

A Lesson From The Animal Kingdom

Not all of us are graceful ballet dancers or stylish fashion followers, but we can still stake a claim to elegance



Coco Chanel, that fearless pioneer of couture, once said: 'Simplicity is the keynote of all true elegance.' But she was all about looks – clothes, jewellery, bags, shoes, accessories, even lipstick – so we can assume she was talking about appearance.

If this is your metric, elegance can cost a mint, or at the very least, more than most of us have down the back of the couch. Which handily brings us to the second point: elegance is a quality of style and grace, of being attractive in appearance or behaviour.

Other words to tick off are poise, simplicity, effectiveness, timelessness and tastefulness. Visual design, decorative arts,

literature, science and yes, even maths can be elegant. The AI bots tell us that it's the art of making a statement without uttering a word, captivating attention with understated charm rather than flamboyant extravagance. Simplicity and quality over flamboyance and excess.

But I have to differ. You can't accuse peacocks of a lack of excess and flamboyance, of simplicity. They're all about making a showstopping entrance, but like many creatures of the wild, they possess a superior elegance. Perhaps take a leaf out of the wildlife's book. Amid the hustle and bustle of the everyday, the ugly concrete and tar, the

natural world transcends the mundane and speaks to something deeper within us.

Close your eyes and think of the places of quiet and beauty (close them after reading this, that is): the silent majesty of a snow-capped mountain or the hypnotic rhythm of waves crashing against the shore; or the ripple of grasses in the breeze or the slow drift of clouds across a bluer-than-blue sky. Nature can remind us of our place in the larger tapestry of life.

And nothing reminds us more of that than the roar of a big daddy lion bellowing his majesty across the plains. Nothing silent, gentle or graceful about that, nor

about the inelegant jump scare that immediately follows.

There is little more elegant than a flamingo, until it moves of course, when it becomes more unhinged nutter than graceful silhouette. Storks have it too. They can stand utterly still, watching for something tasty to eat. Every feather, every muscle, every movement designed for a specific purpose; their necks too, which telescope out from a statue-still body, all the better to spy dinner.

There's the blue crane, its tail arcing down from its streamlined body. As long as it keeps its beak shut, blue cranes can hold their own against hadedas. Yes, they are noisy, but their feathers shine in iridescent blues, pinks and purples.

Consider the cheetah: lithe body, sleek, spotted fur. Every aspect of its physique, from its elongated limbs to its flexible spine, is finely tuned for speed and agility. And the effortless grace with which it moves – fluidity, precision.

In the ocean, manta rays glide through the water. They are the true definition of ethereal grace and streamlined efficiency. Nature's grace and elegance can be found in the intricate patterns of a butterfly's wings or the delicate movements of a balletic octopus, and in the courtship dances of so many birds.

Take a lesson from nature: elegance is a balance.