



The Evolution of Allure: Sexual Selection from the Medici Venus to the Incredible Hulk

By George Hersey

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The beauty of the human body has found a daring beholder in art historian George Hersey, who for the first time brings modern Darwinian theories of sexual selection (mate competition, attractor manipulation, and the like) into the history of art. *The Evolution of Allure* shows how Western art has channeled mate choice, exploiting the cosmetics, clothes, muscles, organs, and ornaments that showcase the body. From the Medici Venus to Vitruvius, Leonardo, Dürer, and the phone-sex goddesses of *D-Cup Superstars*, Hersey's lively, erotically charged text shows that the formulas set forth by the Greek sculptor Polykleitos have established a Western canon of human gestures and proportions and may have influenced human evolution.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Yale University's George Hersey has come up with an entertaining theory that introduces Darwinian concepts of sexual selection to art history. Briefly stated, his argument goes like this: human beings have chosen their sexual mates based on artistic representations of beauty, as a result of which the human form has gradually evolved to mirror the proportions of those representations. Hersey admits up front that his hypothesis is largely unprovable, but it's still great fun to consider, particularly since he manages to cram a lot of information about everything from prehistoric sculpture to the Incredible Hulk into approximately 200 pages without resorting to an excessive amount of stuffy academic jargon. This book will give your brain muscles a workout, but one that any art lover should enjoy.

Review

"Hersey . . . establishes compelling connections between high art and popular culture in this entertaining interdisciplinary romp."

—*Choice*

"A highly interesting look of the element of 'beauty' as manifested in art throughout the ages."

—*Art Times*

About the Author

George Hersey is Emeritus Professor of Art History at Yale University. He is the author of numerous books, including *The Evolution of Allure: Sexual Selection from the Medici Venus to the Incredible Hulk* (MIT Press, 1996) and *The Lost Meaning of Classical Architecture: Speculations on Ornament from Vitruvius to Venturi* (MIT Press, 1988).

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