

8.3 The changing face of beauty

Lecturer: Now, today's lecture is the fourth in our series of lectures on *The changing face of beauty*. This week I will look at beauty in the modern world. Of course, remember also that I am not just referring to female beauty but concepts of male beauty too.

Certainly, images of beautiful women or men are all around us. You can find them in fashion magazines, on TV, in movies ... We all know what beautiful people look like, even if we are not beautiful ourselves. Yet, even in the modern world, what we see as 'beautiful' is constantly changing. In the 1890s the actress Lillian Russell was called 'the most beautiful woman in the world'. She was 165 pounds/75 kilos. In 1967 the fashion model Twiggy was seen as the perfection of beauty – and she weighed just 91 pounds/41 kilos. A big change in our perception of beauty, in quite a short time.

In the desire to be perfect many people decide to change their appearance through surgery. Cosmetic surgery, which started as long ago as 1910, aims to 'improve' our physical appearance. Then, it was an expensive luxury. Now, it's almost routine. Men who want more hair can have hair transplants, or pec implants for a more masculine chest. Women have facelifts, or tummy tucks to remove fat. The problem is not the size of your stomach or the amount of hair on your head – the problem is that today, more than in any other time in history, we choose to identify ourselves by our appearance. We all want to be beautiful; because we all think beautiful people lead better lives.

Another common way we try to change our appearance is by dieting. Do you sometimes worry about your weight? Many people do. In 1950 diet products were worth \$100m a year. Today, the diet industry is worth over \$50 billion a year.