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The Strangeness of Beauty

Contribution by
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Is the Strangeness in Beauty or the Beauty in Strangeness?

strange attractor (Maths) a pattern existing in abstract mathematical space, representing the path traced by a point that expresses the essential parameters of a chaotic system.

English Collins Dictionary, 5th ed. 2000 © Harper Collins

There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion.

Francis Bacon

I love fairy tales because of their haunting beauty and magical strangeness. They are set in worlds where anything can happen.

Frogs can be kings, a thicket of brambles can hide a castle where a royal court has lain asleep for a hundred years, a boy can outwit a giant, and a girl can break a curse with nothing but her courage and steadfastness.

Kate Forsyth

'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' [by Samuel Taylor Coleridge] had a formative effect on me. I think it's one of those works that if you encounter it very early you're doubly enchanted by the beauty of the language and the strangeness of the vision. It stays with you.

Ben Okri

It is the addition of strangeness to beauty that constitutes the romantic character in art.

Walter Hagen

We also maintain – again with perfect truth – that mystery is more than half of beauty, the element of strangeness that stirs the senses through the imagination.

Richard Le Gallienne



My father [...] was talking about this thing – strangeness and charm. It's actually the name of the two smallest particles that there are when you split the atom, so I wrote a song around it. I even managed to fit the word 'hydrogen' in

there. Isn't that a nice thing for scientists to call them though?

Florence Welch

I think that a good deal of poetry and art gives us some sense of access to another's voice, perception, texture of thought, imagination. Sometimes it gives us better access to the strangeness in ourselves.

Mary Szybist

Unless otherwise cited, the quotes listed were accessed, January 2021, at <https://www.brainyquote.com/topics/strangeness-quotes>.

An online search in *Brainy Quote* reveals numerous quotes on beauty and strangeness. From artists to writers to scientists, all have wondered and written about the topic and, after reading many of them, one begins to wonder whether the real issue is not about searching and identifying strangeness within oneself, within one's own actions and expressions, but is really about finding truth within oneself?

Scientists search incessantly for years and when their work finally yields a result, a truth, they are flabbergasted by the wonder of the universe, at what has always been there but only now has a tiny bit of it been revealed. The imagination of writers is boundless, and it is often by looking into unlikely possibilities that they find themselves face to face with truth. Artists, no matter what medium they work with, search within themselves and each time they create a work, it seems they come one step closer to a truth.

When I became interested in this topic, I was searching literally as to why, whenever I see some physical manifestation of beauty, I am particularly attracted to some odd aspect of it. It is through my own consistent research that I finally realised that I was searching for my own strangeness and oddness. I have discovered far more of myself through this experience.

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*The Strangeness of Beauty or An Anecdote
and an Incomplete List of Synonyms*



Manholes are small openings in pavements or streets that allow a person to enter the sewers beneath them. They are usually kept covered to prevent people and objects from falling in. But a manhole near my parents' apartment in Beirut has been without a cover for as long as I can remember. To ensure that no one falls in, my father has, over the years, balanced different objects on the rim of the manhole to make it more visible. Every time I visit, I take a photograph of these strange and beautiful works of art.

Strange aberrant, abnormal, addlepat, alien, alluring, anomalous, astonishing, astounding, atrocious, atypical, backasswards, baffling, bewildering, bizarre, bizarro, captivating, colourful, confounding, conspicuous, cranky, crazy, creepy, crotchety, curious, dark, deviant, different, distant, dubious, eccentric, eerie, enchanting, erratic, exceptional, exotic, extraordinary, fantastic, far-out, faraway, fascinating, fishy, flaky, foreign, freak, freakish, freaky, fresh, funky, funny, glamorous, idiosyncratic, ignorant, incongruous, inexperienced, inexplicable, innovative, irregular, kinky, kooky, like nothing on Earth, magical, marvellous, mysterious, mystifying, new, newfangled, newsworthy, nonconformist, nonmainstream, non-traditional, notable, noteworthy, noticeable, novel, obscure, odd, oddball, off, off the wall, off-centre, off-kilter, offbeat, original, out of the ordinary, out of the way, out-there, outlandish, outrageous, outré, outstanding, particular, pathbreaking, peculiar, perplexing, phantasmagoric, phenomenal, picture-book, picturesque, pioneering, prominent, puzzling, quaint, queer, queerish, questionable, quirky, rare, remarkable, remote, romantic, rum, salient, screwy, shocking, singular, spaced-out, special, spooky, striking, surreal, suspicious,

trailblazing, unaccountable, unaccustomed, uncanny, unco, uncommon, unconventional, uncustomary, unexpected, unfamiliar, unheard of, unique, unknown, unnatural, unorthodox, unprecedented, unseasoned, untried, untypical, unused, unusual, unwonted, unworn, wacko, wacky, way out, weird, weirdo, wild, wonderful, zany.

Beautiful A-OK, A1, acceptable, adequate, admirable, aesthetic, all right, alluring, angelic, appealing, arresting, artistic, as pretty as a picture, attractive, awesome, bang on, bang-up, banner, beaut, beauteous, beddable, beguiling, better, bewitching, blue-chip, blue-ribbon, boffo, bonny, boss, brag, brave, bully, bumper, capital, celestial, charming, chocolate-box, choice, classic, classical, classy, comely, cool, corking, crackerjack, cracking, cunning, cute, dainty, dandy, dazzling, decent, decorative, delicate, delightful, desirable, dishy, divine, dollish, dope, down, drop-dead-gorgeous, dynamite, easy on the eye, effulgent, elegant, engaging, enticing, excellent, exceptional, exquisite, eye-catching, fab, fabulous, fair, famous, fanciable, fancy, fantabulous, fantastic, fascinating, fetching, fine, first-class, first-rate, first-string, fit, five-star, flamboyant, flashy, flawless, four-star, foxy, frontline, gangbuster, gilt-edged, glamorous, glorious, glossy, gone, good, good-looking, goodly, gorgeous, graceful, grand, great, groovy, handsome, heavenly, high-class, high-grade, high-test, hot, hunky, hype, ideal, immense, irresistible, jim-dandy, Junoesque, keen, knockout, likely, lovely, lovesome, luscious, magnificent, marvellous, mean, neat, nice, nice-looking, nifty, noble, nubile, number one, numero uno, OK, out of this world, out-of-sight, par excellence, passable, peach keen, peachy, perfect, personable, phat, photogenic, pleasant, pleasing, premium, prepossessing, presentable, pretty, prettyish, prime, primo, prize, prizewinning,

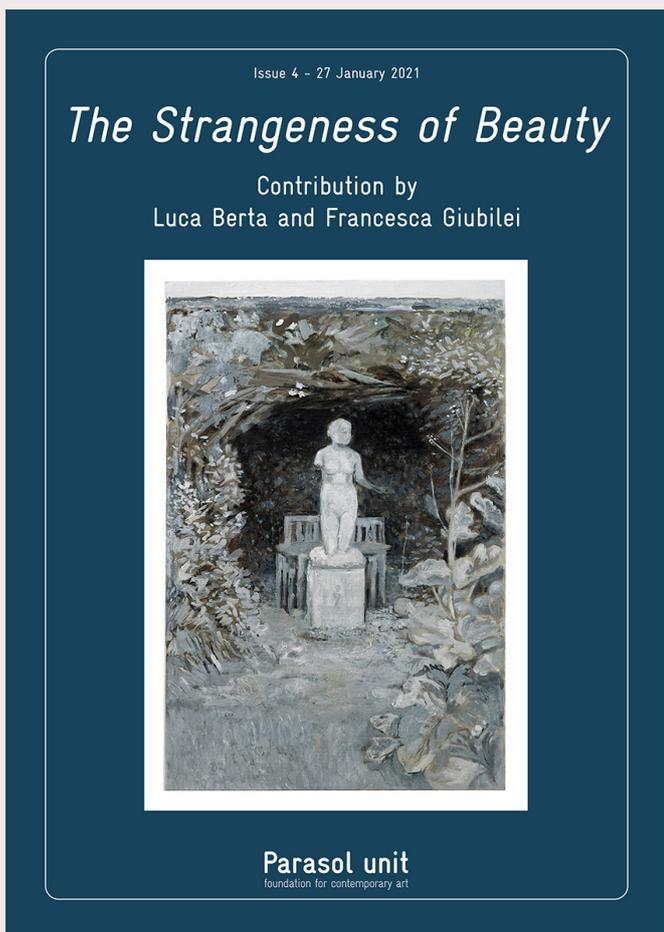
pulchritudinous, quality, radiant, radical,
ravishing, resplendent, righteous,
satisfactory, seductive, seemly, select,
sensational, sexy, showstopping, showy,
sightly, slick, smashing, snazzy, special,
splashy, splendid, spunky, standard,
statuesque, stellar, sterling, striking,
studly, stunning, sublime, superb, superfine,
superior, superlative, supernal, swell, taking,
tasty, telegenic, terrific, tip-top, tolerable,
too much, toothsome, top, top-notch, top-
of-the-line, top-shelf, topflight, topping,
traditional, unsurpassed, well-favoured,
winsome, wizard, wonderful, zingy.

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Rayyane Tabet, *Beirut October 20, 2017*.
Digital image. Courtesy of the artist

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Rayyane Tabet, *Beirut July 30, 2015*.
Digital image. Courtesy of the artist



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The Strangeness of Beauty
Issue 4, 27 January 2021

Featuring a contribution by
Luca Berta and Francesca Giubilei,
founders of Venice Art Factory

Front cover
Cecilia Edefalk, *Double White Venus with Mask*, 2008.
Egg tempera and oil on linen. Private collection.