

It Used To Be Rouge — And Water Colours

The 'black is beautiful' idea conceived to instill a new sense of racial pride in Negroes, has had a practical consequence undreamed by its authors. Black women, now more determined than ever to project an image of loveliness, are turning in increasing numbers to a beauty aid that they seldom used in the past: cosmetics. Responding eagerly to

the demand, at least five firms have begun producing cosmetics designed specially for black skin — the field has already grown into a multi-million dollar business.

From the time the great cosmetic boom hit the U.S. at the end of World War II until recent years, it was whites only proposition. "Let's face it," a black beauty specialist says: "The black wom-

an just didn't need cosmetics then. Her job outside the house was almost always as a maid or housekeeper. She didn't need to look attractive."

Receding Eyes
When a few black women began to use cosmetics, the lipsticks and makeup then available did not really work on black skin. Naomi Sims, a model, recalls having to mix her own even in the '60s: "I used to add rouge and water-color paint," she says. Model Pat Evans remembers makeup that "turned black women's mouths into neon signs, turned their skin ashen, made their eyes recede." The fact is that stock cosmetics are bad for blacks.

"Our skin is different from white skin," explains former Actress Barbara Walden, now in the beauty business. For one thing, there is a wider variety of skin colors among blacks. "Do you know," she asks, "that we have undertones of browns, oranges, reds and golds — and even purple — in our skin? But never pink, which is the most common undertone in white skins and white makeup." Accordingly, makeup designed for white women is unflattering for blacks; it tends to make darker toned skin look gray. Lips pose questions too. Many black women find it necessary to use two shades of lipstick to equalize skin color, because their bottom lips often are more pink than their tops.

Like white makeup, the black variety is designed basically to give the skin a uniform tone. But the new black cosmetics have other roles. They are synthesized to meet the problems of black skin — such as oiliness — and differ markedly in ingredients from white makeup. Thus they have lower oil content, for example, and their basic color tones are darker than the pink common to makeup designed for whites.

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