Lipstick Encyclopedia Article

Lipstick

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Lipstick has become one of the most widely used cosmetics since Cleopatra first stained her lips with carmine in 69 B.C. "Even women who don't wear makeup wear lipstick," write Meg Cohen Ragas and Karen Kozlowski in *Read My Lips: A Cultural History of Lipstick*. Often referred to as hope in a tube, lipstick has captivated women (and men) since the earliest rosy stains forever linked lipstick and women's lips with femininity and sexuality.

First mass-produced in 1915 when American Maurice Levy designed a metal case for the waxy tube, lipstick was one of the few luxuries purchased by Depression-era women. Lipstick hit its stride commercially in the 1950s, and despite the creation of numerous formulations, lipstick trends have proven cyclical throughout the twentieth century. Honored in 1997 as one of only 12 objects included in an exhibition entitled "Icons: Magnets of Meaning," lipstick has transcended its decorative roots and become culturally indispensable as a quick and affordable way to transform one's image.

Further Reading:

Angeloglou, Maggie. *A History of Make-up.* New York, Macmillan, 1970.

De Castelbajac, Kate. *The Face of the Century: 100 Years of Makeup and Style.* New York, Rizzoli, 1995.

Ragas, Meg Cohen, and Karen Kozlowski. *Read My Lips: A Cultural History of Lipstick.* San Francisco, Chronicle Books, 1998.