



The Body Image Labyrinth

Labyrinths are an ancient path and have been found in all corners of the world. They can help us contemplate our thoughts, issues, problems and ideas. Following the path of a labyrinth helps us consider issues in a different way. The path of the labyrinth helps us unwind, slow down and be mindful of our thoughts.

Researchers from Liverpool School of Art and Design **Carol Ryder** and **Elaine McNeill** have collaborated in the development of a labyrinth to explore issues and anxieties related to body image that can be detrimental to our physical and mental wellbeing.

The **Body Image Labyrinth** encourages us to consider the impact of the widely promoted idealised body - tall, thin, young, predominantly white, heterosexual and able-bodied - a Western standard that is considered the embodiment of physical perfection in many countries around the world. The global adulation of this - often artificial, therefore unachievable - 'ideal' fashionable body has given rise to unprecedented levels of body dissatisfaction and a trillion-dollar industry has grown up, eager to capitalise on widespread insecurities by selling a dizzying array of 'solutions' to perceived physical 'problems'.

In recent years however, a persuasive diversity agenda has begun to challenge the dominance of this version of the 'fashionable body' in the media. As a result, a noticeable move towards greater bodily inclusivity has emerged, supported by academic research that suggests consumers are more likely to buy fashionable clothing if it is modelled on bodies that bear some resemblance to their own.

Elaine McNeill and Carol Ryder are researchers in Arts and Health at Liverpool John Moores University.

Elaine McNeill

Elaine McNeill is an Arts and Health researcher at Liverpool John Moores University. To date, her research has centred around raising awareness and understanding of dementia within the community. More recently McNeill has collaborated with Carol Ryder to explore the use of labyrinths as a means to investigate issues related to body image.

E.McNeill@ljmu.ac.uk

Carol Ryder

Carol Ryder is a Senior Lecturer in Fashion and an Arts and Health researcher at Liverpool John Moores University. Her research is concerned with the relationship between fashion and body image. She is currently working in partnership with North West Boroughs Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NWBH) in the development of the **Fashion on Prescription** initiative. The Body Image Labyrinth is the result of a collaboration with Elaine McNeill.

c.ryder@ljmu.ac.uk

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