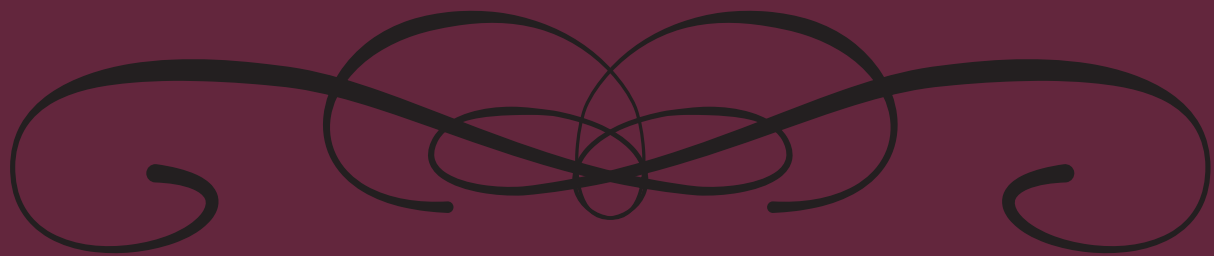


Fat Stuff: Confessions of an Overeater



Nancy Kay Turner

*“A woman can never be too rich or too thin.”
—Wallis Simpson*

I weighed 96 pounds in sixth grade. I weighed 110 pounds in Junior High. I don't think it's normal to remember your weight as a young person. So why do I? Sometime in elementary school, my mother took me to the doctor to figure out why I was “chubby.” He recommended that I cut out ice cream (that was never going to happen). I went on Weight Watchers as a teenager when its rules were draconian. Liver once a week! Only powdered fat free milk (disgusting). Imagine taking out a little vial of powdered milk on a date! I did.

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Sometime in my teens, my mother and I went to another doctor to find out if my glands were a problem. This doctor wittily debunked the gland theory by asking “Did you ever see a gland grab a sandwich?” (well, no) And he also pooh-poohed the heavy bones theory. He asked, “Did you ever see a fat skeleton?” (well, no)! Sure, my metabolism was on the sluggish side, but within normal range. Still, in my early twenties, not satisfied with my weight, I went on the half a peach, cottage cheese and naked hamburger patty diet, the grapefruit diet, the ten-day fruit juice fast and many others. I once went to a diet doctor in New York whose name was (and I am not making this up) Dr. Sugar, who went in his back room and brought out little white pills (hmmmm.) Wonder what those were? I took them and lost four pounds in four days but couldn't stop talking. So where did I get this obsession with weight? My parents were not overweight and my sister was skinny but also afraid of getting “fat.” It didn't help growing up in the era of Twiggy and anorexic models. In the fifties, the voluptuous model size was a 12!

Full disclosure, I am and have been a member of Weight Watchers on and off for ten years ...and am currently back on. I like to think it helps keep me sane about these body issues. If I look back at pictures of me, I am sometimes startled to see that I was not really fat. Maybe a little thick in the —what I affectionately call - “The Turner Middle.” So why do I perceive myself that way? How did it start and why does it continue? The culture plays an important part in the ideal of beauty and I know that I am not alone in this quest for thinness, or the more perfect body.

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Fast forward some 40 years and “fat” is still a contentious issue. Is it better to lose weight or accept yourself as you are? Is it healthier to be thin or be fit? Is coconut oil good for you or bad? Should you not eat anything white - as in dairy, sugar, flour? So many questions, so little time.

When Kristine and I started to share our experiences, we thought at some point we might revive that proposal with a 21st century emphasis on identity, body image, health and wellness. Kristine’s ambitious *Perceive Me* project was just an idea then, not the fantastic reality that you see here before you in this exhibit. *Perceive Me* seeks to address this eternally thorny question of beauty and body size by inviting artists to render a figurative art piece of Kristine as she literally bares body and soul. The results are astounding. Brava, Kristine! ∞

Tony Pinto
Nancy Kay Turner holding her
high school Senior portrait
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