



Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty

Nancy Etcoff

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In this provocative, witty, and thoroughly researched inquiry into what we find beautiful and why, Nancy Etcoff skewers one of our culture's most enduring myths, that the pursuit of beauty is a learned behavior. Etcoff, a faculty member at Harvard Medical School and a practicing psychologist at Massachusetts General Hospital, skewers the enduring myth that the pursuit of beauty is a learned behavior.

Etcoff puts forth that beauty is neither a cultural construction, an invention of the fashion industry, nor a backlash against feminism, but instead is in our biology. It's an essential and ineradicable part of human nature that is revered and ferociously pursued in nearly every civilization--and for good reason. Those features to which we are most attracted are often signals of fertility and fecundity. When seen in the context of a Darwinian struggle for survival, our sometimes extreme attempts to attain beauty--both to become beautiful ourselves and to acquire an attractive partner--become understandable. Moreover, if we come to understand how the desire for beauty is innate, then we can begin to work in our interests, and not solely for the interests of our genetic tendencies.



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