

The Enigma of Beauty 謎樣的美

The search for beauty spans centuries and continents. Paintings of Egyptians dating back over 4,000 years show both men and women painting their nails and wearing makeup. On the other side of the globe, the ancient Maya of Central America considered crossed eyes beautiful, and hung little balls between children's eyes to develop this look. In 18th-century France, wealthy noblemen wore large wigs of long, white hair to make themselves attractive. In cultures throughout the world, people have gone to extreme length to achieve the goal of beauty.

「美」的調查經歷了好幾個世紀以及各大洲。追溯到埃及過去 4,000 年前，那時的埃及人不管是男人或是女人除了有指甲的彩繪之外還會化妝。看向世界的另一端，在中美的馬雅人祖先認為有鬥雞眼是美麗的象徵，他們會放一顆小球在孩子的雙眼間，以達到這個效果。在 18 世紀的法國，有錢的貴族們會戴著長且白色的假髮，讓他們自己看起來更有魅力。世界上的文化有很多種，不管是哪個文化的人都會盡自己最大的力量達到美的極致。

Today, people continue to devote a lot of time and money to their appearance. According to a recent report by the Nielsen Company, a global information and marketing corporation, "one out of three consumers globally say they are spending more money today on beauty and health care products...than ever before." Worldwide, sales of makeup, dieting, hair- and skin-care products, as well as gym memberships and cosmetic surgery, generate billions of dollars every year.

現今，人們持續花費很多的時間與金錢在他們的外表上。根據最近尼爾森公司的全球資訊與市場公司報告顯示：「三分之一的顧客說他們現在花更多的錢在美容及健康管理的產品上...以前從來沒有過。」以全世界來說，銷售化妝、減重、護髮、護膚的產品，以及健身房的會員、整形手術，每年產生數十億的商機。

And there is at least one good reason for the desire to be attractive: beauty is power. Studies suggest that good-looking people make more money, get called on more often in class, and are perceived as friendlier.

而且這裡至少有一個理由讓人想要變得更美：美麗是一種力量。研究指出那些好看的人們會賺更多的錢、在課堂上容易被老師叫到，而且被認為是更友善的。

But what exactly is beauty? Trying to define it is difficult, and yet we know it when we see it - or so we think. "Beauty is health," says one psychologist. "It's a billboard saying 'I'm healthy. I can pass on our genes.'" And our awareness of it may start at a very early age. In one set of studies, six-month-old babies were shown a series of photographs. The faces on the pictures had been rated for attractiveness by a group of college

students. In the studies, the babies spent more time looking at the attractive faces than the unattractive ones.

但是到底什麼才是美？試著定義的話很難，但是當我們看到的時候會知道 - 或者我們會覺得。「美麗就是健康」，一位心理學家這麼說。「有一個廣告這麼說，『我很健康，我可以放心傳遞我們的基因。』」而我們通常在很早的時候會意識到這件事情。在另一組研究中，讓六個月大的嬰兒們看著一系列的照片。而這些照片是從一群大學生中選出不同吸引力的臉蛋。這組研究顯示，嬰兒們會花較長的時間看著較有吸引力的臉蛋。