

The diploma thesis “Body art – the functional and symbolic meanings of tattoo and piercing“ focuses on body modifications that are used as body art and which have become fashionable as a cultural and social phenomenon in the contemporary society.

First part of the thesis introduces a basic theoretical framework and sets the subject into the context, which the author presents in such a way that even a laic can benefit from the paper. Theoretical part defines the terms and introduces first archeological findings connected with this cultural phenomenon. Further on the paper introduces examples of body art from selected traditional cultures and describes the way, which this phenomenon undertook to the contemporary western society. At the end of the theoretical part categories of functional and symbolic meaning, which the body art can acquire, are introduced.

Second part presents qualitative research that focuses on functional and symbolic meanings, that the body art in contemporary society acquires. Statements of twenty-two people who talk about their body art can be found here.

At the end of the paper you will find out which functional and symbolic meanings of body art are the same among the contemporary society and the primitive one, how do they differ or which functional and symbolic meanings have vanished completely.