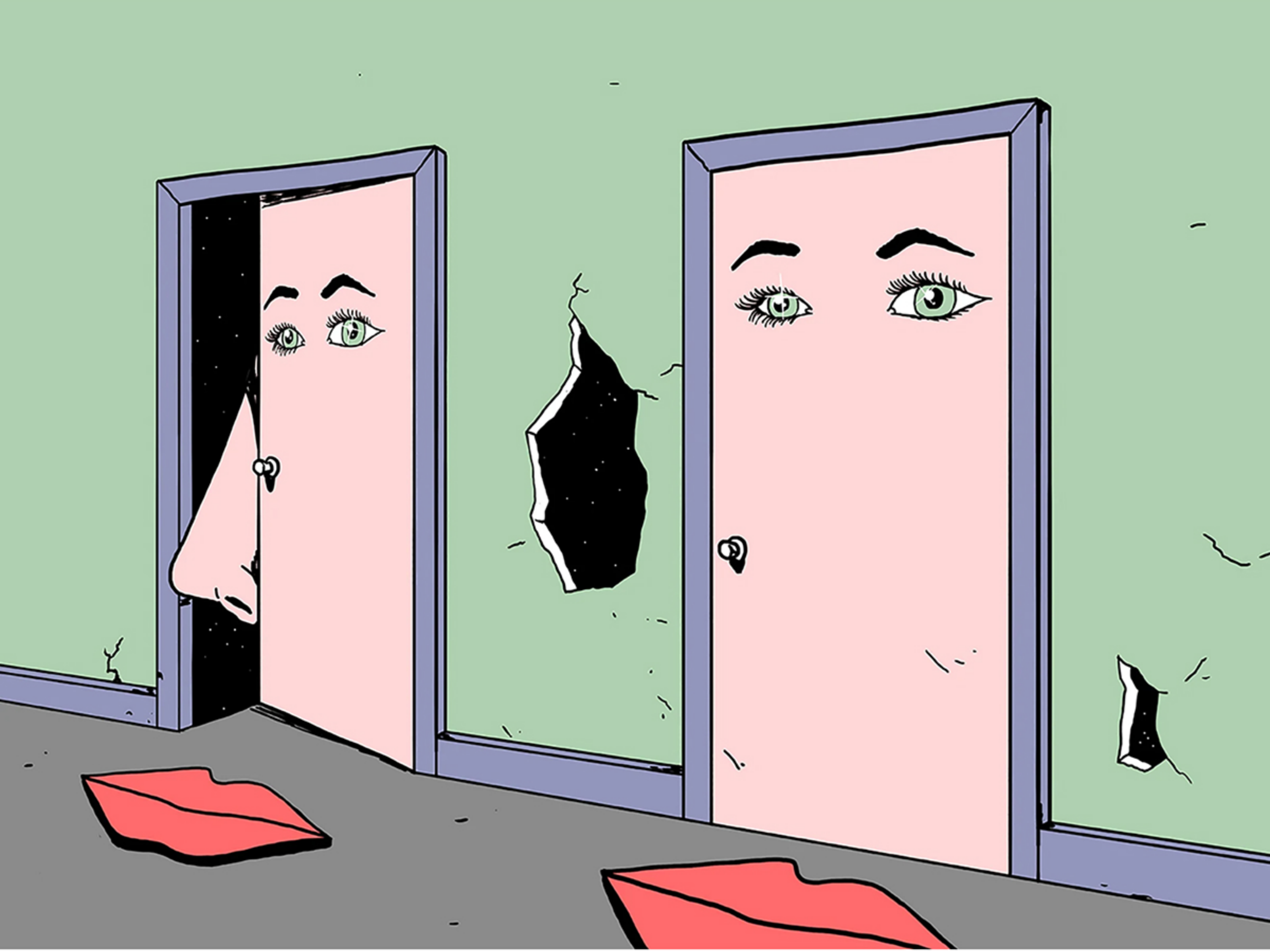


Rethink: Beauty



VOGUE beauty contributor Anjan Sachar examines the fresh face of our beauty routines

By Anjan Sachar Illustration by Andrey Kasay Thursday 14 May, 2020 Long read

It's been a while since the internet first made it easier to restock your favourite foundation, but before it was unthinkable that digital could ever really overrule the tactility of buying skincare and beauty. Human contact and hands have always been part of the process. What has become a pastime, even a bonding ritual over decades, seemingly will spiral into something that lacks such personal connection in a post-pandemic world. But what will the future look like? And how will we benefit from beauty's new frontier? Beauty editor Anjan Sachar turns to her little black book of international experts to find out.

A recalibrated routine

Sales of make-up have fluctuated throughout lockdown, with highs and lows, depending on which stage people's emotional response to the pandemic is at. But, even when sales have still continued, purchases have been far more tailored. Many of the experts I speak to, including Mamta Mody, Beauty and Health Director at ELLE India, predict some women will continue to refine their routine and even consider, after such a traumatic period, to abandon their make-up altogether.

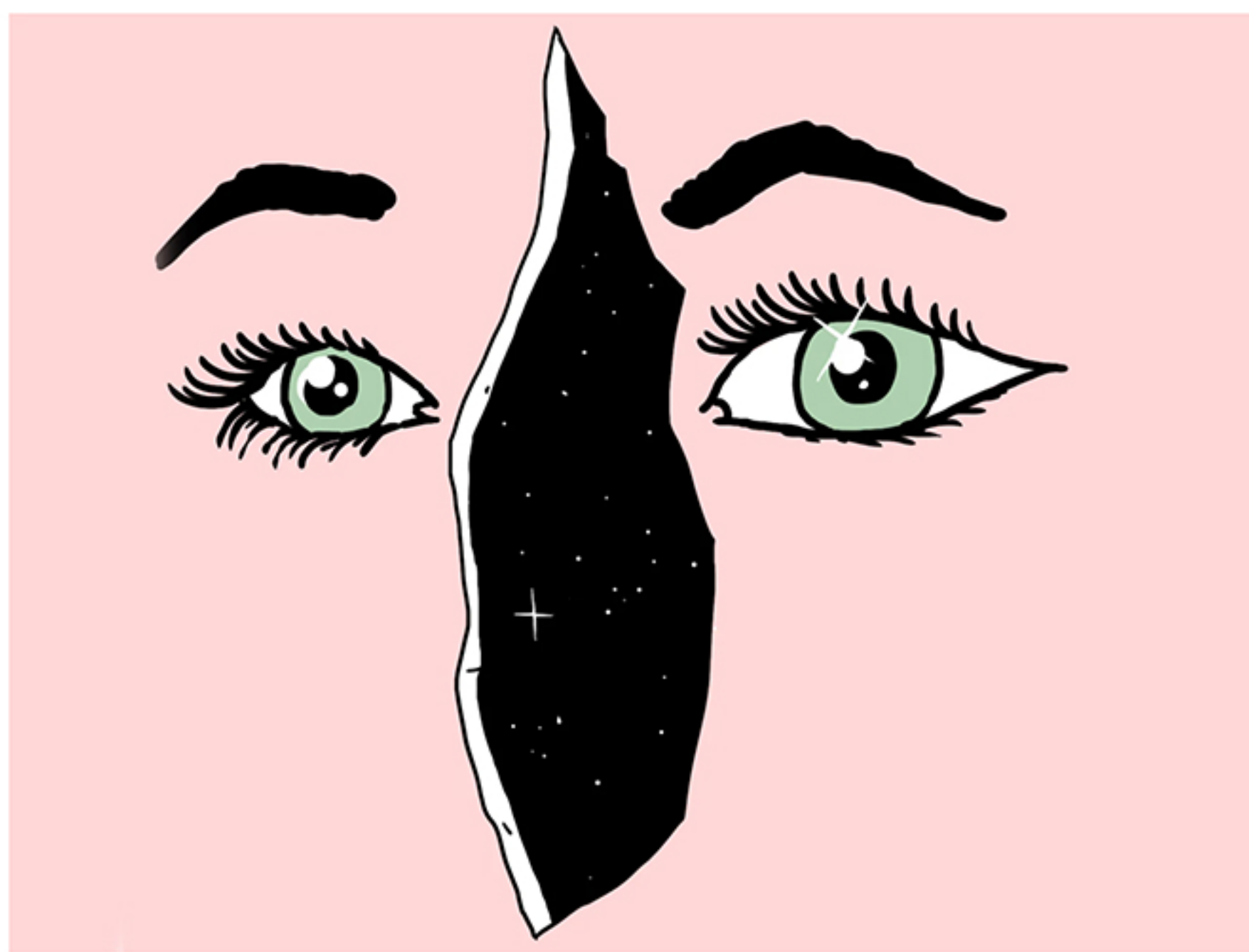
Realistically, Mody says, one hangover from the pandemic is that 'many people may choose to work from home in the future, and then there is no real need for non-essential personal care products.' What we agree on is that this is a real moment to recalibrate and stop thinking about need – as there isn't the same need anymore.

Readjust your spending

Financially, this time is an adjustment for many. As is always the case with an unpredictable climate, 'tighter purse strings mean reduced spending on luxury (read: non-essential items),' says Mody. But, that shouldn't mean you should deprive yourself of the pleasure of buying and applying make-up, if that is what you want during this time. Buying and using new make-up has a high hedonic value, one that Los Angeles-based, celebrity make-up artist, Kate Synnott, says is key to maintain as part of your daily life. '[Most of us] still love the experience of having our make-up done. I think we all deserve that.'

'The economic recession caused by the COVID-19 crisis, along with the urgent call for sustainable lifestyles, will surely make us rethink our consumption patterns,' says Mody. 'It may even end overconsumption – no more buying your seventh lipstick in the same nude shade.'

'With the catastrophic changes in our economy, many can't afford an ad-hoc approach to skincare,' says Dr David Colbert, New York-based celebrity dermatologist and founder of the New York Dermatology Group. 'Many of my clients have learnt to pare down their skincare needs to fewer but more effective products.' He agrees that the guilt associated with regular purchases of the most premium and luxury items weigh down on consumers far more at the moment. And right now, we both agree, none of us needs to carry any extra burden.



Mindfulness prevails

From ingredient concentrations to packaging properties and a product's carbon footprint, the new beauty consumer wants to know it all.

'The pandemic has created a trend that isn't new – back to basics and efficacy. No more cluttered bathrooms filled with impulse purchases,' says Dr Colbert. This means actually thinking about what you want and need – for your skin to feel less greasy? For your pores to feel more elastic? And then to translate that into spending practice. Research what is in the product you are buying and see if its efficacy matches your desire. If it doesn't, even if your favourite A-listers uses it, it's not for you.

The relationships that brands have built with their customers have also come into play in this time. 'Consumers are demanding transparency more than ever and have found their voice through social media,' says Alexander Kummerow, cofounder of Herbivore Botanicals – especially now that we are all at home on our phones so much more. 'It is bringing back transparency and industry. I love seeing these more intimate relationships forming between brands and their customers.'

Digital lead

'Moving forward, [consumer] behaviours will change across the board, as we will be more cautious about entering retailers and using testers,' says Charlotte Cho, a New York-based aesthetician and founder of Soko Glam. 'Shopping in aisles at physical stores with a mask is not an enjoyable experience,' says Cho.

The increased use of human virtual assistants, video tutorials and artificial intelligence in the world of beauty during this time has dictated the future: digital is more important than ever. Expect to see beauty brands and retailers – across make-up and skincare – investing more and more in their online content, in the hopes of giving their consumers maximum insight into their products. Salons, clinics and spas will also possibly take the digital route and provide one-on-one guided treatments and services until safety measures are in place.

Is anything a trend anymore?

'Now is not the time to be overwhelmed with choices, but instead, we want to be given thoughtful and intentional rituals and routines that bring comfort to our lives in this new normal' says Cho. So, the trend will be, essentially, anti-trend. With models and influencers also under lockdown without access to the teams, crews or studio space, the desaturated timeline has actually been a tonic for consumers.

#Beautyxwellness

While we re-evaluate our entire way of living, we're also rediscovering beauty mindfully.

'As a whole, there will be a greater commitment and interest in skincare rituals as a form of self-care and wellness,' says Cho. 'We will use it as a moment of daily meditation and comfort.' Consumers have used beauty as a form of self-care for years, 'but quarantine has highlighted that simple actions – like doing a five-step skincare routine – can help stabilise your mood,' adds Jessica Cruel, Features Director at Allure. 'In past financial crises (like the 2008 recession), beauty has proven to be resilient, because it is a way for people to feel good about themselves.'

'Being in quarantine is giving everyone a chance to introspect, skip the blow-dry, try slow beauty and discover a deeper meaning to holistic wellness,' adds Mody. 'Self-care has been a buzzword since 2018. It may not be a face mask whipped in the kitchen, but it could be a vitamin C-rich smoothie, ashwagandha supplements or soothing essential oils. As we spend more time at home and experiment with DIY methods and recipes, our connection with slow beauty will only strengthen.'

Beauty brands that are able to provide consumers with more than just temporary cosmetic benefits have a seat saved in the new world, according to Kummerow. 'The shift towards clean beauty will start to accelerate over the next year as we adapt to living in the COVID-19 era, where we're constantly asking ourselves, "Am I acting in the best interest of my health?" Beauty has become a much bigger conversation than goop in jars, and we feel like it is important to empower our customers to practise wellness and give them the tools to be their best self.'

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