

Sensory Delights



Get Real

by

Brooke Bessesen



A new view for the quirks that make us ... us

Every person is special, a unique snowflake in the blizzard of life.

Created by complex coils of DNA, each one of us represents a distinctive sampling of diversity.

An infinite number of variables play into appearance alone, which surprisingly accounts for only about 0.1 percent of our genetic makeup.

With so many faces and forms, it's sad how often we simply observe coloring and stature – frequently overlooking one another's most distinguishing qualities.

I have brown hair, green eyes and am of slightly-above-average height.

But if someone looked more closely, they might notice that I also have very nice veins. Really. I am a phlebotomist's dream.

I occasionally worry for thin, flimsy-veined individuals who might suffer health problems from bad blood flow. Not me. My hemoglobin pumps through long, sinewy lines with the PSI of a fire hose.

After reading this, don't worry. If you happen to bump into me someday and can't peel your eyes off my lined forearm, I promise I won't be offended.

Perhaps you are hiding a heart-shaped mole behind your left ear, or an extra-outty bellybutton, or the fact that your knees are wrinkly.

Why not be proud of such oddities?

After all, these are the traits that make us ... well, us.

We always relish attributes that set us apart from the crowd – flamboyant eyelashes or bodacious bazoombas. We even accentuate them to draw

attention.

Yet, as social beings, we have an inherent need to assimilate with our group, so keep culturally unappealing differences tucked safely out of view.

It's a strange balancing act, trying to simultaneously stand out and fit in.

However, by projecting a secure Self Image we can effectively influence the perception of others, turning our negatives to positives.

Take, for example, my recent visit to the podiatrist for a small-but-unremitting ache in my heel.

After reviewing X-rays and having me perform a few funky foot drills, the doctor academically informed me that I am one-third club-footed – a congenital malformation called Talipes Equinovarus.

Which, basically translated, means "horse foot."

Although I was told the signs are barely noticeable and my pain was unrelated, I couldn't help fixating on the finding.

My childhood ballet teachers repeatedly commented on my "exquisite" point, which made me proud of my high arches. Now a devastating truth had been revealed: I'm deformed.

Concerned this new development might threaten my pedal confidence, I foraged for the bright side.

Oh sure, my feet are aesthetically challenged, often a bit moist and sporting unusual proportions (nearly as wide as they are long). My little piggies are plump and there's enough space between them that if I had webbing (which I don't!) I would make a fine duck.

But haven't my five-toed tires served me well? Tolerantly transporting me from Point A to B and never once requiring Roadside Assistance?

Under a rosy light, this could be considered a rare and splendid distinction. I'm one-third club-footed. How many people can say that – and really mean it?

Thus, after some soul-searching, I cheerfully wrote the following email to my mother:

Good news! Turns out I have partial horse feet (you know how much I like horses!) and a nice dancer's arch to boot, with no real drawbacks.

Sometimes my luck amazes even me!

Our feet are similar, so I suspect you may have it, too. But you might not want to tell a whole bunch of people because it could cause problems with jealousy. This is a rare and splendid distinction that unfortunately not everyone can have.

Now when you see me, you'll be torn between staring at my

forearms and my hooves.

But hopefully you'll also think, "This girl has amazing confidence for someone with bulging veins and squat feet."

See, it's all in the presentation.

Of course, with 99.9% of our genes working on non-aesthetic details, individuality isn't merely physical. It's also reflected in the jobs we choose, vehicles we drive and hobbies we enjoy. Some lifestyles are strange and eccentric.

Additional peculiarities can be found in temperament, integrity and taste.

I have a friend who doesn't like eyebrows – she thinks they're weird. This is the kind of quirky characteristic that makes her an interesting person to know.

Let's be honest; life would be a bore if people didn't have unusual features. It is, in fact, the vast variety of remarkable qualities that makes this world so darn wonderful.

So, bare that bellybutton, show off your knees! And when we meet ... no horse jokes, please.

Scottsdale resident Brooke Bessesen is the author and illustrator of the children's book *Look Who Lives in the Desert!*, a humorous-but-educational look at desert wildlife. It's available at all book retailers, including Gridleys of Fountain Hills.

The ups and downs of contemporary art

By Chaya Shapiro

It's going to be a good evening. I can tell as I approach the Mesa Contemporary Arts building. It is, of course, a minimalist geometric structure beckoning passers by with an enormous piece hanging in the window-wall that resembles silkworm cocoons spun by the doozers from Fragil Rock ... just my speed.

I am going to the opening reception of two new exhibitions at the Center, Molten and Out There: Unconventional Landscapes. I came for the new exhibitions, but I stayed for the old ... and the wine.

Though I am no art critic, I know what strikes me, texturally, with color, content and intent.

And as a layman art lover, the beauty of contemporary art lies in its insistence to

embrace all mediums in almost all conceivable combinations that convey meaning. Great.

Better still is the meaning. The symbolism is not contained in historical reference as in, say, Renaissance art, but is an exploration of our realities and art itself.

And again, the beauty is that contemporary art allows me to infuse my moment, reality, perception and worldview into the piece and it either says 'uh huh, I know exactly what you mean' or challenges my reality.

Molten and Out There did not provide for this at all. And as art for art's sake, I was not so impressed.

Molten was a small exhibit of neon art work. A couple pieces like *Pretty American Tacos* by Jason Chakavarty, did get the wheels turning ... sort of. Three glass tacos were nestled in a metal briefcase –

very heist-like – with red, white and blue neon illuminating them from underneath. Hm.

Chakavarty was pretty much the only artist featured that evening who made me pause. But that is just me. You be the judge.

What did grip me instantaneously and with absolute glee was Sandow Birk's *Divine Comedy*. Picture Dante Alighieri's cantos beneath painstakingly detailed drawings of modern-day Californian scenes, shadowy and slightly sinister.

Imagine paintings with vivid and rich colors of similarly chaotic scenes and you have an intelligent modern-day satire of American mainstream culture. It really is brilliant.

James A. Cook's installation of *Pivot*, also held my attention. His combinations of multimedia projections upon, or in, seemingly unrelated



An exploding atomic bomb projected onto a bright rotating cylinder is part of James A. Cook's *Pivot* installation running through Nov. 26 at the Mesa Contemporary Arts.

objects may seem absurd until you know his intent, which he tells you before you enter the space. He is exploring human choice in moment-to-moment existence and our sometimes blind movement. I have to say, I didn't get all of his pieces.

But I wanted to. And as a layman art lover, I couldn't really ask for more.

For more information on the Mesa Contemporary Arts at Mesa Arts Center and its exhibitions visit www.mesaartscenter.com.