

the works of these two artistic figures: pain, death, anxiety, and love. The ending of *Priestess of Morphine* returns to the comparison between Marie-Madeleine and Munch with an inclusion of Munch's series *By the Deathbed*. Although Siegel's instruction "to imagine Gertrud Günther in his [Munch's] place on her own deathbed" comes off as uncomfortably appropriative, Siegel has gifted us with an otherwise powerful and perceptive text.

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## **SURFACE IMAGINATIONS: COSMETIC SURGERY, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND SKIN**

Rachel Alpha Johnston Hurst  
Montreal & Kingston: McGill-  
Queen's University Press, 2015

### **REVIEWED BY SYDNEY TYBER**

Rachel Alpha Johnson Hurst's *Surface Imaginations: Cosmetic Surgery, Photography, and Skin* is an original exploration into the social and cultural phenomenon of twenty-first century cosmetic surgery. Driven by the visual and ultimately "photographic" rhetoric that her seven female interviewees drew on to discuss their own bodies and cosmetic procedures, Hurst innovatively sutures modern notions of corporeal "flesh" with the material "flesh" of the photograph. Using contemporary feminist theory and (primarily Lacanian) psychoanalysis,

she cleverly illustrates how cosmetic surgery and photography work together to create what she terms "surface imaginations." Although the path to its definition is somewhat convoluted, "surface imagination" is usefully and specifically a phenomenon in which the photograph and the remodeled skin are "collapsed" as part of the fantasy which "offers inspiration to, and proof of, the subject's narrative of care and success in the project of self-creation". She later extends this idea to encompass the understood mutability of all bodies under a twenty-first century, Western biopolitical regime, and those imagined fantasies of identity re-fashioning she argues are so common in a Capitalist society.

While not always seamless in its transgression of disciplinary and methodological boundaries, the ambition in Hurst's project is remarkable as it recruits art history, cultural studies, and medicine, all examined through ethnography and a psychoanalytically-inflected feminism. The result is a series of chapters that offer contributions to all of these disciplines. She begins with a Preface on artist ORLAN that introduces the major tensions explored in the book: the "limitless opportunity" offered by the cosmetic surgery industry to both patients and surgeons. This *limitless-ness*, however, runs up against the always present *limited* agency those same agents face in social, cultural, and biological practices of the surgery itself.

The arc of the study moves through an introduction of her seven interview subjects, followed by a chapter introducing her theoretical paradigms. While Hurst's second chapter sets out to offer a history of Western cosmetic surgery as it connects to psychoanalysis and "psychical work", what it does more successfully is examine the role of the visual image as it pertains to fantasized constructions

of the self in popular culture and medical settings. The third chapter offers the study's most interesting oscillation between the empowering and insidious aesthetic rhetoric and narratives of self-fashioning located within the promises of plastic surgery. The final chapter offers the book's strongest contribution to gender studies by reading the feminine skin "topographically". This chapter compares the skin's tactility and affects to the "flatness" of the photograph, an aesthetic form Hurst argues is integral to cosmetic surgery as a corporeal commodity.

Distinctly, each chapter presents a careful argument that is well-informed by the subject-matter Hurst considers. While the interview subjects tie the book together, the project's interdisciplinarity causes some lack of cohesion in argumentation and logic. A stronger grounding in one discipline would have allowed Hurst to pivot through the others, potentially creating a clearer trajectory for the piece as a whole.

Certainly, though, distinct pieces of the book and the overall idea of the "surface imagination," are useful to anyone working through questions of gender studies and bodies, aesthetics, or medicine. Hurst's interrogation of those positive effects of cosmetic surgery without ever losing a critical feminist lens is precisely the kind of balancing act we need to see more of in the field.

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*She has received grants for site-specific performance in Toronto, published in the Canadian Theatre Review, and presented work internationally.*

## **CRAFTING WITH FEMINISM: 25 GIRL-POWERED PROJECTS TO SMASH THE PATRIARCHY**

Bonnie Burton  
Philadelphia: Quirk Books, 2016

### **REVIEWED BY DEBORAH HERMAN**

In his late-career lecture on the woman problem, Freud reluctantly admitted that women have offered one contribution to Western culture, and that is the invention of the textile arts. Even that achievement, however, is a manifestation of shame. Women are ashamed of their “genital deficiency” and so their unconscious motive is to weave and plait their pubic hair in order to disguise their castration.

Bonnie Burton’s *Crafting With Feminism: 25 Girl-Powered Projects to Smash the Patriarchy* will have none of that. She takes the traditional Kinder, Küche, Kirche to task in a witty and winsome way. Her book is quirkily subversive, saving women’s work from charges of being childish, regressive, sexually repressed or representative of arrested development. “Bonnie has taken many clichés about feminism and turned them into wonderful exercises of whimsy,” writes Felicia Day in the book’s Foreword. “The projects embody the spirit of optimism and determination that I associate with feminist activism—a spirit, that, sadly, has fallen out of focus thanks to reactionary politics.” Despite the “Heroes of Feminism Finger Puppets,” many of the projects

are quite shocking. This is not your daughter’s Klutz book.

Burton opts instead to tear apart stereotypes of domesticity or girly frivolity by being playful with her politics. She’s crafty. Burton has hosted the YouTube channel shows Geek DIY and the Vaginal Fantasy Book Club and has published popular books like *The Star Wars Craft Book*, *Girls Against Girls*, and *Womanthology*. She takes part in the current renaissance of hands-on handicrafts as seen in the programming of second-tier cable channels like Makeful’s *Craft It Yourself, Post My Party*, and *Crazy Beautiful Weddings*, or in Debbie Stoller’s needlework books, *The Happy Hooker* and *Stitch and Bitch*. Bust magazine is currently hosting a “Craftacular” in Brooklyn that pulls together groups of like-minded artful types for workshops in macramé, marble painting, DJ’ing and even witchcraft. Burton provides a calendar for the reader to host themed parties to commemorate events like Glitter Day (the second Saturday of January), Galentine’s Day (February 12th), or International Yarnbombing Day (June 11th). Yarn-bombs are blowing up Pinterest and other social media sites—public statues and buildings are being wrapped in wool like the Reichstag. “We make things happen by making things,” writes Felicia Day. It is reminiscent of the Greenham Common Peace Movement’s women who established a Peace Camp outside a U.S. Air Force base in Britain in 1980 and knit wool condoms for the nukes.

There are no anti-Trump pussyhats in Burton’s repertoire, however; knitting is out of the scope of the DIY spirit anyway. The only cost involved is a quick trip to the dollar store for pipe cleaners and embroidery floss or simply raiding the recycle bin for supplies. Necessity is the mother of invention, after all. There is no expertise required; Burton offers an

appendix listing around-the-house supplies and instructions on how to do the basic running stitch or the whip stitch. No sewing machine required either (although that is a female invention!).

Freud’s shame is taken to task with cheeky crafts like vagina-shaped Christmas tree ornaments made from an easy-to-make salt dough, “Tampon Buddies” with embroidery floss hairdos and little fabric dresses or a “Huggable Uterus Body Pillow” with a pocket to house a heating pad for cramps. Even the panties have feminist slogans emblazoned on them, as do babies’ onesies. These hempen home-spuns reclaim women’s bodies with projects like a googly-eyed fun-fur monster pouch to store your feminine hygiene products. This radical use of toiletries would make even Martha Stewart proud. Self-care is underscored, such as homemade aromatherapy candles or an assertive “Nope” necklace made of old Scrabble tiles to let your assaulter know he’s committing sexual misconduct.

Other traditional forms of female adornment are turned inside out. There is a lovely crown for the princess who saves herself and a handful of rings bearing the images of historical queens. “Too many fairy tales involve a charming prince saving a young damsel from a life of toil and trouble just by marrying her and resting a bejeweled crown upon her head,” writes Burton. “Here in the real world, you know better. All you need to feel like a queen is flexible cardboard, fabric, lace, felt, fake flowers, and—of course—glitter.” High heels are upcycled into succulent planters and bras are fitted with secret cleavage pockets or sequined with flames to signify the infamous guerrilla street theatre stunt of 1968. Miss America’s sash bears “killjoy” titles like “Miss Behaves” or “Queen of Everything,” and Wonder Woman’s wrist-cuffs