

The evolution of beauty

美的演变

Since the beginning of human history, we have wrestled with what it means to be beautiful. We're all vain in some way and seem to care too much about the way we look. Perhaps that's why we've all had moments when we felt like we're falling short of some clearly defined standard of beauty, but the reality is that beauty standards are fluid. What is considered beautiful at one moment is despised in another. Over the course of history, our concept of beauty has undergone a constant evolution.

从人类历史的开始，我们就一直在与美丽的含义作斗争。我们在某些方面都很虚荣，似乎太在意自己的外表了。也许这就是为什么我们都有过这样的时刻：我们觉得自己没有达到某个明确定义的美的标准，但现实是，美的标准是不停变化的。在某一时刻被认为是美的东西在另一时刻被鄙视。在历史的长河中，我们对美的概念经历了不断的演变。

The ancient Egyptians, back in the third millennium BC, prized slim waists over heavier ones. In contrast, the ancient Greeks regarded heavy, broad hips as a defining characteristic of beautiful women. Despite these differences, both cultures applied make-up to highlight certain facial features, particularly the eyes. In Greek art, beautiful women often appear with dark-rimmed eyes. Similarly, in ancient Egypt, thick black eyeliner was considered beautiful for both men and women.

早在公元前三千年，古埃及人就偏爱纤细的腰部而不是较粗的腰部。相比之下，古希腊人则把厚重、宽大的臀部视为美女的一个决定性特征。尽管存在这些差异，两种文化都通过化妆来突出某些面部特征，尤其是眼睛。在希腊艺术中，漂亮的女人经常带着黑眼圈出现。同样，在古埃及，浓密的黑色眼线被认为对男人和女人都很漂亮。

In the Han Dynasty, which lasted from the third century BC to the third century AD, pale skin was regarded as beautiful, in large part because lighter skin was associated with the upper class. The wealthier members of society were more likely to have pale skin because they were not required to labour outdoors, and so they had less exposure to the sun. A delicate frame was another marker of great beauty for women in this era. However, this conception of beauty did not last forever. In the Tang Dynasty, a few hundred years later, seldom did one see a slender woman because wider waists became more desirable.

从公元前三世纪到公元三世纪的汉朝，白皙的皮肤被认为是美丽的，这在很大程度上是因为较浅的皮肤与上层社会联系在一起。社会上较富裕的人更可能有着白皙的皮肤，因为他们不需要在户外劳动，因此他们很少暴露在阳光下。精致的身躯是这个时代女性美丽的另一个标志。然而，这种美的观念并没有永远延续下去。在几百年后的唐朝，很少有人看到苗条的女人，因为更宽的腰围更受欢迎。

Japan, meanwhile, had its own notions of beauty. In the Heian period (794-1185), one of the most sought-after features in a woman was very long, dark hair. Women liked to grow their hair all the way down to their—toes and even beyond. If a woman had grown her hair very long, she would instantly have been recognized as a member of the upper class. In this era, women also had particular ideas about how to style their eyebrows. They often shaved off their natural eyebrows and drew in a new set (sometimes called 'butterfly' eyebrows) much higher up on the forehead.

与此同时，日本也有自己的美丽观。在平安时代（794-1185），女性最受欢迎的特征之一是长而黑的头发。女人喜欢把头发留长到脚趾甚至更长。如果一个女人的头发长得很长，她马上就能被认作是上流社会的一员。在这个时代，女性对如何设计眉毛也有特别的想法。他们经常剃掉天生的眉毛，在额头上画一组高得多的新眉毛（有时称为“蝴蝶”眉毛）。

In Renaissance Europe, which roughly began in 1300 and lasted until 1700, it was plump figures that were held up as the standard of beauty. Paintings from this period depict women and goddesses as curvaceous,

with rounded hips and stomachs. Such curves were seen as symbols of fertility.

在文艺复兴时期的欧洲，大致始于 1300 年，一直持续到 1700 年，丰满的身材被视为美的标准。这一时期的绘画描绘了女性和女神的曲线美，臀部和腹部圆润。这种曲线被视为生育能力的象征。

The ideal body type changed again in the twentieth century. During the 1920s, a period commonly referred to as the Jazz Age, a boyish figure on a woman was all the rage. This was in direct contrast to the curvier figure favoured in earlier centuries. This revolutionary period also saw women cutting their hair short and wearing short skirts to show off their legs. Throughout the century, however, beauty standards shifted many times over. By the end of the century, beauty came to be associated with super skinny models. This has persisted for several decades, but like any other notions of beauty, it will certainly prove to be fleeting.

理想的身体类型在二十世纪又发生了变化。在 20 世纪 20 年代，一个通常被称为爵士乐时代的时期，一个女人身上的男孩形象风靡一时。这与前几个世纪人们喜欢的曲线型身材形成了直接对比。在这个革命时期，妇女们也剪短发，穿短裙来炫耀自己的双腿。然而，在整个世纪里，美容标准发生了多次变化。到本世纪末，美貌开始与超瘦模特联系在一起。这已经持续了几十年，但和其他任何关于美的概念一样，它肯定会被证明是转瞬即逝的。

It's easy to get swept up in the beauty standards of our time. These days, we can fall into the trap of conforming and thinking that if we were skinnier, we would be more beautiful. We might even start thinking unhealthy thoughts, like 'If I had eaten less, I would have achieved a higher standard of beauty.' It's important to remember that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and rarely does one type of beauty last forever. Beauty is not a fixed concept, but one that is constantly evolving with time.

我们很容易被这个时代的美丽标准所左右。现在，我们可能会陷入顺从的陷阱，认为如果我们更瘦，我们会更漂亮。我们甚至可能开始思考一些不健康的想法，比如“如果我少吃一点，我就会达到一个更高的美的标准。”重要的是要记住，美是在旁观者的眼中的，很少有一种美能永恒存在。美不是一个固定的概念，而是一个随着时间不断演变的概念。