
Critics On Western Beauty Ideals: All That Glitters Is Not Gold

To start, the concept of representation was first introduced by Plato and Aristotle with a term called 'mimesis' to define the imitation of character in literature and art. Both Plato and Aristotle agree that a poet imitates nature and the meaning of the poem itself reflects nature, therefore, literature is a form of representation (Baker 168). On the other hand, Stuart Hall believes that the meaning of a text is not a reflection of nature, but is built through language (Hall 15). According to Hall, there are two systems of representation. The first, 'is the 'system' by which all kinds of objects, humans, and events correlate with a set of concepts or mental representations that we carry in our heads, this is known as a shared conceptual map. Then, this shared conceptual map is articulated through the second system, namely language. With language work, this shared meaning is represented and exchanged by members of the language. Language is operated by translating conceptual maps into written, oral, or image language. The language form of this variation is then called the 'sign' (Hall 17-18).

The music video started with the appearance of Alessia Cara with her face without any make-up, her naturally curly hair, wearing a simple black long sleeves shirt and simple black pair of jeans. She looks very natural in an empty room with huge windows in her background; this clearly brings up the idea of simplicity in the music video. Later on, there are some women and men from all age range introducing their names as Jess, Carmel, Francesca, Miles, Myren, Marney, Florence, Shavon, Joanna, Christina, Josh, Kylie, Miranda, Joad, Grace, James, and Tasha. There is one familiar face that shows up here, Joanna, or as known as Jojo is a public figure. From here, I believe that the music video is trying to reach out to all of the audience that even a public figure has insecurities as well. From the introduction, the audience can clearly see that these people are so diverse, physically. The songs then continued and from this part of the music video the lyric synchronized the clip very well as the lyric goes "deeper than the eyes can find it", the camera goes close up to Shavon's eyes; "so she tries to cover up her pain", the camera goes to Carmel, the woman who wears head-cover; "and cut her woes away", the camera goes to Myreen's face; "cause cover girls don't cry", the camera goes to Shavon's full-body sitting on the chair as if she's in the middle of a photoshoot session; "after their face is made", the camera goes to Joanna while she is covering up her face with her hands. Entering the refrain of the song, the first image shows is an overweight woman, this woman is not a part of those who introduce themselves earlier, and she represents beauty in all sizes. The next person is Miles, the camera then closes up to one of his un-perfect ears, represents beauty in the imperfection. The camera then does another close-up of a stretch mark on a woman's stomach, another representation that emphasizes scars won't determine someone's beauty. The camera then shoots Carmel while she's opening her headcover. Next, the camera closing up to Grace, a woman with slanted eyes smiling, another representation of beauty in all shapes.

The next part of the music video shows some of the models sharing their thoughts and experience as Maureen says "there are my peers, and then there was me", initiating the insecurities women tend to feel. Joanna says "and a lot of people aren't afraid to give their opinions whether they're hurtful or not", which represents the current society that is judgmental. Then Kylie says "people would laugh and stare" (at her) because she is a cancer survivor who loses her hair for the chemo. An overweight woman says "people watching you eat and making

little comments”, another experience that represents the current situation of society. Franchesca says “as I grew up thinking that I had to look a certain way”, which represents the stereotypes and perceptions build by society. Franchesca has an athletic body with muscles that is more identic with men’s body, this is another representation of beauty in all shapes. Christina, the Asian woman, says “I never thought I was as pretty as the other girls”, which represents the insecurities women tend to have. Then Miles says “be proud, I shouldn’t be trying to hide it” which represents how people are supposed to be proud and not be ashamed by their flaws. The camera then starts closing up to Miranda’s scars on her chest and the camera move to shot her smiling. There is a transgender woman who shows up after, represents another shape of beauty. The next part of the music video is another sharing session of thoughts and experience as Miranda says “what I love about people is when they’re just being themselves and not worrying about what they look like”. Marney says “...eyelashes and my hair extensions, that’s you always want what you don’t have”, which represents another insecure feeling of how people want to have something to look perfect and the feeling of dissatisfaction. An overweight woman says “it’s been something I’ve struggled with my entire life, not feeling like I fit in”, this represents the struggle of women who have the same body dissatisfaction issues as her, feeling like they never fit in.

The music video then entering the stage of confidentiality and realization of self-worth, self-love, and body satisfaction as Mayren says “hold on and just wait until you can get out of that bubble, because the things that seem like weaknesses, that seems like weird things that make you strange when you become an adult and get out into the world, you’re gonna find out that all those differences, they’re like your greatest strengths”, a very powerful message to encourage everyone to consider their flaws and differences as their greatest strength. While Mayren says that, the music video shows and trying to emphasize the other models’ flaws and their uniqueness, including Joad’s hairy hands, Josh with his black skin color, a tattoo of the words Hope and Faith, a woman with hole scars in her neck, Carmel open up her head-cover and showing confidence with her bald head, and some more new models expressing their confidence through their big smiles. Tasha says “a lot of it was in my own head I realize now”, which represents that most of these insecurities are actually came from ourselves, indirectly trying to tell the audience to start loving and fully accept ourselves first. Josh says “there’s always someone unique now, which is what the cool part and that’s what made me comfortable to realize that every single person is different”, which represents more confidence self-love. Followed by Joad says “personality outshines everything else at the end of the day”, this is one of the strongest messages that the music video is trying to carry with it that personality is all that matters and our physical appearance should not take our confidence away because the true meaning of beauty shines from within. Christina says “what only matters is what I think of myself and that everyone has different kinds of beauty”, another message that we should never let what other people think of ourselves influence the way we see ourselves, and that everyone is beautiful with their own kinds of beauty. Another woman who is not a part of those introducing their names says “smile, smile”. Followed with all the models smiling and shining their confidence self out. The music video ends with a message as follows:

“Oftentimes, the world both directly and indirectly tells us that we shouldn’t be happy with ourselves if we don’t fit certain beauty standards. Scars to your beauty are a reminder that beauty isn’t only one look, shape, size, or color. It isn’t even always tangible. It comes in an endless amount of forms and we need to recognize that.”

The writer conducts a survey involving ten respondent about ‘beauty’ the respondent's age

range from 18-20+ which mean age where they already care for their own beauty and have a more open opinion regarding beauty.

When asked about what beauty is, most of them answered about appearance but followed that beauty isn't limited to physical, they stated that people's behavior and personality also count as beauty. The respondent also has various criteria on how people can be considered beautiful. All of them said that beauty is relative and the standard could be different for each person, yet true to be told appearance matters, but rather than innate physical, the respondents answered that beauty is measured by how the person takes care of themselves, how they behave, because people have their own preferences and the standards also differ for each person, moreover beauty can also be seen through their inner beauty such as personality, attitude, etc.

Regarding how respondents view themselves as beautiful, there are various responses, the positive, neutral, and the negative one. Some said they view themselves as neutral, not beautiful but aren't ugly either, some said that they feel ugly as a person because they do not fit with the mass media criteria for beauty. For those who answered positively, they said that most simply they saw themselves as 'beautiful' enough. One thing though, people tend to see themselves as narcissists when admitting that they are beautiful. This view is also related to their insecurities about their body, many people have a part(s) they like and dislike about their body hence affecting their view of themselves as beautiful people.

After showing the respondents the Alessia Cara's music video, and asked their opinion about it, all of them answered that they agree with what is conveyed in the music video, it's about the notion that all women are beautiful regardless, and that they should be proud because they are beautiful as they are, even if they get judged. After all, beauty takes so many forms not limited to the mass media has always been idealized.

Upon showing this music video, the respondents were asked whether the music video changed their mind about what they have said regarding their view on their beauty. As expected, none of them changed their view of themselves, but the music video indeed makes them change their insight on the beauty standard that has been stigmatized in society. For the people who have the same perspective, this music video strengthened their insight once again.

Nowadays, with many beauty campaigns conducted, the stigma toward women's beauty has ceased, at least. This made women gain more confidence in expressing their beauty. They showed that they are beautiful just the way they are regardless of their body curves, their faces, their skin colors, and so on. Not only that as of now, but inner beauty has also begun to be recognized as one of the important beauty aspects. However, the mass media criteria of beauty weren't as easy to change, it was the long-term product of culture after all. The message conveyed in Alessia Cara's music video 'Scars to Your Beautiful' is well-received by the mass including Indonesian teenage girls and inspiring them to see the beauty in themselves, that they are beautiful just the way they are. Truthfully, even though the music video has a strong message, it still didn't change how people see themselves, it was reasonable because it was not easy to convince oneself that has been viewed as 'not really beautiful' for a long time can be changed in a short amount of time just by watching a music video, but that doesn't mean the music video has no impact. The people who already seen it admitted that they agree with the message on the music video, and it makes them have a better point of view of the real definition of 'beauty'.