

Soft Service

When it comes to makeup brushes, are you giving your clients the brushup, or the brush-off? Good-quality brushes are essential to great applications and healthy sales, but many makeup artists are so driven by color and design that they forget to promote their tools with equal enthusiasm. It's only when you ask your clients to bring in their makeup collections for evaluation that you see the terrible makeup tools that most women use at home. At the very least, the next time one of your clients says, "I just didn't like that blush you sold me because it went on so streaky," or, "The powder you recommended caked on my skin," take the time to inspect her brushes.

Everyone knows that if you purchase a cheap, stiff paintbrush, you're going to get a streaky finish and plenty of splatter, yet few people make this same connection between makeup brushes and their finished applications. Barbara Panagos, president of Brush Up With Barbara in New Hyde Park, New York, relates: "Using a quality brush is the only way to consistently ensure a flawless application. Choosing the right brush is equally important. You can't eat spaghetti with a spoon, nor can you eat soup with a fork. It stands to reason that using a straight-cut brush for blending, or a big fluffy powder brush to apply blush won't work either. Clients need to be taught which brush to use for every step of their makeup applications."

Fabulous makeup brushes are meant to enhance a person's skin quality and best facial features. Using a high-quality foundation brush to apply a base will create a nearly perfect complexion on even blotchy, dull skin. Only a lipstick brush can give the vermilion (colored portion) a more definitive shape and allow users to plump, balance and reshape their lips. "Brushes can definitely make or break a polished look," agrees Karen Bock, president of Brushes By Karen in Mineola, New York. "Quite often, the quality of brushes clients use at home determines whether or not they're happy with their makeup purchases at your spa."

By J. Elaine Spear

Brushes Photography by Dawn W Klugman

Brush Up with Barbara



In the Making

To a makeup artist, a beautifully made brush is a treasure. It inspires artistry and creativity, and adds an element of luxury to every makeup application. Not long ago, a good makeup brush was hard to find, with most having stiff or poor-quality hair, roughly finished handles and cheap ferrules (where the bristles are attached) that caused the brush heads to fall apart. Today, it's a far different situation with many professional brushes embodying the highest-quality materials that are finished and assembled by hand.

Brush heads can be made with a variety of animal hairs, as well as synthetic materials such as nylon or Taklon, the latter two being ideal when applying wet media such as concealer and lipstick. In terms of natural

hair, quality is determined by the source of the hair, whether or not it's a first cut and if it has been assembled by hand. "As hair grows, it loses keratin, causing it to become tapered and softer," explains Jane Iredale, president of Iredale Mineral Cosmetics in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. "The first cut means that these soft, tapered ends provide a very comfortable, diffuse application. Handmade brushes are considered top-of-the-line because artisans actually shape the taper and overall design of the brush head by hand-tying and affixing the hairs to create a certain shape. Cheaper brushes are cut into the desired shape, making the ends blunt and prickly, and creating streaky, uneven applications."

Handles come in different lengths,

in the Process

A makeup artist typically uses four different brushes just to apply eye makeup, while the average client uses only two to four brushes to do her entire face! How many brushes should a client really be using?

According to Alphonse Wiebelt, vice president of development and education for True Cosmetics based in San Francisco, clients should be using six to eight tools. These tools include:

- Allover shadow brush
- Eye contour brush
- Eye shadow blender brush
- Eye liner/brow brush
- Blush brush
- Concealer brush
- Foundation brush
- Finishing sponge or puff

"Not using a foundation brush is a major miss," says Wiebelt, who has designed high-quality makeup brushes for the past 17 years. "It creates a much more even application and allows for better wear throughout the day. Clients also conserve a third of their foundation that would otherwise be washed off their hands or sponge and rinsed down the drain."

with no one measurement being right or wrong; it all depends on the preference of the makeup artist or client. Research done by Sothys, however, has shown there is an accepted norm. "The most popular brush handle length is five inches," says Carolyn Rushworth of Sothys U.S.A. in Miami. "Our research shows that this is the ideal length for makeup applications done by the professional and client. It offers stability, even weight distribution and sufficient length for comfortable holding."

Desirable brush handles are frequently made with close-grained woods that can easily accept multiple coats of lacquer for a smooth, comfortable, luxurious finish. Brush Up With Barbara's Italian collection, for instance, is made with peach tree wood handles and gold-toned ferrules that look spectacular. True Cosmetics' lacquered black handles literally gleam in the light and feel like polished marble.

Unique materials also make high-end brushes stand out on the shelf. Flax Sticks by Aveda, based in Minneapolis, for instance, uses a flax-infused natural resin for its handles, and soft, animal-free Taklon bristles that radiate an earth-friendly spirit. Brushes By Karen has a set of ultra-modern acrylic-and-metal brushes that are sleek, sexy and eye-catching. And Sothys' elegant five-piece brush collection features handles and ferrules made with a pale, copper-colored metal that closely resembles finely brushed jewelry. Elegant brushes like these definitely entice clients to make quality tools a part of their daily makeup routines.

In the Merchandising

Of course, the challenge is always how to get these brushes off your shelves

Brushes By Karen



in the fiber

Barbara Panagos of Brush Up With Barbara, which

offers more than 400 different brushes, explains why different brush styles are made with different fibers:

Blue squirrel is the softest hair available. It's perfect for soft, sheer applications. With blue squirrel brushes, you can gradually build color on the face. It's also the perfect hair for soft blending.

Sable hair is smooth and durable. Pure sable has a uniform golden hue, and since this hair is taken from the underbelly of the weasel-like animal, it's not particularly long. That's why sable is used to make brushes to apply eye shadow. Dry shadow clings well to this natural fiber, making color applications quite rich.

Raccoon is a stiff, yet smooth hair that picks up color well for precise applications. The hair is denser than squirrel hair, making the color more saturated on the skin. Raccoon hair can be used for both applying and blending.

Badger hair is slightly stiffer than raccoon hair, so it makes a great brow brush and treatment fan brush. You can recognize badger hair because it goes from light to dark.

Pony is one of the more traditional types of hair that's used to make everything from powder to lip brushes. It's readily available and the hair is naturally dense and smooth.

Goat is another hair that's traditionally used alone or mixed with pony. Both hairs are very porous and have a little kink to them, enabling them to absorb more color. You'll often see fan brushes made with white goat hair.

Synthetics like Taklon or nylon aren't porous like natural hair, making them ideal for applying liquid and cream products such as: liquid foundation, cream blush, cream shadow, concealer, lipstick and gloss. They can also be used to apply dry powders, but the color may go on very sheer.

and into the hands of clients. By staying focused on these most important retail items, though, many experts estimate that they can represent as much as 25% of a total makeup sales generated by a 30-minute makeup lesson! Day spas have the opportunity to sell makeup and brushes on a minute-to-minute basis by offering a quick touch-up service after every facial, and a complimentary full makeup application with every high-end skincare

treatment. There are also holidays to consider as sales opportunities—especially Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and the winter holidays—as well as occasions such as “spring cleaning,” and back-to-school events.

“Many times, makeup artists' tools are for sale, but the clients don't realize this because they only see the artist's worn brushes in her case or working area,” says Bock. “You need to display your brushes by fanning them





Antoine
de Paris

out on a display where clients can touch and experience them, or by putting each style in a glass beaker behind your counter—a very common sales technique that’s successfully done by many department stores.”

“For me, selling brushes is a no-brainer,” notes Iredale. “You should always sell the brush that goes with the product. Many lead estheticians, for instance, won’t sell one of our bases without the proper brush. They simply tell their clients, ‘You won’t get the look you want to achieve unless you use this brush.’ Clients also like to buy brush kits. If your supplier doesn’t carry them, consider making up your own.”

Brush Up With Barbara and Brushes By Karen have several travel or home kits that include five to six application tools. Spas also have the opportunity to buy empty pouches and bags, and custom-fill products accord-

ing to their customers’ needs. For professionals, Iredale Mineral Cosmetics has just released a nine-piece makeup kit that includes a lustrous, embossed leather roll-up pouch and a very fine collection of brushes including the Handi, a multipurpose brush made of squirrel that’s fabulous for applying both pressed and loose powders as well as blush. This pouch doubles as a brush holder by standing on end!

Colorlab’s marketing director Mari Roseman also suggests creating brush sets around specific functions. “The best way to bundle and sell brushes is to identify your clients’ needs and tailor your sets accordingly. For instance, you might want to create a basic brush set, plus one focused on the eyes, foundation or powder and



Colorlab Cosmetics



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brush sources

Antoine de Paris, www.antoinedeparis.com, 800/222-3243

Aveda, www.aveda.com, 888/222-4155

Brush Up With Barbara,

www.brushup.com, 800/338-1423

Brushes By Karen, www.brushesbykaren.com, 800/722-0528

Colorlab, www.colorlabcosmetics.com, 800/790-2417

Crown Industries, www.crownbrush.com, 219/791-9930

Grafton Cosmetics, www.graftoncosmetics.com, 800/662-5387

Jane Iredale Mineral Cosmetics, www.janeiredale.com, 800/817-5665

Joey New York, www.joeynewyork.com, 800/563-9691

Sothys, www.sothys-usa.com, 800/325-0503

True Cosmetics, www.truecosmetics.com, 800/419-TRUE

Universal Companies, www.universalcompanies.com, 800/558-5571

Youngblood Mineral Cosmetics, www.ybskin.com, 800/216-6133

blush." This makes choosing brushes less confusing, while allowing clients the ability to master one portion of their makeup application at a time.

Bock relates that when she worked in the salon as a makeup artist, she displayed the latest makeup trends to generate ongoing interest among clients. "I used to frame a picture from a current magazine ad showing the hottest seasonal makeup look," she says. "I would use Velcro to attach the colors and tools needed to create this look directly onto the frame so I could switch them out on a monthly basis. Clients would ask to purchase the set just by seeing this display!"

Anything that represents a time-saving measure is popular with clients, whether it's mapping out an illustrated face that they can follow at home until they get their new application down pat, or using just a minimal number of brushes while improving their overall makeup results. "Clients usually have only enough time to use a few brushes, but for every product they use, they should have a brush to apply it," concludes Panagos. "Brushes really do ensure a flawless application, help conserve the product and reduce contamination." If your clients seem reticent about buying your brushes, consider inviting them to apply makeup on one side of their face using their existing makeup tools and on the other side with the brushes you suggest. The difference should be painfully obvious! ♦

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