



BLACK EYES,

WHITE MASKS

AND

ROSY CHEEKS

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE HISTORY OF MAKEUP

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On Purim, many a pint-sized *kallah* has her first brush with makeup, the mysterious world of paints and powders that have intrigued women almost since the dawn of time. But while a light smear of lipstick and a little blush will satisfy a Purim bride, the grown-up quest for beauty has led to styles of makeup that are not only bizarre, but often downright dangerous

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Mishpacha

Throughout the centuries, woman have tried to enhance their beauty. The definition of beauty, though, has gone through dramatic transformations — and the use of makeup has followed suit.

ANCIENT EYES

While it's thought the earliest makeup may have been tattoos, makeup historians usually begin their story in Ancient Egypt, where beauty was considered a sign of holiness.

Egyptian men and women enhanced their eyes with green eye shadow made from malachite — a copper mineral they mined in the Sinai Desert — and thick eyeliner called kohl. Black kohl, often made from lead sulfide and soot, was used to line the upper eyelid; green kohl made from copper oxide was used to line the lower one. The desired effect was to create exaggerated falcon-shaped eyes, because according to Egyptian mythology, a falcon's eye was a symbol of life and protection.

In addition to warding off the evil eye, the thick layer of kohl was thought to provide medicinal benefits, such as better eyesight. While that claim has yet to be substantiated, the lead sulfide found in kohl did ward off small insects that could cause eye disease. The heavy eye shadow, which went up to the eyebrow, had a benefit as well, because it helped protect the eyes from the drying effects of the hot Egyptian sun.

With time, kohl-lined eyes became popular in many African, South Asian, and Middle Eastern countries. Blue-black-colored kohl was prevalent in Eretz Yisrael, and its use is discussed in the Talmud. For instance, applying kohl on Shabbos was forbidden, but it was permitted on Chol Hamoed.

Egyptians would also apply black kohl to their

eyebrows, thus completing the dramatic effect. Grecian and Roman ladies used kohl, too, in their quest to achieve what was considered a high-fashion look of that time: the unibrow, where the two eyebrows meet in the middle to form one unbroken line. The Greeks would also affix false eyebrows made from oxen hair — and if that sounds strange just wait until we get to the 18th century.

Kohl Alert: Before we leave Egypt, what's the verdict on kohl? Is it healthy, neutral, or dangerous? While kohl is still used in many parts of the world, the US Food and Drug Administration has banned all products containing kohl, due to the possibility of lead poisoning. (Children are particularly vulnerable.) Cosmetics that use the word “kohl” to describe the shade of a color are permissible, as long as the product doesn't actually contain kohl — so be sure to check the product's label before buying, particularly if the product is imported.

COLOR ME PALE

The Greeks and Romans both favored the “natural look.” Ironically, their definition of “natural” was not a bit natural to southern climes and therefore took lots of time and money to achieve.

The classic look started with porcelain-colored skin, a symbol of wealth because pale skin meant the woman didn't have to work in the hot sun. To lighten her complexion, she would paint her face with highly toxic white lead. Other ingredients, such as chalk, crocodile dung, starch, and eggs were also used to whiten the face.

But since it's possible to have too much of a good thing, super-pale skin was given a bit of color in the form of rouge created from red flowers such as roses and poppies, Tyrian vermilion made from cinnabar, or red ochre — an iron oxide naturally mixed with clay and other minerals — from Belgium. Poor ladies who couldn't afford such luxuries

Is There Lead in Your Lipstick?

If you're like me, you were shaking your head in wonder at those women who painted their faces with white lead. But are we any wiser today?

When the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) was founded in the early 1900s, it didn't regulate cosmetics. That changed in 1936, after FDA chief education officer Ruth deForest Lamb published a collection of tragic botched-beauty tales in her book *American Chamber of Horrors*.

With the passage of the 1938 Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, cosmetics came under FDA control. By 1977, US cosmetic manufacturers were required to list ingredients on product labels.

But in October 2007 the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics (CSC), an umbrella organization of activist groups, announced that its private study found a “hazardous level” of lead in a third of 33 name-brand red lipsticks. That report started a heated debate between physicians who considered the lead levels to be of concern, because even small amounts applied daily can add up and remain in our bodies, and those who argued the lead levels were safe.

The FDA conducted a follow-up study, publishing the results on its website. In brief, it concluded, “Lipstick, as a product intended for topical use with limited absorption, is ingested only in very small quantities. We do not consider the lead levels we found in the lipsticks to be a safety concern.”

Of course, lipstick is just one item in the makeup bag. When you add in other cosmetics, such as skin, hair, and hygiene products, as well as perfume, the safety concerns multiply. Can we depend upon the FDA to regulate the safety of these other products?

According to Teresa Riordan, author of *Inventing Beauty: A History of the Innovations That Have Made Us Beautiful*, “The US Food and Drug Administration does oversee cosmetics, but it's an after-the-fact kind of oversight, where unsafe products can be taken off the market once they have been proved to be unsafe. Unlike drugs, cosmetics don't have to go through clinical trials before they go on the market.”

The FDA says the majority of cosmetics sold in the US are safe. They point out that growing consumer awareness means cosmetics companies have a financial interest in ensuring their products are safe to use. But the FDA's jurisdiction doesn't include regulating counterfeiters, who often use dangerous levels of poisonous chemicals such as arsenic and lead to produce their fake version of name-brand products, which they sell cheaply online or at disreputable nail and beauty shops. So if you run across a name-brand cosmetic whose price is too cheap to be true, do your face a favor and don't buy it.

Purim Alert: What about face and body paints for children that are used on holidays like Purim? Are they safe? It depends on the brand, because some might contain toxic Chinese chemicals. Last October, New York Senator Chuck Schumer cited Wet n Wild Fantasy Makers, Fun World, and Rubie's Costume Co., among other brands, for containing heavy metals. Dr. Lisa Donofrio, associate clinical professor in the department of dermatology at Yale University School of Medicine, advises wearing any paint for just a few hours and limiting it to a small surface, such as the face.

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resorted to rouge made from crushed mulberries or wine dregs.

Just as pale skin was a beauty must, so was blonde hair, at least during certain periods of Rome's reign. Since Mediterranean ladies usually had dark hair, going blonde was a bit of a challenge, unless you were extraordinarily rich and could sprinkle a liberal amount of gold dust on your locks. A more common solution was to douse the hair with vinegar and then sit out in the sun for hours. To protect the face from getting tanned, women would wear a broad-brimmed hat with a hole cut on top. Thus, the hair was exposed while the face was protected.

If vinegar didn't do the trick, there were hair dyes made from a saffron-flower infusion. And when that didn't work, women would wear a blonde wig — the blonde hair came from the heads of their German and Scandinavian slaves.

Sun Alert: While today we know the sun's rays can be harmful, Grecian and Roman ladies had yet another reason to fear it: The hot sun melted their makeup! In the words of the Greek poet Eubulus: “If you go out when it is hot, two streams of black makeup flow from your eyebrows, and red stripes run from your cheeks to your neck. The hair hanging down on the forehead is matted with white lead.” So much for the “natural look.”

BEAUTY AND NOT SO BEAUTIFUL SPOTS

The Roman Empire fell in 476, but the Roman ideal of pale skin remained popular for most of the next 1,500 years, due to its continued association with wealth and leisure. Medieval ladies, who tended to favor a more ethereal look — no kohl-blackened eyebrows for them, because eyebrows were tweezed until they disappeared! — had recipes for creating white masks from non-toxic wheat paste.

But by the Elizabethan era, white paint made from lead was back in all its dangerous glory. Queen Elizabeth

I led the way with a beauty regimen that included several layers of *ceruse* (a mask created from white lead paint and vinegar). In addition, a layer of egg whites was used in between each *ceruse* layer to create a glaze. Fortunately for the queen, she didn't have to recreate her time-consuming white mask every morning. Unfortunately for her skin, the mask was seldom washed off, which meant the facial skin hiding underneath all those toxic layers turned gray from lack of oxygen.

European nobility continued to use white paint until the early 1800s, even though by then people knew the lead in it was toxic. Why would people literally kill themselves to be “beautiful”?

One reason was a smallpox epidemic that swept through Europe. By the early 1700s, some 400,000 Europeans were dying annually from the highly contagious disease, which attacked all classes, from kings and queens to simple laborers. Those who survived were often left with deep scars on their body and face. While the poor couldn't do much about the scars, fashionable ladies had more options. In addition to white paint, they borrowed another makeup trick from the Romans — cover the unsightly scar with a small patch.

Suddenly black patches made from silk or velvet became all the rage and they were used to cover acne-caused “spots” as well. Even a lady with a good complexion would apply patches to her face. Part of the fun was that the patches came in many different shapes, from simple circles to crescent moons and even a horse-drawn carriage.

Mouse Alert: Remember the Roman blonde-wig craze? In the mid-1600s, wigs were back in fashion, at least for men whose bald pates were out of synch with the era's fondness for long and flowing locks.

During the 1700s, “big hair” hairstyles

A lady wishing to add a little color to her complexion either rubbed some red beet juice into them or pinched her cheeks before she entered a room



became fashionable for women. While at first a woman could create the look with her own hair and the artful use of hair extensions (a liberal sprinkling of white or gray powder could cover up the differences in color), by the mid-1700s hairstyles were so full-blown that some women also began to wear wigs.

Contrary to one popular legend, it's doubtful that mice found a comfortable home in these sometimes sky-high concoctions. But mice did contribute to one cosmetics accessory: When dark and full eyebrows came back into style, some 18th-century women wore false ones made from mouse fur.

TO GLOW OR NOT TO GLOW

One result of the French Revolution was that many of France's aristocrats lost their painted and wigged heads to the guillotine. Post-revolution French fashion looked back to the supposedly more natural time of Greece, and English fashion during the Regency period followed suit. Natural hair colors were back in style, as were rosy cheeks — which became a symbol of good health. When it wasn't possible to take a long walk in the outdoors to achieve the effect naturally, a lady reached for her pot of rouge

to create a "natural" glow, artificially.

In contrast to the glowing-health look was an opposite effect that took its cue from the new disease ravaging Europe: tuberculosis. In the 1800s it was called consumption, and it was considered a disease that primarily afflicted the sensitive and soulful — attributes that were valued during this era. Thus, if an otherwise healthy woman wished to look interesting and soulful, she'd apply rouge to a pale and powdered foundation to create a feverish glow. Pupils were dilated with belladonna to increase the feverish effect.

Although Regency ladies eschewed the theatrical painted look of their grandmothers, they were still susceptible to an ailment common to all times and places: Finding fault with one's face. Whether it was freckles, wrinkles, or spots, the imperfection had to be covered if it couldn't be cured. Makeup and lotions that could supposedly cure any ill were advertised in the newly invented magazines, such as *Ackermann's Repository* and the *Lady's Magazine*.

Recipes for homemade cosmetics also appeared in the era's magazines and books, including *The Jewish Manual* written by Lady Judith Montefiore. By this time, many authors, including Lady

Montefiore, warned their readers about the harmful effects of lead and mercury and encouraged women to create vegetable-based makeup instead. But in the rush to acquire the desired milky-white complexion, many women still bought white powders containing lead.

Skin Alert: Among the many Regency recipes for improving the complexion is this one from Lady Montefiore: "Mix half a pound of mutton or goose fat well boiled down and beaten up well with two eggs, previously whisked with a glass of rose-water; add a table-spoonful of honey, and as much oatmeal as will make it into a paste. Constant use of this paste will keep the skin delicately soft and smooth."

BAN ON BLUSH

Victorian women had one of the healthiest makeup regimens of all time. After Queen Victoria declared that makeup was improper, no self-respecting Englishwoman would use it.

Of course, that didn't mean women completely stopped trying to improve their looks. For smoother skin, she might prepare a facial mask made from oatmeal, honey, and egg yolk. Rose water and scented vinegar were used to cleanse the skin. While rice powder was used to take the shine off the nose, nails would be buffed to increase their glow. Clear pomade was applied to the lips — and if a little color was added to that pomade to give lips a rosy tint, no one told. As for the cheeks, since rouge was forbidden, a lady wishing to add a little color to her complexion either rubbed some red beet juice into them or pinched her cheeks before she entered a room.

But the ladies who came after the Victorians weren't amused by this ban, and wearing makeup came back into fashion.

Lighting Alert: Lighting can change the way a color looks. Therefore, modern makeup

aficionados will use different hues for casual daywear and more formal evening dress. Victorian ladies also had their tricks: To achieve a pale porcelain complexion even at night, they applied tinted powders to counteract the yellow hue of gas and candle light.

MAKEUP MEETS THE MASSES

By the 1910s makeup was undergoing a transformation. The basics didn't change — eye makeup, foundation, and color for the cheeks, lips, and nails were still in demand — but technology was making makeup easier to buy and apply.

In 1915, a 19-year-old American named Tom Lyle Williams used his chemistry set to help his sister Mabel apply dark color to her eyelashes. The result was a new product called mascara, and a new cosmetics company that Williams named after his sister: Maybelline.

Meanwhile, a Jewish immigrant from Russia named Max Factor brought his 20 years of experience in the cosmetics industry to his new home in California, where he founded an empire that introduced products such as Pan-Cake foundation and concealer sticks. Other products introduced during this decade were pressed powders, which included a mirror and puff for touchups; lipstick that came in a metal case; and Cutex's liquid nail varnishes.

The 1920s saw a dramatic turnaround in the beauty ideal: For the first time in thousands of years a suntan was fashionable. Of course, it wasn't just any suntan. French fashion designer Coco Chanel inadvertently turned brown after too much sunbathing on a Mediterranean cruise and *voilà!* — a new fashion trend was created. For the next few decades, a suntan became a status symbol

for office-bound New Yorkers, Londoners, and other Northern Europeans.

As the 20th century progressed, makeup styles seesawed between dramatic effects and more natural looks. Since today makeup generates more than \$10 billion in annual sales in the US alone, it seems that many women are still on the quest for that elusive elixir that will correct all their perceived beauty flaws. Yet when one famous actress was asked for her beauty tips, she quoted these words written by Jewish-American humorist Sam Levenson:

"For attractive lips, speak words of kindness. For lovely eyes, seek out the good in people. For a slim figure, share your food with the hungry. For beautiful hair, let a child run his or her fingers through it every day. For poise, walk with the knowledge that you never walk alone." ☺