

Reflectoporn

Date : April 6, 2007

A couple of years ago a student of mine wrote an essay on the concept of objectification, and the importance of modes of externalisation as the means by which we come to know ourselves. To illustrate this she used the phenomenon of reflectoporn. This is where people flouted the ban on pornography on E-Bay by putting up for auction objects such as mirrors, kettles with reflective surfaces and such like, which when given a second glance, turn out to dimly reflect naked persons presumed to be the people who are selling the things. As far as I know this is not a particularly extensive phenomenon, but it has attracted a sort of urban myth status with hundreds of websites telling us that the phenomenon exists. Rather in the manner of all those essays on the way shopping malls use pastiche, it has become a very obvious way to claim something profound about the modern world. Still even if it doesn't actually say anything of the kind, its kinda weird and kinda intriguing, and I guess we have just become one more of those websites that is spreading the word. So, just in case someone out there needs a quick and dirty example for some essay on material and visual culture, don't bother with this one. We already know. Incidentally the student then went on to become a first class researcher.

Danny Miller, Anthropology, UCL