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# History of Beauty

Umberto Eco & Alastair McEwen (eds.)

Rizzoli (2005)

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## Abstract

What is beauty? What is art? What is taste and fashion? Is beauty something to be observed coolly and rationally or is it something dangerously involving? So begins Umberto Eco's intriguing journey into the aesthetics of beauty, in which he explores the ever-changing concept of the beautiful from the ancient Greeks to today. While closely examining the development of the visual arts and drawing on works of literature from each era, Eco broadens his enquiries to consider a range of concepts, including the idea of love, the unattainable woman, natural inspiration versus numeric formulas, and the continuing importance of ugliness, cruelty, and even the demonic. Professor Eco takes us from classical antiquity to the present day, dispelling many preconceptions along the way and concluding that the relevance of his research is urgent because we live in an age of great reverence for beauty, "an orgy of tolerance, the total syncretism and the absolute and unstoppable polytheism of Beauty." In this, his first illustrated book, Professor Eco offers a layered approach that includes a running narrative, abundant examples of painting and sculpture, and excerpts from writers and philosophers of each age, plus comparative tables. A true road map to the idea of beauty for any reader who wishes to journey into this wonderful realm with Eco's nimble mind as guide.

## Keywords

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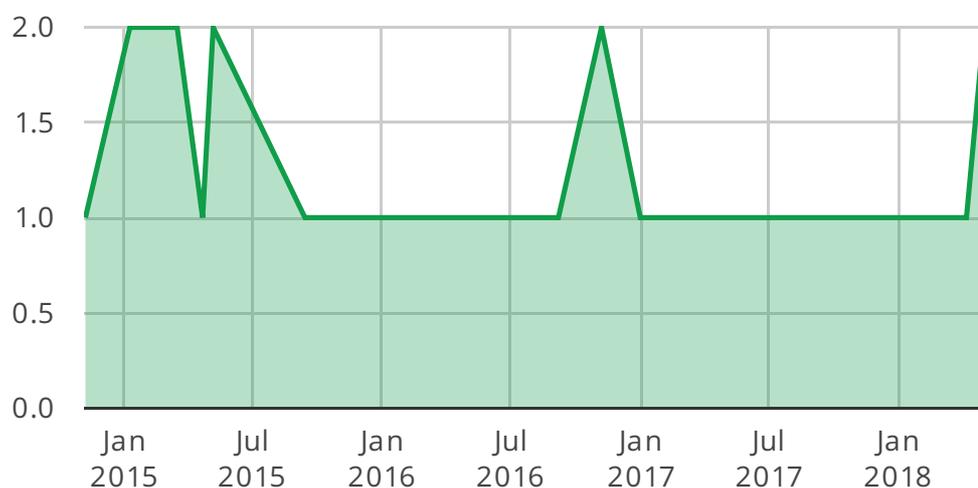
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