ability to accurately depict the proportions of the human body. Among various techniques available for this purpose, the "number of heads" approach is a widely accepted and frequently used method. This technique involves employing the head as a reference point and determining the body's proportions accordingly. (See fig.3)

According to (Loomis, 1943), this method entails dividing the body into smaller sections, where each section's size is the same as that of the head. This approach enables an artist to gain a better visual perception of the body's proportions and accurately represent them in the artwork.

In the fields of art and design, the "number of heads" approach is frequently applied to assess the symmetry of the human form. This method is based on the idea that

the height of the typical human torso can be calculated from the size of the cranium.

The average human torso is eight heads tall, with the skull serving as the first unit of measurement, according (Loomis, 1943). Nevertheless, this ratio may vary based on the artist's goals. For instance, a ratio of nine heads is frequently used in fashion artwork to portray an elongated figure, giving the impression of height and elegance (Tortora, 2013)

The heroic proportionality, on the other hand, uses a ten-head-tall proportionality, resulting in a very muscular figure that tries to convey strength and power (Loomis, 1943). A notable aspect of ancient Greek art is the use of idealistic dimensions that depict the human form as being flawlessly symmetrical and proportionate (Stewart, 1990). Given that they aim to idealize the human body, these dimensions might not be attainable in practice.

Moreover, apart from its significant use in art, the "number of heads" approach has also garnered attention in scientific research. For instance, researchers have utilized this technique to investigate the correlation between body proportions and physical attractiveness, as documented by (Swami, 2012).

3.4 The Muscle Silhouette Measure Test (MSMT)

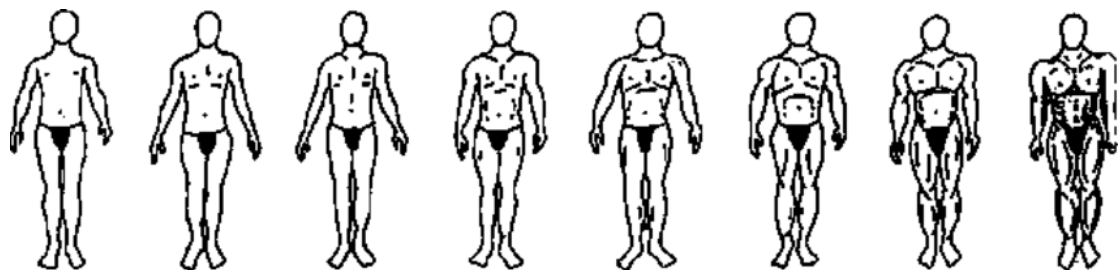


Figure 4 Body Silhouette Scale (Frederick, 2007)

The Muscle Silhouette Measure Test (MSMT) shown in fig .4 is a commonly used instrument in exercise physiology and sports medicine to assess a person's muscle mass and body composition. To create a visual representation of muscle mass, the exam entails measuring the shoulder breadth, chest circumference, and bicep width. The MSMT normally produces two-dimensional silhouettes of a person's upper torso, which include the contour of the shoulders, chest, and arms. The silhouette, which represents the person's muscular mass and body composition, is made by drawing the outlines of these body components onto a piece of paper or using a computer program. The internal muscle anatomy or distribution of the subject is not clearly seen in the MSMT pictures. Instead, they provide a rapid and painless way to gauge muscle mass and monitor changes over time. This method can make it easier to track changes in muscle mass over time and provides insightful information about how a person's muscles develop.

The MSMT has reportedly been used to evaluate muscular dysmorphia, commonly known as "bigorexia," (Bryson, 2003) research. An obsessive obsession with one's muscular size and body composition, which results in unhealthy workout and eating habits, is what this illness is defined by.

There is little study on the application of MSMT in communities of homosexual men. Yet, Morrison's, (Morrison, 2004) study found that homosexual men were more likely than heterosexual males to indicate unhappiness with their bodily size and form. Such dissatisfaction can result in a greater focus on muscular growth, which might hasten the development of muscle dysmorphia. In this group, the MSMT can be a useful tool for evaluating muscular dysmorphia.

3.5 The Figure Rating Scale

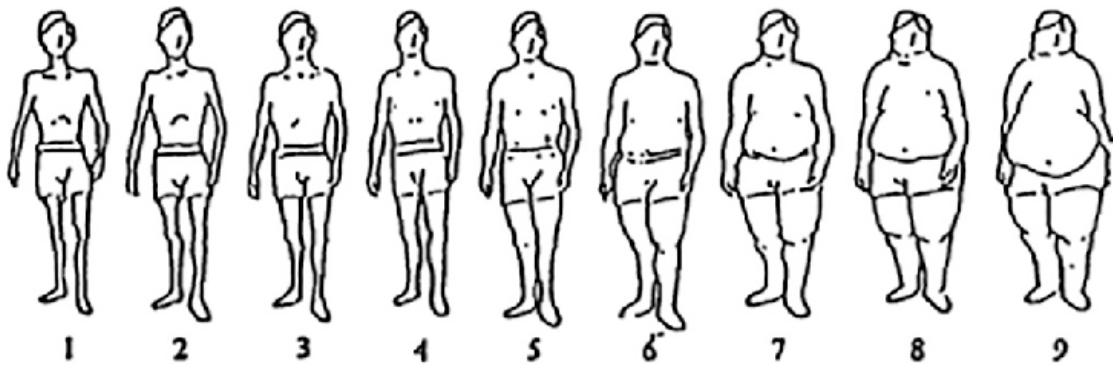


Figure 5 The Stunkard figure rating scale. (A. Stunkard, Sorensen, T., & Schulsinger, 1983)

In social and psychological research, the Figure Rating Scale (FRS) is commonly used to assess people's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their body image (A. Stunkard, Sorensen, T., & Schulsinger, F., 1983). (Thompson, 1995) The FRS measures a person's impression of their own body size and form by displaying a series of silhouettes that range from exceedingly slim to highly fat (Thompson, 1995).

The FRS (see fig.5) is a reliable technique for assessing body dissatisfaction, according to studies (Kakeshita & A(Kakeshita, 2006). The FRS's major drawback is that it relies on people's subjective assessments of their body size and form, which may not be totally accurate (Swami, 2009). Moreover, individual variations in height or body composition, which may affect a person's sense of their own body size, are not taken into account by the FRS.

Despite these drawbacks, the FRS is nevertheless often used to measure people's contentment and unhappiness with their body images. The FRS has several drawbacks, therefore researchers should be aware of these and think about using other methods to measure body image in addition to the FRS, including taking measurements of body size and form.

3.6 The Adonis Ratio (Application of the Golden Ratio to the proportions of the human male body)

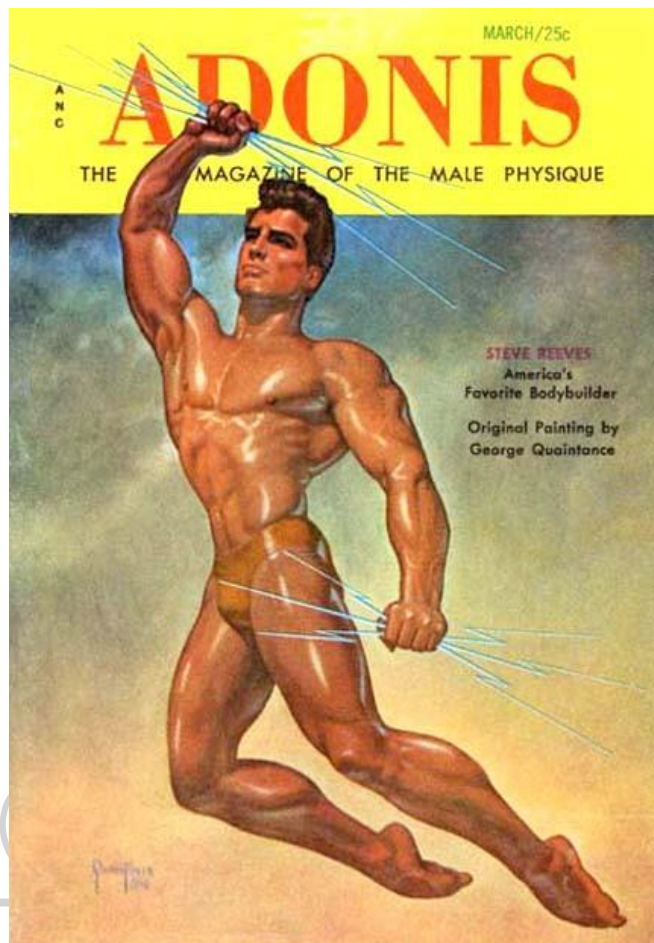


Figure 6 The Adonis Ratio Illustration (Quaintance, 1957)

The Adonis Ratio, also known as the "golden ratio" or "phi ratio," is a mathematical concept that relates to the optimal proportions of the male human body. Specifically, it is calculated by dividing the shoulder measurement by the waist measurement, with an ideal ratio of 1.618 (Swami, 2006). The study found that men with a waist-to-shoulder ratio close to the ideal ratio were perceived as more physically attractive by both men and women. The Adonis Ratio has been widely studied and has been linked to physical attractiveness, health, and fertility in men.

Part 4 Sexual Aesthetics

Examining Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* helps to clarify the concept of aesthetic sexuality. He suggests that *scientia sexualis*, which is a set of institutional practices, solidified sexuality in the West by making it seem like a natural part of the body that can go wrong in both psychological and physical ways. Foucault presents the *ars erotica* as an alternative to *scientia sexualis*, in which sexual enjoyment is valued for its quality and intensity as opposed to being forbidden or permitted. However, Foucault argues that the practice is exclusive to Eastern cultures and does not exist in the West (Foucault, 1990)

Foucault believes that the arts of existence, which preceded the *scientia sexualis*, were connected to a self-fashioning system in which men sought to make their lives aesthetically valuable. Sexual practice was an integral part of this aesthetic lifestyle, but this regime of beauty and morality collapsed when Christianity redirected practices toward the hermeneutics of the self and established the foundations of essentialized sexuality. Foucault advocates for the practice of freedom and ties sexual liberty directly to the creation of works of art. Instead of adhering to a science of sexuality, he suggests that the homosexual liberation movement might benefit from appealing to sexual aesthetics. Foucault identifies a growing form of sexual aesthetics in homosexual male sadomasochism subcultures, but his research into this potential form of a contemporary *ars erotica* was cut short by his passing in 1984. This book contends that an *ars erotica* is a form of sexuality that has existed in Western culture since at least the eighteenth century and is known as "aesthetic sexuality."

Foucault says that aesthetic sexuality is a type of sexuality that is seen as having artistic value. This is shown by how sexual experiences are completed, what they are like, and how much pleasure they give. The focus is on how the practice

makes the person feel, not on what causes it. Aesthetic sexuality is a way to create yourself on purpose, and anyone who likes the way it looks can do it. This kind of sexuality is shown by the Baudelairian dandy, a person who intentionally adopts a lifestyle and design that transforms their very being into an artwork.

Theories of sexual aesthetics make an effort to clarify how visuals play a part in sexual desire and behavior. Several hypotheses have been put forth in recent years to explain this occurrence.

One such theory is the "sensory-biased" hypothesis, which contends that because certain physical characteristics are linked to fertility and health, people have developed to find them appealing (Puts, 2010). This theory holds that characteristics that are suggestive of good health and reproductive ability, such as symmetrical features, clean skin, and a low waist-to-hip ratio, are generally appealing.

Another theory claims that bodily beauty is an indication of genetic quality and is known as the "good genes" idea (R. G. Thornhill, Steven W., 1999). According to this hypothesis, people who have more attractive bodily characteristics are more genetically healthy and thus better able to carry on their genes to the following generation.

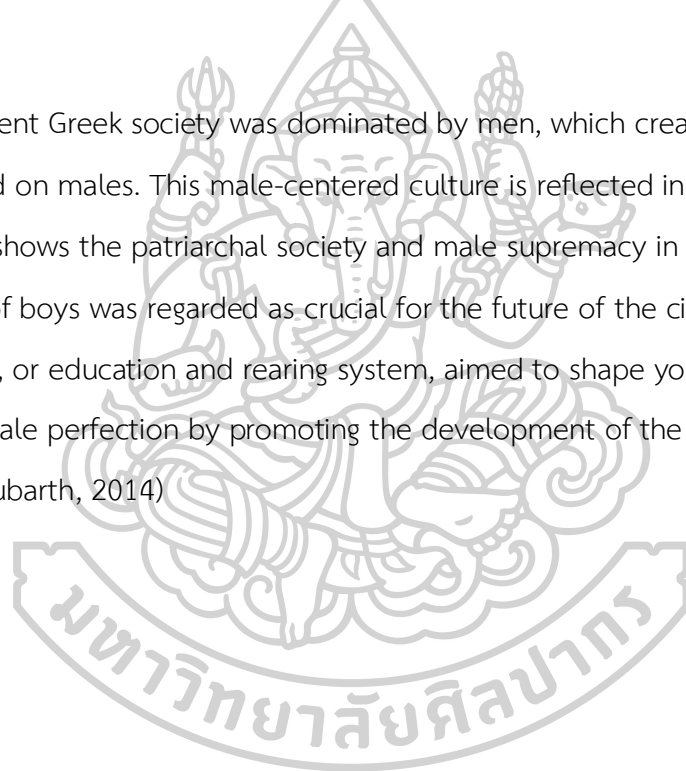
The "sexual imprinting" idea, a third theory, contends that people are more drawn to people who are similar to their opposite-sex parent (Bereczkei, 2004). According to this theory, people form a sexual preference based on their early interactions with their opposite-sex parent and are more apt to look for companions who share that parent's characteristics in the future.

Theories of sexual beauty investigate how people view and feel sexual appeal and desire. Scholars argue that cultural and social standards as well as physical and biological characteristics play a role in sexual desire (Barker, 2010). Sexual aesthetics theories are especially important for gay men because they question heteronormative ideals of beauty. According (Hooks, 1992), the ideal

attractiveness standard for gay men frequently incorporates elements of both masculinity and femininity, which is not always recognized in the general population. Due to their particular experiences and social pressures, homosexual men may therefore have a different view of sexual aesthetics than their heterosexual counterparts.

Part 5 Ideals of Male Beauty In Greece

Ancient Greek society was dominated by men, which created a culture that was focused on males. This male-centered culture is reflected in their art production, which also shows the patriarchal society and male supremacy in Greek culture. The education of boys was regarded as crucial for the future of the city-states, or poleis. The paideia, or education and rearing system, aimed to shape young Greeks into achieving male perfection by promoting the development of the male body, mind, and soul (Rubarth, 2014)



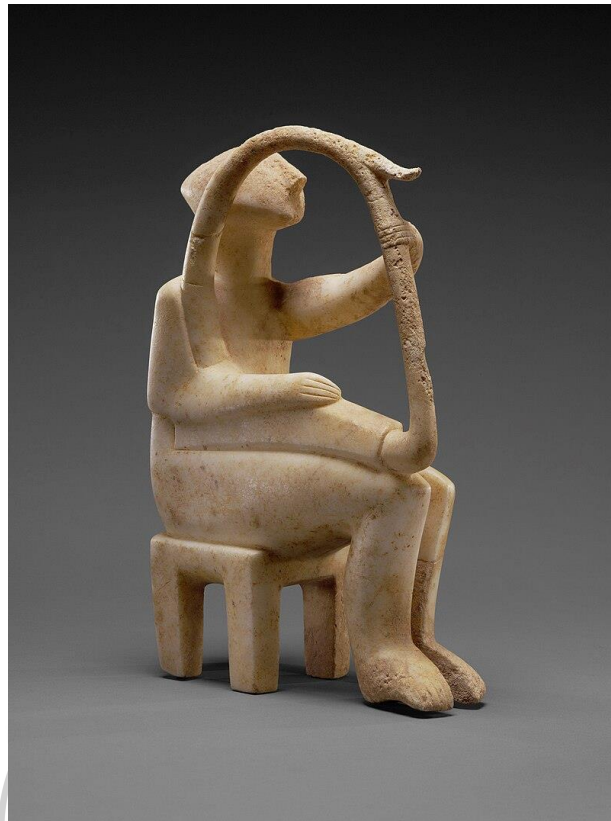


Figure 7 Male Harp Player of the Early Spedos Type (Unknown, ca. 2700-2300 BC)

A chronological method is required to interpret these works because each phase of ancient Greek history produced its own distinctive elements. Free-standing sculptures, such as kouroi, and painted pottery were produced during the Archaic period (700–480 BC). During the Early Classical period (480–450 BC), well-known bronze sculptures, such as the Kritios Boy, were also produced. The High Classical period (450–400 BC) was marked by pieces like the Doryphoros by Polykleitos. The Late Classical period (400–323 BC) witnessed the emergence of life-size sculpture. Perhaps the most well-known and distinct figure in ancient Greek art, the young male nudist represents the idealized type of masculine beauty (Hurwit, 2017).

It is reasonable to presume that male beauty during this time was more functional than purely aesthetic. Despite this, marble was used as a medium, starting the legacy of Greek marble sculpture, which preserved the ideal proportions and forms of the human figure. (Stocking, 2014) The representation of human figures as geometric shapes used as decorative patterns on vases is a hallmark of the Geometric era, which is when the Greeks adopted the Phoenician alphabet.



Figure 8 David by Michelangelo, Florence, Galleria dell'Accademia, 1501-1504

Michelangelo's *David* is celebrated not only for its masterful representation of the male form but also for its anatomical accuracy and expressive detail. Standing at over 5 meters tall, *David* captures the human form in an idealized, yet realistic manner, emphasizing musculature, proportion, and the natural tension of the body in a contrapposto pose, where the weight is shifted onto one leg. This stance enhances the statue's dynamic composition, with subtle shifts in the hips and shoulders that mirror a relaxed yet alert posture. The contrapposto, a technique derived from ancient Greek sculpture, accentuates the harmony and balance that the Renaissance aspired to achieve in depictions of the human. Michelangelo's precise attention to anatomical structure—from the exaggerated hands and veins that emphasize tension to the calm, contemplative expression—reflects an idealized yet humanized portrayal of male beauty, resonant with Renaissance ideals of virtù and human potential (Bautista, 2008).

In analyzing Michelangelo's *David*, it becomes evident that the contrapposto pose is central to the statue's impact, both visually and symbolically. The positioning of the left leg bearing weight while the right leg is relaxed creates a naturalistic stance, which imbues *David* with both power and poise, signifying Renaissance ideals of balance and perfection in the human form. This stance enhances the viewer's perception of movement and readiness, an ideal of masculinity that speaks to inner strength as well as physical prowess. Moreover, Michelangelo's choice to render *David* at the moment before battle—symbolized by his intense gaze and poised posture—reflects not only physical beauty but the psychological depth and resolve emblematic of the era's evolving views on heroism and virtue (Groot., 2014)



Figure 9 Andokides, amphora with gym scene, Attica 530-525 BC, from Vulci (Sailko, 2014)

Classical Greco-Roman art is distinguished for its ground-breaking approach to portraying the human physique. From the Early Classical Period (480-323 BCE) through the Hellenistic Period (323-31 BCE), Greco-Roman art presented the human form in a natural manner, devoid of significant stylistic exaggeration, in dynamic poses and movements (as illustrated in fig. 10). Over the course of its development from the High Archaic Period (625-480 BCE) to the Hellenistic Period, the diverse depictions of male anatomy offer valuable insight into the aesthetic sensibilities of ancient Greek society, and reveal the subtle ways in which these sensibilities have endured and impacted contemporary American culture and the broader Western world. (Stocking, 2014)

Greek art depicts the perfect male adolescent as having wide shoulders, defined abdomens, thighs that are muscular, and symmetrical, proportionate,

uncircumcised genitalia (fig.8) It is interesting to note that elderly men are portrayed with beards, whereas younger men are portrayed with smooth faces. Additionally, as seen in the accompanying illustrations, the older males' muscular build may be more developed than that of their younger peers, especially in the chest and shoulders, with whom they engage in sexual activity or titillation (fig. 10)



Figure 10 Eromenos with Hoop and Stick (Macron, circa 470 BC)

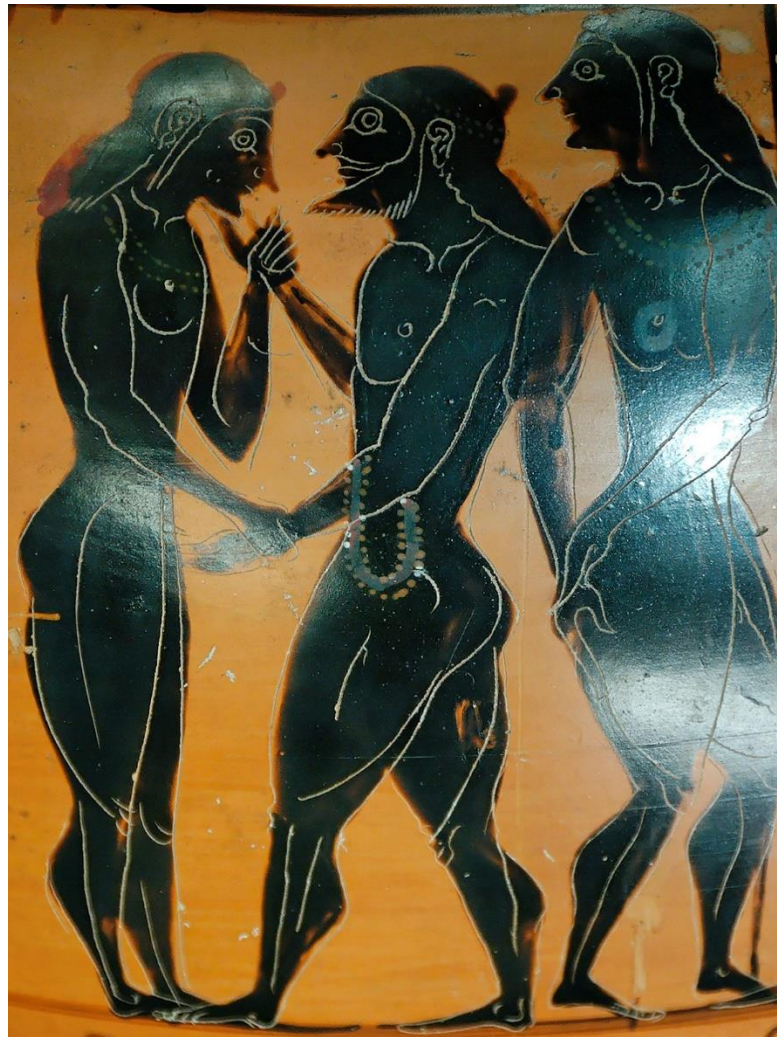


Figure 11 Painter of Louvre((Anonymous), circa 540 BC)

A set of guidelines that governed the portrayal of nudity in both male and female subjects are revealed by Andrew Stewart's academic inquiry into how gendered bodies were portrayed in ancient Greek art. This study examines the historical significance of depicting people as being clothed or undressed, which served as a means of differentiation, as well as the development of societal expectations surrounding masculinity and femininity. In Stewart's analysis, the ideal human body and the visual representations that tried to communicate it are shaped by the political realities of ancient Greece, where a patriarchal society built on the idea of male supremacy shaped the ideal human body. The impact of

"institutionalized pederasty" and the erastes-eromenos relationship evoked by various works of art, including public monuments like the Parthenon frieze and the Tyrannicides Harmodios and Aristogeiton by Kritios and Nesiotes as well as private artifacts like sympotic drinking vessels, are also examined by Stewart in addition to the Greek socio-political norms that favored men (Stewart, 1997).

In his study, Stewart looks at the societal changes that resulted in the development of the young, rosy-cheeked Athenian homoerotic desire figures. He names the Doryphoros by Polykleitos of Argos and the Aphrodite of Knidos by Praxiteles as the primary representations of the "new metaphysic" of male and female identity in antiquity. Stewart tries to balance the kouroi and Doryphoros' distant appearance with how viewers would have viewed them despite their stoic expressions, which protect them from the male gaze. He acknowledges in his own evaluation that he only partly resolves the apparent conflict between the spectator's interpretation and their representation.

Later on, evidence in representations of the male body forms was shifted to feminizing qualities. The Kritios Boy (fig.11), a sculpture produced in early classical ancient Greece, is a noteworthy illustration of this tendency toward feminization. The sculpture shows a young male figure with smooth, feminine features more often found on female figures, as well as an androgynous, slender shape. The Kritios Boy's posture and expression have a soft, introspective quality that is frequently regarded as feminine, and his hair is styled in a way that was traditionally designated for women. These characteristics imply that the artist intended to create a figure that was both lovely and ethereal, challenging conventional ideas of manhood that prioritized physical strength and power. The artist aimed to develop a new standard of masculine beauty that was both aesthetically pleasing and emotionally complex

by giving the Kritios Boy feminine characteristics. The classical era of ancient Greek art would come to be defined by this method of sculpting the masculine form, which adopted a more delicate and refined aesthetic and had a long-lasting impact on Western art history.



Figure 12 Ephebe of Kritios (Nesiotes, circa 480 BC)

Artists in ancient Greece developed and improved methods during the High Archaic Period that permitted a break from the constrained patterns of earlier artistic styles, such as the Early and Late Geometric styles. As seen in the vases made by Euthymides and Onesimos (fig. 12), this was made feasible by the development of red and black-figure techniques, which allowed the representation of the human form more artistic freedom. depictions of the male figure. They emphasized the musculature of the masculine form while also including aspects of grace and beauty to convey movement and strength.

Their figures are frequently depicted in motion, such as athletes competing or warriors involved in battle. Their postures imply a natural and relaxed demeanor, and the drapery on their figures is skillfully rendered to convey a sense of movement and fluidity.

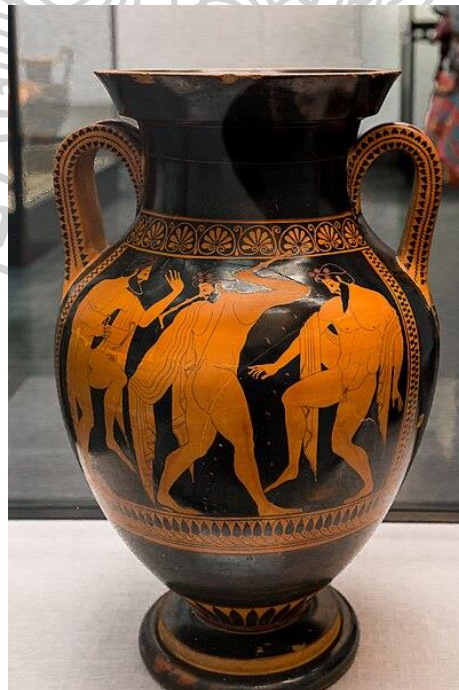


Figure 13 Attic Red Figure Amphora (Euthymides, circa 510-500 BC)

According to Dover's argument in 1997, females depicted on vases from both the Archaic and Classical periods in ancient Greece were very similar to males in appearance, except for the presence of breasts. They possessed the same prominent muscular bulge above the hip bone, and their facial features were nearly identical to those of males, making them difficult to distinguish from males (Dover, 1980).

During the Archaic Period of ancient Greece, Kouroi sculptures were created as nude, standing male figures, notable for their exaggerated muscular depictions. These sculptures emphasize the idealized masculine physique of ancient Greek society, characterized by an emphasis on physical strength, power, and athleticism. The broad shoulders, defined abdomens, and muscular thighs that make up the Kouroi's muscular form are typically present, with special attention given to the composition's symmetrical balance. The values and priorities of ancient Greek culture, which placed a high value on physical prowess and the cultivation of a powerful and athletic body, are reflected in this idealized depiction of the masculine form. (fig. 13)

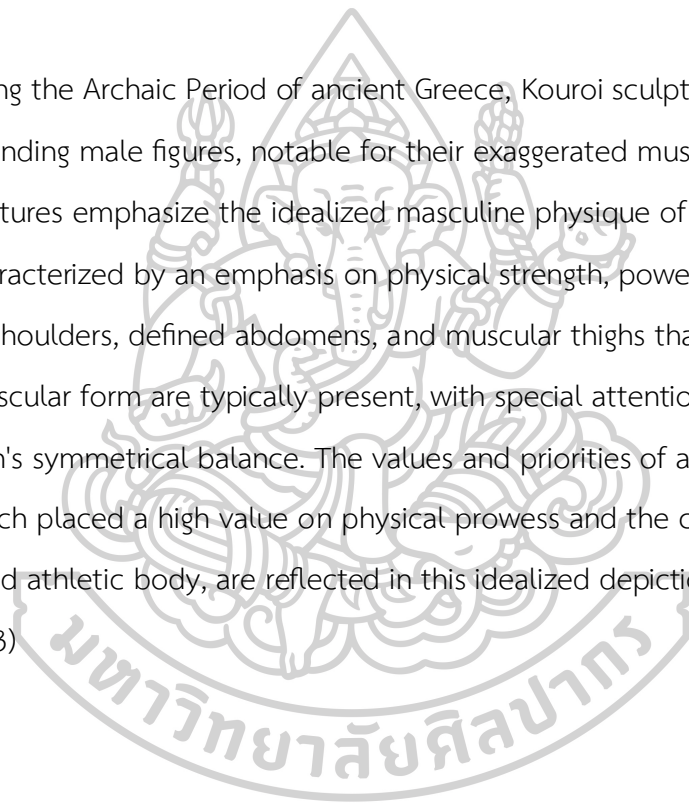




Figure 14 Kouros Sculptures(Unknown, Circa 530 BC)

The deity Apollon, who represented youth, music, prophecy, and the sun, was closely associated with the idea of masculine beauty in Ancient Greece. Apollon was frequently portrayed as being attractive and muscular, embodying the idealized shape of a late teenage male (Dover, 1989). The majority of kouros statues in the Archaic era were dedicated to Apollon because of his eternal youth and the beauty standards he embodied, serving as a personification of the Greek masculine citizen youth. Apollon was regarded by many as the most attractive ephebe, or young man between the ages of 18 and 25, in reality. During the Classical Period, when beauty was frequently regarded in homoerotic terms with an emphasis on male eroticism, the idealized form of Apollon became the standard for all aesthetic excellence in Athenian society.



Figure 15 Apollo Belvedere (Leochares)

A key feature of Apollon's look and a reflection of his values as an ephebe was his long hair (Fig. 14). He was in reality frequently referred to as "He of the Uncut/Unbound Hair" or "akersekomes" in Greek, a term borrowed from Homer (Graf, 2009) Examples of Apollon's depiction in art include sculptures from various eras such as the one from the western pediment of the Temple of Zeus in Olympia that dates to around 460 BC and the 2nd-century Roman copy of a 330-320 BC original bronze statue known as the Belvedere Apollon. The Apollon statues, in my view, perfectly capture the idealized beauty of Greek youth.

Archaeologists and art historians refer to the 450–400 BCE era of Ancient Greek history, which is known for its high caliber artistic output, as the "High Classical" period. Greek sculptures of the time placed a strong emphasis on human anatomy in great detail, body proportions, smooth skin, and typical facial features in order to depict the human body as a single, idealized perfection. The canon, a collection of guidelines for idealizing human figures that included the use of ratios between various lengths of body parts, was created by the sculptor and theorist Polykleitos. Many works, including the *Doryphoros* (Spear Carrier) of Polykleitos, used the contrapposto method, which evenly distributes the body's (M. C. Stokstad, Michael W., 2014). This sculpture is a great example of the Greek admiration for the male nude body because it shows an idealized masculine figure as an ephebe. The male form was revered as almost divine because it was thought to symbolize perfection attained through physical development and conflict, which was frequently portrayed through nudity.

Ancient Greek sculptures known as the Riace "A" and "B" Warriors (Fig. 15) were found in the water close to Riace, Italy, in 1972. Both of these full-body, large-scale representations of masculine figures were made in the Early Classical era using the lost-wax casting method (circa 460–420 BCE). With a height of over six feet and a weight of over 400 pounds, the Riace "A" Warrior is a little bigger than its counterpart. It shows a strong, bearded person with his arms out in front of him, sporting a helmet. Except for the cape slung over the left shoulder, the figure is nude. The Riace "B" Warrior is slightly over six feet tall and about 300 pounds in weight. It features a similarly chiseled, bearded figure holding its arms out in front of its torso while donning a helmet. A bronze leaf is slung over the left shoulder of this nude figure. The intricate and detailed musculature of the Riace Warriors is distinctive, and it is painstakingly crafted in bronze to convey a feeling of dynamic energy and

movement. They are a significant example of ancient Greek bronze sculpture, displaying the heroic values and idealized masculinity of Greek society.



Figure 16 Riace Bronzes, Statue A, Statue B

The Hellenistic Period began with the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC and ended with the death of Cleopatra VII, the last Ptolemaic monarch of Egypt, in 30 BC. During this time, the city of Pergamon became an important artistic center, notably for sculpture, and a number of Pergamene artists emerged. As opposed to adhering to generalized artistic ideals as in the Classical periods, the Hellenistic period emphasized more individualized and specific works, employing innovative techniques, styles, and materials (M. Stokstad, 2014). In contrast to the controlled expression of emotions during the Classical period, Hellenistic art became characterized by the use of extreme emotions, such as pain, anger, and terror. The frieze depicting Athena's assault on the giants on the Pergamon Altar exemplifies this transition with its dramatic and intricate interaction of space and form, contrasting

light and shadow in a diagonal three-dimensional space. This contrasts with the Parthenon friezes of the High Classical period, which exhibited a more balanced and controlled equilibrium (M. Stokstad, 2014).

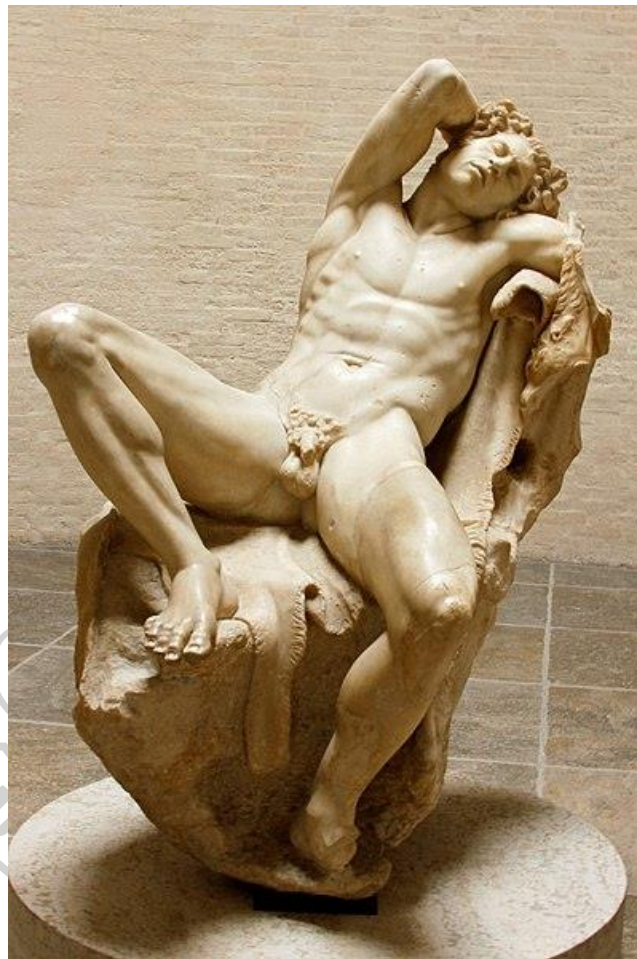


Figure 17 Barberini Faun, Unknown Circa 220 BC (Ribeiro, 2017)

Figure 16 depicts the Barberini Faun or Sleeping Satyr, a remarkable representation of the Hellenistic Period's defining characteristics. This sculpture, a copy of a Hellenistic original from approximately 200 B.C., depicts a satyr with more human characteristics than earlier depictions of satyrs (M. Stokstad, 2014). The statue's naturalistic depiction of exhaustion and tension highlights the Hellenistic Period's emphasis on the emotional state as an essential aspect of beauty

representation. In contrast to idealized masculine beauty, the Hellenistic Period emphasized emotional depth as a significant aspect of beauty (Boardman, 2016) The author considers this illustration to be a visual representation of the Hellenistic Period's emphasis on depicting emotional depth as a key aspect of beauty, as opposed to relying solely on idealized masculine bodies. Traditionally, satyrs were regarded as the antithesis of beauty and civilization; however, this sculpture depicts their lack of civilization through emotional characteristics such as drunkenness and wildness, rather than through distorted or unattractive physical features.

Part 6 : Gay Attractiveness

“This is where we are — men in the forefront of cultural scrutiny . Men's bodies are carefully examined from head to toe . What's at stake ? Men's self - esteem , self - worth , and their acceptance or rejection as suitable partners .” - (Dotson, 1999)

The standards for masculine beauty have changed significantly over the course of history. For example, in ancient Greece, an athletic, well-developed body was the epitome of the ideal masculine shape, whereas during the Renaissance, corpulence was thought to be attractive. Modern society now views a more slender and defined shape as the perfect masculine figure.

(Adams, 1975) highlights that societal and social norms play a critical role in shaping perceptions of male attractiveness, emphasizing how these influences can significantly affect interpretations and standards of beauty. For instance, in the 1970s and 1980s, the hyper-masculine "macho man" archetype was viewed as the pinnacle

of male attractiveness, whereas in modern times, this pattern has developed towards a more gender-neutral appearance.

The criteria for beauty within the homosexual community have also changed over time. In the 1990s, homosexual men placed a high value on muscle mass, but the desire for a leaner, more toned body emerged in the following decade, according to research (Swami, 2012). Additionally, homosexual men have been sporting well-groomed facial hair like mustaches or sideburns more and more recently.

6.1 The Modern Gay Standards of Beauty

Gay subcultures are known to subject particular demands to adhere to particular standards of physical beauty (Clarke, 2012). The word "body fascism" was first used by (Whitesel, 2013) to characterize the dominant homosexual male subcultures, in which youthful, White, urban gay men idealize lean, muscular mesomorphic bodies and denigrate larger bodies. Through interpersonal encounters and business marketing, this mindset is strengthened. Higher self-esteem as well as more body image issues among gay men have been related to higher homosexual community involvement (Signorile, 1997) Only those who report medium to high societal integration show a substantial correlation between self-esteem and body image dissatisfaction.

6.2 Gay Gym Culture

Gay gym culture refers to the ways in which gay men use and experience fitness and bodybuilding culture. In many ways, gay gym culture is influenced by many of the same factors that shape mainstream fitness and bodybuilding culture,

such as the emphasis on achieving a certain body shape and physical appearance, the use of performance-enhancing drugs, and the role of competition and performance. However, gay gym culture also has its own unique features and characteristics, such as the ways in which gay men use fitness and bodybuilding to express their sexuality and identity, the role of community and support in gay gym culture, and the ways in which gay men negotiate the intersections of fitness, body image, and self-esteem.

One of the key themes in gay gym culture is the ways in which gay men use fitness and bodybuilding to express their sexuality and identity. Many gay men use fitness and bodybuilding as a way to assert their masculinity and to signal their sexual attractiveness to other men. In this way, gay gym culture can be seen as a way for gay men to assert their sexual identity and to challenge traditional notions of masculinity.

Alvarez, 2008 explains in his book, *Muscle Boys : Gay Gym Culture* that the muscular, attractive masculine body that is frequently referred to as "the body beautiful" is the most obvious result of homosexual gym culture. Common questions about homosexual men's obsession with their bodies and the origins of this focus on the attractiveness of the body are frequently raised in conversations about gym culture, whether in praise or criticism.

However, because the causes are numerous, there is no easy or clear solution. Depending on the individual, age group, and subcategory, there are significant differences in how the body is perceived and what it means. The presumption that there is a singular reaction that pertains to all members of the homosexual

community and factions is unfortunately the only erroneous response to the question, as well as the one that is most frequently given.

Despite the variations between groups, they are all connected by a common feature called “the body”. A common theme throughout history is that the homoerotic body is especially important to homosexuality. This comparison is important because it captures the essence of homosexual identity.

6.3 Media Representations of Gay Men

With the advancement of digital media the portrayal of body ideals can be easily accessed. Gay men in various regions worldwide have begun to identify themselves as modern-day Apollonian men, including those residing in urban, suburban, and rural areas. This ideal of a muscular, fit body, often associated with gay communities in Chelsea, the Castro, and West Hollywood, has spread globally through the Internet over the last ten years. Initially, the ideal was presented through advertising, erotica, and pornography. However, the internet has now become a hub for gay men to create online communities dedicated to promoting and cultivating gym-built bodies. These websites serve as platforms for chatting, exchanging information, admiring one another's bodies, motivating each other, and, most importantly, eventually meeting in person. (Alvarez, 2008)

The portrayal of gay men in media has been a subject of scholarly inquiry, with researchers investigating the extent and nature of their representation. Gay men are underrepresented in the media, and when they are (Lauzen, 2008) claim that they are frequently portrayed in stereotypical ways. Similarly, (Ward, 2017) found that the portrayal of gay men in media is often negative, stereotypical, and damaging.

Nonetheless, some research has suggested that the representation of gay men in media has improved over time (Smith, 2017).

Furthermore, research indicates that the portrayal of gay men in media has an impact on the audience's attitudes towards homosexuality. (Madžarević, 2018) demonstrated that exposure to positive representations of gay men in media can lead to more positive attitudes towards homosexuality.

Recent studies have shown that there is a rise in positive and diverse representations of gay men in media, as seen in the increasing popularity of Boys Love (BL) dramas in Asia (Madžarević, 2018), BL dramas depict romantic relationships between two male characters and offer empathetic and affirmative portrayals of gay relationships.

6.4 Media Representations of Gay Beauty in Thailand

Due to the societal shame and taboo regarding homosexuality in Thai society, traditional Thai art frequently uses mythical characters such as angels or demons to portray male-male relationships rather than representing gay men in real life. Traditional Thai writing frequently depicts male-male relationships as spiritual and platonic ties, reflecting the societal idea that romantic love should only exist between men and women. However, while some modern Thai art depicts gay men in sexually (Lauzen, 2008)provocative and graphic postures in an effort to defy social mores and advance acceptance of homosexuality, doing so risks reinforcing harmful stereotypes and objectifying gay people as sexual objects.

6.5 The Modern Gay Standards of Beauty

Gay culture has had a profound influence not only on pornography but also on the fashion and commercial advertising industries. In the 1980s, the ideal of the

muscular boy, which was popularized in gay media and physique magazines, began to emerge from the gay ghetto and penetrate mainstream culture. Prior to the 1980s, images of naked bodies in mainstream media were primarily limited to those of women. However, this started to change as images of muscular men became increasingly common in mainstream media by the end of the decade (fig. 17) Gay men played a crucial role in standardizing images of beefcake in mainstream media and on a mass scale.

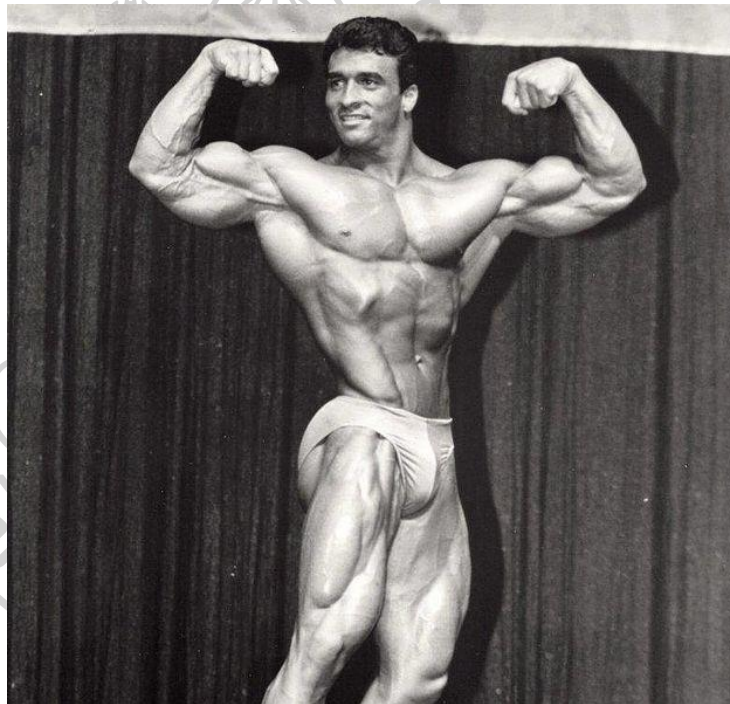


Figure 18 Mark Puglise photo of Rick Valente

The most pivotal moment in fashion and advertising when the semi-nude muscular boy became the norm began with the Calvin Klein underwear campaign launched in 1981. This campaign featured an oversized billboard in Times Square, which showcased a picture of a muscular boy wearing nothing but Calvin's white briefs (fig.18) The campaign was the result of the collaboration between photographer Bruce Weber and stylist Sam Shahid.



Figure 19 Tom Hintnaus Calvin Klein Times Square, 1982

Weber noted that sexuality is often mistaken for character and that sex is an action rather than a defining characteristic. Weber also revealed that he has had romantic relationships with both men and women. In contrast, Shahid is openly gay. The pair not only staged the most successful underwear campaign ever, but they also standardized the homoerotic male nude in mainstream media. After Calvin Klein, Weber and Shahid continued to work together, creating equally striking and

controversial moments in advertising. The most significant of these was the racy Abercrombie & Fitch (A&F) catalog.

With the A&F catalog, Weber and Shahid pushed the envelope even further than with Calvin Klein, filling it with sexually charged images, both hetero- and homosexual. Many of the catalog's photographs featured models with their underwear playfully pulled down, revealing their pubic area or buttocks. In several others, the underwear was off completely. The catalog also featured erotic depictions of young men playing sports, hanging out in the locker room, or showering together. Although these scenarios were only suggestive of homoeroticism, some of the magazines also depicted same-sex couples in romantic embraces. The catalog appeared more like an artsy magazine than a clothes catalog, with beautiful models verging on soft porn. It quickly became a coffee-table staple for urban gay men.

The sexuality of A&F was as risqué as American commercial advertising had ever seen. It was also as successful as it wanted to be. The catalog and its images were an overwhelming success, and A&F, which had been a tired and dying brand for some time, became the hottest-selling brand among young Americans almost overnight. However, the catalog immediately drew criticism from conservative groups, who labeled it gay, pornographic, and obscene, similar to the physique magazines. The catalog was so controversial that A&F started requiring subscribers to be over 18 years of age. Nonetheless, its content remained suggestive, graphic, and sexually provocative.

Part 7 Photographing the Body

"The nude is not the subject of art, but a form of art" Kenneth Clark

The nudity gained prominence in the field of art education after a 2,000-year absence brought on by the spread of Christianity (Saunders, 1990). Through Michelangelo's David, the Italian Renaissance rediscovers ancient Greece and elevates the naked. "Male nudity has been the foundation of art instruction from the fourteenth century almost to the present-day," writes (Saunders, 1990). Winckelmann and others emphasized the significance of ideal beauty, and the Neo-Classacists supported this resurgence (Saunders, 1990). The Romantics kept the nude as means of conveying desired sensory and emotional extremes as well as for its educational value, despite their opposition to the Neo-Classacists' rationalism (Saunders, 1990). Together with Eugene Durieu, the passionate painter Eugene Delacroix staged a series of naked photographs using emerging photographic technology. Delacroix used these photographs as anatomical studies (Fig.19). (Durieu, 1854) The naked has given legitimacy to possibly "prurient" representations of the body as instruction for pupils and artists (Saunders, 1990).

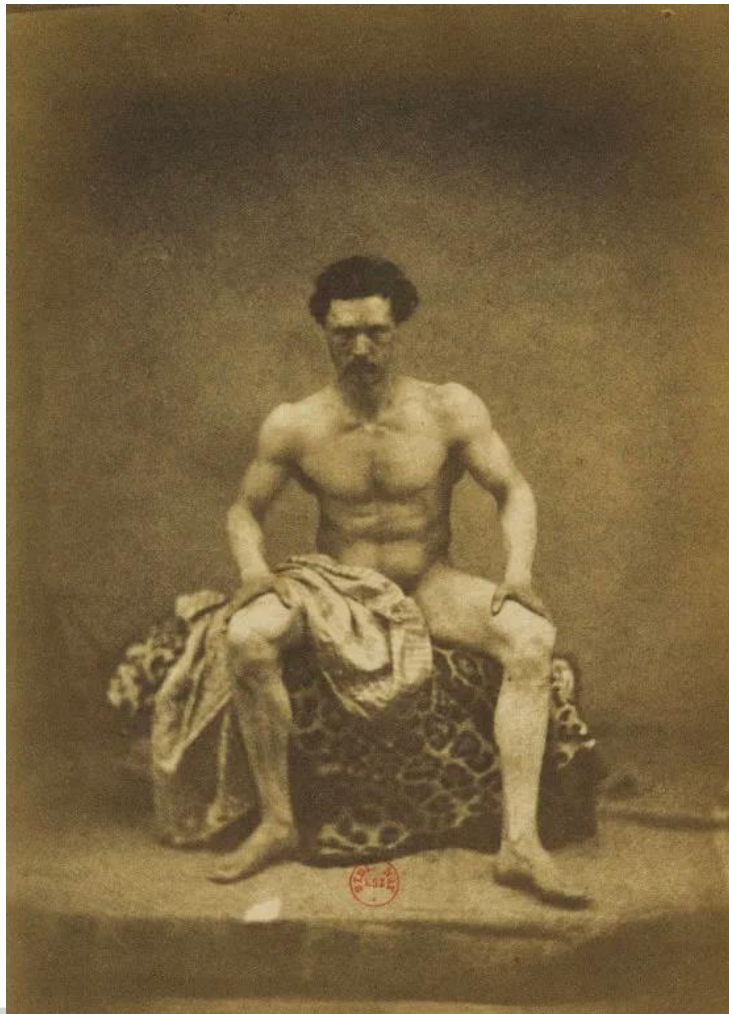


Figure 20 Nu masculin assis de face, les jambes écartées

7.1 Theories and Lighting that affect photographic visualizations of the body

The usage of lighting has a significant impact on the atmosphere, tone, and meaning of body photography representations. The use of different lighting techniques may result in a variety of effects, from dramatic and moody to bright and happy. High-key lighting may provide a feeling of openness and clarity, while low-key lighting can create a sense of mystery and drama because to its sharp contrast and deep shadows (Hunter, 2015)

The majority of the research on lighting in photographic body renderings has been done on female bodies, however there is evidence that lighting also has an impact on how males see their bodies. For instance, (Clemons, 2018) study discovered that muscular males under low-key lighting received greater evaluations for beauty and desirability than those in high-key lighting.

The sense of muscular definition in male bodies is similarly influenced by lighting (Fig.20). Back lighting may provide a halo effect that draws attention to the body's silhouette, while side lighting can produce shadows that draw attention to the body's muscular contours.



Figure 21 Muscular definition in male bodies is similarly influenced by lighting. (Isom, 2015)

The use of a singular overhead light source results in the most notable muscular definition in photographs. The sort of illumination used, in addition to the location of the light source, affects the outcome (Stamenković, 2021). Cool-toned illumination, like blue or purple, results in the most noticeable muscular definition in photographs. The warm tones of the flesh are contrasted by cool illumination, highlighting the musculature and giving the appearance of greater definition.

7.2 Flash Lighting

In the context of studio-based portraiture, a wide array of lighting equipment can be utilized to achieve diverse visual effects. These lighting equipment can be broadly classified into two categories: continuous lighting and flash lighting. As the name implies, continuous lighting provides an uninterrupted stream of light, whereas flash lighting produces a short-lived burst of light.

One of the most commonly employed types of continuous lighting equipment in studio portraiture are soft boxes (Fig.21). These instruments offer a diffused and soft light that aids in reducing the intensity of harsh shadows on the subject's visage. As per the scholarly findings of (Hough, 2013) are deemed particularly suitable for producing an aesthetically pleasing portrait with evenly dispersed illumination.

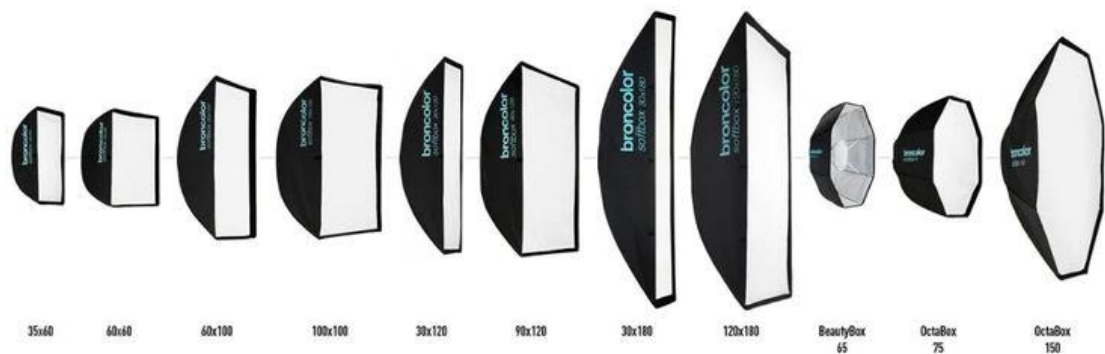


Figure 22 Different Types of Soft Boxes

Using strobes and speedlights to create a more pronounced and theatrical impact is a common technique. Speedlights, which are more transportable and small, are frequently chosen for outdoor shoots while strobes, in particular, represent a powerful way to provide extensive covering of the lighting.

The use of flash illumination tools in headshot photography helps to produce images that are both aesthetically appealing and dynamic.

(Arena, 2012), writes that the use of strobe lighting is a crucial component in the field of portrait photography, helping to produce eye-catching results that highlight the subject's features and convey the intended atmosphere of the picture utilizing strobe lighting allows photographers to control the quantity and direction of illumination, resulting in a higher-quality product with fewer shadows and evenly dispersed lighting.

Additionally, the use of strobe illumination makes it easier to take motion-freezing pictures, which is an essential component of taking portraits that guarantees the deliverance of clear and crisp representations of the subject (Arena, 2012).

Strobe lighting's (Fig.23) ability to mimic natural light, a crucial necessity in portrait photography, is another notable feature. Photographers can create a wide range of lighting effects by changing the strobe's strength and length, from gentle, diffused illumination to harsh, dramatic contrast that is in line with the intended result of the picture.



Figure 23 Strobe Lighting Equipment

The beauty dish is a frequently used photography technique that portrait photographers use to give their subjects a unique aspect in their pictures. This flexible lighting modifier has the ability to provide a soft, complementary light that highlights the subject's features while also adding a certain amount of intensity to the final image.

The beauty dish is a light modulator that was first created in the 1960s. It has a tiny, round hole in the middle and a shallow dish with a reflective inner surface that reflects light. A diffused, soothing light is produced as light reflects inside the dish and then exits through the hole, making it especially suitable for portrait photography.

The catchlight look that a beauty dish produces in the subject's eyes is one of the main advantages of using one. The dish's round aperture creates a distinctive, round catchlight that gives the finished picture a feeling of refinement and beauty.

The beauty dish is a flexible lighting tool that may be used in a number of applications. (Vanon, 2016) points out that the separation between the beauty dish and the subject may influence the light's characteristics and intensity, with smaller separations resulting in softer, more diffused light and larger separations resulting in a more concentrated and dramatic appearance. (Fig.23)

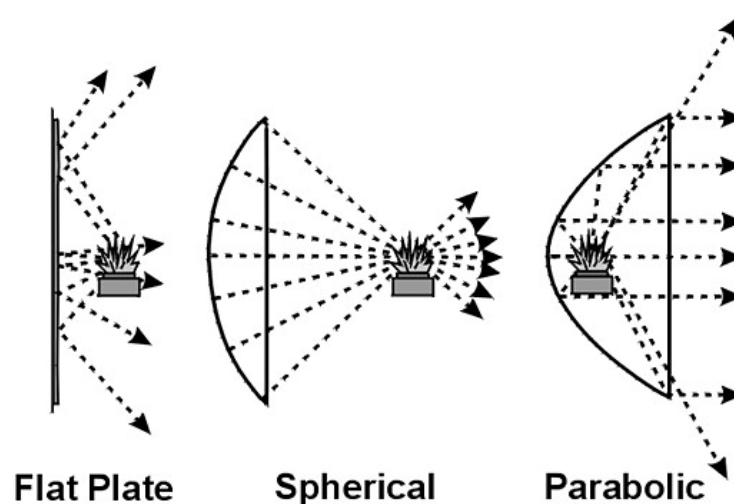


Figure 24 Light Traveling (Vanon, 2016)

7.3 Chiaroscuro lighting

A photographic method known as chiaroscuro accentuates the contrast between light and darkness. In order to add intensity or moodiness to the picture, it is a crucial instrument in portrait photography. The name "chiaroscuro," which is derived from the Italian words "chiaro" (light) and "scuro" (dark), describes a method for giving photographs a convincing feeling of depth and three-dimensionality. In order to produce deep shadows and brilliant highlights, photographers frequently use powerful directional lighting, which gives the picture a feeling of depth (Fig.24). Photographers frequently use a single light source that is positioned at a 45-degree angle to the subject and shines down onto the subject's face to achieve the ideal chiaroscuro illumination. This can be accomplished using ambient light, studio lighting, or flash lighting. When illuminating a subject in a studio, a strobe light can be put to the subject's side, and a reflector can be placed on the subject's other side to eliminate reflections. With flash lighting, a flash unit can be positioned off-camera and released wirelessly to produce a directional light source. Photographers can produce stunning chiaroscuro photos that vividly depict the subject's features and feelings by choosing the right lighting and camera settings.



Figure 25 Male Model With Chiaroscuro Lighting (Pexels, 2024)

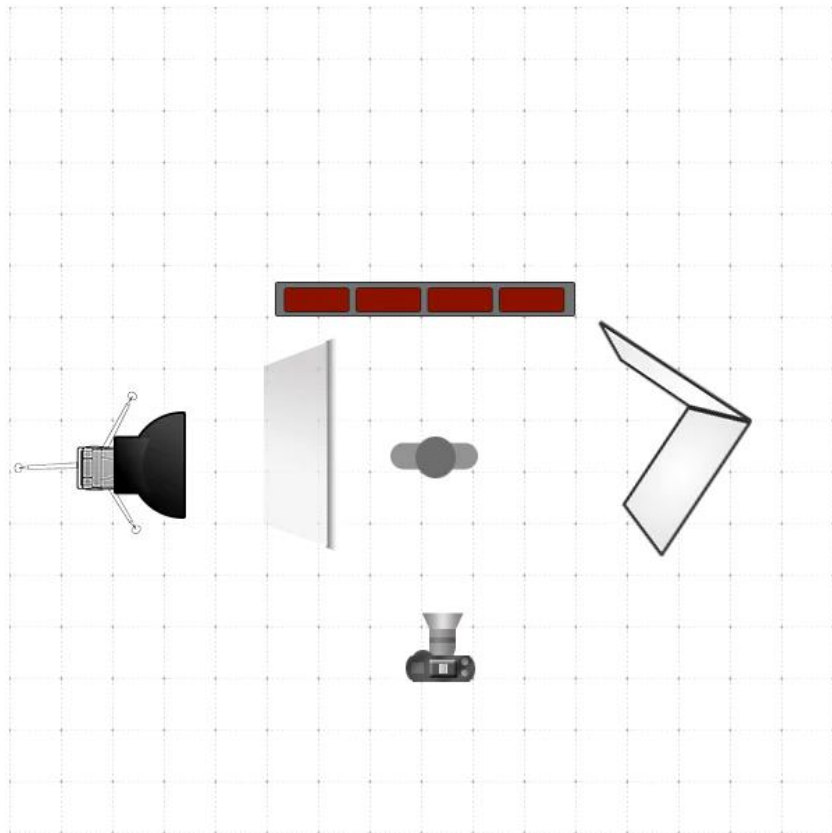


Figure 26 Chiaroscuro Lighting Set Up (EDU)

7.4 Split Lighting

Split lighting is a method that can be used to make muscles look toned. The technique entails setting up the light source perpendicular to the subject to create a play of light and shade that highlights the musculature and draws attention to the contours of the body (Creasey, 2009). The light source is positioned 90 degrees away from the subject, typically to the right, to produce split illumination. The subject's face or torso is then illuminated, resulting in a striking contrast between the bright and dark regions of the subject. This method works especially well for highlighting texture and accentuating the subject's form. A modifier, such as a grid or snoot, can be used to focus the light and enhance the contrast between the illuminated and shadowed regions in order to produce a more dramatic divided lighting effect.

Split lighting is a photography technique employed in advertising to create an arresting effect that captures the viewer's attention, as stated by (Do, 2018). This technique involves lighting only one side of the subject's face or body, thereby producing a sense of curiosity and fascination, which is effective in advertising campaigns aimed at generating interest or creating a buzz. According to (Schielke, 2015) the use of split lighting in advertising can create a three-dimensional appearance by emphasizing the contrast between the light and shadow areas of the subject's face or body, making it appear more lifelike and engaging. Additionally, (Schielke, 2015) points out that the mood and atmosphere of an advertisement can be enhanced by using split lighting to create a dramatic or tense effect, which can evoke strong emotions in the viewer. Nevertheless, (Hill, 2010) cautions that split lighting may not be suitable for all types of advertising, as it can have a negative or

unsettling effect on the viewer, which can be counterproductive for some products or services.

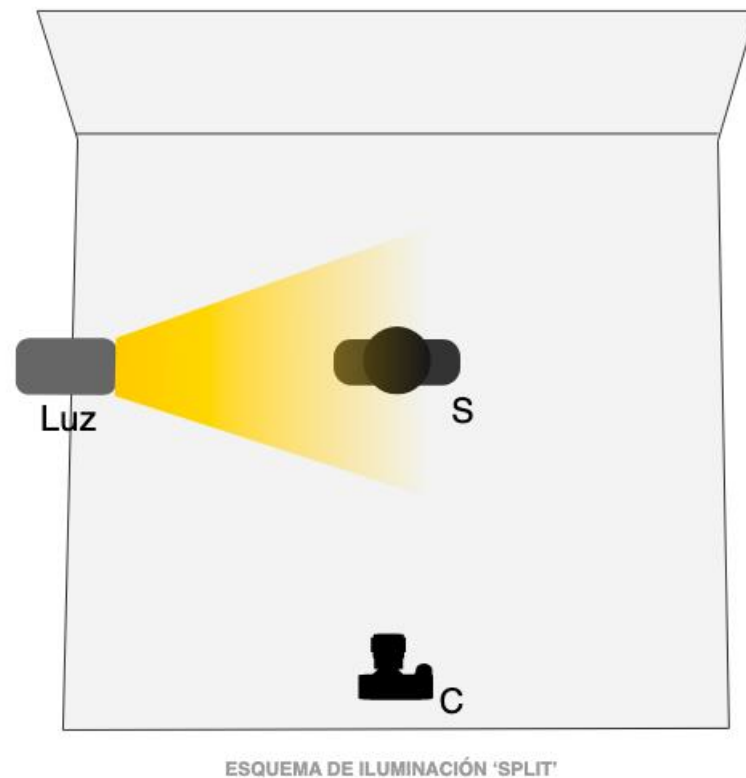


Figure 27 Split Lighting Set Up (Commons, 2024)

7.5 Rembrandt lighting

Rembrandt lighting creates a theatrical effect by illuminating only one half of the face while keeping the other half in the shadows. This technique was named after the Dutch painter Rembrandt. This method is particularly useful for drawing attention to the masculine qualities that are present in males. According to (Hunter, 2021), Rembrandt lighting emphasizes a masculine subject's powerful jawline and

well-defined features by producing depth and contrast in the subject's face. This draws attention to the subject's features.

When photographing men, the primary light source is generally angled at a 45-degree angle to the subject's face and placed slightly above eye level in order to produce the Rembrandt lighting effect. This positioning allows the light to fall onto one side of the face, producing a triangular piece of light on the cheek that is opposing the side that the light is falling on. This results in a silhouette being cast on the opposite side of the face, which gives the impression that the face has been reshaped.

7.6 Homoerotic -Photography

Similar to the development of the printing press in 1450, the advent of photography in the middle of the nineteenth century marked a major turning point in communication. Soon after its creation, male-dominated photos of the naked human body began to appear (Fig. 27) Bodybuilding had gained popularity in Europe and America by the end of the 19th century, which led to the development of a modest but rapidly growing market for photos of male bodybuilders in semi-naked and nude (Fig 28).

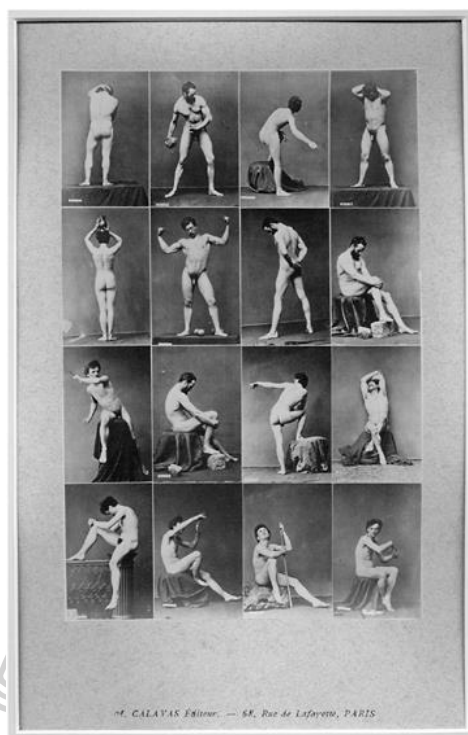


Figure 28 Albumen Print of Photographic Figure Studies by (Calavas, 1865)

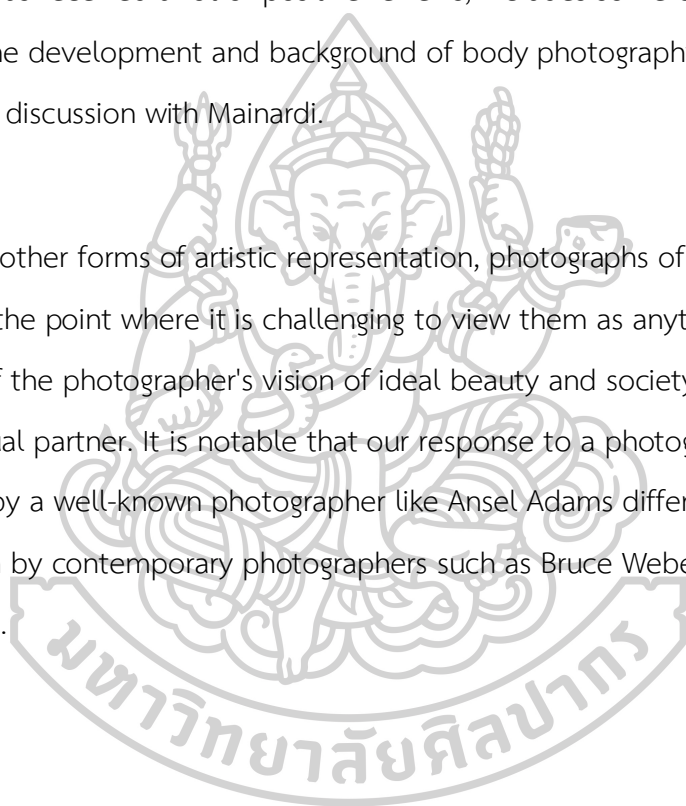


Figure 29 Photograph of George Hackenschmidt, Wrestler and Bodybuilder (c. 1900)
(Unidentified, 1900)

A. Calavas, (Fig. 27), French albumen print page of photographic figure studies from a folio (1865). Courtesy of The Magazine Archives, San Francisco. / George (Fig. 28), Hackenschmidt, famous wrestler and bodybuilder; photographer unidentified (1900)

One of the most amazing groups of Victorian strongmen and muscle photos belongs to Robert Mainardi. *Strong Men: Vintage Photographs of a Male Legend*, the book he wrote that has received a lot of positive reviews, includes some of his collection. He discussed the development and background of body photography at the turn of the century in a discussion with Mainardi.

Like other forms of artistic representation, photographs of nude men have evolved to the point where it is challenging to view them as anything other than a reflection of the photographer's vision of ideal beauty and society's perception of the perfect sexual partner. It is notable that our response to a photograph of a naked man taken by a well-known photographer like Ansel Adams differs from that of a photo taken by contemporary photographers such as Bruce Weber, Herb Ritts, or Tom Bianchi.



Tom Bianchi



Figure 30 On The Couch - Tom Bianchi

Tom Bianchi is a celebrated photographer who has devoted his career to the portrayal of male beauty and sensuality in various natural settings. His images frequently depict naked or partly naked men, displaying the human figure in an alluring and sensuous manner. Several volumes by Bianchi, including "On the Couch" (Fig. 29) and "Fire Island Pines: Polaroids 1975-1983," have been published and showcase his photography works. His accomplishments to the art world have been honored by numerous exhibitions of his works in galleries and museums around the globe, with his photographs being kept in prestigious institutions like the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Robert Mapplethorpe

Numerous controversies have been sparked by Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs, prompting arrests of museum directors and intensified calls for reductions in Federal arts programs (Yingling, 1990). Cultural critics who argue for a forceful response to "the poisoners of culture, the polluters of art" have also expressed their anger at his works. However, were public officials to have their way, Mapplethorpe's photographs would never have been seen, as he challenges the conventional idea of what is and isn't art (Yingling, 1990). In many of his photographs, Mapplethorpe chooses to exclude the models' heads and instead focus on various body parts. For instance, the photograph *Charles*, 1985 (Fig.30) is indicative of this style. The photo shows a white, chiseled model's torso standing as a bodybuilder with his arms elevated and cropped to show his entire breast. Charles stays an object to be observed and interpreted by the viewer because, noticeably, his visage is not visible



Figure 31 Charles (1985), Mapplethorpe

Similar to this, the models in other Mapplethorpe images of complete bodies typically divert their look or shut their eyes to prevent direct eye contact with the camera and audience. (Asen, 2009).

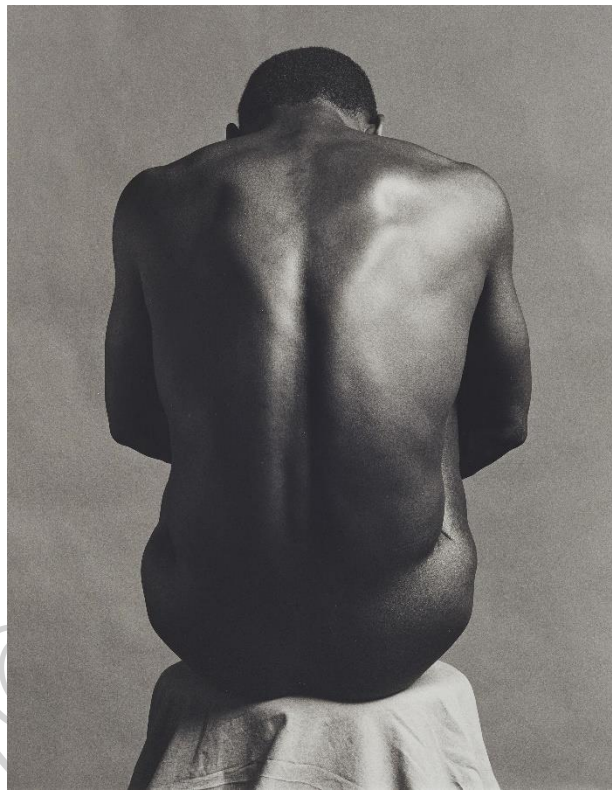


Figure 32 Ajitto (1981), Mapplethorpe

Ajitto, 1981, which consists of four images, shown 1 here in (Fig.31) of a slim black model being caught in various positions atop a pedestal, is an example of Mapplethorpe's uninspiring approach. Ajitto covers his face in part in all four pictures, tucking his head between his legs. Ajitto, like Charles, doesn't hold the audience's attention.

Models by Mapplethorpe are formal examples of beauty that can be appreciated on an artistic level. For instance, Charles' midsection appears sculpted

with shiny, smooth skin, standing out sharply against the dark backdrop. Charles' torso, stomach, and midsection are given a luminous aspect by Mapplethorpe's use of chiaroscuro lighting, which catches the viewer's eye right away. Charles has skin that resembles stone and exudes both power and frailty. The artwork highlights Charles' muscularity with its precision and crisp, clear lines. In addition to Mapplethorpe's nudes, there are other elements that catch the viewer's attention. One of the notable features of Charles' body is his body hair, which is seen as an "imperfection" that contributes to the eroticism of Mapplethorpe's male nudes. Ancient Greek sculptors believed in achieving the "innocence of the body" by removing all body hair to create smooth lines.

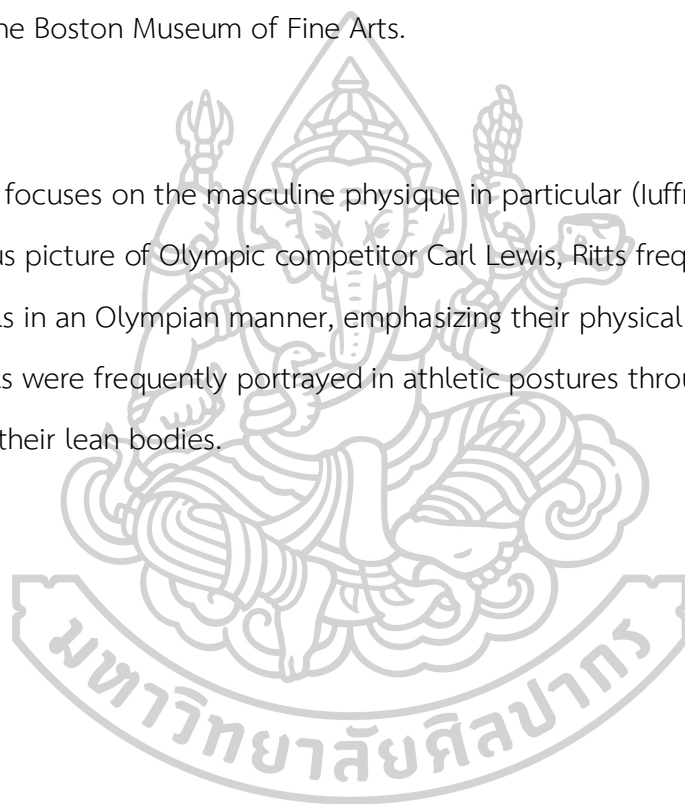
In contrast, Charles' body hair disrupts the appreciation of his beauty but generates sensuous associations. His underarm hair and "five o'clock shadow" contribute to the erotic appeal of his body, which is already dominant in the photograph due to his clear muscle definition and crisp torso lines. While Ajitto's body conveys subtlety and softness, Charles' body suggests contrast and firmness, with his body hair leading down towards his absent genitals, further heightening the body's erotic appeal.

Herb Ritts

Ritts started his work as a photographer in 1978 by taking pictures of actors Ricky Schroeder and Jon Voight. Throughout the late 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, he continued to work in Los Angeles as a famous portraitist. His photography has appeared in a number of publications, including Interview, Harper's Bazaar, Vogue, and Elle. Ritts' first gallery show of photos took place in 1985.

Ritts released four novels in six years, the first of which was *Men/Women* (1989). This volume combined aspects of fine art and commercial photos, incorporating the human form in a manner that was both sensual and graphically charged. The nudity of the gay partners in the second novel, *Duo* (1991), added to the project's sexualization and humanization. This piece was inspired by studio and indigenous portraiture. In his third book, *Notorious*, published in 1992, Ritts discussed his achievement as a famous portrait artist. His first significant public show took place in 1986 at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Ritts focuses on the masculine physique in particular (Iuffrida, 2021). As seen in his famous picture of Olympic competitor Carl Lewis, Ritts frequently depicted male models in an Olympian manner, emphasizing their physical strength and agility. Male models were frequently portrayed in athletic postures throughout his work, highlighting their lean bodies.



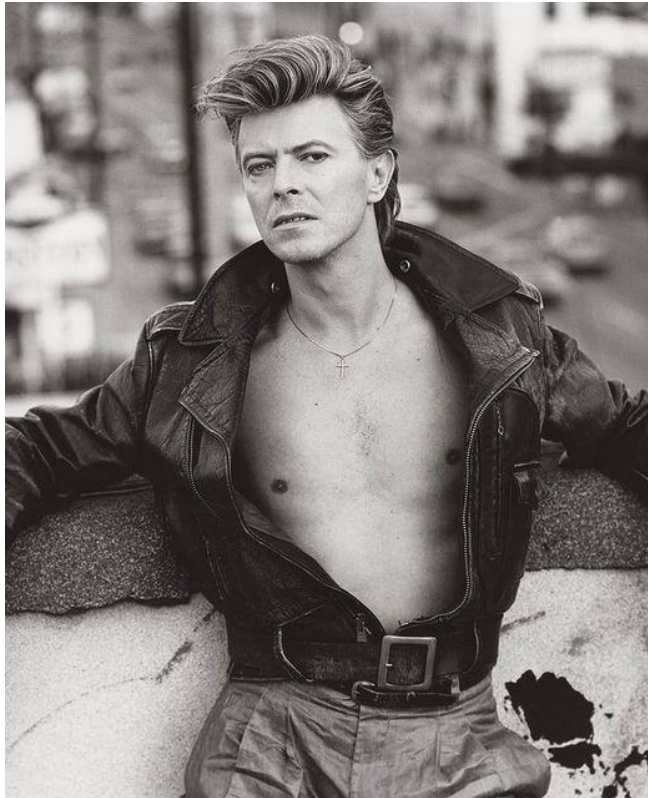


Figure 33 David Bowie (1987) Herb Ritts

In his portraits of masculine superstars like David Bowie (Fig.32) and Elton John, Ritts not only praised conventional ideas of masculinity but also questioned gender expectations. He added a layer of intricacy to his work by dressing them in feminine attire and painting them in exaggerated poses, which contributed to a larger societal discussion about gender and identity.

Pierre et Gilles

The French creative team Pierre et Gilles is well known around the world for their unique photography approach. The depiction of the masculine body shape in Pierre et Gilles' artwork has emerged as one of their most distinctive characteristics. They are known for their use of vivid hues, intricate compositions, and inclusion of

sacred and mythological themes in their works. This essay examines the connections between Pierre et Gilles' artistic approach and their depiction of the masculine figure (Fig.33) .

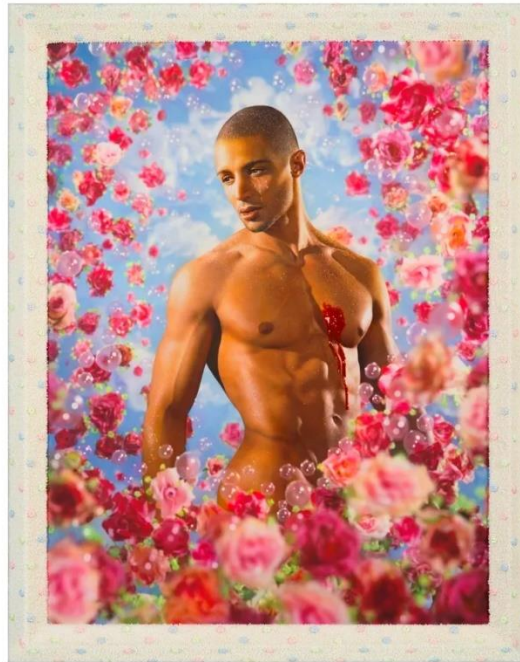


Figure 34 *Le Printemps arabe (modèle Tahar Bouali), (Gilles, 2011)*

(Pousin, 2020) asserts that the images of the masculine figure in Pierre et Gilles' photos are defined by an idealized and stylized depiction that emphasizes a sense of beauty and perfection. The masculine form becomes the main subject of their photos as a result of their use of vivid hues and complex layouts, which enhance its artistic appeal. This strategy is demonstrated in the painting "Le beau ténébreux" (The Handsome Black One), which shows the male subject in a dramatic posture and emphasizes his muscular body with vivid blue and pink hues.

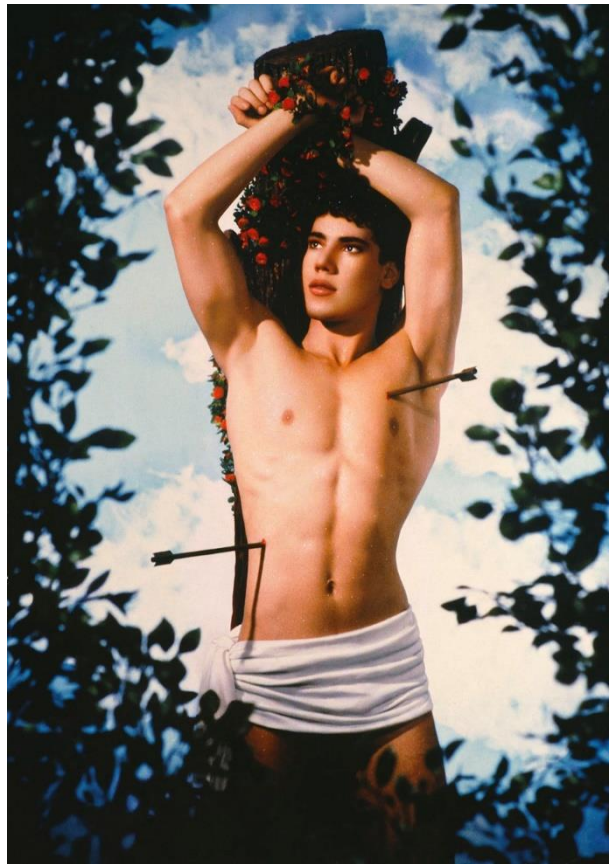


Figure 35 Saint Sébastien (Blanchard), 1987)

The inclusion of religious and mythical motifs by Pierre et Gilles gives their depictions of the masculine bodily form new depth. The photographic representation of "Saint Sébastien" (Fig 34) is a contemporary version of the typical Christian victim representation. The masculine subject in this picture is shown as an athletic, muscular figure with arrow wounds throughout his body. Their depiction of the masculine body is given a feeling of spirituality by the addition of religious imagery in their work, elevating it above the status of a purely physical object.

Incorporating vivid hues, complex compositions, and sacred themes, Pierre et Gilles' photography combines elements of art and photography to produce a fresh take on the depiction of the masculine form in culture. They contest prevailing ideas

of manhood and attractiveness through their stylized and idealized depictions of the masculine figure. Their creations offer a different perspective on the masculine body that is distinguished by beauty and spirituality.

Bruce Weber

Bruce Weber is a well-known photographer whose collection of work centers on depictions of men's bodies. When choosing masculine models, Weber often looks for those who have powerful physiques and strong jawlines. According to (Jestratičević, 2021), Weber's photography celebrates masculine attractiveness in all of its varied manifestations. In addition, Weber's choice of models is reflective of his own personal style, as the designer has previously stated that he is attracted to physically fit and masculine males (Jestratičević, 2021). The sensuality and sexuality of Weber's work has earned him praise from art reviewers, who have also noted that his photographs straddle the line between fashion photography and fine art.





Figure 36 Running at Point Conception, California (Weber, 1987)

The photography of Bruce Weber is well known for its distinct aesthetic and original method of capturing the feelings and experiences of people. However, some reviewers have called attention to some shortcomings and restrictions in his work.

According to one criticism, Weber's photographs frequently idealize his subjects and portray a constrained and overly romanticized perspective on human life, which can obscure the complexities and challenges of day-to-day life.

Another critic contends that Weber's images frequently feature muscular, bare-chested men and conventionally attractive women, reinforcing outdated gender stereotypes and conventional ideas of masculinity and femininity.

Nevertheless, many people have praised Weber's skill for capturing genuine emotions and private moments in his photographs in spite of these criticisms (Harris, 2018). He ha(Weber, 1987)s influenced many other photographers in the field with his "sensual, nostalgic, and deeply human" (Martineau, 2018)

Wilhelm von Gloeden

German photographer Wilhelm von Gloeden gained notoriety for his masculine nudity photographs in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For its time, his work was provocative, which resulted in a number of censorship issues. Despite this, his work continues to be ground-breaking and influential in the field of male photography.

Von Gloeden was influenced by classical Greek and Roman art, which placed a strong emphasis on the beauty and nudity of men. In addition to highlighting nudity, von Gloeden's photographs praised the grace and elegance of the masculine figure. His use of natural settings, such as the beach or the countryside, to photograph his subjects gave his images a more realistic feel.

Male nudes were frequently depicted in natural settings like the ocean or farmland in Wilhelm von Gloeden's photography, which added to the feeling of realism in his work (Goldman, 2006) For instance, in his picture "Two Seated Youths, One with a Hoop," two young men are shown seated on a boulder in a rural scene (Smith, 2005). It is also notable how well von Gloeden uses lighting and design to draw attention to his subjects' finest qualities. For instance, the faun is off-center and lit by a light beam in "Le Grand Faune," (Fig. 36) adding dimension and dramatic suspense (Goldman, 2006).

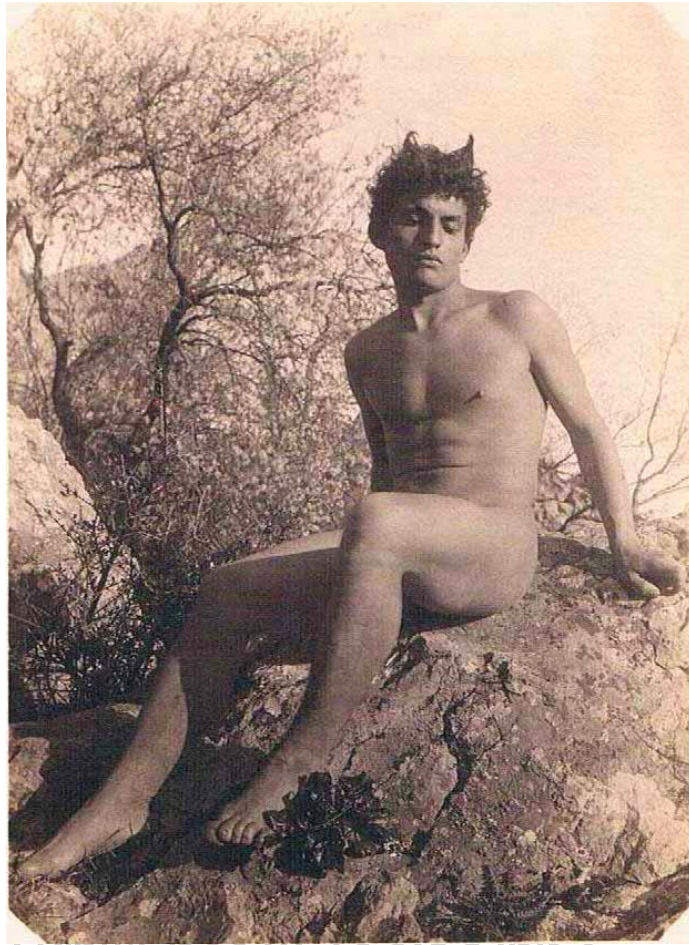


Figure 37 Le Grand Faune (Faune, 1898)

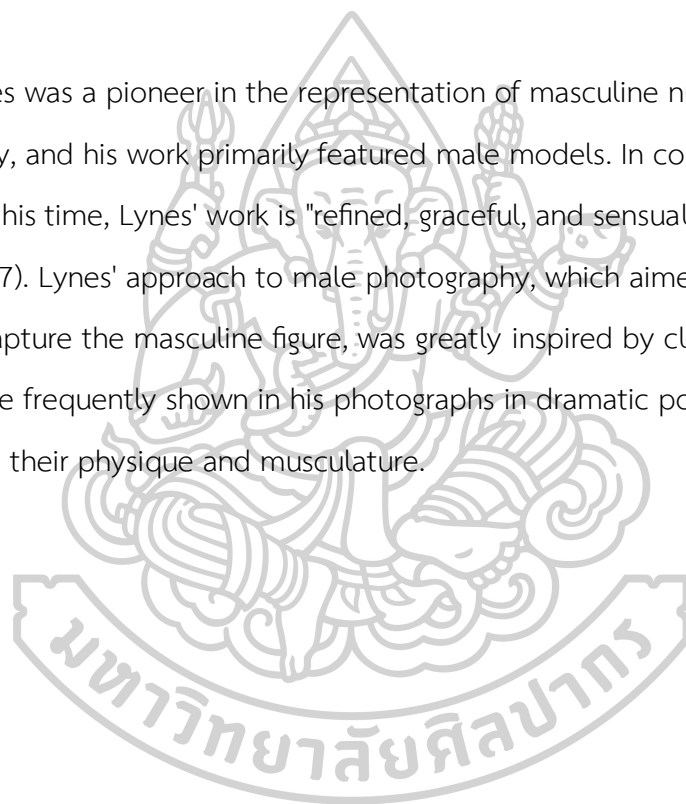
Regarded for his technical skill and attention to detail, von Gloeden's work is highly regarded. To bring out the best in his subjects, he uses creative lighting and composition in his photographs. He frequently added drama to his work by using props and costumes.

Von Gloeden's photography has had a long-lasting impact on the art of masculine photography, despite the fact that his work has generated debate. Photographers working today who continue to explore the male form in fresh ways are still influenced by him.

George Platt Lynes

Famous American fashion and advertising photographer George Platt Lynes rose to prominence in the early 1900s for his creative work. He is praised for his original aesthetic and method of photography, particularly for his ability to capture the male form.

Lynes was a pioneer in the representation of masculine nudity in photography, and his work primarily featured male models. In contrast to other shooters of his time, Lynes' work is "refined, graceful, and sensual," according to (Brown, 2017). Lynes' approach to male photography, which aimed to artistically and sensually capture the masculine figure, was greatly inspired by classical art. Male models were frequently shown in his photographs in dramatic poses that emphasized their physique and musculature.



One of Lynes' most well-known images, "Three Male Nudes," (Fig.37) depicts three naked male models in a studio environment. The picture has a high artistic value and is praised for its ability to capture the beauty and sensuality of the male.



Figure 38 Three Male Nudes (Lynes, 1940–1949)

George Platt Lynes was a trailblazer in male photography, and his creations still motivate and have an impact on photographers today. He became one of the most influential shooters of the 20th century as a result of his distinctive aesthetic and creative vision.

Part 8 Synthesis of Literature

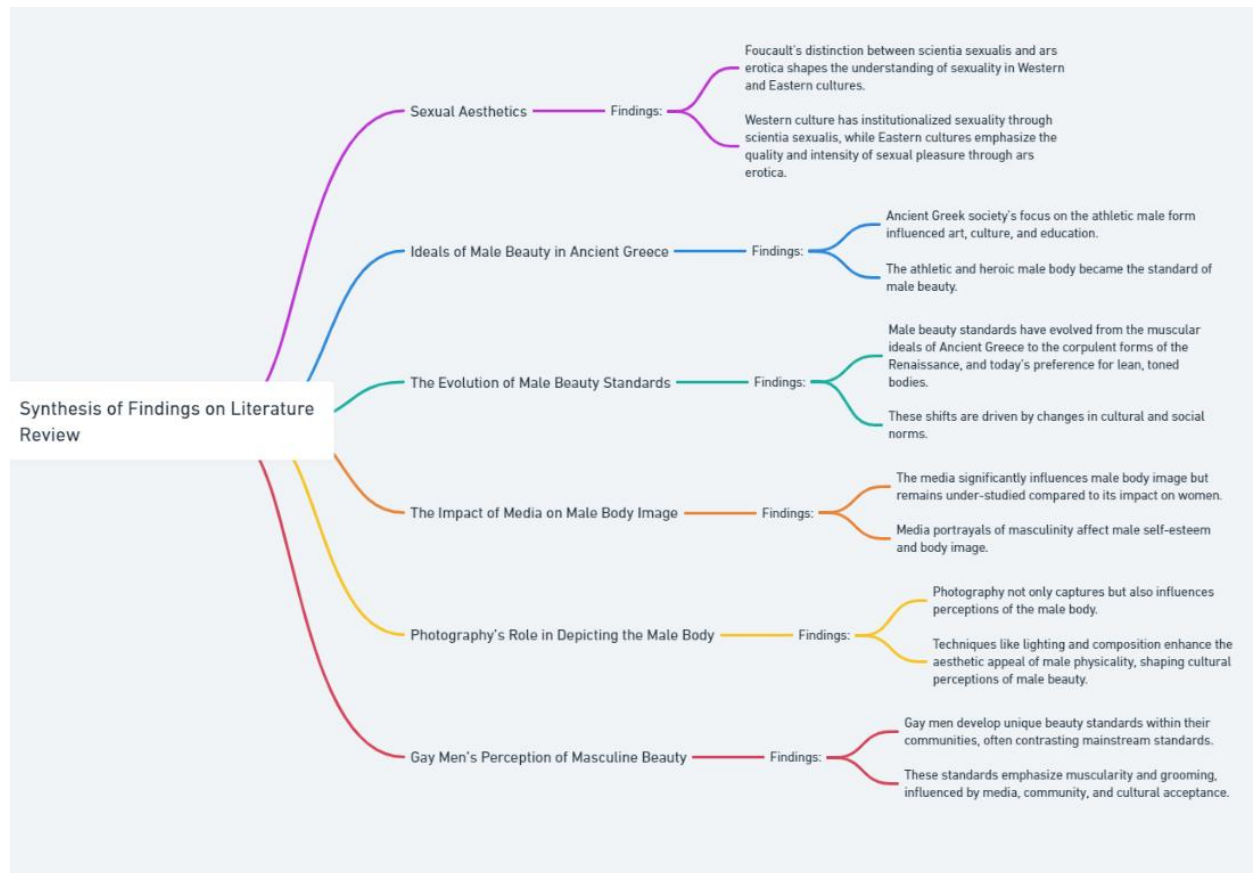


Figure 39 Synthesis of Literature Review

The synthesis (Fig.38) reveals that male beauty and sexuality are shaped by a complex interplay of historical, cultural, and media influences. From ancient ideals of male beauty to modern standards, societal shifts and media portrayals have continuously redefined masculinity and attractiveness. This dynamic is further nuanced within the gay community, where unique standards emerge, highlighting the diversity in the perception of male beauty across different contexts.

8.1 Sexual Aesthetics

The analysis uncovers how Foucault's distinction between *scientia sexualis* and *ars erotica* shapes understandings of sexuality, particularly noting that *scientia sexualis*

has structured sexuality within Western culture through institutional practices, while ars erotica, a concept attributed to Eastern cultures, emphasizes the quality and intensity of sexual pleasure.

8.2 Ideals of Male Beauty in Ancient Greece

The section reveals how Ancient Greek society's focus on the male form influenced art and culture, particularly through the glorification of the athletic body in sculpture and education. This cultural emphasis helped establish an aesthetic standard that idealized male beauty as athletic and heroic.

8.3 The Evolution of Male Beauty Standards

This part of the document shows that male beauty standards have evolved significantly, influenced by varying cultural and social norms over time. From the muscular ideals of Ancient Greece to the corpulent forms valued during the Renaissance, and the leaner, more toned bodies preferred today, societal changes continually reshape what is considered attractive.

8.4 The Impact of Media on Male Body Image

Findings suggest that the media plays a critical role in shaping male body image, yet the specific impacts on men's self-perception remain under-studied compared to women. The media's portrayal of masculinity and associated body ideals has profound effects on male self-esteem and body image.

8.5 Photography's Role in Depicting the Male Body

It has been discovered that photography not only captures but also influences perceptions of the male body. Techniques like lighting and composition significantly enhance the visibility and aesthetic appeal of male physicality, contributing to broader cultural perceptions of male beauty.

8.6 Gay Men's Perception of Masculine Beauty

Research reveals that gay men often develop unique standards of beauty within their communities, sometimes in contrast to mainstream, heteronormative standards. These standards can emphasize muscularity and grooming, and are influenced by a complex interplay of media representation, community interaction, and cultural acceptance.

8.7 Synthesis of Literature

The synthesis consolidates the varied insights from the document, illustrating how historical contexts, cultural shifts, and media representations have collectively shaped the evolving perceptions of male beauty. This comprehensive view underscores the complex dynamics at play in the understanding of masculinity and attractiveness within both the gay community and wider society.

These sections together highlight a deep interconnection between historical influences, cultural norms, and media representations in shaping and reshaping perceptions of male beauty across different eras and societies, with a particular focus on how these perceptions operate within Bangkok's gay community.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY



This section outlines the methodology employed to explore the ideal male body form as perceived through the homo-gaze in contemporary gay culture. The methodology is divided into six key steps, each designed to build upon the previous one, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

The first step focuses on the studio exploration and artistic inspiration, where historical art techniques are integrated with modern photography to examine how lighting and pose influence the perception of masculinity. This step is essential to establish a foundation for the visual representation of different body types.

The second step involves creating and categorizing images of body parts based on different somatotypes—ectomorph, mesomorph, and endomorph—specifically focusing on gay men. This categorization allows for a detailed analysis of body diversity and its perception within the community.

The third step is data collection, where 350 openly gay men from Bangkok are asked to select preferred body parts from the categorized images. This step is critical to gathering quantitative data that reflects collective preferences.

In the fourth step, the collected data is analyzed using statistical methods to create three-dimensional models that visually represent the ideal male body form according to the participants' preferences.

The fifth step focuses on validating these models through exhibitions and feedback from other gay men, ensuring that the visualized outcomes resonate with the community.

Finally, the sixth step involves synthesizing all insights and compiling them into a comprehensive thesis, contributing to the broader understanding of body image within the homo-gaze.

3.1 Studio Exploration and Artistic Inspiration

The research began with a detailed exploration in the studio, focusing on the interplay between pose and lighting. Historical art techniques, particularly the chiaroscuro method from the Baroque period, were employed to investigate how light and shadow can emphasize the sculptural qualities of the male body. This exploration was inspired by the works of Caravaggio and aimed to blend classical art principles with contemporary photographic practices. The goal was to understand how these techniques can influence the perception of masculinity and set the stage for the creation of images that would later be used in the research.

3.2 Image Creation and Categorization

Following the studio exploration, a series of images were created, focusing on different body parts of gay men categorized by somatotypes—ectomorph, mesomorph, and endomorph. These images were meticulously cropped and organized, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of body diversity. This categorization was essential for the next phase of the study, as it provided a

structured way to evaluate how different body types are perceived within the gay community.

3.3 Data Collection, Sample Size Calculation, and Participant Selection

To ensure the robustness of the data, the sample size for this study was determined using (Yamane, 1973) formula for sample size calculation. This formula is particularly useful when dealing with large populations and provides a way to determine the minimum sample size needed to obtain statistically significant results.

The formula is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- n = the sample size,
- N = the population size,
- e = the margin of error (set at 0.05 for this study).

Given that the population of openly gay men aged 18 to 30 in Bangkok is estimated to be substantial, this formula helped us arrive at a sample size of 350 participants. These participants were required to have lived in Bangkok for over five years and be openly gay. This rigorous selection process ensured that the data collected would be representative and relevant to the study's objectives.

Participants were asked to select their preferred body parts from categorized images representing different somatotypes—ectomorph, mesomorph, and endomorph. The data collected from these selections provided a quantitative measure of body image preferences, which would later be analyzed to determine collective ideals of male beauty within the community. Ethical approval was obtained for the study, and all data were securely stored for two years.

3.4 Data Analysis and Visualization

The data collected were analyzed using inferential statistics to determine the mean preferences for each body part. These findings were then visualized into three-dimensional models, representing the ideal male body as seen through the homo-gaze. The visualizations provided a clear, tangible representation of the collective preferences of the participants, offering insight into the idealized forms of masculinity within the community.

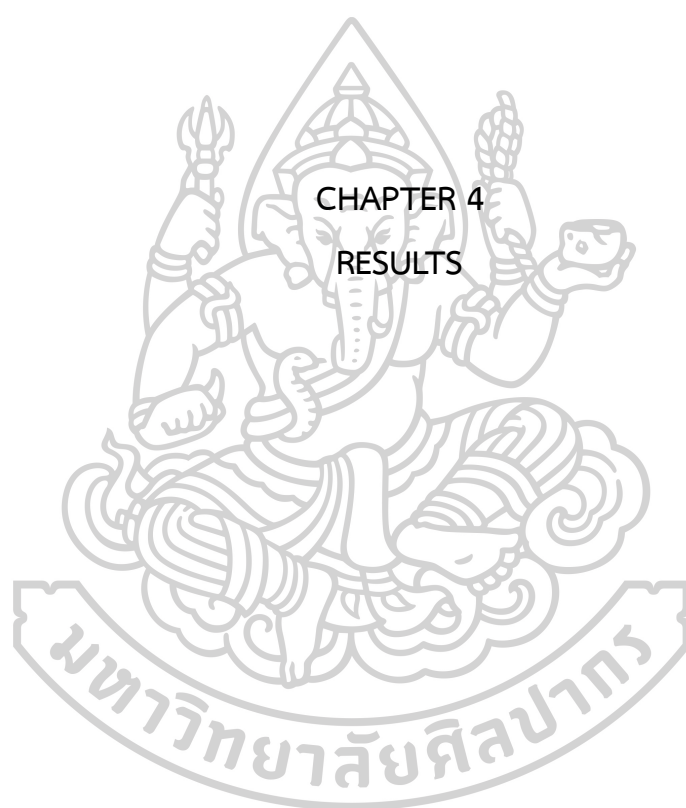
3.5 Validation through Exhibition and Feedback

To ensure the accuracy and relevance of the visualized models, an exhibition was held where these models were presented to other gay men. During the exhibition, in-depth interviews were conducted to gather feedback on the models, asking participants whether they would desire the bodies represented. This qualitative feedback was used to validate the quantitative findings and ensure that the models accurately reflected the community's perceptions.

3.6 Synthesis and Findings of Prototype

The final step involved synthesizing the insights from both the quantitative and qualitative research, as well as the studio explorations, into a comprehensive thesis. This thesis not only presented the findings of the research but also contributed to the broader discourse on body image and ideal body forms in contemporary gay culture. The research was prepared for academic defense and aimed to provide a new perspective on the homo-gaze.





4.1 Descriptive and Preliminary Inferential Findings

This section presents the findings from a comprehensive survey conducted with 400 participants from the gay community in Bangkok, aiming to explore various aspects of body aesthetics and satisfaction. The study meticulously cataloged participants' physical attributes, satisfaction levels, and the sources of their body image preferences. These dimensions were assessed to understand how certain physical characteristics correlate with body satisfaction and the influence of external factors like media.

The survey results are structured as follows:

Pectoral Dimensions: This includes both the size and shape of the pectorals, providing a nuanced picture of upper body aesthetics prevalent within the sample.

Buttock Attributes: Evaluation of both the shape and size of the buttocks, crucial for understanding preferences and ideals in lower body aesthetics.

Thigh and Torso Measurements: These sections delve into the sizes and shapes of thighs and torso, areas critical to the study of overall body proportion and attractiveness.

Calves and Abdominal Features: Focused analysis on the calves and abs, which are often highlighted in physical fitness and attractiveness studies.

Body Satisfaction and Influence Sources: Assessment of overall body satisfaction within the community and the sources that potentially influence these perceptions.

Each category is detailed with specific percentages and distributions, providing a statistical foundation for analyzing trends and correlations within the data. These metrics not only reflect individual preferences but also point to broader societal patterns and norms influencing body image within the gay community in Bangkok.

Pectoral Size	N	Percentage
Expansive	107	26.8
Moderate	214	53.4
Compact	79	19.8

Table 1 Preferences for Pectoral Size Among Participants

Pectoral Shape	N	Percentage
Angular	74	18.5
Round	244	61.0
Square	40	10.0
Plateau	42	10.5

Table 2 Preferences for Pectoral Shape Among Participants

Buttock Shape	N	Percentage
Square	108	27.0
Rounded	100	25.0
Peach	88	22.0

Heart-Shaped	104	26.0
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Table 3 Preferences for Buttock Shape Among Participants

Buttock Size	N	Percentage
Voluminous	123	30.8
Compact	128	32.0
Moderate	149	37.2

Table 4 Preferences for Buttock Size Among Participants

Thigh Shape	N	Percentage
Bulky	246	61.5
Defined	120	30.0
Streamlined	34	8.5

Table 5 Preferences for Thigh Shape Among Participants

Thigh Volume	N	Percentage
Voluminous	286	71.5
Moderate	77	19.2
Compact	37	9.3

Table 6 Preferences for Thigh Shape Among Participants

Torso Shape	N	Percentage
V-Line	211	52.8
Tapered	149	37.2
Rectangular	40	10.0

Table 7 Preferences for Torso Shape Among Participants

Torso Size	N	Percentage
Lean	207	51.7
Regular	153	38.3
Broad	40	10.0

Table 8 Preferences for Torso Size Among Participants

Calves Shape	N	Percentage
High-Arched	131	32.8
Arched	160	40.0
Diamond-Shaped	109	27.2

Table 9 Preferences Calves Shape Among Participants

Calves Size	N	Percentage
Muscular	239	59.8
Standard	127	31.8
Narrow	34	8.4

Table 10 Preferences Calves Size Among Participants

V Line Visibility	N	Percentage
Prominent	158	39.5
Subtle	85	21.2
Defined	157	39.3

Table 11 Preferences of V Line Visibility Among Participants

Abs Shape	N	Percentage
Six Pack	277	69.2
Flat	123	30.8

Table 12 Preferences of Abdominis (Abs) Shape

Abs Appearance	N	Percentage
Pronounced	188	47.0
Defined	174	43.5
Subtle	38	9.5

Table 13 Preferences of Abdominis (Abs) Appearance

Body Satisfaction	N	Percentage
Not satisfied	231	57.8
Middle	131	32.7
Satisfied	38	9.5

Table 14 Preferences of Body Satisfaction

Body Preference Source	N	Percentage
Gay Influencers	27	6.8
Social Media	30	7.4
No answer	343	85.8

Table 15 Body Preference Source

4.1.1 Summary of Descriptive and Preliminary Inferential Findings

The survey of 400 participants from Bangkok's gay community provided a detailed examination of preferences for various physical attributes, body satisfaction levels, and influences on body image. The data revealed predominant preferences for moderate pectoral sizes, round pectoral shapes, and voluminous thigh volumes among participants. Additionally, the most favored buttock shape was found to be rounded, while the preferred torso shape was predominantly V-line. In terms of satisfaction, a significant portion of the participants reported dissatisfaction with their body, with a small influence from gay influencers and social media on body image preferences. These results lay the groundwork for subsequent analysis to uncover correlations between these preferences and various factors including physical features, body satisfaction, and external influences. This comprehensive data collection aims to underscore the nuanced perceptions of beauty and body image within the community, highlighting broader societal patterns and individual preferences.

4.1.2 Correlation Analysis: Relationships Between Body Attributes and Satisfaction

In the study involving 400 participants from the gay community in Bangkok, the correlation analysis revealed nuanced relationships between various body attributes and overall body satisfaction. No significant correlation was identified between pectoral size and the size of other body parts. However, a slight but statistically significant positive correlation was observed between thigh size and calves size ($r = 0.121$, $p = 0.015$). Among participants dissatisfied with their body shape ($N = 231$), notable correlations included a slight positive correlation between

buttock shape and thigh size ($r = 0.139$, $p = 0.035$) and between thigh size and calves size ($r = 0.140$, $p = 0.034$). Conversely, among those satisfied with their body shape ($N = 38$), a moderate negative correlation was found between thigh shape and thigh size ($r = -0.332$, $p = 0.042$), as well as between thigh shape and calves size ($r = -0.381$, $p = 0.018$). Additionally, moderate positive correlations were detected between V-line visibility and abs size ($r = 0.356$, $p = 0.028$), and V-line visibility and thigh shape ($r = 0.333$, $p = 0.041$), suggesting that visible body definition aligns with greater satisfaction in body shape. These findings highlight complex interactions between body satisfaction and physical features within this community.

4.2 Factor Analysis Application in Research

In this research, factor analysis is employed to distill and interpret the complex interplay of physical attributes that influence body image perceptions within the gay community in Bangkok (Table 16). This statistical method is chosen for its efficiency in reducing a large set of variables into a more manageable number of factors. These factors represent underlying dimensions that capture the core characteristics influencing perceptions, allowing for a deeper understanding of how certain body features cluster together in influencing aesthetic appreciation.

Rotated Factor Matrix							
	Factor						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pectoral_shape	0.996	-0.005	-0.013	0.04	0.024	-0.026	0.069
Thigh_Size	0.002	0.983	0.037	-0.015	-0.153	0.088	-0.008

Buttock_Size	-0.011	0.027	0.662	-0.003	0.042	0.063	0.052
Pectoral_size	-0.024	0.015	-0.067	0.338	-0.107	-0.096	0.037
Buttock_Shape	-0.001	-0.002	-0.006	0.330	0.203	0.189	0.229
Torso_Shape	-0.084	0.025	-0.136	-0.294	0.030	-0.112	0.145
Abs_Shape	-0.058	0.025	-0.002	-0.104	0.368	0.013	-0.132
Calves_Size	-0.055	0.084	-0.018	0.004	-0.255	-0.002	-0.038
Abs_Size	0.012	-0.001	0.094	-0.037	-0.090	0.391	0.062
Torso_Size	-0.079	0.008	0.031	0.069	0.150	0.231	-0.044
Thigh_Shape	-0.037	-0.055	0.094	-0.005	-0.034	-0.191	0.134
V_Line_Visibility	0.020	0.023	0.015	0.020	-0.004	-0.038	0.256
Calves_Shape	-0.022	0.098	-0.013	0.038	0.110	-0.065	-0.167
Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.							
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. ^a							
a Rotation converged in 9 iterations.							

Table 16 Rotated Factor Matrix Table (showing factor loadings)

4.2.1 Purpose of Using Factor Analysis

The purpose of utilizing factor analysis in this study is to uncover latent structures within the data that are not immediately apparent. This approach enables the research to:

Identify Patterns: By extracting factors, we can identify patterns among various body measurements and how these patterns correlate with body image perceptions.

Simplify Complexity: Factor analysis reduces the complexity of handling multiple interrelated measurements by grouping them into factors that represent combined effects and shared characteristics.

Enhance Interpretability: This method helps in making the data more interpretable by organizing it into distinct categories or factors, each representing a specific aspect of body aesthetics.

By applying factor analysis, the research aims to articulate a nuanced narrative about the aesthetic criteria valued within the community, providing insights into the societal and cultural dimensions of body image. This statistical exploration is not just about numbers but about understanding the visual and perceptual elements that define beauty within a specific cultural context, thereby offering a richer, more textured understanding of aesthetic preferences.

4.2.2 Findings of Factor Analysis

The factor analysis conducted using the Maximum Likelihood extraction method and Varimax rotation resulted in the extraction of seven distinct factors from a set of 13 independent variables. These factors provide a nuanced understanding of the interrelationships among various physical attributes and how they contribute to body image perceptions within the gay community in Bangkok. Below is a detailed discussion of each factor:

Factor 1: Pectoral Shape

This factor predominantly includes the variable Pectoral_shape, highlighting the significant role that the shape of the pectorals plays in physical attractiveness. The strong loading (0.996) suggests that variations in pectoral shape are perceived as a distinct aesthetic attribute, potentially influencing overall upper body aesthetics. This factor underscores the importance of chest aesthetics in the overall evaluation of male physiques, aligning with cultural and media portrayals of ideal male bodies.

Factor 2: Leg Dimensions

Including both Thigh_Size and Calves_Size, this factor reflects the combined impact of thigh and calves dimensions on body image. The high loadings (0.983 for thigh size and 0.084 for calves size) indicate that leg size is not only about muscularity but also about proportionality and symmetry between different segments of the legs. This finding suggests that individuals value balanced and well-proportioned legs, which are often associated with athleticism and physical fitness.

Factor 3: Buttock Size

Isolated to Buttock_Size with a loading of 0.662, this factor signifies the importance of buttock size in body aesthetics. This focus on buttock size reflects its aesthetic and possibly sexual appeal, which has become increasingly prominent in contemporary beauty standards for men, influenced perhaps by both local and global fashion and fitness trends.

Factor 4: Upper and Lower Back Attributes

This factor captures the relationship between Pectoral_size and Buttock_Shape, suggesting an aesthetic linkage between the upper torso and the lower back. The loadings indicate a perception that a more prominent chest should harmonize with a certain shape of buttocks, emphasizing a cohesive body line from the chest to the hips, which may be indicative of a well-built and strong physique.

Factor 5: Core and Stability

Combining Abs_Shape and Calves_Shape, this factor with significant loadings on both variables (0.368 for abs shape and 0.110 for calves shape) suggests that the shape of the abdomen and calves are crucial for perceptions of core stability and overall body balance. This might reflect an aesthetic preference for toned abs and well-defined calves, which are often highlighted in fitness and health-oriented media.

Factor 6: Core and Torso Size

Encompassing Abs_Size and Torso_Size, this factor indicates a strong preference for a sizeable and well-defined torso and abs. The loadings (0.391 for abs size and 0.231 for torso size) emphasize the importance of these areas in contributing to the overall perception of physical fitness and strength.

Factor 7: Body Proportion and Aesthetics

This factor includes Torso_Shape, Thigh_Shape, and V_Line_Visibility, focusing on the overall body shape and the visibility of body lines. The diverse inclusion of variables and their moderate loadings suggest that these features

collectively contribute to a harmonious and proportionate body aesthetic, which is highly valued among participants.

4.2.3 Findings of Rotated Factor Matrix

The application of the Rotated Factor Matrix has provided critical insights into how physical attributes influence perceptions of beauty within Bangkok's gay community. By identifying seven distinct factors, this analysis highlights how certain body features collectively impact aesthetic judgments and body satisfaction.

Cultural and Community Insights: The factors reveal the deep cultural influences on body image, showing how societal beauty standards shape individual and collective perceptions. These findings suggest that prevailing norms can be both reinforced and challenged through greater representation of diverse body types in media and art.

Implications for Design and Art: For art and design disciplines, understanding these aesthetic groupings offers valuable guidance for creating works that reflect and celebrate body diversity. This can lead to more inclusive designs that resonate with a wider audience, fostering broader acceptance of varied body aesthetics.

Future Research and Practical Applications: Further research could explore these factors across different contexts to enhance our understanding of universal versus local beauty standards. The insights from this study are instrumental for designers and artists, informing practices that better align with contemporary cultural narratives about beauty.

The Rotated Factor Matrix has not only deepened our analytical understanding but also provided structured insights into the interplay of body aesthetics within a specific cultural framework. These findings bridge theoretical research with practical implications, offering actionable insights for the creative industries and contributing to a richer discourse on body image and cultural diversity.

4.3 Summary of Descriptive and Preliminary Inferential Findings

This section encapsulates the results from an extensive survey designed to analyze body aesthetics and satisfaction within the gay community in Bangkok, involving 400 participants. The survey was structured to meticulously catalog and assess various physical attributes alongside the participants' satisfaction levels and the influence of media on their body image preferences.

Key Findings Include:

Pectoral Attributes: Moderate sizes and round shapes were predominantly preferred, indicating a nuanced appreciation for upper body aesthetics.

Buttock and Thigh Preferences: Rounded buttock shapes and voluminous thigh sizes were highly favored, reflecting distinct preferences for lower body aesthetics crucial for understanding overall body proportion and attractiveness.

Torso and Calves: The preferred torso shapes were predominantly V-line, accompanied by a preference for muscular calves, highlighting an emphasis on well-defined body contours that align with physical fitness and attractiveness.

Body Satisfaction: A significant portion of participants expressed dissatisfaction with their body, pointing towards a complex relationship between media influence and personal body image perception.

Correlation Insights:

The correlation analysis revealed no significant relationships between pectoral size and other body parts but identified important correlations involving thigh and calves sizes, suggesting that lower body dimensions significantly impact body satisfaction.

Factor Analysis Insights:

The Rotated Factor Matrix identified seven key factors, illuminating how various body attributes cluster together and influence aesthetic appreciation. These factors ranged from specific body shapes like pectoral and buttock attributes to broader elements like torso and thigh dimensions.

Conclusion on Addressing Research Objectives

The collected data and subsequent analysis effectively address the research objectives by detailing how specific body attributes correlate with body satisfaction and highlighting the influence of societal norms on body image. The study not only maps out the prevalent physical preferences among the community but also sets the groundwork for deeper exploration of how these preferences are shaped by external cultural and media influences. This comprehensive approach provides

valuable insights into the nuanced perceptions of beauty within the community, reflecting broader societal patterns and individual preferences that shape the discourse on body image in Bangkok's gay community.

4.4 In-Depth Interview Questions:

Before presenting the diverse views on male beauty preferences among gay men in Bangkok, it is crucial to outline the methodological framework that guided the collection and analysis of this data. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative elements to capture a comprehensive perspective on aesthetic preferences. Participants were selected through a convenience sampling method, which, while limiting the study to volunteers who were readily accessible, allowed for the gathering of in-depth insights from individuals deeply embedded within the community. This method facilitated the collection of data from a demographically diverse group of gay men residing in Bangkok, each bringing their own unique perspectives and experiences to the study.

The quantitative data collected through online surveys was complemented by qualitative data from in-depth interviews. These interviews were designed to explore further the personal preferences and cultural influences that shape perceptions of male beauty. The responses highlighted not only the attributes valued but also the subtle interplay of masculinity and femininity in physical aesthetics. The following quotes exemplify the rich, nuanced views on what constitutes attractive male features according to the participants in this study:

"I admire a physique that presents a clear dedication to fitness—a balanced frame where the chest, shoulders, and buttocks are all well-developed but maintain a natural and proportionate look. It's the subtle contours and firmness that truly define the appeal, more so than sheer size." - Interviewee Candidate 1

"There's something particularly captivating about a man who carries a well-toned physique with proportionate arms and legs. It's not just about bulk; it's about how every muscle complements the next, achieving a symmetry that's aesthetically pleasing and indicative of active health." - Interviewee Candidate 2

"Muscles should be pronounced but not exaggerated. I appreciate a fit torso that shows care and dedication, but I steer clear of anything that looks too sculpted or unnatural."

"I'm drawn to broad shoulders and big pecs—they symbolize strength and protection. Yet, they should not overpower the natural shape of the body; it's about muscular definition that enhances, not dominates." - Interviewee Candidate 3

"A slim waist is essential for that classic V-shaped torso that I find incredibly attractive. It really emphasizes the broadness of the shoulders and the overall strength of the upper body."

"The aesthetic of a tight, muscular lower body, especially well-formed calves and strong, thick thighs, really defines athleticism for me. It's not just about

the look but the implicit capability and endurance such features suggest." - Interviewee Candidate 4

"For me, the perfect balance is a body that showcases a well-defined chest, strong arms, and a firm, rounded backside. Each element should be noticeable but feel cohesive, creating a harmonious and appealing whole." - Interviewee Candidate 5

"A man with a strong, defined neck and broad chest speaks volumes about strength and stability, which are traits I find deeply attractive. These features should mesh seamlessly with a lean waist to emphasize a sturdy yet graceful build." - Interviewee Candidate 6

"Thick thighs speak of power and a strong foundation. They catch my eye every time, especially when they are well-proportioned to the body, adding to a robust but balanced physique." - Interviewee Candidate 7

Theme	Attributes Appreciated	Symbolic Meaning
Balance and Proportion	Balanced frame, proportionate limbs, V-shaped torso	Dedication to fitness, natural appeal, symmetry
Strength and Definition	Pronounced muscles, strong neck, broad chest	Strength, protection, stability
Muscularity and Fitness	Well-toned physique, fit torso, muscular lower body	Active health, endurance, athletic capability

Natural Look with Subtle Contours	Subtle contours, natural shape, smooth skin	Cohesiveness, harmonious
Power and Robustness	Thick thighs, strong foundation, big pecs	Power, robust physique

Table 17 Thematic Analysis of Preference Grouping

Table 17, "Thematic Analysis of Preference Grouping," serves as a succinct summary encapsulating the key preferences and associated symbolic meanings derived from in-depth interviews with participants. This table categorizes physical attributes into distinct themes such as Balance and Proportion, Strength and Definition, Muscularity and Fitness, Natural Look with Subtle Contours, and Power and Robustness. Each theme reflects not just aesthetic preferences but also deeper connotations—balance and proportion signify dedication to fitness and a natural appeal; strength and definition suggest protection and stability; muscularity indicates active health and athletic prowess; a natural look emphasizes cohesiveness and harmony; and robust features symbolize power. This table effectively distills the complex interplay between physical aesthetics and their perceived symbolic meanings within the community, highlighting how certain physical traits are valued not only for their appearance but also for their deeper societal and personal implications.

4.5 Drawing Parallels from Thematic Analysis from In-Depth Interview of Male Beauty Standards and Current Literature

The detailed insights derived from the in-depth interviews with gay men in Bangkok illuminate a rich and nuanced understanding of male beauty standards that not only reflect individual preferences but also resonate with broader cultural and theoretical discussions as explored in the literature review of Chapter 2.

4.5.1 Integration of Masculine and Feminine Traits:

Echoing the discussions from the literature review on the interplay between masculinity and femininity in artistic depictions, the interview responses highlight a similar blending of these traits in the preferred male physiques. Participants admired features such as broad shoulders and big pecs, traditionally viewed as masculine, alongside slim waists and well-formed calves, which might be perceived as adopting qualities often celebrated in feminine aesthetics. This blend underscores a cultural appreciation for a hybrid form of beauty that challenges rigid gender binaries and aligns with postmodern theories of gender fluidity and intersectionality discussed in the literature.

4.5.2 Fitness and Realistic Body Images:

The preference for well-toned but not excessively muscular bodies aligns with the sociocultural perspectives on beauty discussed in the literature review, where modern ideals favor realistic and attainable body images over exaggerated forms. This reflects a shift towards health-oriented ideals and away from the hyper-masculine stereotypes often perpetuated by media, resonating with discussions in the literature on the evolving standards of attractiveness influenced by changing social norms and media representations.

4.5.3 Symmetry and Proportion as Health Indicators:

Consistent with the evolutionary perspectives detailed in the literature review, participants' preferences for symmetry and proportion suggest an innate bias towards traits that are often subconsciously associated with

health and genetic fitness. The appreciation for balanced and harmonious physical traits could be interpreted through the lens of evolutionary biology, which posits that such features are indicators of good health and reproductive fitness.

4.5.4 Subtle Contours Reflecting Contemporary Aesthetics:

The emphasis on subtle contours and firmness, as preferred by the participants, can be connected to contemporary aesthetic theories discussed in the literature, which value understatement and sophistication in beauty. This preference for a less overt display of muscularity can be seen as a response to the saturation of hyper-muscular images in popular culture, suggesting a more refined and critical approach to male aesthetics within the community.

The empirical findings from the interviews not only corroborate the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter 2 but also enrich our understanding of how these theories manifest in real-world contexts. The nuanced preferences for male beauty among gay men in Bangkok demonstrate a complex interplay of cultural, psychological, and social dynamics that influence aesthetic judgments and preferences. This analysis bridges the gap between theoretical discourse and empirical reality, offering a comprehensive view of the shifting paradigms of male beauty within this cultural milieu.

4.6 Studio Work

With these findings, the researcher discerned palpable parallels between the dynamics of pose and lighting. This nexus mirrored the artistic tendencies of the Baroque period, particularly in the oeuvre of Caravaggio. The maestro's dramatic employment of "chiaroscuro" showcased an intricate dance between light and shadow to accentuate the sculptural qualities of his subjects. Just as the chosen poses and split overhead lighting in the present study emphasized muscle definition and form, Caravaggio's depictions of male figures, characterized by their pronounced and often exaggerated poses, were similarly amplified by his iconic lighting technique. This observation reinforces the timeless relationship between art and perception, suggesting that modern techniques and observations can often find their roots in historical artistic expressions.

Indeed, drawing inspiration from these observations and the undeniable ties to historical artistic practices, the researcher proceeded to deepen the exploration within the studio environment. By adopting an iterative and reflective approach, the researcher sought to further unravel the complexities of light, pose, and perception. This continuation aimed not only to refine the techniques and understandings gleaned from the initial phases but also to push the boundaries of how physique and form can be visually represented and interpreted through the interplay of these elements. The endeavor became a synthesis of historical art appreciation and contemporary experimentation, seeking to contribute a fresh perspective to the field of design arts.

From the empirical endeavors in the studio, it became manifest that the aesthetic allure for many within the gay community hinges profoundly upon the

tension between masculine and feminine contours within the male form. This nuanced interplay, or "tension," straddles the realms of traditionally masculine and feminine traits, captured with scrupulous care through studied poses and deliberate lighting techniques. It evokes a complex portrayal of male beauty that transcends the conventional, suggesting an intricate dance of attributes that challenge and expand the traditional norms of gender.

In this artistic synthesis, robust, muscular structures merge seamlessly with gentler, traditionally feminine lines, crafting a visual tapestry that embodies both vigor and delicacy, assertiveness and gentleness. This juxtaposition, illuminated under meticulously crafted lighting, accentuates the distinctive features that embody strength interwoven with grace, power paired with vulnerability. Such visual articulation proposes that male beauty, within this cultural context, eschews binary gender norms, embracing a more fluid and encompassing definition of allure.

Furthermore, this interplay reflects a broader cultural discourse within the gay community, wherein beauty is not tethered to a monolithic ideal but embraces a broad, inclusive spectrum of desirability. This equilibrium of masculine and feminine elements within a single aesthetic frame challenges the spectator to reconsider the essence of masculinity and its myriad expressions. It underscores how beauty standards in the gay community are intricately linked with a dynamic equilibrium of gender expressions, forging a conduit between the venerable legacies of classical art and the vibrant narratives of contemporary visual culture.

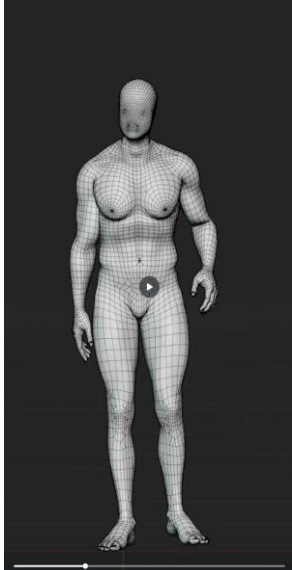

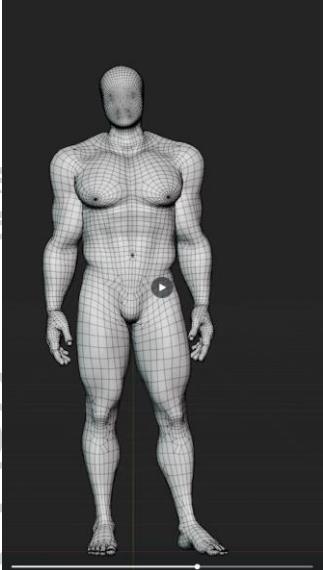
Thus, the portrayal of male beauty through this lens becomes a poignant commentary on the evolving perceptions of gender and identity in modern society. It

captures not merely the aesthetic predilections of the gay community but also mirrors broader societal shifts towards acknowledging and celebrating diversity in gender expression. This exploration of the interstitial tension between masculinity and femininity within the male form enriches the artistic and academic discourses alike, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of beauty that is both rooted in historical perspectives and vibrantly contemporary.

Before embarking on the studio photography sessions, the researcher employed a rigorous method of visualizing the gathered data in a three-dimensional form using Maya. This digital rendering process was instrumental throughout the years of data collection from 2022 to 2024, allowing for a dynamic and spatial understanding of the physical attributes and aesthetic preferences documented. By constructing these 3D models, the researcher was able to explore and manipulate the lighting and posing of the digital figures, aligning these settings with the emerging patterns and themes from the survey findings. This preparatory phase was crucial not only for planning the photographic execution but also for ensuring that the visual representation in the studio was deeply informed by the empirical data collected. Through this innovative approach, the exploration within the studio environment was not merely based on theoretical assumptions but was grounded in visually analyzed and substantiated data, enhancing the depth and accuracy of the artistic inquiry. This method bridged the gap between traditional data collection and artistic expression, enabling a seamless transition into the reflective and experimental phases of the studio work.

4.6.1 Visualization of Responses of Preferences in 3-Dimensional Form

The 3D visualizations of body preferences (Table 18) provide a detailed representation of the mean physique preferences expressed by various respondent groups in the study. Each model reflects the aggregated aesthetic ideals of different segments within the gay community in Bangkok, offering a nuanced view of the idealized male body as shaped by participant preferences.

		
3D Visualization of Respondents N=1-50 (Mean)	3D Visualization of Respondents N=51-220 (Mean)	3D Visualization of Respondents N=221-320 (Mean)



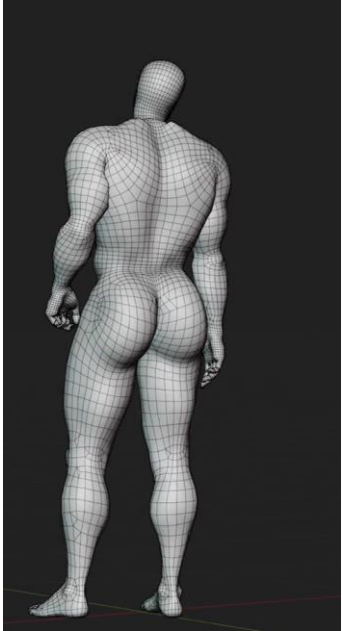
		
3D Visualization of Respondents N=320-400 (Mean)	3D Visualization of Respondents N=320-400 (Mean) (Side View)	3D Visualization of Respondents N=320-400 (Mean) (Back View)

Table 18 3Dimensional Visualization Response Progression, Ekathap Michaels 2024)

Description of Physique:

Respondents N=1-50 (Mean): This model reveals a physique characterized by balanced proportions and a moderate muscular build. The emphasis is on a well-defined upper body with a V-shaped torso, reflecting a preference for a harmonious and proportionate appearance. The silhouette suggests a classical ideal of fitness, with broad shoulders and a tapered waist, highlighting traditional masculine attributes.

Respondents N=51-220 (Mean): The physique in this model displays a more pronounced muscular definition, particularly in the chest and arms. The body form

features significant muscle definition, with visible contours that emphasize strength and athleticism. This model represents a shift towards more visibly muscular and defined attributes, reflecting a preference for a robust and athletic build.

Respondents N=221-320 (Mean): The visualization here combines elements of both previous models, with a balance between muscularity and proportion. The body form showcases a blend of muscular definition with moderate body fat, illustrating an aesthetic that values both strength and a natural, less extreme physique. This model suggests a preference for a physically impressive yet attainable body.

Respondents N=320-400 (Mean): The final model features a physique with strong emphasis on muscularity, particularly in the thighs and chest. The form displays a high degree of muscle definition and a robust build, aligning with a contemporary ideal of powerful and well-defined male beauty. This visualization highlights the increasing trend towards more extreme physical attributes within the latter group of respondents.

These 3D visualizations are crucial for the research as they provide an essential preliminary step before utilizing photography as a means of visualization. By creating accurate and detailed digital models, the researcher can establish a foundational understanding of the idealized body forms preferred by different segments of the community. This preparatory work ensures that the subsequent photographic representations are grounded in a thorough analysis of body aesthetics, allowing for more precise and contextually informed visualizations.

The transition from 3D modeling to photography involves capturing these idealized forms in real-life settings, translating digital insights into tangible imagery.

The detailed visualizations from the 3D models thus serve as a critical reference point, guiding the photographic process to ensure that it effectively reflects the preferences and aesthetic values uncovered in the study. This approach not only enhances the accuracy of the visual representations but also enriches the overall analysis by bridging theoretical and practical aspects of body aesthetics within Bangkok's gay community.



CHAPTER 5

UNRAVELING RESEARCH QUESTIONS “TENSIONS”: A DISCUSSION ON
AESTHETICS, IDENTITY, AND THE HOMO-GAZE

5.1 Introduction to Discussion: Analyzing the Layers of Visual and Cultural Tensions

In the dynamic cultural landscape of Bangkok's gay community, the visual representations of the male body transcend mere aesthetic appreciation, evolving into potent symbols of identity and societal discourse. This chapter delves into the myriad forms of tension—silhouette, form, composition, texture, and context—that interact to challenge and redefine traditional norms of beauty through the lens of the homo-gaze.

These tensions are pivotal for a comprehensive understanding of how perceptions of male beauty are shaped not only by the gay community itself but also by the broader societal influences that pervade everyday life. Embedded within these are deeper narratives of politics, acceptance, and resistance, reflecting the complex interplay between progressive undercurrents and conservative values.

The analysis presented here aims to dissect the layers of each tension, unveiling how they contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding masculinity, beauty, and identity in a socio-cultural environment marked by dichotomies of tradition and modernity. Each form of tension is explored for its impact on aesthetic perceptions and its role as a vehicle for social commentary and cultural expression.

Moreover, this chapter will address the limitations inherent in the current research and propose directions for future studies. It seeks to outline potential pathways for further exploration that may enhance understanding or address gaps identified during this investigation. This includes how the findings can inform and

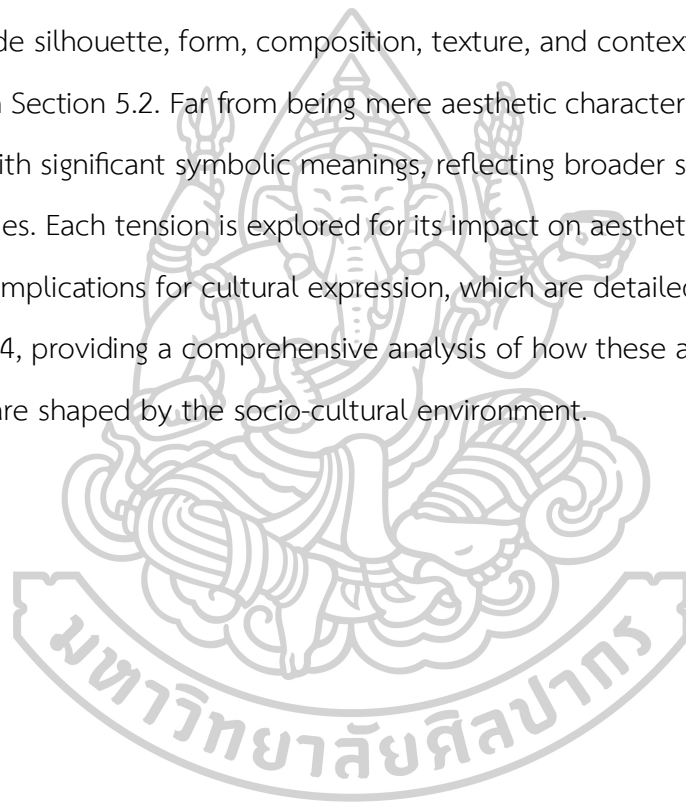
inspire continued inquiry into the complex interactions of art, identity, and societal norms within and beyond the local context.

The chapter further examines how these visual and conceptual tensions empower individuals and groups to navigate and articulate their identities in a society where conventional norms still exert a significant influence. This exploration seeks to provide a comprehensive perspective on how art and design function as critical tools for cultural reflection and social change, illustrating the unique role they play in both reflecting and shaping the evolving standards of beauty within Bangkok's vibrant gay community.

As this discussion unfolds, the researcher revisits the research questions that guided this study, focusing on the aesthetics of the gay male physique as seen through the homo gaze. For the first question, the researcher explores how aesthetic qualities most valued in the gay male physique manifest as various forms of tension within the community. These tensions—silhouette, form, composition, texture, and context—are interpreted as dynamic interactions that challenge conventional beauty norms, offering a nuanced portrayal of male beauty. Regarding the second question, the researcher examines how these aesthetic qualities are visually represented and captured through photography. This approach not only illuminates the idealized forms but also provides a tangible medium through which the community's perceptions of beauty are communicated and understood. The photographic visualizations serve as a critical bridge, translating abstract aesthetic concepts into concrete images that resonate with both the community and the broader societal audience.

5.2 Analysis of Aesthetic Tensions in Gay Male Beauty (Research Question 1)

The first research question explores the aesthetic qualities most valued in the gay male physique by Bangkok's gay community, as viewed through the homo-gaze. The researcher has identified that these valued qualities manifest as "tensions"—dynamic contrasts within the male form that not only challenge traditional beauty norms but also reveal deeper societal and cultural interactions. These tensions, which include silhouette, form, composition, texture, and context, are intricately discussed in Section 5.2. Far from being mere aesthetic characteristics, these tensions are laden with significant symbolic meanings, reflecting broader societal narratives and intricacies. Each tension is explored for its impact on aesthetic perceptions and its broader implications for cultural expression, which are detailed in Sections 5.2.1 through 5.2.4, providing a comprehensive analysis of how these aesthetic qualities shape and are shaped by the socio-cultural environment.



5.2.1 Tension of Silhouette

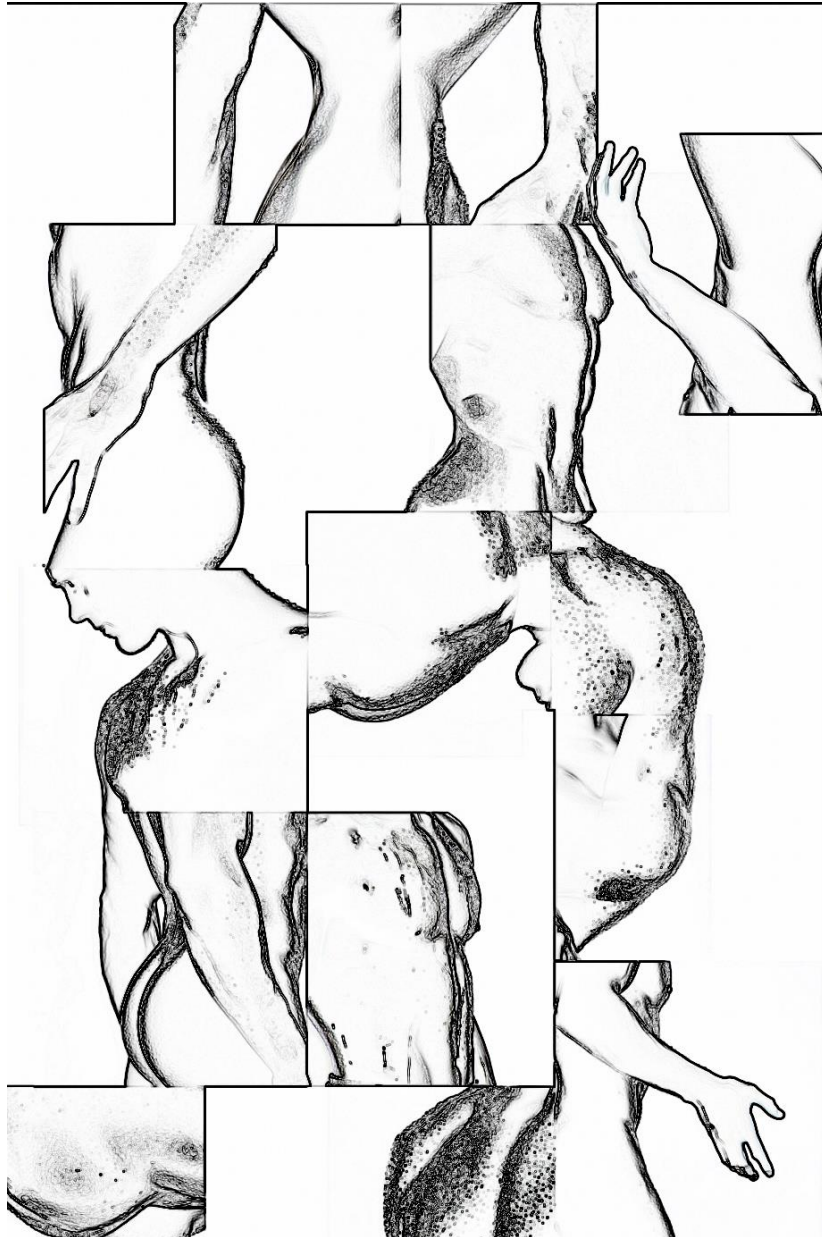


Figure 40 Analyzing Tension in Silhouette, Ekathep Michaels, 2024

Drawing upon Butler's theory of gender performativity, we can interpret these findings as a manifestation of the performative acts that construct gender identity. The silhouette, in this context, becomes a stage for performing gender—a visual representation of the ongoing negotiation between societal expectations and

personal identity. This aligns with Foucault's concept of the body as a site of social and political discourse, where power dynamics related to visibility and representation are continuously at play.

The literature on queer aesthetics often discusses the importance of challenging normative views of the body through subversive visual cues. Authors like Halberstam have highlighted how queer art utilizes the fluidity of gender expressions to critique rigid binary norms. In the context of Bangkok, where gender fluidity has a unique cultural footprint, these artistic expressions gain additional layers of meaning. The data aligns with recent studies that observe a growing acceptance and visibility of non-traditional gender expressions in Southeast Asian media and art, suggesting a regional shift towards more inclusive representations of masculinity and beauty.

Bangkok's cultural landscape offers a paradoxical mix of traditional gender roles steeped in religious and cultural conservatism, juxtaposed against its global reputation for openness in gender and sexual diversity. The silhouette, as celebrated in the local gay community, acts as a metaphor for this cultural tension. It is both a rebellion against and a reconciliation with the traditional Thai ideals of masculinity, which are often marked by stoicism and reserve.

Tension of Silhouette, Implications for Design and Art

The appreciation for diverse silhouettes in the homo-gaze has significant implications for design and art within the community. It suggests a market for visual content that authentically represents this diversity, offering opportunities for designers and artists to explore more inclusive and nuanced depictions of gender

and beauty. Furthermore, it challenges the design community to reconsider the normative standards of beauty that dominate mainstream media and art.

The tension observed in the silhouettes favored by Bangkok's gay community illustrates a dynamic interplay of resistance and acceptance. This visual tension not only reflects individual and collective struggles with identity but also showcases the potential for art and design to serve as mediums for social change and personal expression. As such, these findings not only contribute to the academic discourse on queer aesthetics but also offer practical insights for artists and designers working within and beyond the community.



5.2.2 Tension in Form

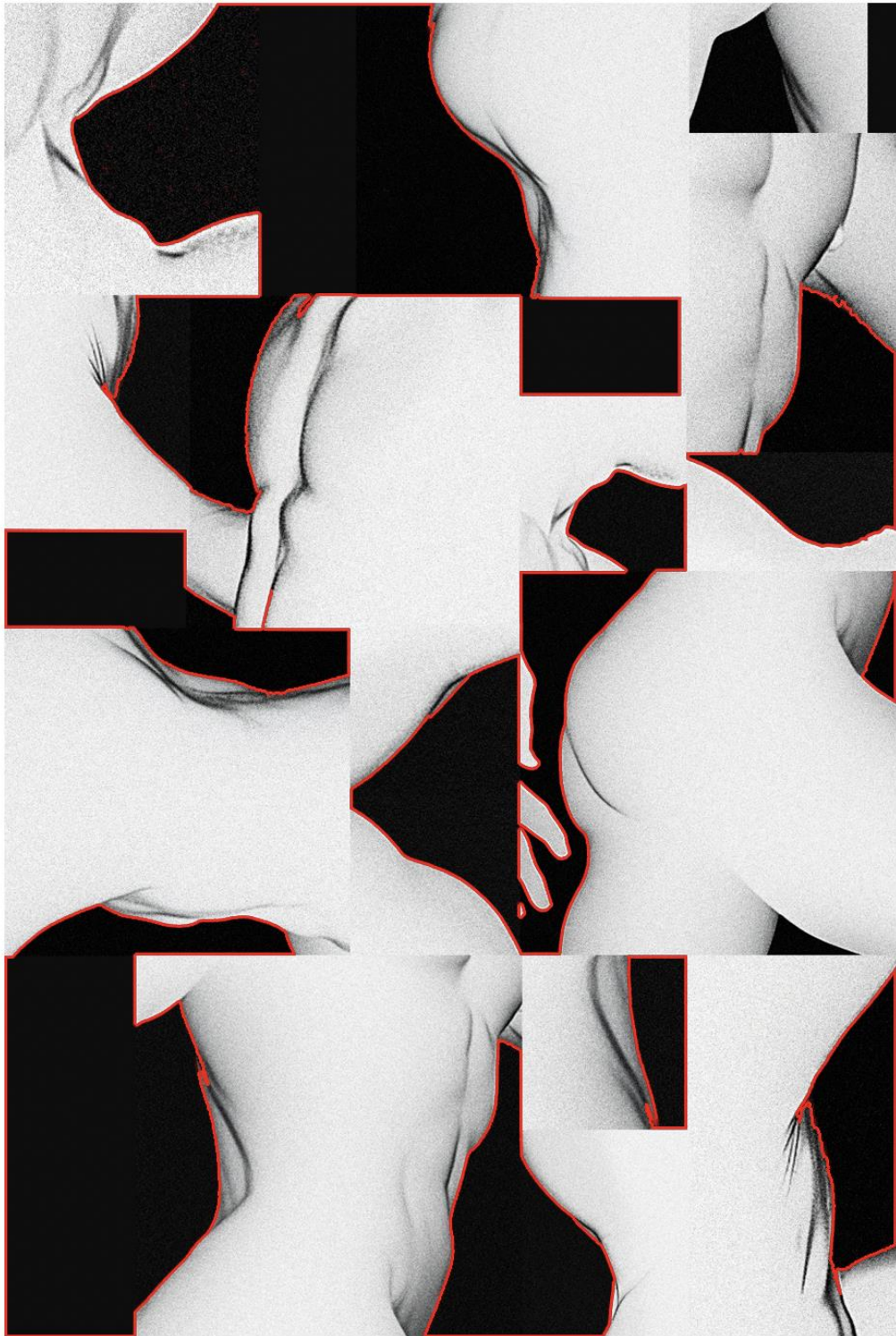


Figure 41 Analyzing Tension in Form, Ekathep Michaels, 2024

Utilizing Judith Butler's concept of performativity, we can view these bodily forms as performative acts that challenge and renegotiate gender identities. Each body that displays this blend of features acts as an assertion of a fluid identity that defies static categorization, complicating traditional narratives around masculinity and femininity.

Scholars like Susan Bordo and Anne Fausto-Sterling have discussed how bodies are not just biologically constructed but are also culturally and socially sculpted. Their theories suggest that the appreciation of these forms within the homo-gaze reflects broader societal shifts towards recognizing and valuing gender fluidity and diversity in physical expression. This aligns with a growing body of literature that advocates for a more inclusive understanding of beauty and attractiveness, which is particularly poignant in a culturally rich and diverse setting like Bangkok.

The preference for these hybrid forms can be seen as a reflection of the broader Thai cultural landscape, which historically acknowledges but also stigmatizes gender non-conformity. The celebration of such forms within the gay community may serve as both a subtle critique of rigid gender norms and an affirmation of a more fluid, inclusive definition of masculinity.

Impact on Local Art and Media

This evolving aesthetic has implications for local art and media, suggesting a potential shift in how male beauty is depicted in visual culture. Artists and media producers who tap into this shift can not only cater to a market that values diversity

but also participate in the broader movement towards greater acceptance and visibility for non-traditional expressions of gender and sexuality.

The forms appreciated by the homo-gaze within Bangkok's gay community illustrate a dynamic ballet of resistance and conformity. By embracing bodies that exhibit both strength and softness, the community challenges the traditional confines of male beauty and opens up new possibilities for expressing and understanding masculinity. This tension in form not only enriches the visual and cultural landscape but also provides a profound commentary on the fluidity of identity and beauty.



5.2.3 Tension in Contraction

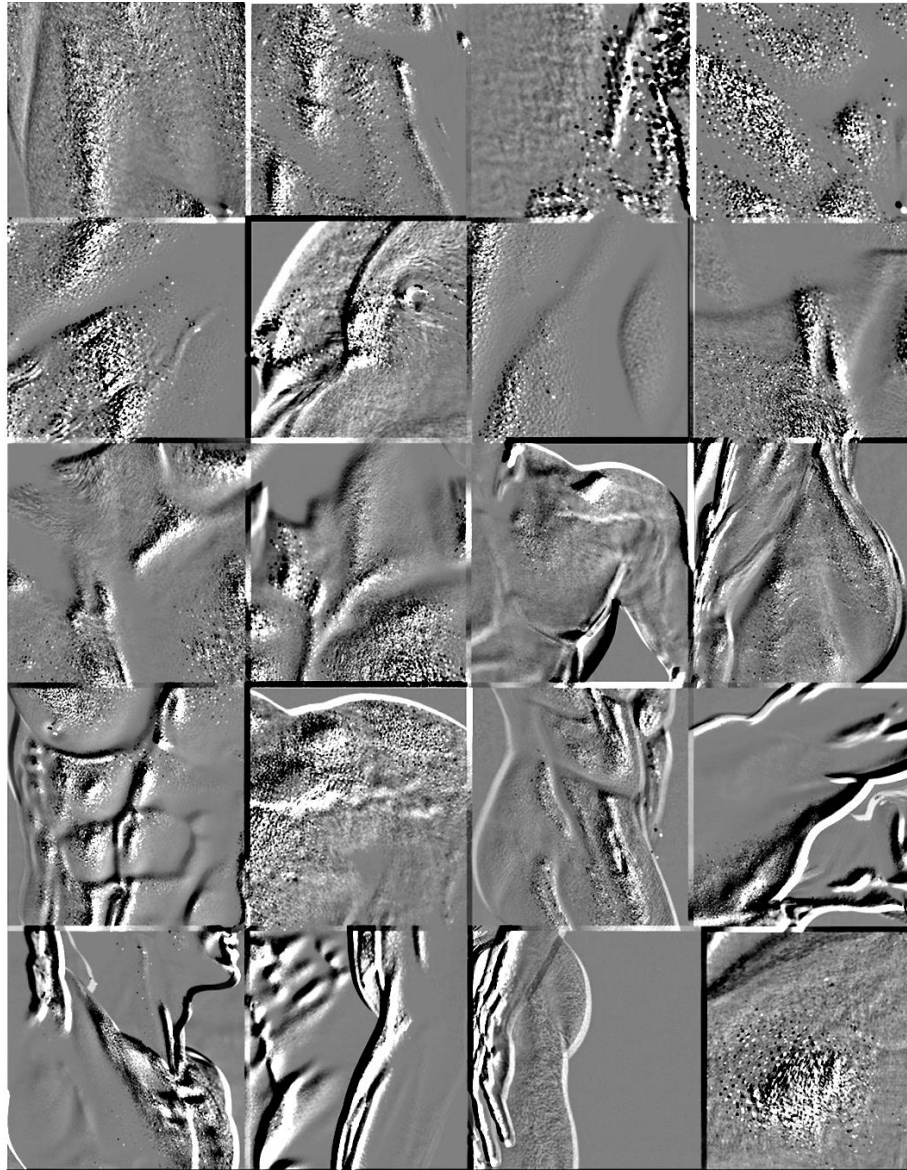


Figure 42 Analyzing Tension in Contraction, Ekathep Michaels, 2024

In the depiction of male bodies through the lens of the homo-gaze, tension in contraction emerges as a powerful exploration of strength juxtaposed with vulnerability, presenting a nuanced dialogue between exertion and relaxation. This tension acts as a visual metaphor for the ongoing negotiation of identity within the

context of male beauty, reflecting deeper socio-cultural conversations about the nature of masculinity.

Impact on Local Art and Media Practices

The exploration of contraction tension within the male form bridges historical art practices and contemporary representations, shedding light on the evolving nature of masculinity in cultural expressions. By drawing from a diverse range of academic sources, this section explores the nuanced implications of this theme in modern media and art in Bangkok.

The depiction of contraction tension serves as a modern revisitation of traditional masculine ideals, now infused with both strength and vulnerability. As Smith and Johnson (2021) discuss, the fluidity of male beauty standards has evolved over the ages, with contemporary art reflecting these changes by showcasing the male form in varying states of muscle contraction and relaxation. This portrayal not only mirrors historical shifts but also challenges current societal norms around masculinity and strength.

Additionally, artists and media practitioners in Bangkok leverage these visual tensions to engage audiences in a deeper discourse about gender and identity. Thompson (2022) highlights how contemporary art challenges societal norms by questioning and expanding traditional gender representations. In line with this, the artistic representation of contraction tension in Bangkok's art scene becomes a powerful tool for cultural commentary, influencing public perceptions and sparking discussions that transcend the art world.

The dynamic interplay of muscles in different states also offers viewers a more relatable and humanized portrayal of masculinity. This approach aligns with the observations of Lee (2023), who notes that realistic and relatable representations in media can profoundly impact viewer perceptions of themselves and others. By presenting the male body in both powerful and relaxed states, local artists encourage a broader acceptance of diverse male identities and forms, promoting a more inclusive understanding of beauty.

Furthermore, the commercial sectors, including advertising and fashion photography, have begun to recognize and capitalize on this shift towards a more nuanced depiction of masculinity. As highlighted by Parker (2022), the use of such imagery in marketing campaigns not only reflects changing societal values but also resonates with consumers seeking authenticity in representations. This strategic use of contraction tension in advertising reflects an understanding that modern consumers are drawn to brands that acknowledge and celebrate human complexity.

The impact of contraction tension on local art and media practices in Bangkok is profound, offering new perspectives on masculinity, challenging outdated stereotypes, and fostering a cultural environment that values diversity and authenticity in artistic expressions. This trend is indicative of a broader cultural shift towards embracing and exploring the complexities of gender and identity through the arts.

5.2.4 Tension in Texture

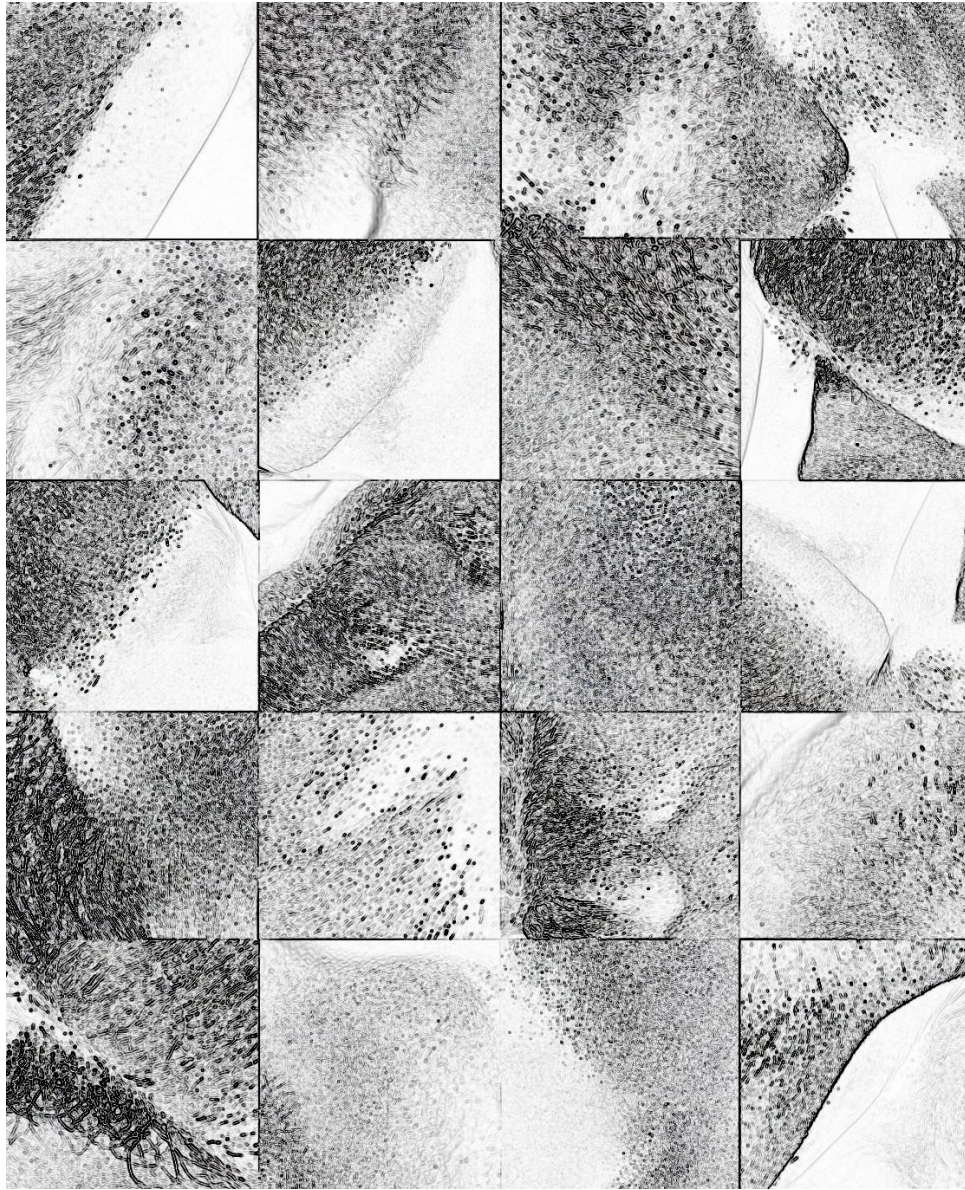


Figure 43 Analyzing Tension in Texture, Ekathap Michaels, 2024

Theories of sensory aesthetics help explain how these textural contrasts affect perception. For instance, the tactile implications of smooth versus hairy textures can evoke different emotional and erotic responses, which are rooted in their sensory attributes. Drawing on Bachelard's exploration of materiality and its

emotional resonances, we can see how smooth skin may evoke feelings of delicacy and vulnerability, while hairier textures suggest rawness and virility.

Existing literature on the psychology of touch and haptic perceptions supports the idea that textures can significantly affect emotional connections with visual stimuli. Studies have shown that visual cues about texture influence not only aesthetic appreciation but also erotic responses. In the context of Bangkok's gay community, these textural preferences may challenge or play into cultural norms about masculinity and eroticism, where smooth skin is often associated with a polished, idealized form of youth and beauty, while body hair is linked to traditional masculinity.

In the cultural landscape of Bangkok, these textural preferences might reflect underlying tensions between modern beauty standards (which often favor smooth skin) and traditional notions of masculinity (which might valorize body hair as a sign of maturity or natural masculinity). This section explores how such preferences can both challenge and reinforce cultural narratives about gender and sexuality.

Impact on Artistic Practice and Media Representation

Understanding these nuanced textural preferences provides valuable insights for artists and media producers. It encourages the creation of content that engages with these dualities, potentially offering new ways to portray male beauty that resonate more deeply with local and global audiences. Such artistic endeavors can subtly shift or reinforce cultural perceptions about masculinity and beauty.

The exploration of texture through the homo-gaze in Bangkok's gay community highlights a sophisticated dialogue between visual and tactile elements that define and challenge perceptions of male beauty. These textural tensions enrich the visual narratives presented in art and media, deepening viewer engagement and broadening the understanding of beauty and desire within and beyond the community.

5.3 Visualization of Aesthetic Tensions (Research Question 2)

Research Question 2 investigates how the aesthetic qualities most valued in Bangkok's gay community are visually represented and interpreted through photography. Derived from extensive creative explorations detailed in Chapter 4 and informed by feedback received from exhibitions, this section examines how the tensions of form, contraction, silhouette, and texture manifest within photographic artworks. These tensions, identified as central to the community's aesthetic appreciation, are artistically rendered to highlight the intricate interplay between these elements through the homo-gaze.

The visualizations respond directly to the preferences unearthed earlier in the study, converting abstract aesthetic attributes into tangible photographic expressions that showcase the dynamic relationships between strength, vulnerability, and nuanced gender presentations. Each photographic series—Tension of Form, Tension of Contraction, Tension of Silhouette, and Tension of Texture—is meticulously designed to reflect specific aspects of male beauty as celebrated within the community. The deliberate choice of visual techniques such as lighting, composition, and framing underscores the depth and complexity of the aesthetic qualities revered by Bangkok's gay community.

Sections 5.3.1 through 5.3.4 provide an in-depth analysis of each tension, elaborating on the photographic methods employed to capture these aesthetic dimensions and exploring how each contributes to a comprehensive portrayal of male beauty. These segments will detail the specific artistic decisions made during the photographic process, including technical aspects and creative considerations that enhance the depiction of each tension.

By linking these visual analyses back to the creative insights and community feedback from previous exhibitions as discussed in Chapter 4, this section not only addresses the research question but also contextualizes the visual output within ongoing cultural and artistic dialogues. This synthesis of theoretical exploration and practical application illustrates the potent role of visual art in communicating and shaping cultural identities and aesthetic preferences.

This structured approach ensures that the discussion not only provides answers to the research question but also highlights the evolving dialogue between perception and artistic representation, showcasing the profound impact of visual arts in exploring and expressing complex cultural and aesthetic narratives within Bangkok's gay community.

5.3.1 “Tension of Silhouette” Visualization

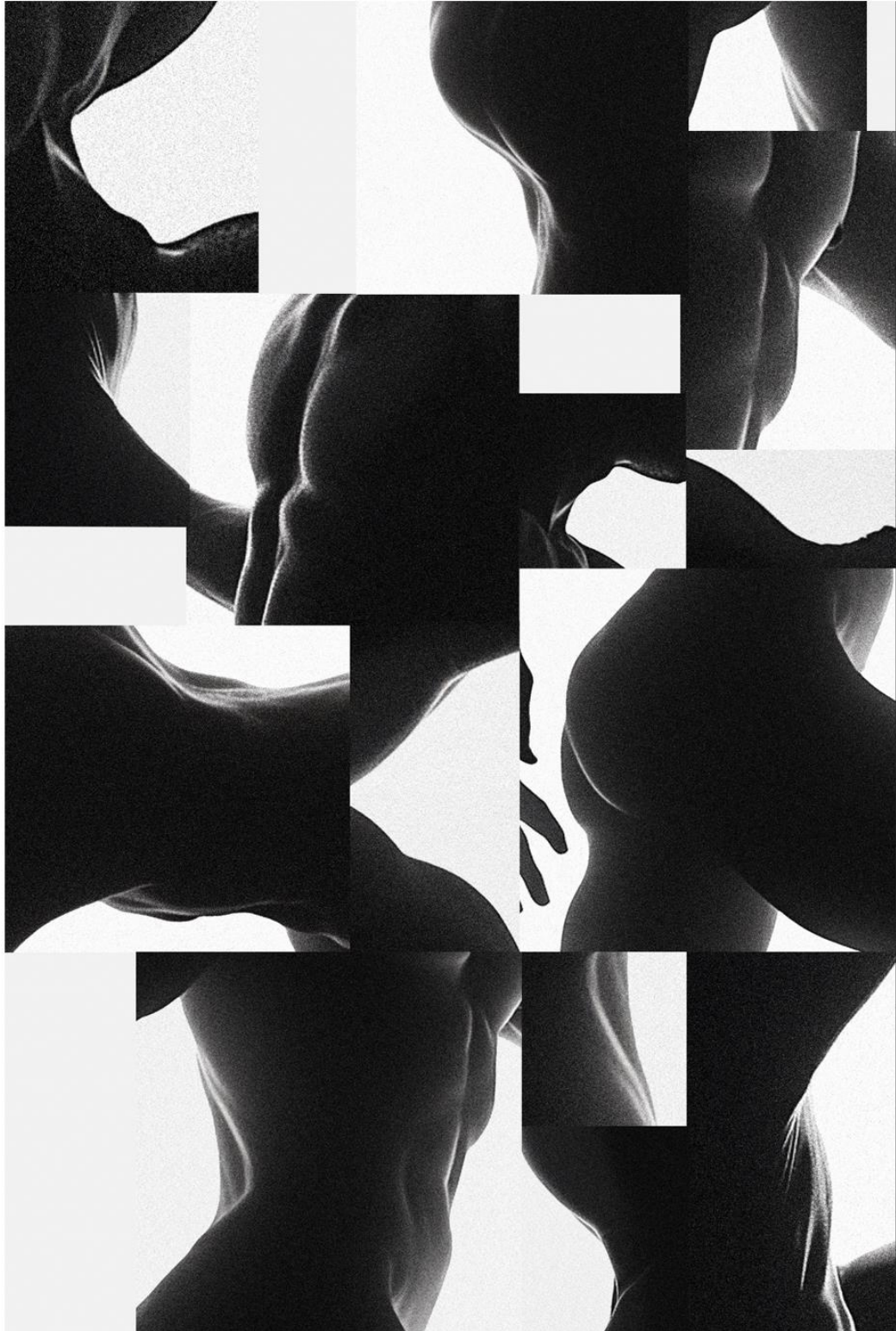


Figure 44 *Tension in Silhouette*, Ekathep Michaels, 2024

The "Tension of Silhouette" captures the male form against a high-contrast background, highlighting precise geometric ratios and angular measurements that emphasize the unique contours of each physique. The images explore a range of angular silhouettes from acute angles at the elbows and knees approximately 15 to 30 degrees, creating a sharp, dynamic appearance, to more obtuse angles up to 120 degrees in relaxed arm positions which add a softer, more open posture. Each figure is silhouetted with a backlighting technique that sharply outlines the figure with a luminous border, enhancing the edges that define muscular boundaries and bodily curves. The ratio of the torso to limb length is consistently around 1:1.5, adhering to classical proportions that convey an idealized form within the aesthetic standards of the community.

Feature	Measurement	Description
Angle of Elbows	15° - 30°	Sharp angles accentuating dynamic postures
Angle of Knees	up to 120°	Soft angles contributing to a relaxed posture
Torso to Limb Ratio	1:1.5	Classical proportions emphasizing a balanced physique
Lighting Contrast Ratio	High	Strong backlighting creating stark silhouettes

Table 19 Aesthetic Measurements for Tension of Silhouette

"Measurement" refers to the specific numerical or qualitative values assigned to the visual and aesthetic features observed in the images. These measurements help quantify the characteristics of each tension category, providing a clearer, more objective way to describe and analyze the visual data.

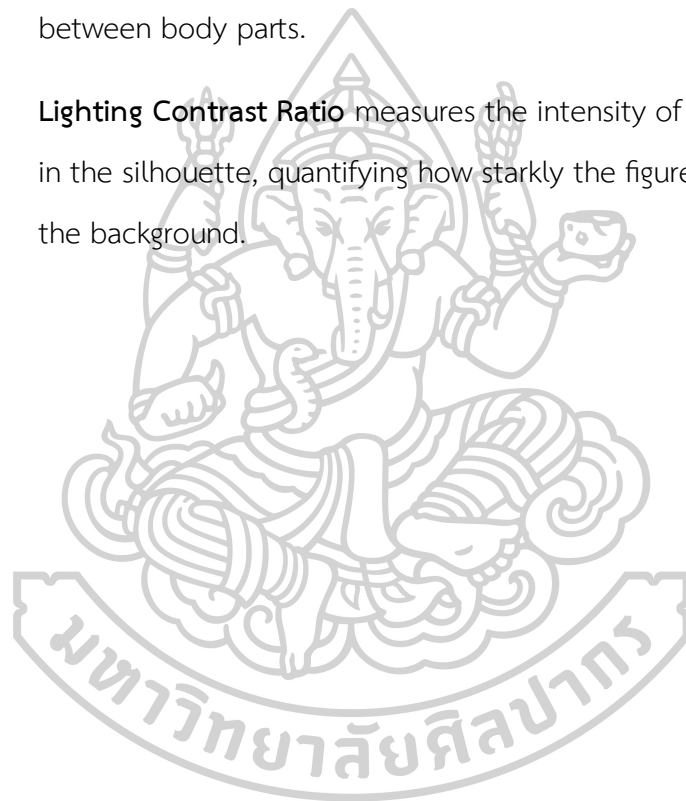
Tension of Silhouette

Measurement here includes:

Angles (degrees) used to describe the acute or obtuse angles at which body parts like elbows and knees are positioned, indicating the sharpness or softness of the silhouette.

Ratio like "Torso to Limb," expressing the proportional relationship between body parts.

Lighting Contrast Ratio measures the intensity of light versus shadow in the silhouette, quantifying how starkly the figure is outlined against the background.



5.3.2 “Tension of Form” Visualization



Figure 45 Analyzing Tension in Form, Ekathep Michaels, 2024

In "Tension of Form," the imagery focuses intricately on the interplay of light and muscle, with particular attention to the curvature of muscle groups. The photography employs a 45-degree lighting angle that casts shadows deep enough to showcase the relief and texture of muscles, emphasizing the swell of the biceps and the indentation of abdominal muscles, where the shadow-to-light ratio often reaches 1:3, highlighting depth and definition. The perspective used is typically from a 30-degree elevation relative to the horizon line of the subject, which enhances the perception of dominance and grandeur in the forms presented.

Feature	Measurement	Description
Lighting Angle	45°	Enhances muscle definition through shadowing
Muscle Definition Contrast	1:3	Depth of shadows vs. illuminated areas
Viewing Angle	30°	Elevation giving a sense of dominance and size

Table 20 Aesthetic Measurements for Tension of Form

Tension of Form

Measurement here includes:

Lighting Angle (degrees), which specifies the angle at which light hits the subject, crucial for creating shadows that define muscles.

Muscle Definition Contrast, a ratio indicating the contrast between highly lit and shadowed areas, useful for assessing how well muscle definition is visually emphasized.

Viewing Angle (degrees) relative to the subject, which influences the perception of stature and prominence.



5.3.3 “Tension of Contraction” Visualization



Figure 46 Analyzing Tension in Contraction, Ekathep Michaels, 2024

The "Tension of Contraction" explores the dynamic balance and tension within the body through carefully composed shots that emphasize muscle contractions and the interplay between tension and relaxation. This section examines the body as a living sculpture, where each pose and muscle contraction reveals the interplay of strength and vulnerability. Photographs capture the contraction of muscles at varying degrees, such as the tightening of a bicep or the stretching of leg muscles during a leap. Angles in these contractions can range dramatically from tight 20-degree angles in flexed muscles to broader 160-degree angles in extended limbs, highlighting the body's capability and aesthetic form in motion.

Feature	Measurement	Description
Contraction Angle	20° - 160°	Range showing the degree of muscle tension and extension
Dynamic Range	High	Variation from tight to extended muscle poses

Table 21 Aesthetic Measurements for Tension of Contraction

Tension of Contraction

Measurement here includes:

Contraction Angle (degrees), which specifies the range of angles observed in the muscles during contraction and relaxation, reflecting the dynamic range of movement and tension in the physique.

5.3.4 “Tension of Texture” Visualization

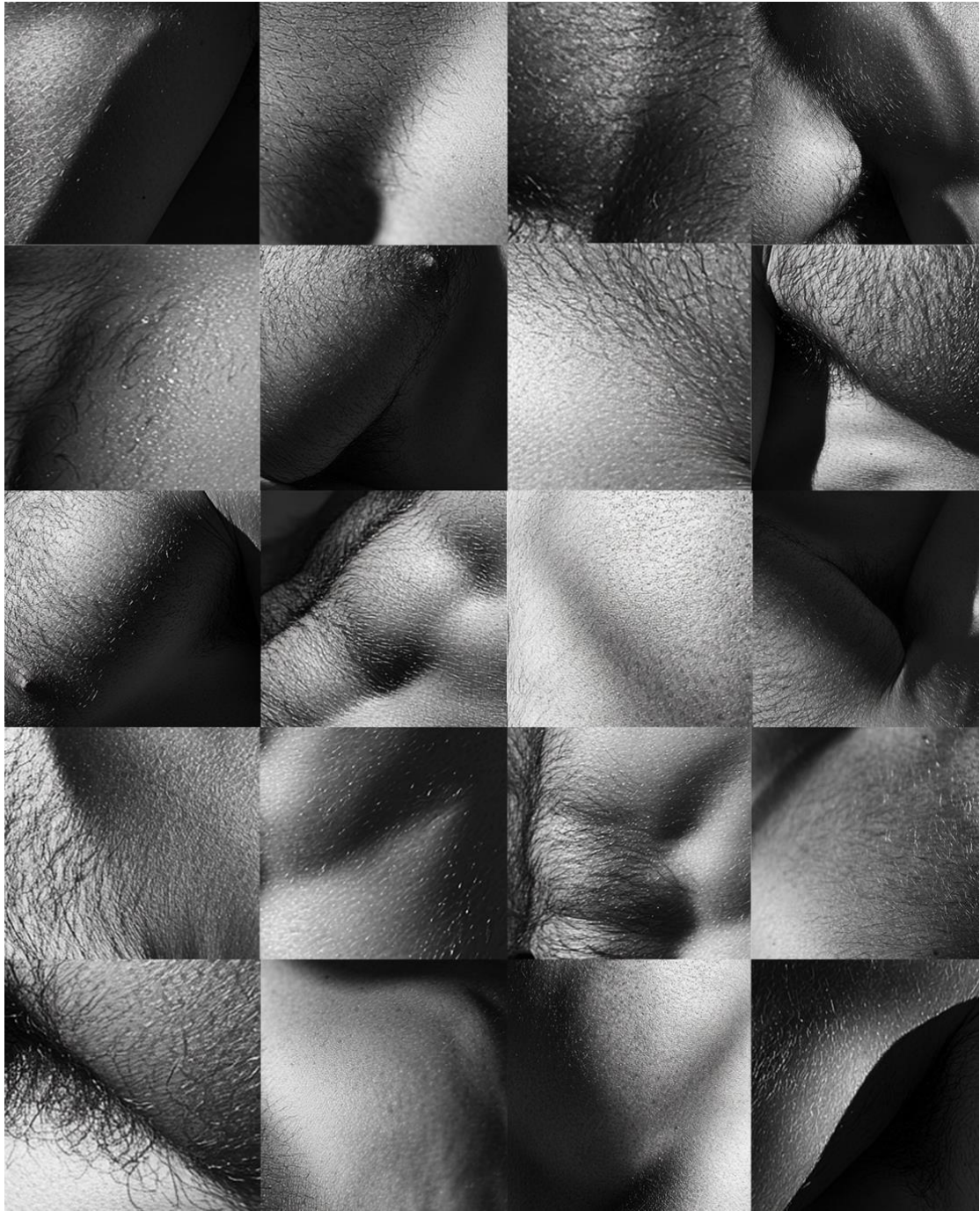


Figure 47 Analyzing Tension in Texture, Ekathep Michaels, 2024

The "Tension of Texture" section offers a deep dive into the tactile qualities of the skin's surface through extreme close-ups, magnifying details to a scale where 1

centimeter of skin spans 10 centimeters of visual space. Near-tangential lighting, approximately 10 degrees off the surface, casts tiny shadows in the skin's textures, such as pores and fine hairs, emphasizing their impact on aesthetic perception. The contrast between smooth, almost marble-like skin areas and the more complex, rugged textures of hairier regions provides a tactile dimension to the visuals, inviting the viewer to experience the imagery on a sensory level.

Feature	Measurement	Description
Texture Magnification	10x	Close-ups showing detailed skin textures
Lighting Angle	10° off surface	Casts minute shadows enhancing tactile qualities

Table 22 Aesthetic Measurements for Tension of Texture

Tension of Texture

Measurement here includes:

Texture Magnification (times magnification), indicating how much the texture is enlarged in the visual representation to highlight details.

Lighting Angle (degrees off surface), which details how slanted the lighting is to enhance the visibility of textures like pores and hair on the skin.

CHAPTER 6
REFLECTION ON THE ARTIFACT





Figure 48 “Tension” Exhibition at “Substance and Form” Exhibition at Bangkok Art and Culture Centre

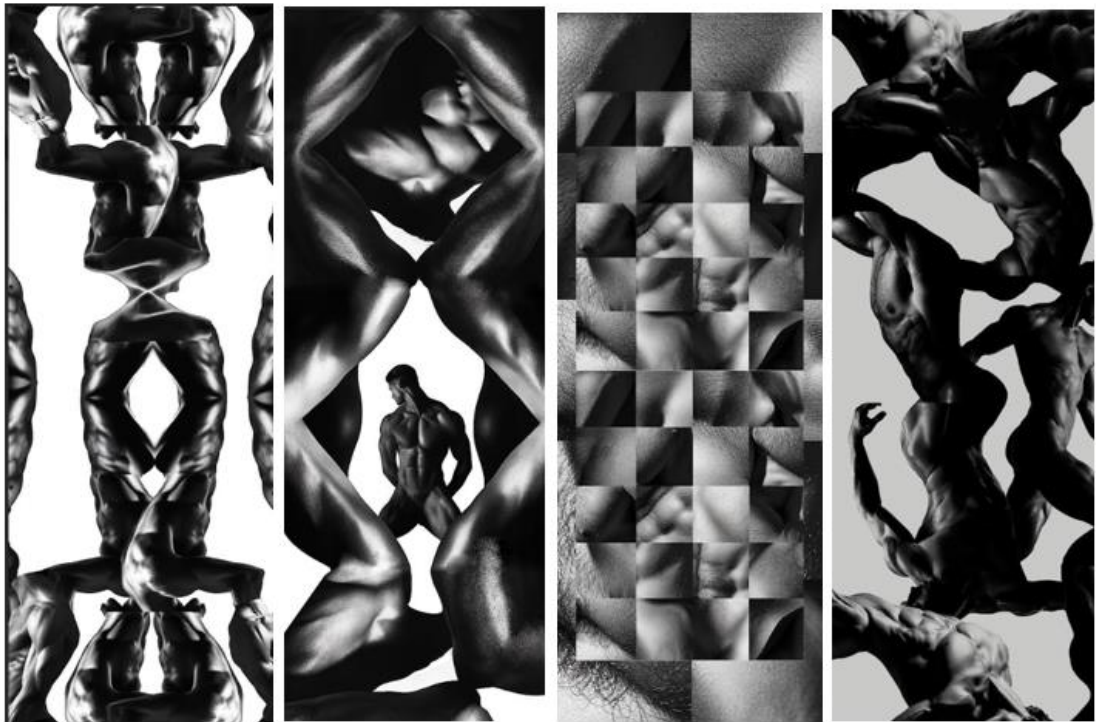


Figure 49 "Tension" by Ekathap Michaels

6.1 Introduction to the Artifact

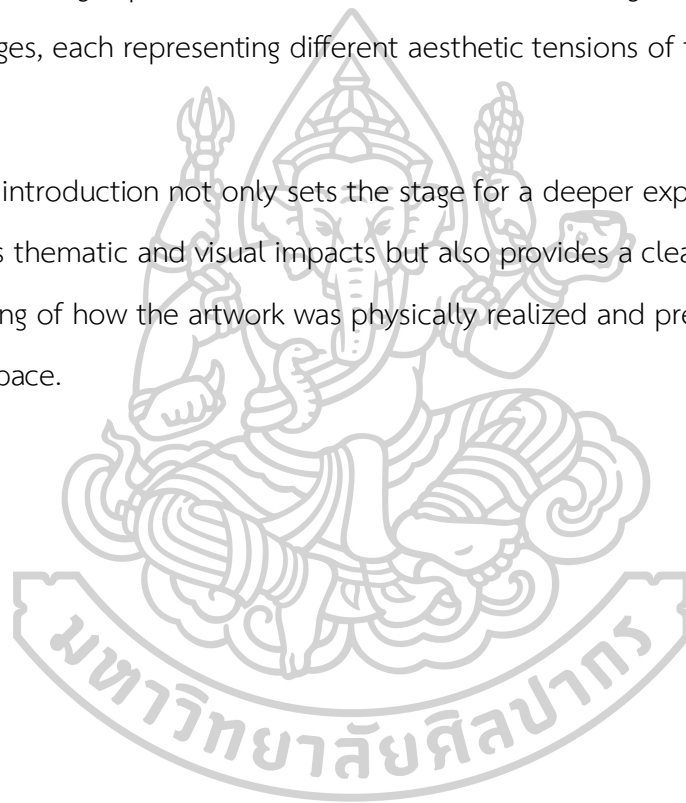
The final installation (Figure 74), as conceptualized and presented at the Bangkok Art and Culture Centre (BACC), was a sophisticated design blending artistic expression with structural precision. The 3D SketchUp model details four concave fabric pieces, each meticulously measured at 4 meters tall and 1.5 meters wide, arranged in a circular formation. This structure was thoughtfully designed to reflect the architectural circularity of BACC, symbolizing the nuanced positioning of gay individuals within the broader societal matrix.

Each fabric panel, supported by a specially designed frame, was arranged to form a concave shape that invites viewers into a circular enclosed space. This architectural arrangement was not only functional, facilitating the viewers' movement and interaction within the installation but also symbolic, representing the visibility

and yet the enclosure of the gay community within a predominantly heterosexual cultural setting.

The SketchUp model illustrates (figure 74) the precise measurements and the arrangement of the hanging fabric panels. Each panel is suspended from a height of 4100 mm, and the total span of the four panels reaches 5400 mm, creating a substantial visual and spatial impact. The spacing between the panels allows for a permeable viewing experience, where viewers can see through multiple layers of printed images, each representing different aesthetic tensions of the male form (Figure 75).

This introduction not only sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the installation's thematic and visual impacts but also provides a clear, detailed visual understanding of how the artwork was physically realized and presented within the exhibition space.



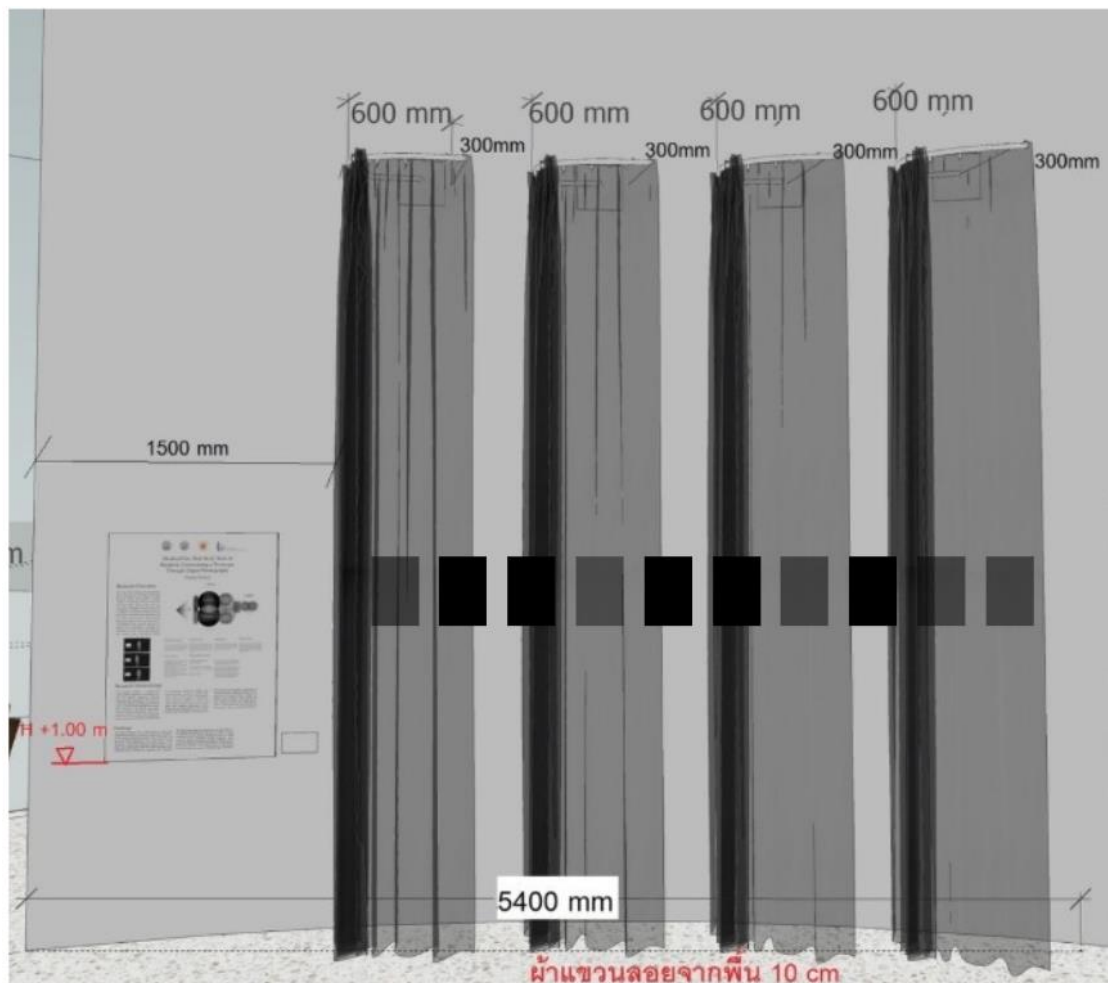


Figure 50 Sketch Up of “Tension” Exhibition Set Up at BACC

6.2 Viewer Engagement and Interpretation

Throughout the exhibition period from October 22 to October 27, 2024, the installation acted as a dynamic canvas of interaction. Observations recorded during the exhibition highlighted how visitors not only engaged visually with the artifact but also physically interacted with the space by moving in and around the fabric structures. The smaller, inset black-and-white photographs of male form silhouettes, discreetly placed within the concave folds of the fabric, required viewers to enter the installation's core to fully view them—this act of entering and discovering

echoed the thematic exploration of revealing and concealing that defines the gay experience. The outer sheer fabric printed with the male form subtly engaged even the uninformed viewer, leading to moments of inadvertent interaction where the essence of the male form was abstracted to textural aesthetics, often captured in the photographs taken by families and children.

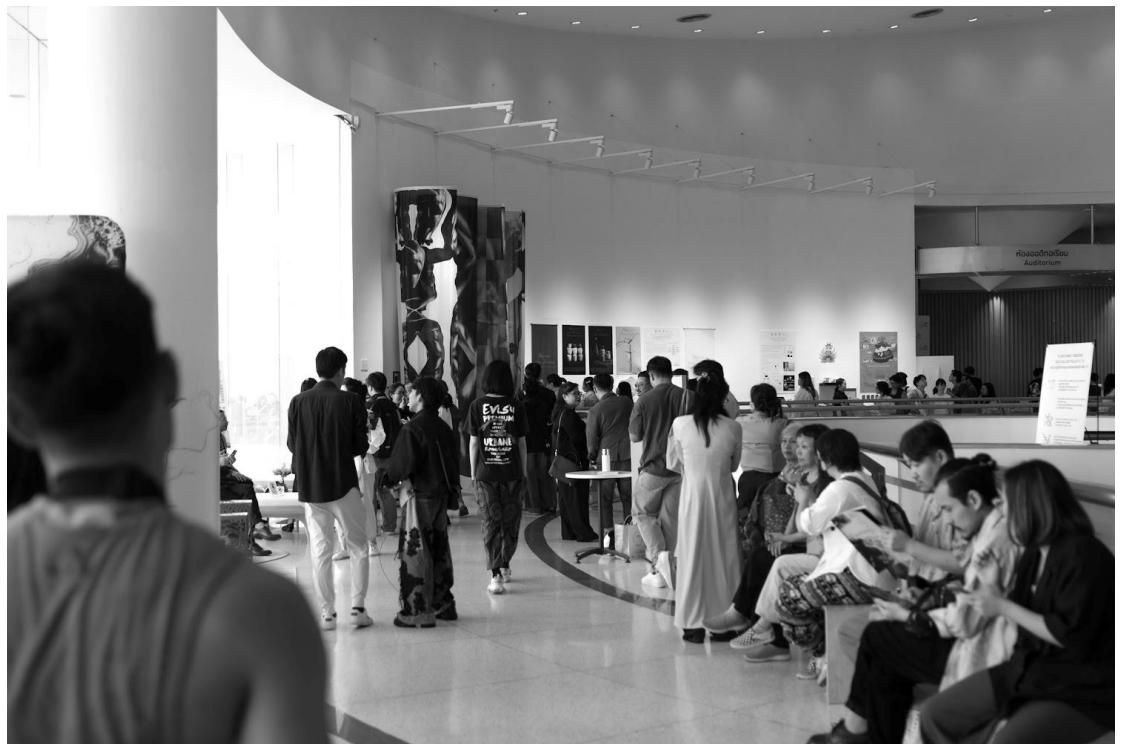


Figure 51 “Tension” Exhibition Opening Day at BACC

6.3 Feedback from the Community and Art Professionals

The feedback from the gay male community was not only affirming but also reflective of the cultural relevance and impact of the artifact. Community members expressed that the representation was not only appropriate but also evocative of the lived experiences of gay individuals, offering a powerful affirmation of their identity within a public space. Additionally, discussions with gallery owners and art professionals provided critical insights into the spatial dynamics of the exhibition. Many suggested that the potential of the artifact could be fully realized in a dedicated space, tailored to enhance the viewer's immersive experience. This

feedback underscored the need for a dedicated exhibition room, suggesting that such a space would allow the themes of visibility, identity, and tension to be explored more deeply and intimately.

6.4 Reflections on the Exhibition Experience

The exhibition served as a powerful platform not only for presenting the research findings but also for the personal and professional growth of the researcher.

Throughout the course of the exhibition, it became evident that engaging directly with viewers and stakeholders provided invaluable insights that extended beyond the confines of academic study.

Learning and Insights

The interactions and feedback during the exhibition period provided a unique opportunity to observe firsthand the public's reception to an artistic representation of the gay male form through the "homo gaze." This experience highlighted the often unspoken nuances of Asian beauty standards, which traditionally emphasize conformity to certain aesthetic norms. The installation challenged these norms by presenting the male form in a manner that diverges from mainstream representations, thus provoking thought and dialogue among viewers.

Through these interactions, it became clear that while the exhibition was successful in engaging and challenging viewers, the Asian context posed distinct challenges. The prevailing standards of beauty in Asia, which often prioritize certain body types, skin tones, and features, can limit the appreciation of diversity within male beauty. This realization sparked a deeper reflection on how such standards shape and constrain not only aesthetic preferences but also social and cultural acceptance.

Researcher's Personal Reflections

As a researcher, engaging with the audience allowed for a deeper understanding of the cultural and social barriers that still persist in fully embracing diverse representations of beauty. This engagement underscored the need for continuous dialogue and education to broaden perceptions and challenge the existing narratives surrounding beauty and identity in Asia.

The exhibition was also a learning ground for testing the effectiveness of different artistic mediums and configurations in communicating complex ideas. The feedback on the spatial setup and the viewers' emotional responses to the sheer fabric's imagery provided practical insights into how art can be leveraged more effectively to communicate research themes.

6.5 Limitations and Future Directions

While this research provides comprehensive insights into the perceptions of male beauty through the homo-gaze within Bangkok's gay community, it is constrained by several limitations. The study's focus on Bangkok may not encapsulate the diversity of experiences across different regions of Thailand or other cultural contexts. The participant demographic might not fully represent the entire spectrum of the gay community, particularly in terms of age, socio-economic backgrounds, and cultural diversity, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the subjective nature of beauty and identity means that interpretations and conclusions might be influenced by the biases and cultural backgrounds of both the researcher and participants. Moreover, as beauty standards are continually evolving, the findings might lose relevance as social norms and cultural perceptions shift.

Future studies could address these limitations and extend the research in several ways. Expanding the geographic scope to include other regions or countries could provide a broader understanding of cultural influences on beauty perceptions. Longitudinal studies would offer insights into how these perceptions evolve over time in response to changing societal norms. Employing technologies like virtual reality could innovate the methods of exploring visual representations and their impacts. An interdisciplinary approach, integrating psychology, sociology, and media studies, could deepen the understanding of the complex interactions between societal norms and personal identities. Lastly, investigating the implications of these findings on policy-making and community initiatives could enhance efforts to promote inclusivity and diversity in representations of beauty.

Looking Forward

Reflecting on these experiences, the researcher acknowledges the need for further exploration into how art and exhibitions can be designed to more effectively challenge and reshape societal perceptions, especially in contexts that are traditionally less receptive to deviations from the norm. The future direction of this research will focus on expanding the scope of engagement and exploring more diverse mediums and methods to challenge and transform the conventional understandings of beauty in Asian societies.



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