



The Power of Glamour: Longing and the Art of Visual Persuasion

Virginia Postrel

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In provocative detail with more than one hundred illustrations, critically acclaimed author Virginia Postrel separates glamour from glitz, revealing what qualities make a person, an object, a setting, or an experience glamorous.

What is it that creates that pleasurable pang of desire—the feeling of “if only”? If only I could wear those clothes, belong to that group, drive that car, live in that house, be (or be with) that person? Postrel identifies the three essential elements in all forms of glamour and explains how they work to create a distinctive sensation of projection and yearning.

The Power of Glamour is the very first book to explain what glamour really is—not just style or a personal quality but a phenomenon that reveals our inner lives and shapes our decisions, large and small. By embodying the promise of a different and better self in different and better circumstances, glamour stokes ambition and nurtures hope, even as it fosters sometimes-dangerous illusions.

From vacation brochures to military recruiting ads, from the Chrysler Building to the iPad, from political utopias to action heroines, Postrel argues that glamour is a seductive cultural force. Its magic stretches beyond the stereotypical spheres of fashion or film, influencing our decisions about what to buy, where to live, which careers to pursue, where to invest, and how to vote.

The result is myth shattering: a revelatory theory that explains how glamour became a powerful form of nonverbal persuasion, one that taps into our most secret dreams and deepest yearnings to influence our everyday choices.

The Power of Glamour: Longing and the Art of Visual Persuasion Details

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Jeff Greason says

While I have deeply enjoyed all of Virginia Postrel's work, especially 'The Future and its Enemies', this book happened to catch me at a time when I was ready for it to provoke some creative thinking. The messages about how glamorous stories and images captivate people and can motivate them to change their behavior -- for good or ill -- will definitely affect some of my own thinking on how I communicate visions of humanity's possible futures in space. If you are interested in why and how ideas and products are marketed and why some forms of style endure, I highly recommend this book

Randall Wallace says

I loved the example of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers bloodying many pairs of shoes to perfect a dance sequence where a floor kept immaculate between takes helps create the illusion of effortlessness and glamour during the dance. Glamour involves channeling desire through imagery after the removing of tedium, effort and difficulties to achieve escape and transformation through mystery and grace. Thus Obama's glamour died when his mystery died and his policies appeared to more and more Americans like those of his unglamorous predecessor George W. Bush. Grace Kelly, Cary Grant and Sean Connery spent years being coached and studying all the refinements that made them who we think they were. It was also hard work made to seem effortless (I remember Baryshnikov once stating that his biggest effort was to make his dancing seem effortless). It took five years to write this book and I can see why; it wasn't at all shallow and it gave me a deep understanding of all the parameters of glamour, what it is and what it is not. This book also teaches you in depth about all the main icons of glamour: the Aviator, Smoker, Princess, Wind Turbines, California, Makeovers, Wirelessness, Superheroes, Windows, Shanghai, Horsemen, the Gibson Girl, Suntans and the Striding Woman. It was cool to read that in the 1880's and 1890's more than one half a million Parisians went to the theater once a week and more than one million went once a month. Brilliantly explained was the highly planned creation of a consumer society not by the people and for the people, but by the advertisers and for profit. The following problem became that the inviting glamour of the new tech achievements for sale, was being replaced by the non-glamorous cutthroat merchandising aspect. Also, the glamour of cars helped to sell the energy inefficient US highway system just as the glamour of fancy new stuff sold Americans the concept of planned obsolescence and overproduction leading to forcing new markets to open up elsewhere on the planet to buy this "rare" stuff. Great book on a rather elusive subject.

Jan Osborn says

A beautiful book in every sense of the word. Virginia Postrel has me thinking about the mystery, the power, the persuasion of "glamour," those "illusions" that can reveal desire. Having read the book, I am much more aware of and intrigued by how my identity is tied to what I "want." From President Obama to my morning cup of coffee, commerce and culture and connected to glamour.

michelle says

made me feel insane and/or psychopathic
and like i should be reading more berger and didion

Beth Adams says

Insanely intelligent look at the topic of Glamour. Once you settle in after the first chapter, it's mind-blowing what Virginia has to say. Quoting her in my thesis a bit too much?
Can't wait to read her next book!

Suzannah says

This was a really fascinating book. As Virginia Postrel works through her definition of glamour--which she defines as something very similar to CS Lewis's *sehnsucht* or Sweet Desire, a longing for something beyond the world ("a promise of escape and transformation; grace; and mystery")--you come to an odd realisation. Call it the only book you'll ever read which does nothing much beyond explain to you in detail why you wanted to read it.

There's a lot of insight here. Postrel unerringly puts her finger on a lot of the whys behind our cultural obsessions, and correctly pinpoints eschatology as the premier example of religious glamour. More interestingly, the final chapter discusses how our longings have changed with the years. In the 1930s, she says, divorce was glamorous being a luxury only affordable by the rich and famous. In the 2010s, stable family life and kind fatherly guidance is now becoming glamorous. And that may be a comforting thought.

Relstuart says

This was generated from a TED talk. A fact I didn't know till I read the afterward. It's really a fascinating book on how the world works in regard to the recognition of desirable beauty, mystery, and longing.

Why are some things glamorous? What is recognition of glamour tapping into in our psyche? This was one I read with a pen in hand to mark the page near thoughts that were resonant or that I wanted to come back to later.

One example (of many): "Whether achieved through misdirection or editing, deliberate manipulation or selective imagination, darkroom grace is the deception people usually mean when they refer to "glamourizing" something or someone. It creates a seemingly accurate image distilled to its most desirable essence."

"So here is one answer to the question of what glamour does. It offers a lucid glimpse of desire fulfilled-if only life could be like that, if only we could be there, if only we could be like them. For all its associations with material goods, the fundamental and insatiable desires glamour taps are emotional. Critics like Berger often assume that glamour create those desires. They imagine if glamour disappeared, so

would dissatisfaction-that, for example, women would not long to be young and beautiful if there were no cosmetic ads or movie stars. But glamour only works when it can tap preexisting discontent, giving otherwise inchoate longings an object of focus.

We all know the woman who went to buy the practical blue gingham dress and came home with an impractical pink silk negligee. We are all that woman now and then... Our known want and recognized need is for the blue gingham dress. But the sight of the pink negligee somehow sets aflame a desire which, until this unrestrained moment, we have not known existed! Dormant desires, unknown even to ourselves; but how full of possibilities!

Beholding the pink silk, the shopper realizes she yearns to be not merely a practical housewife, but an enticingly feminine seductress. She achieves that identity, if only in her imagination, by buying the negligee. It provides the armature of her unspoken desire.

Glamour takes on many forms because both the object objects that embody such longings and the longings themselves-the cladding and the armature-vary from person to person. If the yearning to belong to an elite is an armature, for one person the cladding may be the image of a U.S. Marine as "the few, the proud"; for another it's getting into the city's hottest club; for another its matriculating at Harvard.... One would be writer finds a display of Moleskin journals irresistibly glamorous while another is drawn to a photo of a mountain retreat or a little attic in Paris with a skylight."

"Glamour and romance are closely related, but glamour is about being, not becoming. We experience the result, not the process. The relationship between subject and audience is also different. In a romance, the audience feels a range of emotions along with the characters: excitement, fear, love grief, joy. Glamour, by contrast, remains an outside view. requiring mystery and distance. In the classic version of the character, we don't inhabit James Bond's mental universe. We project ourselves into his setting and talents. He is all "façade". We do not feel what he feels but, rather, the idea of him makes us feel. This distanced identification is why anonymous models or even inanimate objects can be glamorous. We do not need to know them from the inside, we fill their images with our own emotions and desires."

"No one can accomplish anything without first imagining it." Gregory Benford

"The best and most enduring fashion is inspired by our longings for transcendence." Christian Dior advert.

Stephen says

Let's say that this book is Ms. Glamour herself and this is the one chance we've had to interview her. What is she like? How beautiful is she inside? Well it's a little difficult to tell.

It doesn't help that this look at glamour comes from an unlikely position. The motive of libertarians is to gain freedom, to keep government out of our lives. Postrel gives the same cold shoulder treatment to analysis here. Like loudmouths at a Tea Party rally she keeps hammering away at a definition.

It's a shame that she has sourced a thousand references (sent to her from friends via email and contributions made to her blog) and kept her own opinions in the backdrop. Because at one point she leans toward critiquing the embarrassing spectacle of Naomi Wolf and her loopy blathering about "the beauty myth". It

seems the least of Wolf's problems are her leftist politics. If you take feminism seriously glamour is the bitch that keeps stepping out of line. Wolf wishes to have glamour, to embrace it even, as seen in her effusions about Angelina Jolie. Men with their male gaze, that sickening leer, objectifying us with impossible body image standards wrong wrong wrong! And yet Wolf cannot help admiring Jolie's "well-crafted personal narrative" that involves exploiting her beauty and glamour for more cash. Postrel concludes, "This is not social envy. It is more akin to a schoolgirl crush." Oh good, I thought, more of that. But then Postrel withdraws from critique, as she does throughout the rest of the book, quoting the Japanese concept of "akogare" - yearning - for instance, without showing any evidence she's engaged with Japanese culture on its own terms (as she doesn't any aesthetic claims from artists themselves, or anything glamorous outside of an American context, for that matter). Glamour, that Greek goddess that refuses to die, What is she like? What makes her so captivating? From this book, who knows.

There are some good points if obvious ones that glamour is a form of "nonverbal rhetoric". That it assumes a receptive audience (in other words, a group of people already familiar with what is being glamorized). Humor relies on surprise, glamour requires distance. How the image of a woman smoking encapsulated two of glamour's most potent forces: distance PLUS danger. And that, as expressed in the word "sprezzatura", it's all about graceful nonchalance that conceals art with effortlessness suggesting a superior being. As one enchanted with female beauty in all its forms physical and intellectual I have no idea why certain groups are out to destroy this aspect of the female experience: it makes me want to worship, to want to know. Counter to this enchanting realm of the world there are all those who praise a writer or artist for "refusing to glamorize his/her subject". How boring. I would rather eat oatmeal than see Lena Dunham naked. That's a kind of realism I can do without.

Poetry is glamorous. Its beauties are non-verbal. It's an outstanding inducement to look beyond the real or the literal.

Yesterday morning, for instance, I read the following lines from an essay. Sure, now I might look at the term "glamorous wife" with renewed interest. But with much greater interest when treated like this, *A Portuguese couple, described to me as 'a poet in exile and his glamorous wife', would remain friends of Doris, about the only ones who did, until her death. R.D. Laing was a guest a couple of times. I watched amazed as his wife (the first, I think) actually closed her eyes and dropped into sleep every time he started to speak.*

Here's one of my favorite pieces of glamour produced over the past ten years or so, featuring the incredible Maggie Cheung. I will never get tired of watching her walk up and down a staircase, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjcTP...>

Or hearing her argue for copyright protection for artists, by arguing against one of the worst impulses of this "postmodern" age,

If there are no copyrights you don't even know who the talents are, whether we're just copying each other's work. Then anybody could be a creator. I could use your words in my book. I can use your images in my film. If I'm reading a book I need to know who the author is. It helps me to understand everything about him. And I'll buy another one of his books if I like the book. If I was reading a book and I wasn't sure where the information is coming from, that it can be copied from anywhere, then I don't recognize anything. Without (the protection of original material) in the end there's no art. It would just die.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLdjX...>

Jeb Kinnison says

One of the duties of our public intellectuals is to mine the culture for fresh new ways of seeing and describing the world, bringing together seemingly disparate examples and finding regularities and order in what had only been vaguely understood before. Virginia Postrel has been at this for years, and her latest work is a wonderful read that will help anyone in design, advertising, photography, publicity, or any of the arts of persuasion understand at a deeper level how this dream-making works.

When I was living in Vancouver, I had a friend — Clark Candy, a cousin of John Candy's — who had recently moved from Toronto after a career in advertising. A motorcycle accident had crushed his knee, and during the long rehab process he decided not to go back to work in advertising, which he felt had little meaning — persuading people to buy things they did not need by trickery and slick lies, eliding ugly realities. He later went on to help produce glamorous TV productions like *Once Upon a Time*, so he ended up doing much the same work as he did before; perhaps if he had read this book then he might have seen more meaning in his advertising work. *Mad Men*'s Don Draper is a character who creates glammers for a living, and is himself a crafted image hiding a troubled soul; but without glamour and aspiration, life would be drained of the spur to progress and self-actualization of these imagined futures.

Glamour, she writes, exists between the viewer and the viewed. It is a subjective illusion of an effortless life, a higher and better self that you might become if only you could put yourself into the picture. A glamour is a spell, like a reverie or dream of your future created by images and ideas. She points out that glamour has always existed — Homer's epics recited in ancient Greece produced yearnings for lives of heroism and unforced grace in listeners not dissimilar to today's comic book heroes; artists were commissioned to create paintings of idealized existences to reinforce and inspire the real models, as well as present their favored image to others.

But the enormous increase in mass-produced imagery in the last century has given glamour a new importance, as more and more high-powered images are present in even the poorest people's lives. Like any tool of persuasion, glamour can be used for good (inspiring young people to work toward careers they might otherwise have never achieved) or ill (politicians use glamour in propaganda — Nazis, Italian fascists, and the USSR, for example.)

With a wealth of examples, the reader is able to make generalizations and follow along as she lays out a new vocabulary for discussing glamour: "Sprezzatura", the effortless grace of achievement, a stylish performance without apparent sweat or concern (which of course conceals endless practice and polishing); "theatrical grace", the kind of glamour produced by the artifice of hiding the effort to produce it behind the stage scenery; "darkroom grace", created by editing and eliding the flaws and selection of what to leave out (as of a photo) to produce an image with the emotional power to fuel a dream unencumbered by the details of its production.

She casts her net wide in the cultural landscape and brings in examples from every part of high and low culture: Hollywood, comic book heroes, cowboys, Gibson Girls, *Star Trek*, Princess Di, Che Guevara, Helen of Troy and Achilles, theater, industrial design, *Mad Men*, and Apple. The examples and photographs are delightful and consistently entertaining.

The hardcover itself is an example: perfectly laid out, a sensual pleasure to read and feel. I rarely read anything but ebooks these days, but for this work about a primarily visual phenomenon, the hardcover is the wise choice. It's the ideal coffee table book.

Aaron Arnold says

Before I read this, I had thought of glamour as being essentially synonymous with glitz; some showy display designed for and appreciated by shallow people. Not "serious"; not for me. Postrel did a phenomenal job of showing me how wrong I was, articulating how universal the concept of glamour is and how it works, and really putting the lie to the idea that you can be somehow "above" fashion, style, or trends. She manages the neat trick of posing questions of taste without imposing questionable taste herself, and discusses what makes things attractive and desirable to people in an approachable and insightful way. Replete with plenty of examples from all aspects of life, the book gives you a fascinating way to analyze your own desires and sense of aesthetics. Perhaps even more importantly, it conclusively demonstrates that anyone who doubts that illusions are not only important but even necessary in their life is merely participating in an ever bigger illusion.

Glamour is a tricky concept to put words behind. While the effects of glamour are universal, quite often the specific objects that evoke it are unique to each person. Additionally, the process of recognizing glamour usually occurs on a pre-rational level, using the kind of emotional reactions often associated with hidden longings and personal worries. Glamour is not a specific object per se, but "a form of nonverbal rhetoric, which moves and persuades not through words but through images, concepts, and totems." This means that it's often confused with other, similar things, so that point about glamour being a form of rhetoric is crucial to understand how Postrel attempts to "distinguish glamour from style, celebrity, or fame; to establish the relationship between glamour and such associated phenomena as charisma, romance, spectacle, elegance, and sex appeal; and to identify the common elements uniting disparate versions of glamour across audiences and cultural contexts."

She backs up that lofty goal by covering the origins, operation, and evolution of glamour. Quite helpful are the chapter-length analyses of 14 different icons of glamour, each of which provokes some degree of fascination in most people: The Aviator, Smoking, The Princess, Wind Turbines, The Golden State, The Makeover, Wirelessness, The Superhero, The Window, Shanghai, The Horseman, The Gibson Girl, The Suntan, and The Striding Woman. While it's easy to say that any individual one of these icons is not your own personal cup of tea (The Striding Woman, an advertising motif evoking progress, self-advancement, and women's liberation, also brought to my mind the entirely unglamorous internet meme Women Laughing Alone With Salad), it's not really arguable that many, many people react to the idea of, say, California, with an almost mystical longing for what that state represents: sun, surf, youth, girls, Hollywood, etc. While it's possible and even expected for an icon to disappoint somewhat when confronted in the flesh ("Venice is glamorous, until the breeze off the Adriatic brings in the smell of rotting fish and raw sewage, at which point it is like Hoboken with better architecture", in one quote Postrel collects), it's the idea that matters. Flying the regular short-haul route between Cleveland and Indianapolis might not be quite the lifestyle that someone raised on Charles Lindbergh or Howard Hughes expected, but you still get to participate in the glamour of The Aviator.

This would seem to leave the charge open that glamour is essentially just advertising; some kind of lie that deceives more than it delivers. For many people an icon like The Superhero or The Princess is not glamorous but childish, a totem that immature people use to transparently project their own longings into a world where their limitations are absent. Well, sure, that's obviously true in one sense, but in another sense that's meaningless, because who doesn't have inspirational icons that are forever beyond them? A scientist could idolize Isaac Newton, a painter could idolize Rembrandt, a musician could idolize Van Zandt, a director

could idolize Orson Welles, an actress could idolize Lucille Ball, a CEO could idolize Rockefeller, and so on - all of those figures are glamorous because they evoke strong passions, and even if a writer knows deep down that he'll probably never be Steinbeck, it's the idealized qualities of Steinbeck that helps him find essential meaning in his work.

We all need idols, along with their illusions, because "though felt to be true, these illusions are always known to be false." One can scoff at someone who's collected an unusually large amount of Star Trek memorabilia, but Star Trek is just an unusually good way of expressing the values of adventure, exploration, and social and technological progress, and who wants to scoff at those? Relatedly, Postrel has another good quote: "science fiction is to technology as romance novels are to marriage: a form of propaganda." Even people who like to scoff at romantic comedies would have to admit that there's something about the idea of two people finding each other they enjoy; they just need a more acceptable presentation mode to allow themselves to accept its glamour. Romance (which Postrel does distinguish from glamour per se) wouldn't be such a vast industry if we all didn't share very similar longings for the happiness that the Right Person can bring you.

What about fashion? If there's anywhere to criticize glamour it would seem to be there, since fashion can change very rapidly, what's fashionable at any given time is almost arbitrary, and a primary component of fashion is often impressing other people. Shallow, right? Well, don't think about fashion as being about clothes themselves, think about it as being about what those clothes represent. A shirt's not just a shirt, it says something to other people about who you are, or who you would like to be seen as. Not caring about fashion might seem like you're above it all, but really it means that you're willing to be thought of as unfashionable, which is quite different. The most hard-headed utilitarian will admit that the right dress on a woman evokes quite different feelings than another does, or that dressing up for a special occasion brings a sense of being a different person above what a simple change of fabric should do. Fashion can be a game of status, an expression of personal taste, a way of demonstrating solidarity with a group, or a way of transforming yourself, and everyone identifies with all of those at different times. The parallels to art, music, literature, and so forth are clear: participating in fashionable activities with other people lets you participate in the glamour of popularity and being an insider. If you disagree, are you sure you aren't trying to play the glamorous part of the outsider? There's no escape!

Of course, to be glamorous, you can't be seen as trying to be glamorous; an essential component of glamour is sprezzatura, or "a certain nonchalance, so as to conceal all art and make whatever one does or says appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it". That criterion of illusory effortlessness is important, and helps distinguish glamour from romance. In Postrel's words, "romance does idealize reality - it omits the tedious, meaningless, and boring - but it heightens the glory of success by showing the struggle that produces it. Glamour is less narrative. It captures not a story but a scene: the dance, not the rehearsals; the still photo, not the film. Glamour and romance are closely related, but glamour is about being, not becoming. We experience the result, not the process." I think one of the main things that separates successful people from unsuccessful people is the willingness to do the unglamorous work process behind the scenes over a long period of time, in order to reap the rewards later on. Are the people most susceptible to glamour the least glamorous themselves? And in reverse, are the most glamorous people the ones who spend the least amount of time thinking about it? Hopefully knowledge of glamour is itself glamorous, or else this book is playing an awful trick on its readers.

Those questions are intimately related to the process of glamourization. How does something go from unglamorous to glamorous (suntans), or the reverse (smoking)? Does society as a whole select for glamour, which individuals then absorb in a René Girard-ish "imitative desire" process? Or is glamour in culture simply the aggregate of human choices, and certain things are considered glamorous only because others

aren't? Glamour is a non-rivalrous quality, since being thought of as glamorous by one person doesn't prevent it from being thought of that way by another; quite the opposite for many things. But, while for some things glamour is additive, like the positive feedback loop that glamorous celebrities enjoy; for other things it's subtractive, as in the entire underground/punk/DIY subcultures devoted to rejecting what society tells them they should want. I think the answer is that it depends on the specific glamorous object, since popularity is a component of glamour for some things (it's no fun being The Princess if you don't have a court), while it's not for others (does your own version of The Window look out over an idyllic ranch or a crowded cityscape?). Even nuns are glamorous to the right person.

And after all, it is ultimately up to what you feel you need. As Postrel says, "the first precondition for glamour is the willingness to acknowledge discontent with one's current situation along with the ability to imagine a different, better self in different, better circumstances." That sounds about right: glamour is not fundamentally different from any other aspect of society that's driven both by general similarities (certain things are intriguing to just about everyone), and individual differences (each to their own taste). And as far as things gaining or losing lustre over time is concerned, "glamour inspires projection and longing; spectacle produces wonder and awe", so it's possible for some things to appear very glamorous in one era but not so glamorous in the next, while other things seem to remain timeless. The 1960s must be the most written-about decade in world history, even beyond the fact that we're still living in the era of the Baby Boomers, specifically because so many of the things produced in that era resonate with modern human longings better than what came before or since.

And to that end, I found the sections on modern glamour very interesting, although occasionally filled with some funny pretentious over-theorizing - apparently "modern, self-illusory hedonism" is different from old-school hedonism because it's about the anticipation of experiences and not the actual experiences, as if the ancients never made that same distinction between wanting and having, or between the idea of a thing and the thing itself. Glamorous concepts have been around as long as humanity, but the 1930s was when glamour came into its own as a commercial power. This introduces the distinction between things that were thought to be glamorous in the 1930s, and things from the 1930s which are still glamorous, like the Chrysler Building. Nothing gets old as fast as the future, which is why striking and glamorous science fiction often ages very poorly, and why marketing your product as "modern" or "contemporary" is almost guaranteed to get it laughed at a generation down the line (compare also the label "postmodern").

Economic development is the key to understanding modern glamour. Wealth makes glamour more affordable and available, which is good for everyone, but there are also more opportunities to be judged by other people, and countless glamorous products have become unglamorous simply because they got more affordable and hence less exclusive. Mystery is central to glamour, and so striking a balance between broad appeal while retaining just the right amount of distance is difficult in a world of consumer sovereignty. Will the number of universally glamorous icons decrease over time, as markets cater to individual tastes more precisely? Or are there other forces of social conformity at work? And, as always, openly attempting to seem wealthier than you are is definitely unglamorous to those who are actually wealthy: "Meanwhile, the contemporary reincarnations of the old forms of glamour - the gold, diamonds, cognac, champagne, and fancy cars found in countless hip-hop videos - strike the economically secure as hopelessly crass." I think Lorde had a hit song about that a few years ago....

As human beings, we all participate in illusions constantly, because fantasies are an integral part of consciousness. Glamour is such a fascinating subject because to even discuss it is to participate in its appeal, as you pursue this intriguing but mysterious concept, trying to understand the world and yourself better, but (predictably) being left with even more questions about your own wants and desires. This book is indispensable as a tool to understand why some things are so appealing, giving you a rational framework to

understand your own irrational (but perfectly human) preferences, and also making you appreciate whole new swaths of human culture. This is best read in conjunction with other works that analyze trendiness or imitation, such as something by Duncan Watts or René Girard, but stands on its own quite well. Best of all, the book proves its own point by being inherently interesting when you mention it to other people. Postrel hit it out of the park, and anyone afraid of her inserting her own idiosyncratic libertarian political opinions will be pleasantly disappointed.

To digress a bit as a coda, one example of how this book helped me analyze glamour's effects on myself related to my hometown of Austin. Until the late 90s tech boom we were primarily a middle- to working-class town, without much of a noticeable class divide since the main draws in town were state government and the university, neither of which brought in a lot of money to locals (ironically, the fact that the rest of the state hates us might reduce local corruption by eliminating our ability to get pork projects). Without money, people find other ways to differentiate themselves, so a lot of that infamous "weirdness" stuff comes from the grad school aesthetic of old, vaguely run-down bungalows with decent but unrenowned restaurants, used/vintage clothing stores, offbeat artists, and cheap bars with talented but often unambitious musicians plucking away inside. Then our investment in technology paid real dividends, and now Austin has a lot of money, and hence nice houses, craft cocktails, world-class food, high-end fashion, trend-setting artists, and internationally famous music festivals.

That stuff's not bad; it's just different. I personally love the 80s/90s low-rent slacker oasis Austin I grew up in (in my mind a glamorous "city of smart, funny, creative individuals who don't care what the outside world thinks") and have mixed feelings about the 00s/10s high-rent tech hub Austin (to newcomers a glamorous "cool city on the cutting edge that the rest of the world admires"), but it's a mistake to think that the glamour of the former is "authentic" while the glamour of the latter isn't. Clearly I'm projecting my own vaguely narcissistic ideas of what the city "should" be onto a collection of buildings and roads. I want something about the city to reflect my childhood forever and maintain my almost spiritual sense of belonging. The fact that that can't really happen only makes that mythical Perfect Past Austin even more attractive! Whatever, I'm still going to hate on the Domain, because Austin was perfect right when I got here, and ruined right when you got here.

Matt Starr says

A very thoughtful journey through the idea of "glamour" and cultural advertising. I would recommend this to anyone curious about the nature of escapism or anyone who wants to understand the psychological interplay of advertisements.

Julie says

We are hypnotized by the glamour of the world much more than we consciously realize. Many great insights are found here in this analysis of how advertising and the like have a way of tapping into our deepest longings, tapping into our dreams - tapping into the greatest terrain of the human imagination. Some information also on how these glamorous campaigns leave out the 'details.' For example, how the woman who bought the dreamy shoes in the magazine ends up with bloodied feet while running to catch the bus. Or, how ideal home books leave out those pesky wires on any electrical equipment in the photographs. All the stuff that isn't a part of the FANTASY. Overall, we are unconsciously persuaded by visual images and are

complete suckers. But then the art of life also taps into our own ideals of what we need to feel fulfilled and so ultimately, seen in a more positive light, the power of glamour gives us something to aspire towards.

Daniel says

Glamour is one of the unique word that is spelt with 'our' even in American English (unlike armor and humor). Postrel has done a great job describing it.

So glamour is the aura that evoke a kind of longing that is known to be false but felt to be true. It is best felt from far away. Glamorous people would maintain their distance and silence on purpose, and glamorous photos were usually simplistic, allowing the audience to project their own imagination onto them. Glamour is apparently effortless grace, even if lots of efforts have been put in to develop Glamour is destroyed by familiarity. Charisma is totally different and gets better with time and best watched live in action.

Glamour is evoked when it is just slightly out of reach of the audience. Sunglasses, shadows, black-and-white photos all evoke glamour.

Theatrical glamour showed only the curated ideal, and darkroom glamour used Photoshop to beautify the subject.

A history of glamour was then given. Glamour changes with time and culture, but always need to be slightly different and unattainable.

I enjoyed this book a lot!

Sara says

Had some interesting perspectives and photos. Overall, however, it was very disjointed and the author's ideas were all over the place. Halfway through I gave up on the book. It was too frustrated jumping from one unrelated idea to another.
