



PHOTOGRAPHY
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MAKEUP & DIRECTION
LYNSKI
STYLING
MARKO VBROS
ALL CLOTHES ASHISH





It's ooey-gooey, shocking, magical, colourful, political, powerful and personal. It's a cultural, racial, age and gender signifier. Whilst being as important as air, water and Wi-Fi to some; for others it's as foreign as distant, unknown planets.

INTERVIEW BY CAROLINE KRAGER

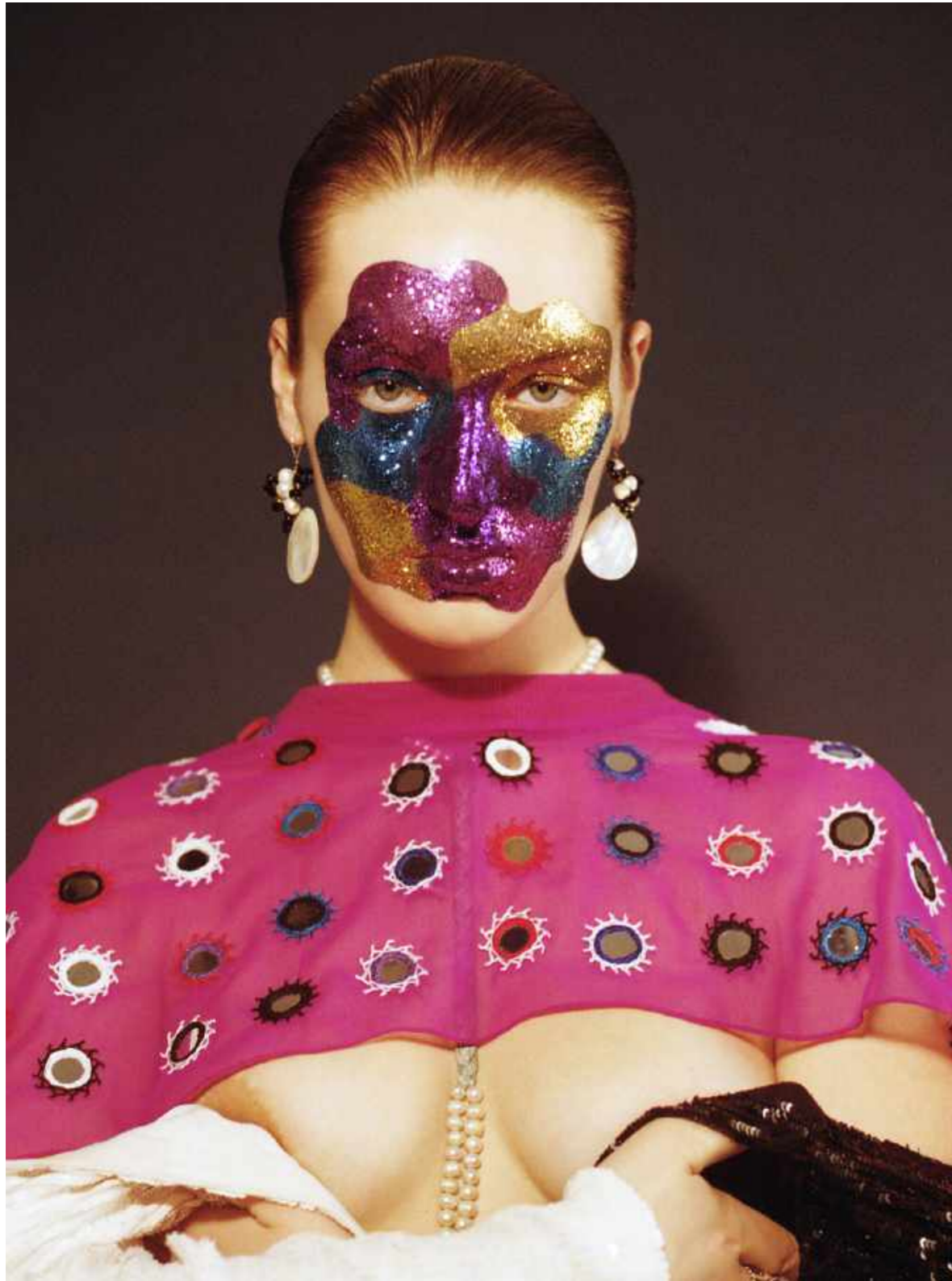
Makeup is tricking you to think something is different from what it actually is. A game of hide and seek: hiding imperfections and seeking attention, acceptance, expertise. It's a billion-dollar industry capitalizing on our attempts to further beautify ourselves. It's about making us up. But what are we up-ing? Our beauty score, our level of self-love, our number of Instagram followers?

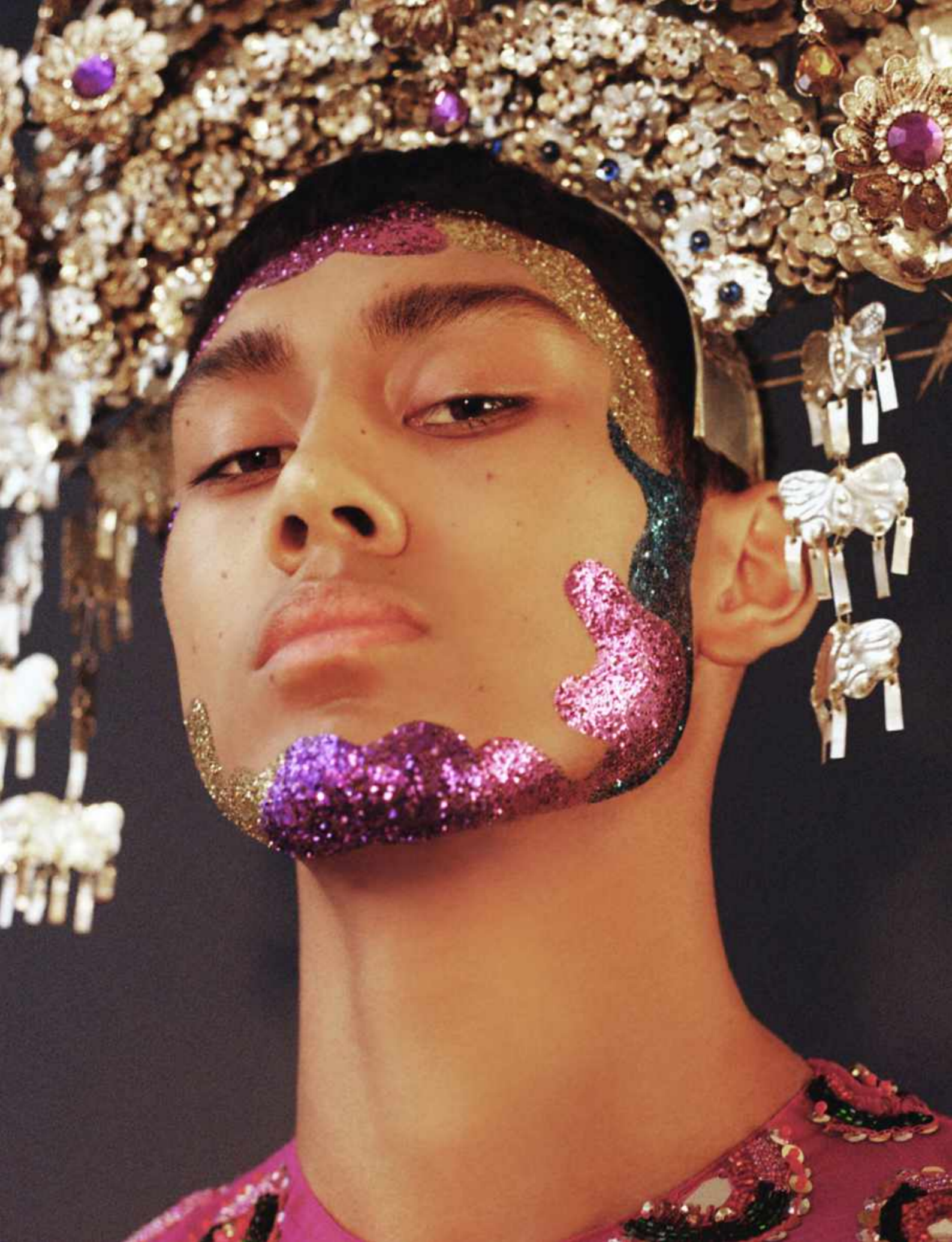
Ideally, it should be about play, about feeling cute and not deleting it later, and about breaking rules by applying rouge on the lips, lipstick on the eyelids and eyeliner on the brows. The paragon of this is Lynski, the Latvian-born makeup artist who's recently taking split-wide strides up the industry ladder in London. Since arriving in one of Europe's biggest cities she's collaborated with Prada, Gucci, and Miu Miu; worked on stories for Beauty Papers, Vogue, Nylon, and Dazed Beauty; and come up with an array of beauty looks for Brooke Candy to wear in the music video *Happy*, produced by the legendary Rankin. In 2019, she even appeared on the prestigious Dazed 100 list of Bright Young Things.

She also found the time to create a beauty challenge called #lynskidare, where her fans and followers were asked to create trails of lipstick or eyeliner all across their faces. Sort of like a two-year-old who gets their hands on their parent's makeup.

"It's funny, cause growing up I always knew I wasn't allowed to touch my mum's makeup. It was on display so beautifully on her vanity table and I remember always eyeballing it, but never daring to touch it," Lynski says to me.

"Or there might have been one time where I held one of her lipsticks in secret for just a moment, but that was honestly it," she adds, flashing a slightly mischievous smile.





Super Zoom Close Ups

As the morning light gleams through the high windows, she's neatly spreading a selection of powders, liquids, gels and creams in tubes and palettes and boxes across a table – like a buffet. To further explain the *mise-en-scène*, a row of shockingly colourful clothes with thousands of mirrors, made by none other than the designer Ashish, are being placed on hangers, ready to take centre stage.

Now 28, her love of makeup wasn't sparked until her late teens. It was the early days of tutorials and hauls by beauty-vloggers on YouTube that piqued her interest. At 19 she packed her bags and headed to London for the first time, hoping to be inspired by a different culture. Almost three years later she hopped, skipped and jumped back to Riga.

"I think I had a realisation that being a makeup artist would mean combining a lot of different things I'm interested in. I saw how other people were capturing the looks with their phones, editing it and sharing it on social media and I figured that would be perfect for me as a place to channel all my ideas."

But first, she needed to acquire the technical skills.

"Back in 2015 there weren't that many options, so I chose a basic course where you learn things like, you know, how to do bushy eyebrows, but also a lot of technique. And then you're sort of ready to work professionally in Latvia. But I already knew I wanted to do more artsy stuff."

Lynski's own face became a canvas to display her experiments. The results of her makeup studies were shared with her growing number of Instagram followers. Scrolling back through her feed the evolution of her work is apparent. One common thread characterizes her posts back then though; the super close-ups and crops.

"I was testing all the makeup looks out on myself, 'cause that's what I had available, but since I don't have a model face I needed to crop it. That way, you only saw shots of my eye or my tongue, which was also a phase I was going through, you know, placing pearls or glitter on it."

"It was around then I understood that I didn't want to be a beauty influencer. I was interested in doing makeup on other people, rather than myself all the time, you know?"

One late night at a house party, fate led her in that exact direction. While, strangely, being compared to Christina Aguilera.

"Someone I didn't know complimented me on my makeup, saying I look exactly like her. To be honest I thought 'What the fuck?' but obviously replied, 'Thank you! I'm a makeup artist!' She asked me whether I wanted to shoot sometime, and I tried to act cool and stuff, but was all 'Oh my god, YES!' inside."

"And that was how it all started. My first real shoot with creative freedom. So random, but that's sort of how it always happens, isn't it?"

Simultaneously the more strategic part of her was grinding in the background, plotting what manoeuvres would lead her to quickly ace the relatively small Latvian fashion industry. Who she should collaborate with and which people she, professionally speaking, needed to slide into the DMs of.

"I don't want to sound like, 'Oh, I'm a mastermind,' but within one year of doing the course I was already being offered really good makeup jobs. I'm sure if I decided to stay in Riga I'd live very comfortably now, but that was never really the goal."

"I was seeing all of this stuff on Instagram of people abroad doing amazing things. So I guess you could blame Insta a bit," Lynski laughs.



London, I'm Coming For Ya

It was 2017. All anyone in the UK talked about was Trump, Theresa May, or Brexit. Rude boys drove around playing Migos' *Bad and Boujee*, Khloe Kardashian got pregnant, and everyone watched David Attenborough talk reverently about sea creatures in the new *Blue Planet* documentary. Over in Riga, Lynski had her aim set on London again. Her bank statements showed that she'd set aside just enough money to get started, and her number of followers on Instagram was slowly creeping towards 4,000. Always the strategist, she'd figured out how to become an even more visible and attractive flower for the bees.

"My main goal was, and still is, to experiment, innovate, create quality content, and reach an audience that appreciates that sort of thing. It's definitely not all about the number of followers I get.

"With that said, strategy and all that jazz is, you know, a part of the job. I knew I needed to get on the Instagram explore page, so I started thinking about what was hot and relevant and began to create similar looks, whilst definitely adding my own vibe to it of course."

A new medium had also caught her attention.

"I thought to myself that videos had a higher chance of going viral, so I tried to film makeup stuff I liked that was visually stimulating, shot in my own way. And sometimes I would get this feeling of 'Oh, this could be really big!'"

Her attempts were not futile. After several appearances on the explore page and hundreds of regrams later, she was back in the city of the black cabs, one wet and windy December day.

She quickly realized that her previously successful strategic moves in Latvia didn't translate here, where there were not just a few circles of people within fashion, but hundreds. Reminding herself that sometimes patience is a virtue, she decided to build it up over time, enjoying the newfound inspiration that came with living in a metropolis.

"Moving to London was huge in terms of my perspective, 'cause something inside of me just opened up and I saw the endless opportunities that exist within the makeup realm, all the things you can do with it. I gave myself permission to explore."

Colour Queen Sci-Fi Player One

The (loose) concept behind the shoot we're doing today is the five human senses. Approaching a brief is sort of a game to Lynski.

"And I like playing it! You're mixing different pieces of information and references with the visual aspects of the clothes and the context, and it's my job to make these different puzzle pieces come together on the body."

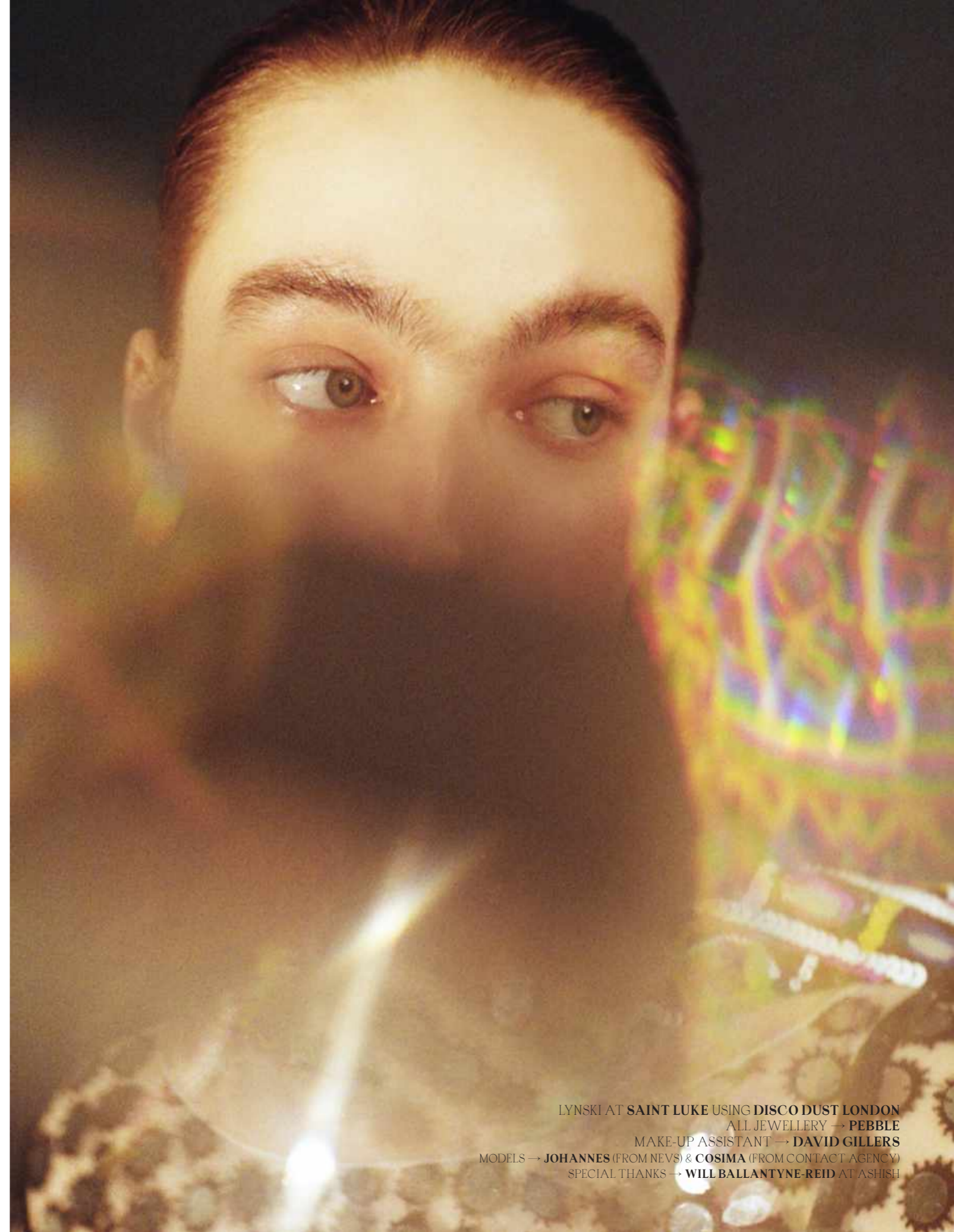
Letting your fingers move through the universe that is her feed, it's literally impossible not to notice all of the pops of vibrant colours dancing and twerking away there. Her name (which is, for the record, a stage name) has become synonymous with colour. Luckily for her, saturated maximalism, drawing heavily on drag culture, has been a huge thing in both editorial and catwalk makeup in recent years. Having worked for a steadily increasing number of clients after coming to London, she's now usually booked to do these vibrant looks.

"I love it, I do, but I think I'm slowly shifting into a more black and white phase. I mean we're all changing and evolving, so that's natural, after having done so much with colour for almost three years now."

Only five years into her career, and literally buckets of makeup later, she's reached an interesting point: she's finding that all these physical substances she surrounds herself with have their limits. Glitchy videos with surreal filters or alien-like effects have made guest appearances in her work, but might be a regular on the Lynski show from now on.

"I'm interested in the concept of makeup being less *makeupey*. That's what I'm researching right now. I don't wanna go full-on 'special effects' but my goal right now is to find a way to combine the digital with what I already do in a cool way. A sort of AR-type or makeup, if you will, where you could actually feel the digital effect physically.

"Imagine how cool that would be?"



LYNSKI AT SAINT LUKE USING DISCO DUST LONDON
ALL JEWELLERY → PEBBLE
MAKE-UP ASSISTANT → DAVID GILLERS
MODELS → JOHANNES (FROM NEVS) & COSIMA (FROM CONTACT AGENCY)
SPECIAL THANKS → WILL BALLANTYNE-REID AT ASHISH