The Eye of the Beholder

Sponsored by the University of North Carolina at Wilmington Science, Humanities and Society Minor, the College of Arts and Sciences and the Center for Teaching Excellence
Announcing a New Course in Science, Humanities and Society

Fall 2003

Bearing our wounds: Gendered images of health and illness in art, film and literature

Dr. Colleen Reilly       Dr. Gregory Bechtel
TR 2-315 PM
Lakeside 134
The Panel
Jack Hall, Moderator

- Don Furst
- Midori Albert
- Sue Richardson
- Tommy Macon
- Kathleen Berkeley
- Betsy Ervin
- Maurice Martinez
- Carrie Clements
- Oliver Speck
- Gregory Bechtel
- Patricia Turrisi
What is beautiful?

Don Furst
Botticelli's *Madonna and Child*, 1475
Rembrandt's *The Flayed Beef*, 1655
The War I: Wounded by Otto Dix, 1924
Willem de Kooning's "Woman I, 1950-52"
Beauty & Anthropology:

Pretty much a Biocultural Point of View

Midori Albert
What constitutes beauty, anthropologically?

• **Physical** and **behavioral** indications of good health
  - Adaptation
  - Mate Selection (Sexual Selection)
  - Aspects of beauty stem from *biologic* and *cultural* determinants...
What constitutes beauty, anthropologically?

Physical and behavioral indications of good health:

- Biologically
  - Symmetry and balance

- Culturally
  - Local, regional, or global aesthetics
What constitutes beauty, anthropologically?

Physical and behavioral indications of good health:

• Biologically
  - Vitality and functionality
  - Social acceptance and awareness

• Culturally
  - Resourcefulness: talent, productivity, skill
  - Normative personality attributes, social integration
Women of Color
Set the Tone

Sue Richardson
Toni Morrison, “Afterword,” *The Bluest Eye*

Beauty was not simply something to behold; it was something one could *do.*
Antithetical Black Beauties
Now *that’s* black beauty!
Giorgione, *Concert Champêtre* ("Pastoral Concert") c. 1510
these hips are free hips.  
they don’t like to be held back.

Lucille Clifton, “Homage to My Hips”
Nikki Giovanni, “Nikki-Rosa”

... though you’re poor, it isn’t poverty that concerns you... I really hope no white person ever has cause to write about me because they never understand Black love is Black wealth...
... something one could do ...
Mammy’s red petticoat
Beauty is not natural

Tommy Macon
197 Miss Camille Clifford, the personification of the Gibson Girl, c. 1906
The Real Deal
KATHY BATES, ACTRESS

For her Oscar-winning performance in Misery, her best-selling role in Play it to the Camera, Kathy Bates has made a name for herself as a damsel in distress. And yet she's as memorable playing wholesome Southern housewife (The Green Traveller and Autumn Gold) as she is gritty, desperate people (don't forget Dolores Claiborne). In fact, Bates has developed such a firm grip on her craft that she can attest to a recent role, as a television director, that she had no idea of the HBO series Six Feet Under and O.C. And in a business where all the talk is of the seasons, not the things, perhaps no actress can be a bigger shock but that Bates did what she did in a hot tub with Jack Nicholson in Burnt Offerings. Was that the last time you saw her? Bates?

Photographed by Arnie Lebovitz at Bates' home in Los Angeles with her Yorkshire terriers.
Hope in a Jar

Kathleen Berkeley
CHILDREN'S FASHIONS—For Description, see last page of Book.
"Mother, here she is!"

Of all moments the most trying—when the son brings her to his mother, of all critics the most exacting. Mother-love causes her to look with penetrating glance, almost trying to find flaws. No quality of beauty so serves to win an older woman as a skin smooth, fresh and healthy in a natural way, as easily provided by

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Schenley... always in the center of things
Naturally! It mixes beautifully... with soda, ice, people, good times!
Women, Beauty, and Work: A Combustible Combination

Betsy Ervin
THE BEAUTY MYTH

How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women

Naomi Wolf

WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION BY THE AUTHOR
BFOQ: Bona Fide Occupational Qualification

PBQ: Professional Beauty Qualification
Social Consequences of the PBQ

- Women shrink their professional goals to fit the discriminatory requirements of the workplace.
- Women blame themselves for discrimination on the basis of appearance.
- Women are materially and psychologically impoverished by the quest for beauty.
- Women remain isolated from one another.
Maurice Martinez
Beauty is as Beauty Does
A Psychologist’s Take on the Beast

Caroline Clements, Ph.D.
Person Perception

- **Person Perception**
  - the process of forming impressions
  - more weight placed on negative than positive

- If you value honesty, finding out that someone you just met is planning to cheat the IRS will count more in your evaluation of her than knowing that she is also a successful executive.
Perrett, et al., 1998
Subjects preferred feminised to average shapes of a female face.
Waist-to-hip Ratio

It’s all in the hips

Plots of attractiveness as a function of BMI and WHR,
Tovee, et al., 1998

Waist-to-hip Ratio

Waist measurement ÷ hip measurement (e.g. 24/36 = .67)

Similar in men and women before puberty (0.85 to 0.95)

Which do you prefer?

Top Row = “underweight”
Middle Row = “average”
Bottom Row = “overweight”
Person Perception and Attraction
Beauty is and is not Skin Deep

- **Competence:**
  - Competent people are more attractive than less competent individuals.
    - However, people are *less attracted to “perfect” individuals* (Aronson et al., 1966).

- **Physical Attractiveness:**
  - Especially early on, physical beauty is important to an attraction.

- **Mutual Liking:**
  - Liking others increases the probability that they will like us in return.
The Case for Beauty

- Success
- Romance
- Financial
- Power and powerful others
Oliver Speck
The I of the Beholder
The I of the Beholder
Self-Perception of Beauty

• A 29-year-old female weighing 353 pounds elected to have gastric bypass surgery because previous interventions were not successful in reducing required weight loss.

• Within one year of the surgery, she had lost 216 pounds and had achieved an optimal weight of 137 pounds.
Beauty Realized

• However, the client experienced major emotional, physical, dietary, lifestyle, financial and relationship changes that were neither fully explained nor realized prior to the surgery.
The American Fix

- Emotional changes
  - Mood swings
- Lifestyle changes
  - Lack of prior social experiences
- Relationship changes
  - Discrimination disappears; hostility reported

Physical
  - Skin sagging, contact dermatitis, body odors

Dietary
  - Radical dietary changes

Financial
  - Insurance often only pays for the bypass surgery
Nonstandard

Patricia Turrisi
True beauty is an approach to perfection.

Beautiful things represent transcendence over the ordinary.

The appreciation of beauty is anthropomorphic.

The sensibility and character of the observer conditions the experience of beauty.
Thank you for your attention. Please join us for refreshments.
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