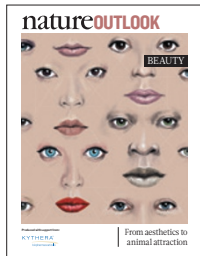


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BEAUTY

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This Outlook is different from most. Instead of focusing on a disease, we move up the hierarchy of human needs above survival, or even health, into the realm of aesthetics. Although beauty could include sunsets and scientific theories, our focus here is on the attraction between humans, and that between other animals that helps to fuel the engine of natural selection.

Neuroscience grants an insight into the traits that have maintained their appeal over the centuries and provides an understanding of how the brain responds to a desirable face (see page S2). In pursuit of beauty, many turn to the products and services peddled by a robust cosmetics industry. A number of these products make scientific claims — some of which are more valid than others (S4). At the more extreme end of the industry, we examine the steady growth of cosmetic surgery. The rising demand for procedures from a more diverse mix of people is leading aesthetic surgeons to rethink facial ideals in a more inclusive way (S6). Men — often neglected participants in the pursuit of beauty — are also starting to get their due (S12). Some people, however, can become obsessed with their appearance, which can lead to a preoccupation with imagined flaws (S14).

Insights into human beauty can be gleaned from researching what it is that other animals find appealing (S8). Evolution has furnished animals with a host of visual cues that signal suitability for perpetuating a species. Stepping back, theoretical physicist David Deutsch makes the case for the concept of 'objective beauty' (S16) and anthropologist Karl Grammer teases apart the role of beauty in human interactions (S11).

We are pleased to acknowledge the financial support of KYTHERA Biopharmaceuticals, Inc., in producing this Outlook. As always, *Nature* retains sole responsibility for all editorial content.

Herb Brody

Supplements editor

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