

CRYSTABEL RILEY: SKIN SURFACES

As an artist I am interested in the shapes, maps and patterns, aesthetically, biologically, resonantly and historically across the various surfaces that I work with - with human skin as a Make-up Artist and drum skin as a Drummer.



Through Make-up Artistry, I have spent several years with the preoccupation around how to increase my understanding and connection with the objects I work with: the ingredients, the peoples they are from, and how these objects relate to the physical surface of the earth's crust, mining practices, symbiosis, surface residues, and the irony of the impact left by what we do in relation to Make-up and beauty. This has informed my stylistic approach, and had a massive effect on how the physical surface - human skin - looks. This process has been public, dialogical and evolving, an exploration rather than a static space that could be inhabited - it's

As a Drummer working with skins on round resonant objects is something that is essentially private space of self-care and ritual. The work becomes public through projects or concerts - there is a deliberate limitation of the amount of concerts and of the people attending - so I can explore attempts to self-heal-care-enjoy acts of skin exploration and try to personally, and occasionally communally, understand what I am doing - it's also been very confusing

also been really confusing.

Both practices are linked through the ethos of public and private exploration of 'physical surfaces' but trying to centre on 'meaningfulness' within the confusion of exploring a meaning and battling against a lack of one.

Listed below are just some of the dual explorations and parallels between these two surfaces, one living (human skin), one dead or never alive since 1957 (when plastic replaced hide in drum sets):

RESONANCE

Preoccupation with the superficial which then resonates through a total being



The resonance of wearing Make-up (or choosing not to) with our feelings and behaviour is colossal. We can walk, talk and breathe differently. Prosthetic lashes add consciousness to blinking. Prosthetic nose pieces made for New Noveta contained most of the nasal breathing and so stimulating another type of 'Make-up resonance' through the performance-body.

'Drum-resonance' of course is the basis of all sound, but, the drums, and my interest in them, works with moving between lack of, and abundance of, resonance - doubling and tripling recycled and discarded skins to limit and expand the resonance.

PATTERNS



We (Make-up Artists) create patterns by working on different areas of the face that can clash or harmonise.

the lips,

the eyes,

the cheeks.



The drumset is the same. Beats work with different combinations of sound around different elements of the drum-kit/face, for example:

the kick drum,

the snare drum,

the floor tom,

HISTORY & FUTURE

The decisions you make can tell various stories



The decisions other people have made can give us a language to tell new stories.

An eyebrow at a particular angle or a snare hit in combination with a pointy lip

and a skipped kick-drum

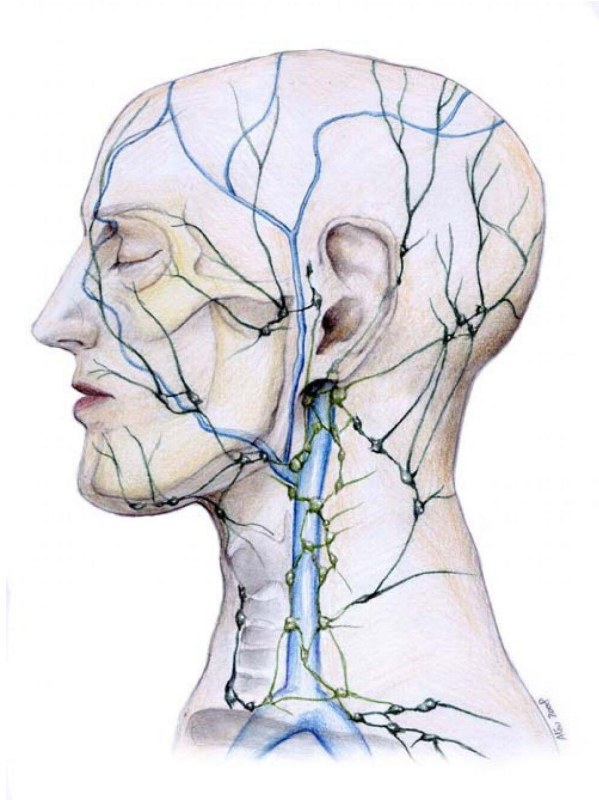
might represent periods of revolution or social upheaval from another time in another part of the world. New stories can be told using languages that can further extend creative oppression or creative up-lift.

I have read of, talked with, and worked on the skin surface of Zinnia Kumar a Model, Ecologist and Scientist researching Colourism. Zinnia writes on Orientalism within the context of fashion shoots, as an example of how problematic some story-telling can potentially be.

But the power can work in both ways and both Make-up and music use some type of historical language (or negation of language) to create uplifting futures.

VOLUME & POWER

Minimalism and maximalism with aesthetic and sonic manipulation



This can be said aesthetically but also in a biological way using the lymphatic system, using ancient knowledge (of which the proper accreditation has been buried) to stimulate pressure points and make movement happen around the face. This idea, that naive volume = power is challenged here; the amount of pressure is very important, too heavy and the nodules are 'squashed'.

Playing loud can sacrifice other types of sonic movement

whilst 'big' Make-up can undo a bigger

statement.

But with sentiment and consideration maximal volume and maximal Make-up can be effective and very enjoyable. Here we see volume and power and insecurity and security connect and intersect from Drums and Make-up.