



Survival of the Beautiful: Art, Science, and Evolution

David Rothenberg

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"The peacock's tail," said Charles Darwin, "makes me sick." That's because the theory of evolution as adaptation can't explain why nature is so beautiful. It took the concept of sexual selection for Darwin to explain that, a process that has more to do with aesthetics than the practical. *Survival of the Beautiful* is a revolutionary new examination of the interplay of beauty, art, and culture in evolution. Taking inspiration from Darwin's observation that animals have a natural aesthetic sense, philosopher and musician David Rothenberg probes why animals, humans included, have innate appreciation for beauty-and why nature is, indeed, beautiful.

Sexual selection may explain why animals desire, but it says very little about what they desire. Why will a bowerbird literally murder another bird to decorate its bower with the victim's blue feathers? Why do butterfly wings boast such brilliantly varied patterns? The beauty of nature is not arbitrary, even if random mutation has played a role in evolution. What can we learn from the amazing range of animal aesthetic behavior-about animals, and about ourselves?

Readers who enjoyed the bestsellers *The Art Instinct* and *The Mind's Eye* will find *Survival of the Beautiful* an equally stimulating and profound exploration of art, science, and the creative impulse.

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