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Topical

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Abstract

This is a piece to start the discussion of how the lightening of pigmentation through melanin manipulation evolved from the demands of cover art photography.

Author/Artist Bio

Trista Hurley-Waxali just finished a stint living in Los Angeles, California for six years and is looking forward to her next adventure. She has performed at Avenue 50, Stories Bookstore and internationally at O'bheal in Ireland and for Helsinki Poetry Connection. She writes weird short stories and is working on her novel, *At This Juncture*.

Keywords

pigmentation, portrait, photography, manipulation, development

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Topical

Trista Hurley-Waxali

Topical creams are not the best option for an even complexion. As there could be a delay between the applications and some parts of the surface may not be evenly exfoliated while other areas might have a high concentration of hyperpigmented cells. Cryosurgery is when liquid nitrogen activates the melanin to be removed as a layer, a process used in sensitive areas. For as long as there are demands for people based on their race and color, there exists a market to lighten one's complexion. As controversial as potentially new products are to some, this desire for clear and light skin is on the rise.

For within the cover art community there is a high demand to having clear and bright skin to land on the front. National Geographic in 1985 featured an Afghan girl with blue eyes in one of their most iconic issues as a means to humanize the refugee crisis. When people looked into those eyes they saw the eyes of many blonde children with the same round and colorless iris. This lack of pigmentation helped give a voice to those in images, saying that these girls can be your neighbors if you open up your borders. Through portrait photography society started learning how to empathize with the baseline, and this baseline was made of the European phenotype. Only recently has there been an increase in having darker models on the cover, and yet the expectation is for that model to act as a totem for change. Yet no matter how much it is encouraged, agencies and studios still seem to request a lighter feature in order to not be intimidating to the reader. There is a sense of not being the focal point in having a distinct race but rather to be comfortably blended in with the other like-covers or portraits in a gallery. And regardless of the industry wanting a change, there is still an overwhelming preference for lighter complexion.

What if there was a measure to target the specific element in the cell, the place where the melanin resides in the chemical makeup? A targeted response to break the chain between the polymeric bonds to reduce the pigmentation. To target the epidermis will be to get to the root of this change, as the largest organ on the body, skin has a way of resisting and adapting that has yet to be commercially manipulated. For muscles are often probed with electricity to give some rehabilitative properties, what if we rehabilitated the skin tone. To where a series of minor electronic pulses can tear apart the chemical bonds to avoid any new growth or darkening. This will be different from the laser because here will be a larger scale of tissue per session and aimed for high melanin individuals. This consistent and even flow of electricity can then skip over cells already broken and target those that have yet to break their bond.

We should be seeing ourselves moving away from these new and invasive methods as requirements for cover standards and begin to see covers that better reflect society. For the measures of topical creams to the development of electric manipulation of cells to be desired within our generation is not very encouraging. So as a spectator to photography, we should do a better job in encouraging beauty standards from all backgrounds and creeds. For art should evolve to liking those faces that remain both familiar and unfamiliar.