



The Fusion of Beauty and Art

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Albert Einstein once said, "Creativity is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited, creativity embraces the world".

Often, when we think and speak about esthetic dentistry we are mistaken to believe that its concepts are well-defined by rules and recipes. Surely, it is fundamental to understand the principles and parameters that are the foundation of this or of any other discipline, but to limit us only to these strict guidelines would lead us to the same results and our patients would all look alike. (Stereotyped smiles Fig. 1 & 2)

Many articles and books have been written trying to teach us the principles of smile design but none is truly able to "teach" a dentist to create a truly natural smile. In nature, we will never find anyone who is perfectly symmetrical. (fig 3,4 and 5). However, that doesn't mean that we can't compose a smile that is harmonious despite irregularities and imperfections.

To believe that the solution for making a natural dental composition is just to randomly apply some irregularities is pure utopia. The true solution is much deeper and must be thought in the perceptive ability that each one of us possess to evaluate composition in perspective and balance of a whole context (teeth, gums, lips, face *and* personality). When one speaks of esthetics in any discipline, it is unthinkable to not involve our attention to beauty and art. Esthetics is, in fact, the harmonious fusion of beauty and art.

The definition of beauty is simple: "Beauty is something that when seen is pleasant to the eye" (St. T D'Aquino) However, when we try to define art, our task is more difficult and uneasy as the concepts of art are very subjective. Often, in error, we believe that one's artistic abilities are inherited and internal and that there is no other way for one to acquire this gift. This is a common perception that has unfortunately often pointed us to search for solutions by making detailed rules and recipes. The consequence of following set formulas often results in the frustration of having a smile of stereotyped symmetry far from harmonious and natural (fig. 1 and 2). A simple solution for a clinician who lacks artistic perception is to engage a dental technician with innate artistic ability. (Fig 6 and 7, 8 and 9)

It is fundamental to be aware that the artistic component of dentistry is a necessity. To know how to visualize and assess art involves the interaction of the two hemispheres of our brains. A reading that I recommend to all is, "*Art and Visual perception*" by Rudolf Arnheim from University of California Press.