



DOCUMENT

UFD0015  Pamela Rosenkranz

Jen, Jeans, and Genes

Pamela Rosenkranz peers into the evolutionary depths of the colour blue

Blue was apparently the favorite colour of the project director of Viagra, the famous pill formulated for the enhanced potency of an endless youth. He is not the only one.

When light from the sun reaches the earth's atmosphere, longer wavelengths—the warmer lights of red, orange, and yellow—pass through, while the shorter rays of the color blue get absorbed by gas molecules and dispersed across the skies. These blue rays colour the skies above and reflect the oceans beneath them. This is how blue set the stage to play the leading colour in the evolution of our eye: the earliest human ancestor species to develop photosensitivity were aquatic, and only two specific wavelength ranges of electromagnetic radiation—blue and green visible light—can travel through water. So when life began to perceive light and, with that, the aesthetic difference between depth and height, the visual sense for space attracted certain species to these lights of the heavens, creating the physical and metaphysical drive to slowly bubble up to the surface to finally take land and now meet the ultimate restrictions of gravity on their growing pads.

Our vision is very much influenced and shaped by the natural conditions of the period preceding the species of humankind

We seem to know these stories implicitly, but we tend to forget that our vision, like our other sense organs, is not abstract, but very much influenced and shaped by the natural conditions of the much longer period preceding the species of humankind. In fact, we still perceive far more of the colours blue

and green than any other colour that our eyes are able to perceive. And this physical ability is very likely responsible for blue being the favorite colour of the majority of people across the world.

But there is another more literal sense to Viagra's chromatic branding. The drug has an inhibiting effect on an enzyme present in photoreception, causing a depolarization of the rod cells and a higher light sensitivity, a side effect called blue vision. An overdose of the blue pills can cause permanent staining of one's vision with light blue clouds. This makes an absurd enough association to another sexual stimulus that nature created for a seemingly meaningless privilege: The *baby blues*. Until around eight thousand years ago everyone had brown eyes. Then the first person started to branch into a nowadays half billion and counting blue-eyed crowd. So far the explanation seems to be that blue irises are a physical feature that female humans first developed to attract sexual partners for reproduction.

Yves Klein's preference for the colour blue seemed to be inextricably related to his seemingly anticipated 'disappearance'

The heavens, as embodied by the blue sky, are the place where many religions 'see' humans go after they die. Likewise, the French artist Yves Klein's preference for the colour blue seemed to be inextricably related to his seemingly anticipated 'disappearance'. As Klein was a fervent Christian esoteric, the blue of the skies might have meant much more to him than the gates to successful sexual reproduction—even though (with perfect ambiguity) he

ended up smearing blue pigments mixed in heavy solvents all over female models, using them as living brushes. In this image it comes to the fore that blue works as a contrary color to the pink tints of their skin colour. As touching human surface, Yves Klein's nameless models—so many bluets—would disappear into the universal chromakey enigma.



And as if framed by his personal bluescreen, Klein appeared to be somewhat of a hypostasis of an artistic practice that revolved around himself exclusively. This form of subjectivity seems to express authenticity, but has been inflated by spiritual chauvinism and art's young swings of messianic stardom. His death was supposed to be special; it was a perfect conservation of the picture that the man had created. Klein's early passing at thirty-four parallels the probable age of Jesus at his death, and seemed to perfectly enhance his version of a self that wishes to die with a cause, to bubble up further and further to the skies of eternal remembrance. But cigarettes, amphetamines, his colour pigments, and solvents and whatever else he ingested—willingly or unwillingly—became a fatal cocktail over the years. To that end, and with today's knowledge, contemporary medicine disputes and dissolves the death of famous *Yves Klein's Blues*; what signified 'immateriality' to Klein is, in fact, a very material, general, and biological death.

The process of aging is a process of cellular decline. It appears, however, that we are continually hindering this process through the laws of natural selection. We grow older and older, or better: we stay younger and younger over the course of time. In a chapter of *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* that elucidates 'The Seeds of Neoteny', a theory explaining the principles of this process that drives man to develop ever-younger features and a prolonged lifespan, Stephen Jay Gould notes that

An ape arrested in its development; holding the spark of divinity only through a chemical brake placed upon its glandular development...

And as if he wanted to illustrate the aesthetic relations of this principle he cites Aldous Huxley's *After Many a Summer Dies The Swan*:

There is a kind of glandular equilibrium.... Then a mutation comes along and knocks it sideways. You get a new equilibrium that happens to retard the developmental rate. You grow up; but you do it so slowly that you are dead before you've stopped being like your great-great-grandfather's fetus.

Our eyes get larger, the forehead morphs longer, our voices are lifted, we reach an ever-greater age, our hair disappears. And nakedness seems to be a product of this process of sexual selection too. There are certain theories that stipulate the process of how humans became the only naked primate. These theories, set about a million years ago, believe it to have been triggered by survival mechanisms more than sexual selection, parasites, transpiration and so forth. But already Charles Darwin speculated: 'No one supposes,' he wrote, 'that the nakedness of the skin is any direct advantage to man: his body, therefore, cannot have been divested of hair through natural selection.' Man—or, more specifically, he implies, women—became hairless to attract a mate. And the image that predominantly tips the scales of selection in our society is clearly one of the utmost hairless, smooth and homogenous skin.

This surface seems to have a special attraction also as an abstract element. Apparently the higher the percentage of skin on an advertisement, the more attention it gets. Particularly useful for cosmetic campaigns, but also increasingly important in the advertisement of water. 'The most important body of water is yours'—one of the most famous slogans that Evian has trademarked—positions the body not as a 'skin sack' but as a precious flexible and living sculpture carrying purity inside. The idea that water can clean the body from the inside, purify it to the surface with its virgin quality, is brought into equation with this by the anthropomorphic design of the bottle. The natural product water advertised as destined to clean the price-worthy skin-coloured subject of health and beauty.

Cats apparently only started to ‘meow’ in adulthood to become more attractive to their hosts or human parents

The strange evolution of cuteness has not only affected us, but has also interfered with the development of our closest friends: the domesticated animals. When they adapted into dogs, wolves began to grow puppy-like fuzzy fur, round torsos, large heads and eyes, and ears that hung down rather than stood erect. And cats only apparently started to ‘meow’ in adulthood to become more attractive to their hosts or human parents. These are all survival strategies which enhance the evolutionary fitness of pets as companions for the humans that host them as living analogies of cuteness.

The very long-term process of stretching life by simulating youth seems to be one of the human brain’s instinctive goals. Brooke Shields presented these rules of attraction in a face overflowing with the warm sadness of a healthy teenager with white skin, and wet and glossy irises in a 1980s commercial for Calvin Klein:

Occasionally, certain conditions produce a structural change in the jeans, which will bring about the process of evolution. This may occur in one or more of the following ways: Firstly, by selective mating in which a single jean-type proves superior and transmits itself to future generations. Secondly, by jean-drift, in which certain jeans may fade away while other jeans persist. And finally, by natural selection, which filters out those jeans better equipped than others to endure in the environment. This may result in the origin of an entirely new species, which brings us to Calvin’s and the survival of the fittest.

Her jeans are certainly wearing precious skin. But jeans in general made it officially to the other end of classes; they definitely held on to someone else than those bodies they were containing originally. Still often blue, they are telling about the confusion that has occurred. The ‘worn-out look’—meaning expressive fades and scratches—requires a technique called sandblasting that is responsible for deadly lung diseases. Their adventurous sex appeal

is produced by getting the do-it spirits off the map in *just do it and shut the fuck up*. The morbid looking shell unconsciously pointing to the grotesque post-post-colonial relationship.

When will the ghosts in our genes meet the ghosts in our jeans?

But it is not just illness or death that pays the price for this kind of sex appeal. Cell decay, triggered by damaging substances, gets copied into the genes of the next generation, and the next, and so forth. Epigenetics is a young branch of science that is dealing with the fact that the conditions we live in are triggering something like the *buttons of our genes*, and when we procreate these markers get fixed into the genes of our children. We don’t know much about it in detail as of yet, but there is evidence that grandchildren of smokers are, for example, fatter, smaller and less intelligent than their peers; those whose grandparents suffered hunger have a much higher risk of diseases like diabetes and certain cancers; and those that in turn enjoyed the advantages of healthy food, good education, and so on, would to some extent automatically live longer and even relatively longer when they would catch up with bad habits like smoking. We inherit the conditions that our ancestors endured or enjoyed. So the feeling that World War II is still sitting in your bones is not simply esotericism. But when will the ghosts in our genes meet the ghosts in our jeans?

A UCLA neurosurgeon reported some years ago that he had found a neuron that responds excitedly to Jennifer Aniston’s features

In the meantime, there is Jennifer Aniston wooing ironically for another water brand, ‘hydration you can feel’ in your face and in your brain. Her hands have caught the bottle of smartwater—*smart because it’s made that way*. And she goes on a journey through the viral hot spots of YouTube. One of them, of course, is packed with puppies. It’s funny, Itzhak Fried, a UCLA neurosurgeon, reported some years ago that he had found a neuron that responds excitedly to Jennifer Aniston’s features. The brains of epileptic test subjects were stimulated by pictures



and healthy bodies. Our vision unravels them out of the blue soups to feel like lifting our own selves up. They are entertaining a message for the hungry I. Who sits behind those eyes? Thinking about how many pills one should take for the next fuck? But this is how we are growing now. Entering the epigenetics of *Viagra children*. They will have the largest, the most absolute, and the bluest of blue eyes, ever. And that's not an analogy. Sexy neotenic holo-gloves, sharing the blue light of our screens.

of celebrities. While the surgery on their conscious brain was performed in full awareness, the patients were offered a picture of Aniston along with other celebrities. And somehow a very special neuron, which populates the deep space of grey matter of many people, strongly fired to the felt presence of Aniston's lovely expressions that the scientists were holding in their hands. Apparently, this same neuron was suspiciously quiet when the neurons had to process pictures of other stars, people or animals.

We can trace these neurons firing to sculpt Aniston's hair, her eyes, and the everlasting, painstaking smile in her smoothed out face. The ad is virally wiring a Jen into billions of minds for 2.46 minutes. Reproducing her over and over. It is a neural celebration of a chosen self in every other three pounds of mind. As spirit in the bottle, we meet the hybrid self that the brains of smartwater created with Jennifer's material. The place of the nerve cell is grafted on top of the area where we get blue skies, lakes, blue eyes, and whatever appears bluer than it is.

This archaic communication lets us draw and think in image

Including the water she is drinking. Those lifting blue sips that run through our bodies everyday. Water as the reflection of the sky. Up there is the widest bright yonder we can see and it laughs down on us in all its shades every single day. It is the dimension of our biggest natural illusion and the contrast to our skin-colored bodies. This archaic communication lets us draw and think in images, develop fantasies and aesthetics and, in the end, allowed us to enter into the exchange of goods. Building a culture of selves that sell us their analogy of blue, deprived of death, lifted, and elevated with clean, stretched