Aesthetics of Ugliness Expressed on Contemporary Women's Hair Styles

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(Received August 19, 2003)

Abstract

Aesthetics of ugliness enlarged aesthetic field and brought back the repressed, estranged things. Hair style is not an exception. So I intended to examine the contemporary(1995~2002) women's hair styles on the basis of Rosenkranz' concept of ugliness. The results are as follows:

First, extrinsic aspect contains formlessness and disfiguration.

Among characteristics of formlessness, discord means appearing on a stage with a hair style derailed from our common sense or an incomplete hair style. Asymmetry means hair decoration or hair dressing which violates the principles of design. Disharmony means excessiveness beyond the concept of accent.

Disfiguration has characteristics of vulgarity, disgust and caricature, and means cruelty, grimness or ridiculousness instead of pleasing beauty.

Second, intrinsic aspect has incorrectness.

As minority ethnic groups, estranged classes, children and women which in the previous field of absolute aesthetics were never considered as beauty appeared as subject matters of hair styles, the repressed things returned and a new genre was created thereby enlarging true aesthetic field.

Like this, I cloud confirm that aesthetics of ugliness organized today's characteristic, peculiar hair styles, and enlarged aesthetic field.

Key words : Rosenkranz' aesthetics of ugliness, formlessness, disfiguration, incorrectness, enlarged aesthetic field

I. Introduction

In modern times, aesthetics of ugliness is being lifted from the ignored or peripheral concept to the most humane issue as new meaning and value and as returning of oppressed things. Ugliness is also leading the expansion of aesthetic boundaries as animating stimulant by invigorating aesthetic impression.

Due to a series of complicated artistic trend such as pop art and surrealism since impressionism, ugliness came to do a socialistic function and play the role of exposing the alienation of subconsciousness. This includes bigger aesthetic ideal than that of absolute standard expressed in ancient art.

But such a concept of ugliness was regarded as negative aesthetics and its aesthetic value was not recognized until modern times. K. Rosenkranz(1805~1879) improved such a concept of ugliness and established it. On the basis of

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Hegelian aesthetics, and through dialectic argument of aesthetics, he maintains that the real aesthetics derives from the existence of ugliness. He also explains that the phenomenon of ugliness, as a cathartic concept, is playing its role in pursuing the real value of aesthetics, and argues on the expanded aesthetic ideal.

Though aesthetics of ugliness is an extensive aesthetic field including general aesthetics, studies on that are very scarce. An Seongyeong[1] bases the concept of ugliness expressed in modern dress and its ornaments on Rosenkranz' aesthetics of ugliness and recognizes wide sphere of expression of modern dress and its ornaments. However, dress and its ornaments range from head to foot, while his study and analysis are confined to dress. Furthermore, her study of 1994 is now irrelevant because the sphere of modern dress and its ornaments is expanded.

Accordingly, on the basis of Rosenkranz' aesthetics of ugliness which realized expanded aesthetic ideal, and centering aroung hair style which has been excluded from the study subject of dress and its ornaments, I intend to carry out a qualitative study on works displayed in pret-a-porte exhibitions from 1995 to 2002. I selected materials from an internet site(http://www.firstview.com). This internet site has a worldwide fame as a site of professional fashion information. For objectivity and logicality, materials were selected by a reference group(3 doctors of clothing and 2 students in doctor's course). Like these, I will examine aesthetics of ugliness of modern hair style centering around Rosenkranz' aesthetics of ugliness.

Ⅱ. Theoretic Background

1. Development of Aesthetics of Ugliness
The concept of ugliness appeared in the ancient Greek age. At that time, ugliness was understood as something opposing or hampering general aesthetic rules.

Platon regarded all pejorative things and trifles, namely all ultimate nonexistence as ugliness. He explained that it is a flexible sense as a separate sign, and it is a pain rather than a pleasure which is incompatible with truthful goodness. The real existence of ugliness as inferior existence to beauty reveals itself as absolute silence and hollow absoluteness. After that Aristotle accepted ugliness as lack of pleasure and lack of beauty and observed that it is a contrast of pleasure with displeasure and beauty with non-beauty. M. Ficino maintained that ugliness is morphological deficiency and such ugliness is opposed to beauty, and beauty derives from ugliness[2].

On this basis, Christianity of Middle Ages and Renaissance influenced the development of aesthetics while aesthetics of ugliness just followed in the steps of ancient times. The representative scholar of the time, Thomas Aquinas, at first said that ugliness is the opposite of beauty, but later observed that it derives from morphological deficiency or lack of order. That is to say, he understood that ugliness is absence of beauty, and ontologically minute, and surely needs a certain essential beauty.

By modern times, contrary to Neoplatonism and understanding of Christian world of later Middle Ages, ugliness was developed into something transcending beauty according to the negative Greek thoughts, and began to be grasped as a more realistic, positive, and active meaning. Because Sloger displays ugliness rather than beauty in real world as an essential expression, he sees it as something humane and realistic while mentioning ridiculous, sad ugliness as a comedy with a scornful aspect, and understanding ugliness dialectically as synthesis of contradiction out of beauty. And F. W. Schelling advocates "free evil" or positiveness

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[1] Seongyeon Ahn, "Concept of Ugliness Expressed in Modern Dress and Its Ornaments," (Master's Thesis, Graduate School of Sukmyeong Women's University, 1994).

[2] Sunhyang Yun, "Study on K. Rosenkranz' Aesthetics of Ugliness," (pp.3-5, Master's Thesis, Graduate School of Hongik University, 1985).

of evil while believing that evil is "exaltation of egoism" and derives from "positive reversal or overturn of principles." Then Hegelian aesthetics appears and criticizes the principle of nature imitation as loss of objective beauty. Eventually we come to face the Kantian proposition that the distinction between beauty and ugliness can be made only by "subjective taste."[3]

Through above-mentioned course of development, Rosenkranz readjusts the concept of ugliness on the basis of Hegelian thoughts.

2. Karl Rosenkranz' Aesthetics of Ugliness

Rosenkranz' concept of ugliness is based on Hegelian aesthetics.

The synopsis of Hegelian aesthetics is as follows:

The kernel of Hegelian thoughts is dialectical one, and, in speculation of conceptual grasping, negative thing is included as positive motive and such a spirit is called the Absolute. Namely the knowledge to develop dialectically sublated absolute spirit is a target of Hegelian philosophy, and the mode of art is understood as a need to learn the Absolute by intuition and represent it. He also developed existing conditions of art into moral spirit. He observed that in such a moral world there are harmony of two spheres - that of God and that of human being - and the thing which denies it, and to recover "self-consciousness," reconciliation instead of confrontation and contradiction is necessary. Mutual recognition of two egos through this "reconciliation" is the absolute spirit. To remove dualism of self-consciousness and reality and accomplish their unity, "reason" came into being. Form and content of spirit's represented intuition are cores of phenomenal knowledge, and important in the system of Hegelian philosophy. Under such dialectic system and in the concept of the Absolute, the narration of "contradictory distinctive, confrontational" concept is

provided. Contradiction is confrontation as contradiction about two opposite thing's existence. Namely A is A and non-A at the same time. So all existing things have something contradictory to themselves and never exist alone. A for distinction, equality of essence of various existing conditions is "the equality containing distinction," and this self-equality is not a sole, absolute thing. Distinction is divided into complicated forms and is expressed as difference, confrontation and contradiction. Difference is the distinction of the first, direct form, and the distinction among things which have no relationships with each other. Confrontation is a bipolar distinction which exists in things. This is the most essential and inevitable distinction and means a denial of itself.[4]

Rosenkranz who was influenced by Hegel completed his aesthetic concept in the dialectical thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. According to him, ugliness first of all is a negative beauty. The element which is opposite to the cause prescribing the essence of beauty constitutes the essence of ugliness. Therefore ugliness is not an incomplete beauty but a negative of beauty, and ugliness and beauty have antagonistic relationship of an equal footing. On the basis of such ugliness, he develops the concept of ugliness while dividing ugliness into 'formlessness, incorrectness and disfiguration.[5]

1) Formlessness(Die Formlosigkeit)

Formlessness can be divided into discord which is the opposite of form, asymmetry which is distinctive arrangement explaining the opposite of form, and vivid individual's disharmony of opposite form.

Discord is provided directly in a single form from overall non-rule of form, and is distinguished within the form itself, and appears in formlessness through non-rules. Asymmetry is ugly, because it denies qualitative individuality

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 14-17.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

[5] Seongyeong Ahn, *op cit.*, pp. 26-32.

of form and damages qualitative equal standard. In lack of symmetry, there exists disorder, in which one form represses and removes another.

Disharmony can change ugliness into beauty when there is inevitable equal distinction, and beauty becomes ugliness by accidental disharmony. When harmony grows powerful, it becomes disharmony, and disharmony improves itself into harmony. This differentiation should have individual negative relationships. Equal proportion brings optical weariness because of its equality which is not a form of beauty. To enrich harmony, subordinate symmetry and orderliness should be eliminated. Disharmony is recognized by stirring interest.

Such expressions of discord, asymmetry and disharmony are natural, and they are present existence for individuality in mind.

2) Incorrectness(Die Inkorrectheit)

Incorrectness means violation of existing artistic rules and incompleteness, and along with distortion it constitutes the root of restriction. Harmony of practicality with concept and harmony of objective emotion of rules lead correctness, and correctness tends toward normative essence and form. When concept or essence is not correct, it brings a change. So Rosenkranz explains incorrectness dialectically. Namely through the concept of thesis that art has a common standard by nature and historical ideology for the correctness of shape, and through the concept of antithesis of special form, he explains that neglect of justness and equality is incorrectness.

3) Disfiguration(Die Defiguration)

Disfiguration has a distinctive steps as indispensible order. As beauty provides ugliness with a positive premise, vulgarity instead of excellence, misery instead of geniality, and satire instead of idealism appear.

Ⅲ. Aesthetics of Ugliness Expressed in Comtemporary Hair Styles

Rosenkranz explains ugliness on the basis of dialectical Hegelian thoughts. He observes that beauty has something in common with ugliness in that it is human agony and struggle to find out original existence from self-alienation for aesthetic spirit in classical art. And what includes "ugliness of content" depending on expressions of falsity and denial has been leading artistic creation which produces beauty. So though ugliness is a collapse of value or a denial of life, in overall art it has consciousness and it is a conversion to aesthetic value. Namely he understands ugliness as something cathartic.

The researchers examined aesthetics of ugliness of modern hair styles with structural, moulding, extrinsic expression aspect and its intrinsic meaning structure on this basis. In Rosenkranz' aesthetics of ugliness, extrinsic expression aspect presents itself as formlessness and disfiguration, and its contents are discord, asymmetry and disharmony in formlessness, and vulgarity, disgust and caricature in disfiguration. I'll develop the concept of ugliness by classifying intrinsic meaning structure into incorrectness. 〈Table 1〉 shows this.

1. Expression Aspect of Extrinsic Ugliness of Modern Hair Styles

I'll examine expression aspect of extrinsic

〈Table 1〉 Rosenkranz' Aesthetics of Ugliness

Extrinsic aspect	Formlessness	Discord
		Asymmetry
		Disharmony
	Disfiguration	Vulgarity
		Disgust
		Caricature
Intrinsic aspect	Incorrectness	Minority ethnic group
		Poor people
		Estranged job
		Women

ugliness of modern hair styles by dividing it into formlessness and disfiguration.

1) Formlessness

The researchers examined expression aspect of extrinsic ugliness of modern hair styles by dividing it with Rosenkranz' concept of formless ugliness. Formlessness is divided into discord which appears in non-rule through non-standard, asymmetry which denies qualitative individuality of form and damages qualitative equal standard, and disharmony which is expressed not in equal distinction but in accidental distinction.

In expression aspect of extrinsic ugliness of modern hair styles, discord is not universal, normative aesthetic field which is so accustomed to us that what is different from it seems awkward or even wrong. It rather seems to be a revolt against existing aesthetic value.

As an example of discord, a model appeared in a fashion show with curling pins ⟨Fig. 1⟩. Curling pins are used in preparing for hair dressing, and not used in completed hair styles. It can be interpreted as a revolt against our universal, sensible, aesthetic field and an extrinsic expression of ugliness to show up in a fashion show with curling pins. In ⟨Fig. 2⟩, a model's hair style is not young, beautiful, orderly one, but seedy one which remind us of hoary old woman. It is not silver hair but hoary hair, and it seems to be an opposite expression to universal aesthetic field of young, beautiful hair styles.

Asymmetry is the resistance to symmetric aesthetic standard, and appears through destruction of symmetry. Asymmetry expresses itself through destruction of symmetry, proportion, emphasis, rhythm and harmony which are the most basic principles of design.

As an example of asymmetry, pink-colored hair of ⟨Fig. 3⟩ is decorated with 3 knots of lock. Judging by size and degree of perfection, it is neither proportion nor symmetry, and it is too big to be interpreted as emphasis. Because there is no proceeding, it is not rhythm either. Therefore it is not symmetric extrinsic expression aspect but asymmetric one. And in ⟨Fig. 4⟩, a hair style has a shape of animal's horns which is not becoming to a feminine, elegant dress, and it gives a very crude, strong feeling. This also seems to be an expression aspect which intentionally destroys overall symmetry.

In the principle of design, there is a deep relation between disharmony and harmony. That is to say, excessive harmony invites weariness, which leads to disharmony. And inevitable equal distinction can change ugliness into beauty while beauty can be changed into ugliness by accidental disharmony.

As n example of disharmony, ⟨Fig. 5⟩ shows excessively rumpled fore lock. Because its rumpled unnaturalness is too intentionally expressed, really unnatural ugly hair style is accidentally induced. ⟨Fig. 6⟩ shows a black model who is wearing a red dress and a green-colored

⟨Fig. 1⟩   ⟨Fig. 2⟩   ⟨Fig. 3⟩   ⟨Fig. 4⟩

⟨Fig. 5⟩   ⟨Fig. 6⟩

⟨Fig. 7⟩   ⟨Fig. 8⟩

wig. The disorderly swelled hair style intentionally employs too much disharmony and really disharmonious expression is formed. Pertinent disharmony can help to overcome weariness and create new beauty, but excessive disharmony and intentional expression of disharmony lead not to the field of beauty but to the field of ugliness.

2) Disfiguration

Disfiguration of extrinsic aspect means deviation from orderly geometrical harmony. But it should be understood as something different from formlessness. Beyond simply destroying formal standard, it contains ironical meaning of satire. Its concept includes grotesque, decadence, kitch, pastiche, parody, etc., and it has an expanded function. According to Rosenkranz' aesthetics of ugliness, disfiguration of extrinsic aspect of such a satirical hair style has 3 characteristics: vulgarity, disgust and satire.

Vulgarity is the quality in personality or behavior which is hostile to our ideal and represses other things.[6] As ⟨Fig. 7⟩ shows, excessive use of decorations brings a counter result of diminishing beauty. And as ⟨Fig. 8⟩ indicates, a model half of whose face is painted blue, a yellow flower, a different colored wig, ribbons, etc. do not match each other at all. Excessive use of unmatched decorations brings a

decadent, vulgar image.

Disgust is expressing satirically something fearsome, horrifying or lowly through synical things from which pleasing smile is excluded.[7] As ⟨Fig. 9⟩ indicates, the design of head-shielding leather is expressing overall cruel image which reminds us of a brutal criminal without exposing a face at all. In ⟨Fig. 10⟩, a face is shielded with metal, which expresses some weirdness depicting cruelty of war and cold-blooded human being instead of beauty.

When we observe a certain phenomenon in our lives or recognize the artistic description - i. e. caricature - of it, ugliness, vulgarity, triviality or shallowness of the phenomenon becomes something comical which brings a laugh or a
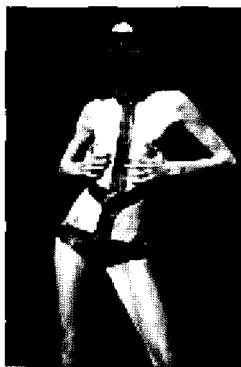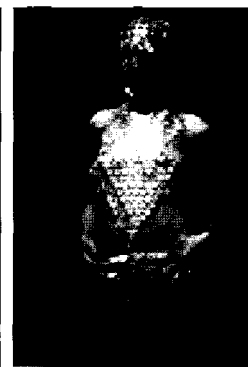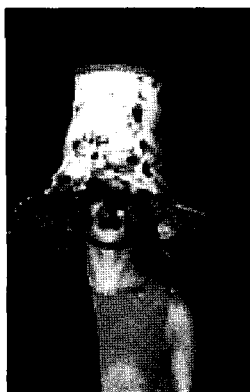

⟨Fig. 9⟩   ⟨Fig. 10⟩

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[6] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

〈Fig. 11〉   〈Fig. 12〉

smile. Therefore we may understand the characteristics of caricature as a comical aesthetic phenomenon. In 〈Fig. 11〉, a model is wearing a lampshade, which can be understood as a comical aesthetic phenomenon. In 〈Fig. 12〉, make-up is very comical, and hair is playfully decorated with ribbons of many colors while hair is presented disorderly. Such expression can also be understood as a comical distortion.

2. Meaning Structure of Intrinsic Ugliness of Modern Hair Styles

The researchers intended to understand meaning structure of intrinsic ugliness of modern hair styles as incorrectness.

1) Incorrectness

Incorrectness means incompleteness or violation of existing rules of art. It can be defined as what is not the correct essence tending toward correct standards or forms. The sociostructural motive of such incorrectness is developed as the ranks and boundaries of social classes tumble down and social structure becomes more horizontal. Such a change of social structure also appears in the field of culture, and the classical value system pursuing absolute beauty and truth is being dismembered. Instead variousness and

variableness are accepted, while different fields penetrate each other instead of keeping their own domains. Such phenomena appear in politics, economy, science, culture, art, and all.[8] Such a result seems to derive from the identity crisis or the alienation.

So incorrectness, the intrinsic meaning of aesthetics of ugliness, is what Freud called "the return of the repressed." What has been repressed or ignored by the authoritative, institutional modernism and remained in the periphery comes to obtain new meanings and values.[9]

Such an ignored, repressed aesthetic field or a field of ugly incorrectness shows up in the meaning structure of intrinsic ugliness of modern hair styles, and creates new beauty and develops a new aesthetic field.

The expression of incorrectness of modern hair styles has the meaning structure which contains the meaning of aesthetics of ugliness by using alienated items such as women, nation, (estranged) jobs, minority ethnic groups.

In a man-centered society where women were no more than assistants for men, men did not bother to imitate or emulate women's hair styles. Now it is not easy to distinguish a man from a woman with a figure from behind, and hair styles of man's and woman's meaning structures do not exist any longer. In the past, furthermore, everybody followed western hair styles. But now western people are imitating other nation's hair styles and non-western hair styles are prevalent all over the world. Namely what has been alienated and ignored, and cannot be defined as the term 'correctness' which we understand as superior or certain, comes to be incorporated into the aesthetic field as a new genre.

Therefore incorrectness of aesthetics of ugliness is the creation of a new genre along with the rise of the alienated. This creation of a new genre came to play a role in expanding expression methods and the aesthetic field. Namely

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[8] Jeonghu Lee, "Uncertainty Expressed in Postmodern Fashion," (p. 17, Doctor's Thesis, Department of Clothing, Sukmyeong Women's University, 1998).

[9] Seongyeong Ahn, op cit., p. 79.

〈Table 2〉 Expression Aspects of Ugliness of Modern Hair Styles

		Discord	Fig. 1, 2
Extrinsic Aspect	Formless- ness	Discord	Fig. 1, 2
		Asymmetry	Fig. 3, 4
		Disharmony	Fig. 5, 6
	Disfigu- ration	Vulgarity	Fig. 7, 8
		Disgust	Fig. 9, 10
		Caricature	Fig. 11, 12
Intrinsic Aspect	Incorrect- ness	Minority ethnic group	* Return of the repressed
		Poor people	* Creation of a new genre
		Estranged job	* Expansion of aesthetic field
		Women	

the domain and the form of the real aesthetic field were expanded by the concept of ugliness.

Such aesthetics of ugliness of modern hair styles can be organized as follows on the basis of Rosenkranz' concept of ugliness.

IV. Conclusion

In modern times, an absolute aesthetic sense was shaken. Beauty was enlarged and became subjective. Even aesthetics of ugliness was incorporated into the concept of beauty. Aesthetics of ugliness incorporated what had been considered as ugliness in the past into the concept of "good appearance." This aesthetics of ugliness, in fact, came to play a role in enlarging aesthetic field and bringing back the repressed, alienated world.

This aesthetics of ugliness was not recognized until Rosenkranz put it in order and organized it. Therefore I intended to examine the enlarged aesthetic field of contemporary(1995~2002) women's hair styles and its extrinsic & intrinsic meanings on the basis of Rosenkranz' concept of ugliness. The results are as follows:

Extrinsic aspect contains formlessness and disfiguration.

Formlessness has characteristics of discord, asymmetry and disharmony. Discord means a behavior derailed from our common sense such as a disorderly hair style or appearing on the stage with an incomplete hair style. Asymmetry is a deviation from the principles of design such as decorating or dressing hair with something too big or off the balance. Disharmony, developed from the concept of accent, means the destruction of harmony with too much exaggeration such as rumpling or excessive dyeing which is not the concept of change or accent but the excessiveness. Disfiguration has characteristics of vulgarity, disgust and caricature, and means aesthetic field of cruelty, grimness or ridiculousness instead of pleasing beauty. Aesthetics of ugliness provides extrinsic aspect which could never appear in a fashion show in the last generation.

As intrinsic aspect, there is incorrectness.

Minority ethnic groups, estranged classes, children and women that were never considered as beauty in the previous absolute aesthetic field became subject matters of hair styles. This is the return of the repressed and it contributed to enlarging the true aesthetic field by creating a new genre.

Today's characteristic, peculiar aesthetic field could organize its phenomena with aesthetics of ugliness. It was meaningful to explain systematically today's pluralistic, subjective, equivocal presentation of hair styles by examining the expression field of hair part the study of which is still unsatisfactory. I also could confirm that aesthetic field of hair styles deviated from the previous field of presentation of hair styles and enlarged to the limitless field of expression.

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