

Beauty and the Role of Cosmetics

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Abstract

Beautiful, as well as graceful, pretty or also elevated, wonderful, admirable and similar words, is an adjective which we often use to describe something we like. However, the criteria for beauty have always been dependent on time and changed with the epochs. They were discussed in depth in philosophy and also at times in theology, thereby equating beautiful with good and morally good. Evil was always associated with the ugly. Therefore, it is difficult for us today not to connect evilness with ugliness. Men and women always tried to manipulate their beauty, by means of cosmetics, medicine or nowadays with the possibilities of plastic surgery. Here, the criteria which make a figure or a face seem beautiful are explained. Thereby the proportion apprenticeship as well as the cosmetic possibilities for embellishment will be taken into account.

Self Creation

The modern person would like to shape not only his or her life, but also his or her body, since the perfection of the external appearance has never had such a value as in present times. The body has become a building site of self optimisation. In this respect, the addiction to individuality and freedom plays a major role. One wants to differentiate oneself from others without getting out of line. Indeed, the modern person can form his or her body him- or herself. Moreover, many possibilities are available to the individual. Apparently, the individual submits voluntarily to the pressure of beauty, which acts as a means

to an end to protect and to create his/her own identity and to position him/her socially. 'Time does not transform us, it only unfolds us' (Max Frisch).

The History of Beauty

The history of beauty is a history of visibility and a history of bodies, from fashion and also from morality images, staging, power and gender roles. In each case, differently appearing beauty ideals were perceived as normality in their respective time and culture.

Throughout time, beauty norms have always worked as a social imperative. As soon as such ideals were set up, they were understood as normality. In addition, the media create 'normality' very fast: in 1965 the model Twiggy shocked the population with a height of 1.71m with the measurements 31-22-32. At that time, even the magazine Vogue wrote 'She is called Twiggy because it seems as if a strong gust of wind could break her and throw her to ground... Twiggy is thin in a way that it is making other models stare at her'.

But 43 years later, in 2008, the 1.84m tall Elle Macpherson with the measurements 36-35-34 was called 'corpulent', 'curvaceous' and 'normally built', thus considering a woman a little more robustly built, but 17cm taller as 'more corpulent', 'more curvaceous' and 'normally built'. What had happened? The 1965 ideal, shocking even for the fashion magazines, had become normality. More than 43 years of watching really thin, even slender models has left its traces, because we have become used to it. Cynics speak of 'skeletons with an eating disorder' in the model business.

What is evaluated as beauty is picturesque in the true sense of the word, because not for nothing does the word 'looks' have its origin in the word 'to look'. Nevertheless, the visibility and with it the incessant publication of a physical ideal as a tessera within the production and reproduction of a beauty ideal. Because of the fact that since 2006 German TV stations may not broadcast live plastic surgery before 11pm and, due

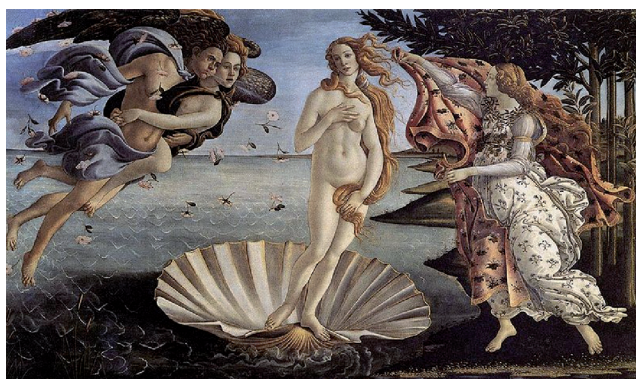


Figure 1.