



American Plastic: Boob Jobs, Credit Cards, and the Quest for Perfection

Laurie Essig

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The riveting story of how cosmetic surgery and plastic money melted together to create a subprime mortgage crisis of the body

Plastic surgery has become “the answer” for many Americans, and in *American Plastic* sociologist Laurie Essig explores how we arrived at this particular solution. Over the last decade there has been a 465 percent increase in cosmetic work, and we now spend over \$12 billion annually on procedures like liposuction, face-lifts, tummy tucks, and boob jobs. In this fascinating book, Essig argues that this transformation is the result of massive shifts in both our culture *and* our economy—a perfect storm of greed, desire, and technology.

Plastic is crucial to who we are as Americans, Essig observes. We not only pioneered plastic money but lead the world in our willingness to use it. It’s estimated that 30 percent of plastic surgery patients earn less than \$30,000 a year; another 41 percent earn less than \$60,000. And since the average cost of cosmetic work is \$8,000, a staggering 85 percent of patients assume debt to get work done. Using plastic surgery as a lens on better understanding our society, Essig shows how access to credit, medical advances, and the pressures from an image- and youth-obsessed culture have led to an unprecedented desire to “fix” ourselves.

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