

Louis Vuitton's make-up revolution

Pat McGrath has created the fashion house's first cosmetics range, focusing on lips and eyes. LESLEY THOMAS is dazzled

AFTER 20 YEARS of writing about make-up, I'm not easily bowled over. But I have just painted my eyes and lips with a selection from Louis Vuitton's new make-up collection and – just WOW! I consider myself impervious to hype and as this is undoubtedly the beauty launch of the year, I made a point of turning down my “pro” bias when I got my hands on a sneak preview a few weeks ago. But the colours, the formulations, the longevity, the precision in the pigmentation and grown-up shimmer, the powdery yet silky eyeshadows are truly something.

But then, it is Dame Pat McGrath, the legendary British make-up artist – emphasis on the word artist – who has created them as the new cosmetics creative director of Louis Vuitton La Beauté, the maison's first foray into make-up. Her vision was to make something that contained the codes of the brand – craftsmanship, travel and luxury – but the products have the inimitable McGrath signatures too: smart colour choices, and unbeatable formulations and textures. “I envision the collection as a beauty experience rooted in the art of travel, a signature of the maison,” McGrath says. “This collection has its own language of beauty rooted in heritage and craftsmanship. It is something that you can travel through life with, tangibly and figuratively.”

For now, the make-up collection consists only of lipstick, balms and eyeshadows. Primarily, it is all about lipstick – a whopping 55 shades of them (LV is 55 in Roman numerals, geddit?), costing £120, or £52 for

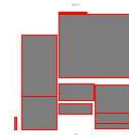
the refills. In addition, there are ten lip balms. The lipsticks have a subtly sweet smell (not taste) created with McGrath and the master perfumer Jacques Cavallier Belletrud: of mimosa and jasmine for the lipstick, mint and raspberry for the balms.

There are eight neat, mirrored eyeshadow compacts too, with four shades in each. I bet if you have eyeshadow sets, one or at a push two of the colours are worn down while the rest lie dormant in the compact. But here you'll find ultra-wearable shades, even if one might seem a tad theatrical. The burnished red eyeshadow in my favourite of the palettes (Monogram Rouge) is only stealthily dramatic once applied, and useful even for everyday wear. The colours have just enough spectacle to make them fun to play around with.

Why launch with just eyes and lips but no mascara, bronzer or foundation? “They are always the features I have hero-ed on the Louis Vuitton runway,” says McGrath, who has been working with the brand creating catwalk looks for more than 20 years. “For me, they are the parts of the face where personality, emotion and power converge: the lip holds presence and a certain authority, while the eyes carry mystery, perspective and even vulnerability.”

Even the humble lip balm, La Baume, has been promoted to centre stage. It is served, as are all the products, in an elegant refillable, plastic-free case that closes, reassuringly, like a Mercedes door. The celebrated, and notoriously practical, furniture designer Konstantin Grcic has created all the packaging, describing the collection as “make-up that is functional, refillable and worthy of being kept for years”. The balm shade Monogram Touch, a tawny colour with slightly

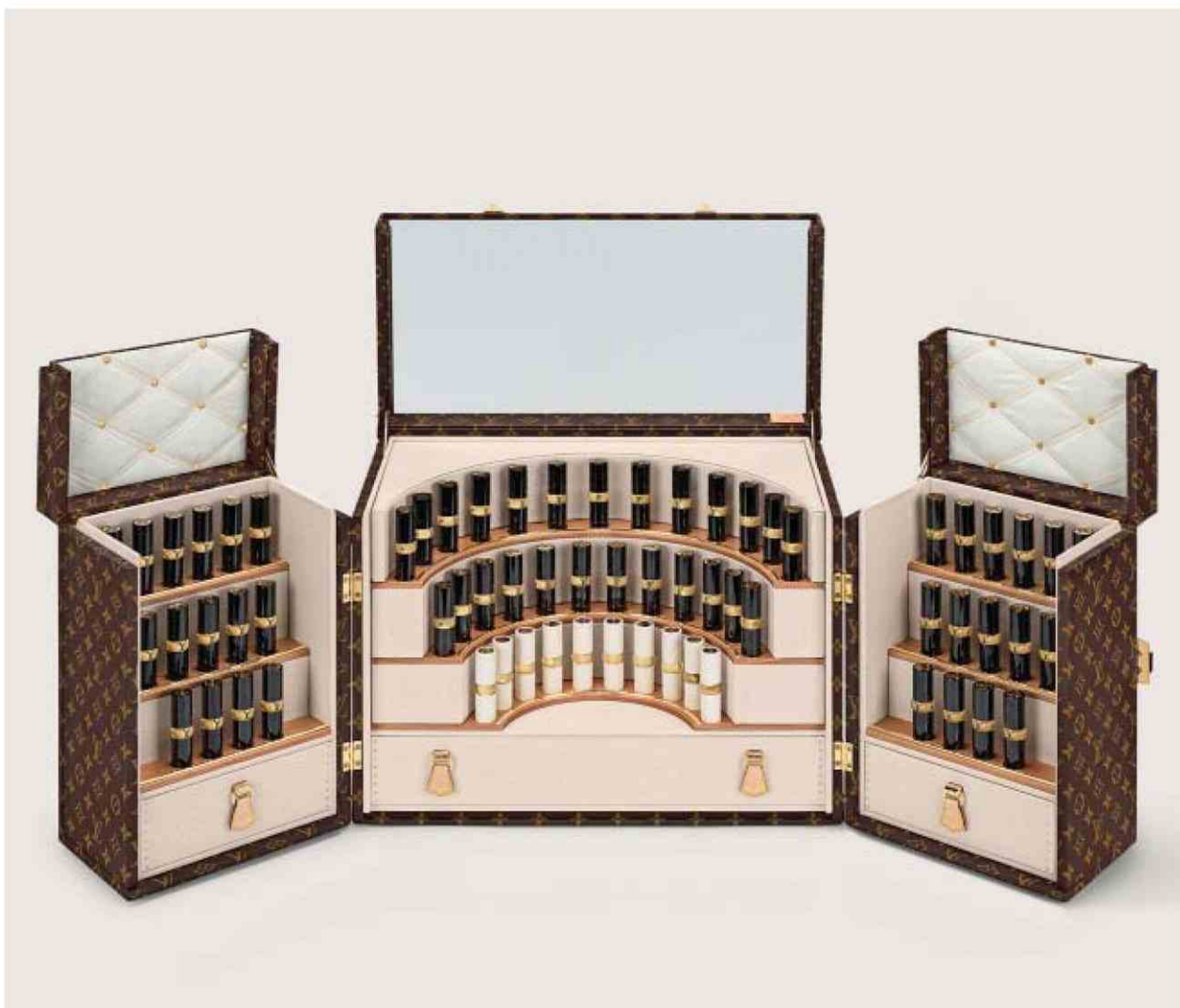




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more pigment than your typical tinted balm and not at all glossy, has become a permanent fixture in my bag. This was very much McGrath's aim, of course. "I see it as beauty that integrates into your rhythm, your rituals, your world," she says. "Products you're proud to own, because they become part of who you are."

La Beauté Louis Vuitton is available at the brand's New Bond Street store and Harrods in London, and on uk.louisvuitton.com



La Beauté Louis Vuitton lip trunk with 55 shades

LOUIS VUITTON MALLETIER