



CHANGING ATTITUDES LISA ELDRIDGE

Make-up artist

Though she names the 1930s as her favourite decade in the history of make-up, Lisa Eldridge, creative director for Lancôme, maintains that she built her career during the best era for beauty. Today, she explains, we have advanced formulations in cosmetics thanks to revolutionary technology, and an increased transparency in advertising on the likes of YouTube. She also believes that women's attitudes towards one another have changed dramatically: "This is the first time in history you can wear a lot of make-up or a little make-up and no one is bothered."

You won't catch Eldridge criticising Kim Kardashian's contouring, or anyone else's beauty regime for that matter. This acclaimed make-up artist is a libertarian when it comes to women's make-up - if someone is confident in their own skin, that's good enough for her.

Eldridge's book, *Face Paint: The Story Of Make-Up*, published last October, celebrates the history of beauty and the iconic figures

who changed the course of the industry. The tome features more than 20 inspirational women (or "feisty" characters as she puts it) through the ages, including Marie Antoinette, Greta Garbo, Lauren Hutton, Amy Winehouse and silent-movie actress Theda Bara. One of Eldridge's favourite beauties, Bara's career sky-rocketed after the studio darkened her skin, kohl-rimmed her eyes, and billed her as Egyptian-born (she was actually from Cincinnati).

Thankfully, it's genuine cultural differences that influence exoticism in make-up today. When Eldridge first went to Japan in 1998 to develop a cosmetics range with Shiseido, she noted how different colours were perceived there - for example, red lips were deemed traditional, while a pink pout was seen as racy.

More recently, she spent time in Korea, researching products for Lancôme. "There, it's all about the shine on the skin," says Eldridge. "I said to one girl, 'How do you like your skin to look?' She said, 'Like a boiled egg peeled.'" The desire for an alabaster-like complexion is linked to ancestral traditions, as Eldridge learnt while researching her book; ancient Korean poetry contains references to skin like white jade.

"Social media has brought make-up to people who would have never worn it"

Eldridge's fascination with make-up began at a young age. She traces her interest back to the discovery of a box of her mum's old make-up from her teenage years. Mesmerised by the packaging, smell and waxy, oily texture of the products, Eldridge would draw with them instead of normal colouring pencils. She is still an avid collector of rare vintage cosmetics.

While growing up, Eldridge would pore over *Vogue* covers featuring the work of make-up artist Mary Greenwell, but it wasn't until she was a teenager that she began wearing cosmetics herself. She would come home from school, put on a full face of make-up, paint her nails and admire herself in the mirror, then wash it all off.

Today, she continues to create make-up looks on herself, but now she has an audience on YouTube of - at the last count - 1.3 million followers. Eldridge began posting make-up tutorials about six years ago; her very first video showed her after a night out, looking unabashedly bare-faced despite a breakout, to highlight her transformation. "I know as a make-up artist that if I have somewhere to go, I can make myself look good. I wanted to pass that on to other women."

Eldridge remains a staunch believer in the confidence-building potential of online communities. "It's nice because social media has brought make-up to a lot of people who really would have never worn it," she explains. "If you read magazines, you couldn't really understand if it said, 'Blend on the socket line and then wing out.' Now everyone is their own make-up artist."

While this may be true, social media can make her job harder, especially when her clients are on their phones. "As I always say to new make-up artists who want to assist me or who come to me for advice, putting on make-up is just 50 per cent of the job; the other 50 per cent is learning to be with people and judge situations. There is so much psychology at play when you're working with someone that closely."

With so many creative outlets, it's a wonder Eldridge never grows tired of make-up; in fact, she talks of pursuing new projects in her field: further books, TV opportunities and, one day, her own cosmetics line. But, by the end of the interview, we have come full circle. She reflects on her early attempts to break into London's fashion industry. One of Eldridge's first jobs saw her helping out at an architects' office, which proved to be a fortuitous step in the right direction, albeit at the firm's expense: after taking after too many sick days, skipping shifts to go on set for photoshoots and do make-up tests, she quit and found something more in line with the career she was chasing. "I got a job working at a Lancôme counter," she adds, ironically.

Story by JANINE LEAH BARTELS