

GROTESQUE BODY: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY DIALOGUE ON BODY PERCEPTION AND PLASTIC INTERPRETATIONS OF CHANGES IN WOMEN'S HEALTH

GROTESK BEDEN: KADIN SAĞLIĞINDAKİ DEĞİŞİMLERİN PLASTİK YORUMLARI VE VÜCUT ALGISI ÜZERİNE DİSİPLİNLERARASI BİR DİYALOG

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the physical changes in women's health in the context of grotesque aesthetics and to examine the interdisciplinary dialogue between art and health. The body, which is at the center of art, has been transformed by factors such as sociology, politics, faith and science from past to present. The representation of the body positioned with its perfection in art has been replaced by its opposite, the imperfect body. This new representation in art is important in terms of saving the body, which is considered imperfect, from being the other. While bodily differences caused by health problems challenge traditional norms of beauty, grotesque aesthetics reinterprets these differences from an artistic perspective. The effects of health problems on the body that cause deterioration in physical appearance change the way individuals perceive themselves and lead to social stigmatization. By making such bodies visible, art supports the psychosocial well-being of individuals and offers alternative narratives that question perceptions of beauty and normality. In this study, the concept of the grotesque body is analyzed through historical and modern artworks, and how art transforms body perception is discussed. It is emphasized that interdisciplinary art and health collaborations are an important tool for making sense of physical transformations in women's health and developing more inclusive health policies.

Keywords: Body Perception, Interdisciplinary Dialogue, Grotesque Body, Women's Health, Plastic Interpretations

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada, kadın sağlığında yaşanan fiziksel değişimlerin grotesk estetik bağlamında ele alınması ve sanat ile sağlık arasındaki disiplinlerarası diyalogu incelemek amaçlanmıştır. Sanatın merkezinde yer alan beden, geçmişten günümüze sosyolojik, politik, inanç ve bilim gibi etkenlerle dönüşüme uğramıştır. Sanatta kusursuzluğu ile konumlanan beden temsili, zamanla yerini karşıtı olan kusurlu bedene bırakmıştır. Sanattaki bu yeni temsil kusurlu sayılan bedenin öteki olmaktan kurtarılması bakımından önem taşımaktadır. Sağlık sorunları nedeniyle ortaya çıkan bedensel farklılıklar, geleneksel güzellik normlarına meydan okurken, grotesk estetik bu farklılıkları sanatsal bir perspektiften yeniden yorumlamaktadır. Fiziksel görünümde bozulmaya neden sağlık sorunlarının beden üzerindeki etkileri, bireylerin kendilerini algılama biçimlerini değiştirmekte ve toplumsal damgalamaya yol açmaktadır. Sanat, bu tür bedenleri görünür kılarak bireylerin psikososyal iyilik halini desteklemekte, güzellik ve normallik algılarını sorgulayan alternatif anlatılar sunmaktadır. Çalışmada, grotesk beden kavramı tarihsel ve modern sanat eserleri üzerinden analiz edilmiş, sanatın beden algısını nasıl dönüştürdüğü

tartışılmıştır. Disiplinlerarası sanat ve sağlık iş birliklerinin, kadın sağlığındaki fiziksel dönüşümleri anlamlandırmada ve daha kapsayıcı sağlık politikaları geliştirmede önemli bir araç olduğu vurgulanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Beden Algısı, Disiplinlerarası Diyalog, Grotesk Beden, Kadın Sağlığı, Plastik Yorumlar

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, the female body has been constantly discussed and shaped in artistic, social and aesthetic contexts. The body has not only been a biological structure, but also a symbol to which various meanings such as beauty, health and identity are attributed. It has been observed that the physical changes experienced especially by women due to health problems create a dynamic that challenges bodily perception and social norms. Grotesque aesthetics offers an important tool for reframing both the social and individual meanings of these transformations. It is known that the grotesque transforms the body perceived as “maladaptive” or “deformed” into a form of artistic and emotional expression by pushing traditional aesthetic boundaries. Dictionary and encyclopaedia definitions of 'monster', 'grotesque' and 'freak', emphasise the lack of clear limits or boundaries to these forms; they are multiple and huge or mixed and in-between (Meskimmon, 1996).

Exploring how the grotesque two bodied figure creates space in the genre to stop looking at women as two extreme opposites allows a more complicated understanding of the cyclic nature of female relationships, that often combines birth and death, cruelty and kindness, in a two bodied exploration of insecurities and anxieties of women (Persaud, 2015). We can say that grotesque aesthetics, especially when dealing with bodies that have been transformed due to health problems such as mastectomy (surgical removal of breast tissue), anorexia (excessive obsession with one's physical form and weight - having a distorted self-figure) and elephantiasis (lymphedema), not only includes artistic expressions of individual struggles, but also questions the social context of these transformations. Art's interpretation of the female body through grotesque aesthetics contributes to the processes of both individual empowerment and overcoming the stigmatization of these bodies in society (Grumberg, 2012). Therefore, the grotesque is not an aesthetic limited to the concepts of “ugliness” or “deformity”; on the contrary, it creates a field of expression that exists at the limits of human experience.

The aim of this study is to discuss the treatment of bodily differences caused by health problems in the context of grotesque aesthetics and to examine the role of this aesthetics in the reconstruction of social norms. In addition, it discusses the effects of the representation of such bodies in art on the psychosocial well-being of individuals. The study seeks answers to the following questions:

- Which prejudices and beauty norms are questioned by physical differences caused by health problems?
- How does art contribute to the aesthetic meaning of physical differences?
- How do the representations of such bodily transformations in art affect the psychosocial well-being of individuals?

1.1. Representation of Physical Differences in Art

In various periods of art from the past to the present, the phenomenon of the body has been represented in various forms in works of art as a reflection of beauty, aesthetics and social norms. However, some physical differences observed in human bodies are generally pushed out of the norms that have been created and imposed by society over time and are evaluated in the category of “other” (Çetgin, 2022; Çırak, 2022). Human beings define any body structure that

is outside the boundaries of the body figure that they are used to as a result of their perception with certain patterns as strange, ugly, deformed or freak (Yılmaz, 2021). This situation creates an important area of questioning not only about the physical characteristics of individuals but also about their social status, identity and life experiences.

The representation of physical differences in art poses an aesthetic challenge, questioning and critiquing the meaning of aesthetics and beauty. It is also seen as a powerful way of expressing individuals' stories and their place in society. At this point, grotesque aesthetics has been an important means of representation in the artistic context of body figures expressed as different and non-normative. At this point, the works of artists such as Hieronymus Bosch and Francisco Goya constitute important examples (Aydın, 2023; Batur & Başdoğan, 2022). Modern art, on the other hand, addresses these differences from a more personal and social perspective, reflecting bodily transformations such as mastectomy, anorexia and elephantiasis as a means of both resistance and acceptance.

Representations of physical differences in art allow not only the understanding of individuals' body perception and social exclusion, but also the questioning of notions of beauty and aesthetics. In this section, it is tried to reveal how physical differences gain an aesthetic meaning by addressing the power of art on individual and social transformation. By examining the works of various artists throughout the history of art, the way in which the grotesque figure is represented in their works is analyzed.

1.1.1. Unusual Bodies and Grotesque Aesthetics in Art History

In this section, where works of art featuring body structures attributed as extraordinary or out of the norm are analyzed, it is first necessary to mention the concept of grotesque. Because grotesque is a concept with a very wide vocabulary of meaning that represents all kinds of bodily structures characterized as unusual, strange, freakish, ugly and defective.



Figure 1: An Figure of the Domus Aurea

The term “grotesque” was first used historically to describe the wall and ceiling decorations of the “Domus Aurea” (Figure 1), also known as the “Golden House”. The decorations on the walls of this building, which consists of a series of cave-like spaces, derived from the Italian word “grotto” meaning “cave” and formed the etymological basis of the term “grotesque” (Gözübüyük, 2013). The remarkable point here is that the concept of “grotesque” used for ornaments and depictions stems from the cave-like structure of the space in which they are located, rather than the formal or artistic characteristics of these ornaments (Aktulum, 2020). In this context, the term refers not only to an aesthetic concept but also to a perception shaped by the physical and atmospheric characteristics of the architectural space. The drawings encountered within this structure are unprecedented and unique. They generally consist of

figures depicted in an unorthodox, anti-naturalistic and half-human, half-animal form. In this sense, the drawings here, on the one hand, exhibit a quality contrary to the classical understanding of art in terms of their characteristics. As a matter of fact, some of the definitions of the term grotesque are directly related to the characteristics of these figures. In the conceptualization of the grotesque, adjectives such as “bizarre,” “grotesque,” “absurd,” “absurd,” “corrupt,” “ridiculous,” “curious,” and “alarming” are among the most frequently encountered qualifiers and reveal the multi-layered world of meaning of the term.



Figure 2: An Example of Figure Drawings in Domus Aurea

Figure 2 shows some of the drawings of the building named Domus Aurea. In the figure, it is clearly seen that the wall is decorated with various motifs and these motifs are arranged to form frames. Within these frames, depictions of strange figures and fantastic creatures draw attention. Especially the two figures in the horizontal rectangular frame in the center of the composition stand out more prominently than the others. Although some of the paint has been erased or lost, the figures can be analyzed to a certain extent. On the left side of the frame is a figure with the head and forelegs of a horse, but the rear part of its body is curved, resembling an eel. On the right side is another figure with a human-like upper body and an eel-like curved lower body. This figure carries a long spear with human-like arms, and upon closer inspection, it can be seen that it also has limbs resembling a horse's foot. These figures are described as grotesque characters created by combining the limbs of different animals. As a matter of fact, such depictions have contributed to the historical definition of the concept of “grotesque”, and similar paintings are still referred to by the same term today.

The meaning of the term grotesque has expanded significantly since its emergence. This concept, which was limited to the narrow scope of expressing the combination of different living species in the first period of its use, has evolved to include all kinds of bizarre, frightening, strange, ugly, ugly, defective, defective, abnormal and unusual body structures. For this reason, a number of neurological, physiological and psychological disorders can also be evaluated within the concept of the grotesque. For example, disorders such as anorexia, which are caused by psychological factors, distort the body structure or change the physical appearance of individuals. Similarly, elephantiasis, which causes abnormal growth of various limbs, creates a grotesque appearance. In addition, unusual and uncommon body structures such as obesity, extreme thinness and dwarfism are also considered grotesque. Beyond these, conditions that disrupt human anatomy, such as limb deficiencies, and conditions that are seen as defects or deficiencies, such as blindness, can also be included in the scope of the grotesque.

In fact, any body structure that is perceived as frightening or disgusting as a result of excessive neglect is also considered a grotesque figure. As a result, any kind of deformity in the formal sense can be considered as a part of the grotesque body figure.

One of the most comprehensive analyzes of the grotesque body figure is the Russian linguist and philosopher Mikhail Bahtin. In his detailed evaluations of the concept of the grotesque, Bahtin stated that grotesque figures in the human body are especially concentrated in the limbs such as the mouth and nose. However, he also counted bodily regions such as the intestine, phallus and anus among the important elements of grotesque figures. The common feature of these regions is that the boundaries between bodies or the boundaries between the body and the world are crossed through these regions. In other words, these regions function both as transition points between the body's inner world and its outer world, and also represent the material and dynamic structure of the body. Stating that this transgression of boundaries constitutes the basis of grotesque figures, Bahtin sees this as a means to re-evaluate the place of the body in both individual and social contexts (Bahtin, 2019).

The grotesque body is one of the subjects treated by important artists in the history of art. In this sense, the most important examples were made by artists such as Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Bruegel and Francisco Goya.



Figure 3: Hieronymus Bosch, “Tree Man”, Pen on Paper, Albertina Museum, Vienna, Austria

One of the most important representatives of the early Dutch Renaissance, Hieronymus Bosch, unlike other painters and sculptors of his time, preferred to design fairy-tale figures and fantastic creature figures instead of following classical beauty ideals. In this context, Bosch is especially known for the extraordinary and bizarre creature figures he frequently used in his paintings. His works generally focus on the representations of heaven and hell, visualizing a worldview that reflects the medieval mentality. Bosch's works invite the viewer to both a visual and conceptual journey with their allegorical narrative and profound symbolism (Krausse, 2005). Looking at the work titled “Tree Man” (Figure 3), there is a striking and strange figure in the center of the composition. Among the other elements of the composition is the figure of a gazelle. When these two figures are compared, it is clearly seen that the strange figure in the center has gigantic dimensions. When the central figure is examined, it is noticed that it has a structure resembling a human face, limbs resembling a tree trunk and a body resembling a

cracked eggshell. At first glance, the tree-shaped limbs of the figure resemble arms, but it is understood that they functionally serve as legs. Having such hybrid features gives the figure a formal complexity and simultaneously a grotesque quality. This hybrid structure of the figure strengthens the overall aesthetic and thematic structure of the painting by bringing together both organic and fantastic elements.

Pieter Bruegel, known for his landscapes and works depicting village life, is one of the most distinguished artists of Dutch Renaissance painting. In order not to be confused with his son and other artists in his family, the artist removed the letter “h” from his surname in 1559 and started signing his works only as “Bruegel”. In addition, he is also popularly known as “Bruegel the Elder” or “Bruegel the Peasant”. These adjectives point both to his interest in peasant life in his art and to his distinction from other Bruegel artists in his family ([https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pieter_Brueghel_\(baba\)](https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pieter_Brueghel_(baba))).



Figure 4: Pieter Bruegel, “Cripples”, Oil on Panel, 18.5x21.5 Cm, 1568, Louvre Museum, Paris

Bruegel mostly depicted village life and peasant people in his works. One of Bruegel's most typical works to be exemplified within the scope of grotesque figurery is his painting titled “Cripples”, also known as “Beggars” (Figure 4). When the composition of the painting is examined, it is seen that a group of five figures is in the center. These figures are depicted facing in different directions from the center of the composition. Three of the figures are depicted with both of their legs amputated below the knee, and to compensate for this deficiency, they carry crutches in their hands to help them walk, while they use strange apparatuses made of wood to replace their amputated legs. In another figure, although there is no lack of limbs, the armpit crutch draws attention. These missing limbs and disabilities in the human body are considered as grotesque elements. Such figures evoke the perception of the “alien,” the “grotesque,” and the “freak” in people, thus crystallizing the boundaries of grotesque aesthetics. Indeed, Nazan and Mazhar İpşiroğlu describe these figures as follows: “Bruegel's painting of cripples is as if made to satirize the Renaissance cult of heroes. It is difficult to even call these creatures, crawling on the ground on crutches, human” (İpşiroğlu & İpşiroğlu, 2017). These depictions are not only a reflection of physical deformations, but also a critical approach to social norms and ideals. By using grotesque elements, Bruegel invites the viewer to think beyond aesthetic boundaries.

1.1.2. Physical Differences in Modern Art

Modern art offers a powerful platform for the representation of physical differences as a form of expression that questions social norms and makes the individual's unique experiences visible. Physical differences, which were defined as “defects” or “deformations” in the past, not only reflected individual stories with the modern understanding of art, but also contributed to the transformation of aesthetic values (Fox, 2020; İlden & Mutlu, 2020; Uçar, 2023).

In the modern art period, which refers to the art period after the 1850s, various physical transformations such as hermaphrodite and mastectomy were used by artists as a powerful tool to break stereotypes about the human body (Görgülü, 2019). These representations have enabled both individuals to express themselves and viewers to question their perceptions of different bodies. Contemporary artists have explored such themes in different disciplines such as photography, performance art, sculpture and digital art, presenting physical differences not only as an “abnormality” but as part of the human experience. For example, photographer Jo Spence's work documenting her post-mastectomy body can be read as an act of resistance that explores the personal and social limits of the body. Similarly, the diverse language of modern art, such as the photographic works of artists like Joel Peter Witkin or Diane Arbus, not only makes physical differences visible, but also invites the viewer to re-evaluate the aesthetic norms of society.

Norwegian figurative painter Odd Nerdrum is known for creating compositions whose time and place are not clearly defined and which carry a universal and mystical atmosphere. His works often feature unusual figures such as hermaphrodites, the dead, giants, twins and cripples. Nerdrum paints these figures in a detailed and traditional style using classical painting techniques. However, the unusual and disturbing elements contained in the figures he deals with give his works a distinct grotesque character. The artist's approach to the grotesque not only emphasizes physical deformations and oddities, but also offers a critical view of the human existential condition and the norms of society. Nerdrum's figures are visual reflections of a timeless world that invite the viewer to a deep questioning, both aesthetically and conceptually.



Figure 5: Odd Nerdrum, “Hermaphrodite”



Figure 6: Odd Nerdrum, “Unarmed Man”

When we look at the artist's “Hermaphrodite” (Figure 5), we see a figure with both female and male reproductive organs at the same time. This work draws attention in Nerdrum's figurative art and goes beyond social norms. The hermaphrodite figure blurs gender boundaries by combining feminine and masculine characteristics. This dual nature of the body gives the

painting a grotesque identity. Moreover, this situation can be interpreted as a challenge to social and aesthetic norms.

Similarly, when the work titled “Unarmed Man” (Figure 6) is analyzed, the relationship between anatomical disorders and deformations and grotesque aesthetics can be clearly seen. The work depicts a figure in a sitting position looking towards the audience. This figure is depicted as having lost one of his arms completely and the other arm below the elbow. Such deformations in the figure's body are not only physical deficiencies but also elements that strengthen the grotesque aesthetic. Such depictions, which go beyond the usual norms of the human body, reflect one of the main characteristics of grotesque art: the figures of unusualness and distorted bodies. Such anatomical disorders deepen not only the visual impact of the work, but also the psychological and emotional impact it has on the viewer. Therefore, “The Unarmed Man” strikingly reveals the relationship between grotesque aesthetics and body deformations.

American photographer Joel-Peter Witkin is known for his works mostly dealing with figures that society sees as “other”, such as corpses, body parts, dwarfs, figures with limb deficient or disabled bodies and transgender individuals. Photographs produced using such extraordinary individuals and objects have been considered as the pioneer of the concept of “ugly aesthetics” (Koca & Selvi, 2017). In Witkin's work, grotesque elements are prominent. Through these figures, he questions aesthetic boundaries by focusing on both the physical deformations of the body and the identities excluded by society. Witkin transcends the traditional dichotomies between beauty and ugliness, inviting the viewer on a disturbing yet profound intellectual and emotional journey.



Figure 7: Joel-Peter Witkin, “Cytro”

Looking at the artist's work “Cytro”, the figure in the center of a black and white photograph bears remarkable grotesque elements. This figure, who has completely lost both arms, is seen as the main figure in the work. A dog is seen next to the figure and sheep grazing in the background. At first glance, this limbless figure is an important element for creating a grotesque aesthetic. However, the actual grotesque quality of the work is not limited to this figure, but is further strengthened by the costumes and apparatus added by the artist. The figure's feet are dressed in a special outfit resembling goat's feet, and a horn-like object is placed on its head. These elements emphasize the grotesque theme more intensely by giving the figure a half-human, half-animal appearance. Moreover, the circular forms placed on the figure's shoulder area not only support the grotesque aesthetic, but also increase the plastic value of the photograph and the visual impact of the composition. This combination reveals a grotesque

aesthetic in which the boundaries of the human body are redefined, creating an effect that strengthens both the conceptual and aesthetic depth of the photograph.

British feminist photographer and writer Jo Spence is known for her critical work on gender, class and body politics. Spence never deliberately set out to be an innovator but she was one of those individuals who come along from time to time with fresh ideas gained through the experience of solving their own problems, who then feel driven to communicate these ideas, and in so doing shake up a complacent status quo—thus making some lasting changes to contemporary practice (Dennett, 2009). She is an artist who uses her own body in her works and deals with themes directly related to women's health, such as mastectomy. She brought art and health together, especially with her “photo therapy” approach, in which she documented her life after her cancer diagnosis. In this sense, her works address the medical, social and aesthetic dimensions of the body as an important part of feminist art. In his self-portraits, he used his body as an “instrument of protest”, emphasizing that physical differences can show resistance against the marginalizing norms in society. In a sense, the artist's works also have a grotesque quality.

Jo Spence saw her mastectomy as an opportunity for resistance and transformation rather than loss. In her photographs, there was an individual challenge to medical and social appropriation of the body. Her figures show how the individual can reclaim her own story, even in times of illness (Dennett, 2009).



Figure 8: Jo Spence, Property of Jo Spence, 1982.

In her series “Photo Therapy”, Jo Spence aims to enable individuals to explore and express their physical and psychological traumas through art. In this series, she documented her bodily transformation and her relationship with her body during and after her mastectomy. For the artist, this work is a kind of resistance against medical processes taking over her personal identity. By showing her post-mastectomy body in all its reality in this series, Spence demonstrated that bodies that are considered “defective” also carry an aesthetic meaning and challenge social perceptions (Dennett, 2009).

The work titled “Property of Jo Spence” (Figure 8) is one of the most famous pieces of this series. When we look at the figure, it is seen that the artist has placed some kind of tape on his operated chest and written “Property of Jo Spence” on his chest, which means “Property of Jo Spence”. This message on her breast is a criticism and rebellion against the possessive

attitude of medical interventions on her own body. This work stands against not only beauty standards but also medical and social ownership practices of the female body. In this sense, a feminist attitude can also be seen in her works. In addition, the artist's display of her body, which has undergone changes due to illness, gives her works a grotesque atmosphere. In this sense, the artist's works contain rich and extraordinary approaches in terms of social, psychological, artistic and aesthetic values.

"The Picture of Health?" series is another series in which the artist focuses on her own body and the disease process. This series, consists of some photographs she took after her diagnosis with breast cancer in 1982 were included in a touring show, that Spence put together in 1985 with documentary photographs of her before and after her surgery for breast cancer, subsequent use of traditional Chinese medicine, and phototherapy sessions. Some of the photographs in the show were taken by Spence when she was in the hospital for her breast surgery from her 'subjective eyeline and point of view: lying down in bed, being on a stretcher, and going into the operating theater'. In this series, Spence has produced striking works by revealing her body after her cancer diagnosis and mastectomy. Again in this series, Spence took a critical approach to the idealized perception of beauty and the perception of the female body. She shows that the body is a site of resistance and transformation rather than being defined as "defective" or "sick" (Bell, 2002).



Figure 9: Jo Spence, Exiled, 1990

One of the most striking works in this series is "Exiled" (Figure 9). Upon observation of the figure, it becomes evident that the artist has employed a methodical and impactful representation of her post-mastectomy physique. A substantial portion of Spence's upper body is encompassed within the confines of the photographic frame. Post-operative scars are clearly visible on her body. Rather than depicting physical pain, the figure serves as a symbol of resilience in the face of medical and social marginalisation (Bolaki, 2017). The work can be associated with the grotesque in terms of subject matter, namely a diseased, deformed or otherwise transformed body. The aesthetic quality of the metamorphosis and scars on the body in artistic expression is emphasised, and the work also contains social and feminist messages.

1.2. Grotesque Art, Health and Interdisciplinary Dialogue

The relationship between art and health is a broad interdisciplinary field that encompasses the support of medical and psychological processes through artistic forms of expression. Art is known to be an important medium for providing valuable insights into the personal, emotional and social dimensions of health and illness and the complexities of health care practice (Brett-MacLean, 2024).

The concept of grotesque aesthetics functions as a tool that facilitates a transformation in the individual's perception of the body, operating on both psychological and social levels. This aesthetic understanding assumes a pivotal role, particularly in the representation of bodily differences and health processes in art. Physical differences arising from health problems prompt individuals to redefine their relationship with their bodies, thereby paving the way for challenging social norms and the formation of new forms of identity (Doğan, 1979). For example, women who regard the breast as a unique body organ symbolizing femininity equate its loss with the loss of their feminine identity. They also see it not only as an obstacle in their interpersonal and social lives, but also as a constant reminder of a life-threatening illness. In this process, the body not only undergoes a medical intervention, but also becomes a symbol that challenges the perceptions of beauty and femininity created by social norms and alienates women from society (Ahn & Suh, 2023). Bilik et al. (2022) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the psychological, spiritual, physical and social challenges experienced by women who underwent mastectomy, utilising photographs and descriptions to illustrate their findings. In this study, 14 women aged between 42 and 67 who underwent mastectomy participated and 45 photographs describing their experiences were obtained, 23 of which were analysed and evaluated gradually by considering the richness of interpretation and maximum diversity. In their analysis, they reported that the loss of an important organ representing femininity with mastectomy operation brought along many psycho-social problems due to decreased self-esteem. Fanny Burney's personal narratives on her experience of mastectomy in the 19th century also shed light on our understanding of the individual and social dimensions of physical transformation (Meek, 2017). Eating disorders such as anorexia, which cyclically affect both physical and mental health, reveal how individuals see their bodies as a "project" due to the thin body ideal of modern society and the destructive effects of this project on health (WHO, 1995). Elephantiasis is a strong example of grotesque body perception as a condition in which individuals are subjected to exclusion and stigmatization due to abnormal swelling of the body (Bugaj, 2019). In this respect, art plays an important role in both making such bodily differences visible and challenging social prejudices. The potential of grotesque aesthetics in art to place such situations in an inclusive context offers a promising path towards women's empowerment (Le Vesconte, 2012). In this context, it is clear that interdisciplinary approaches need to be developed in both art and health to change societal perceptions about women's bodily transformations.

2. CONCLUSION

This study examines the representations of physical changes in women's health in social perceptions and aesthetic approaches. The main problematic of the study is to examine in an interdisciplinary context how grotesque art renders such physical transformations visible and transforms them into narratives of aesthetic value. In addition, it has been revealed how the representation of such bodies in art plays a transformative role at both individual and social levels. In particular, it has been observed that the experiences of individuals who undergo bodily changes due to health reasons facilitate the process of social acceptance by gaining new narratives through art. Grotesque art is not only an aesthetic form of expression, but also a powerful form of expression that supports psychological healing and plays a role in the identity construction of individuals. In conclusion, by increasing the therapeutic effects of art and the

interdisciplinary interaction between health and art, individuals can be empowered both psychologically and socially.

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