

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Zahra Hankir

JVN // Welcome to Getting Curious. I'm Jonathan Van Ness, and every week I sit down for a gorgeous conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something that makes me curious. Over on Pretty Curious, we talk all about makeup; all things beauty, best practices, some of the best products, and what they mean to us. Now we are applying our Pretty Curious knowledge to uncover the fascinating and lengthy history behind one of the most mystifying products of them all: eyeliner. As Saint Taylor Swift says, "draw the cat eye sharp enough to kill a man." Now, that's a beauty tip. Zahra Hankir is a journalist who writes about the intersection of politics, culture and society. Her work has appeared in BBC News, Al-Jazeera English, Bloomberg Business, the Los Angeles Times, to name a few. Her first book, *Our Women on the Ground*, was a bestseller and won the Susan Koppelman Award for Best Anthology in Feminist Studies. Her second book, *Eyeliner: A Cultural History*, is out now. Our guiding question: what's the history of eyeliner? First of all, Zahra, how are you? Are you thriving? What's your day like?

ZAHRA HANKIR // I'm thriving. I'm sitting in my apartment in Brooklyn. I've got my cold brew right here. Everything's good. Thank you. I'm so excited to be here. I appreciate you inviting me. I'm such a big fan, so I'm going to try not to fangirl as we're doing this. I'll try my very best.

JVN // You're the best of all time. And also, thank you for taking your time. And also a cold brew at 2:15 in the afternoon. You are a brave, brave woman, honey. I love it. Eyeliner honey. When and where was like the earliest known use of eyeliner?

ZAHRA HANKIR // So it was in ancient Egypt. So we're talking thousands of years ago. Both men and women wore makeup and they very much wore eyeliner, which was known as kohl in ancient Egypt. So the use for kohl or eyeliner back then was multifaceted. So they would wear it to guard their eyes from the glare of the sun, to protect their eyes against the dust of the desert. Yes! To treat the eyes medicinally; it had medicinal properties, to also ward off evil spirits and to honor the gods. And this is such a great entry way into the book for me, because it really illustrates that there is so much more to eyeliner than meets the eye. I apologize for the terrible pun, but that's really the point of the book, is that when you wear eyeliner, you are channeling so much more than just the aesthetic, right? It's so, it's about beauty; it's about beyond beauty, it's about gender, it's about identity, it's about race, it's about power, it's about your ethnic ancestry. It's all of these things through just this one object. So when you're applying these lines...lines around your eyes, really what you're doing is you're traversing continents, you're traversing cultures, and traversing communities. And I start the book with Ancient Egypt, with Nefertiti as my main character, to really drive that point. And then I go from country to country and community to community, and I'll talk a little bit more about that. But that's really the...she's really the main character of the book: Queen Nefertiti.

JVN // So when was Queen Nefertiti like walking Egypt? Like, was that like...?

ZAHRA HANKIR // 3,000 to 3,500 years ago...so thousands of years ago. But really, actually, what I want to drive, the point I want to drive here, in terms of our understanding of Queen Nefertiti and her beauty has really been based on her bust. So the bust of Queen Nefertiti was discovered about 100 years ago, or it was discovered about 110 years ago in Egypt, transported from Egypt to Germany, then displayed in a museum in Germany. There have been repatriation efforts to bring her back home, but that's a whole other discussion for perhaps another podcast episode. But she was displayed in this bullet-proof case in this museum in Berlin. And basically ever since then, many Western women started to clamor to emulate her very exotic look, right. This is when exoticism and cultural appropriation, you could say, really started with Queen Nefertiti. That's what I try to argue in the book. When Western women were actually thinking, "How do I channel the allure of this beautiful woman?" And they started wearing eyeliner and they started wearing these tall hats to channel her sort of the hat that she has on in the, in the bust, and then also these collar necklaces. So for decades, Western women were starting to channel her look by doing this whilst very much exoticizing in her. And this was part of Egyptomania, right, this obsession with Egypt in the West. And you could find replicas of Queen Nefertiti's busts in like hair salons in like the South, here in America. You, you could find her image in beauty magazines with like white women kind of posing next to this image of her bust. And really that was those were the beginnings of of this exoticization of Queen Nefertiti and I argue that she propels the use of eyeliner in the West. She helped propel the use of eyeliner in the West. So all of these makeup companies started saying, like, "How do we channel the look of this really beautiful Egyptian woman? Well, here's the tool that you can use to do that." And that's where we see the popularization of eyeliner. Of course, we had the film Cleopatra. We had a bunch of other seminal moments that helped further boost the use of eyeliner and the popularity of eyeliner in the West. But I argue that really it was Queen Nefertiti who, who compels a lot of white, Western women to start using eyeliner.

JVN // Do we know, like what it was like made of back then?

ZAHRA HANKIR // I love this question so much because the composition of kohl was a major part of my research. So it was really made of natural substances. And oftentimes the materials used depended on the class of the people using it. So wealthier people use better materials. So there...so it was malachite, green ore of copper, or galena. And galena is the crystal that is the most important ore for lead. But also they would use other natural substances; anything that could be burned and that you could create this, you could use the soot from the burning. So, you know, when you have the ashes that like the black soot would then be used as the pigments that you would use along your water lines. So, you know, nuts could have been used, bones could have been used, blood could have been used; anything that could burn and create that pigment, right.

JVN // So you've mentioned water line a few times. And I think...what is like the geography of the eye for someone who just is like, "I don't know about eyeliner, I don't, I don't really know, like, I'm just a baby. I don't, I've never heard of eyeliner." Like water line: where? Like what, like what are some of the things that we need to know about the geography of the eye or like the different big vocabulary words around, like, eyeliner use application, like, what are a few vocab eyeliner words that we need to know?

ZAHRA HANKIR // Well firstly, eyeliner is not mascara. I do want to say that. I like a lot of people like, "a book about mascara!" I'm like, "No, eyeliner is distinctly different." So this does not have anything to do with curling my eyelashes. So the waterline is really that sort of line that, where your lashes grow. I think that's the best way to put it. It is the line. It's sort of like from the tear ducts that extends that outlines the eye, that is the waterline. You have an upper waterline and then like a bottom waterline. Usually if eyeliner is applied to the waterline, it will be applied on the bottom eyeliner—the bottom waterline—in, in a way that sort of it, because it's actually very close to the eyeball, right. So you would drag the pigment or the pencil or whatever it is along that line, okay? The eye lid, so the eyelid is separate to the waterline. The eyelid is where actually you would most likely apply liquid eyeliner. You wouldn't really apply liquid eyeliner to your waterline because it wouldn't, it would deposit well; it wouldn't stick. So really what you need to be thinking of is the bottom and then the, the lid. And the lid is, you know, you can apply many different types of eyeliner to the lid, but usually liquid eyeliner would be ideal. Pencil eyeliner can work well, as well, for both the lid and the waterline, but those are really the two areas. But then some people wear eyeliner quite extravagantly in such a way that it extends all the way to the edges of the eyebrows towards the temple. So you're moving actually away...

JVN // I did the sluttiest eye makeup the other day. Do you want to see?

ZAHRA HANKIR // I...please do show me!

JVN // Okay wait. Well, that was pretty, too. This is a little bit of it. No, no, no, no, no, no. That's not as good as it needs to be. I spoke too soon! No, and it looks like shit in that picture.

ZAHRA HANKIR // Oh, dear!

JVN // Okay, hate that picture too. Oh my God. Okay, well, you can kind of see it here.

ZAHRA HANKIR // That looks really, that looks quite smokey. That looks smokey.

JVN // I did. I really went for it. I was all up in my upper and lower waterline. But sometimes I be getting this fallout because I have really hooded eyes and then I got, to get like a better like setter. But this is for a different podcast.

ZAHRA HANKIR // There you go. I like that. That sounds great to me. Yeah.

JVN // So like working our way from like ancient Egypt. Like, when do we see eyeliner, like, come up next?

ZAHRA HANKIR // Yeah, so I mean, obviously it will have been used over the centuries. Particular, what I really try to argue in this book, is that the origins of eyeliner really are in the East. So it was used in, across Asia and across Africa, and there's a lot of intersectionality there in the sense that while these, these different communities and

cultures were using eyeliner in different ways, the intersectionality was a lot of the reasons were quite similar. So this has been the case for centuries, thousands of years across these communities in Asia and Africa and elsewhere. It wasn't really—of course, it was also born in the West in different ways—but it wasn't really popularized as eyeliner in the way that we know it today with the contemporary formulas until the 1900s, right. There was this period of intense fascination with ancient Egypt that led all of these Western companies to start creating eyeliner. But of course, they use other materials prior to that, such as charcoal. For as long as people have been beautifying themselves; that is as long as people have been wearing eyeliner. Eyeliner has been around for thousands of years. It just has taken different forms, right, over the thousands of years.

JVN // So when it comes to, like religious significance, what are some of the examples that you learned about in your research where eyeliner like showed up, like with particular, like religious ramifications?

ZAHRA HANKIR // There are mentions of lined eyes in the Bible or darkened eyes, and one of the figures that was mentioned who had darkened eyes was Jezebel, that could lead us into a different direction of like, what does it mean when a woman darkens her eyes? Because it is so uniquely, let's say, an aesthetic item or interpreted as an aesthetic item, that part of the research was really fascinating to me because it showed that actually there is so much more to eyeliner than just beauty. And for the Muslim community or for men and women within the community, because the Prophet had worn it, even in the stricter Muslim countries where you would not accept, for where some of these countries would not accept, beautification to, let's say, attract a man. You were still allowed to wear eyeliner as long as it was quite subtle. So in the United Arab Emirates several years ago, there was a fatwa—fatwa means like an Islamic ruling—that said you are allowed to wear eyeliner as long as you do it without the intent of attracting a male, for example. But that is such a nuance, that is so interesting to me because it's like professing a form of religiosity, but there's that very fine line there where you're like, "Oh, but actually it makes you look really good, though, when you do that, right? So what is your intent when you do that?" So that was quite interesting.

JVN // Was there any other like cultures that you studied or researched that like you found there was like intersectionality or something that like multiple people were using eyeliner for like outside of like religion, spirituality or like medicinal reasons.

ZAHRA HANKIR // Yes, thank you for asking. I think identity is huge. Identity, heritage, ancestry. I found this to be particularly evident with the Chola community, the Mexican-American women who styled themselves in a particular way. As we know. They have this incredible aesthetic. It's very striking where they have very vivid eyeliner, lip liner, the big hoop earrings, you know, the nameplate necklaces. This styling actually is very much rooted in the racial discrimination that Mexican-Americans faced when they moved to America. And as a part of that discrimination, there was pressure on them to assimilate in terms of how they looked, right. But as a reaction to that, as a celebration of their identity, they came up with their own aesthetic, right; this really unique aesthetic. It started with the pachuco styles, those that was like the zoot suits, and they would wear specific types of

clothing. And then eventually that aesthetic evolved into the chola style. And as I said, the chola style is really the heavily lined eyes, the the lip liner, the big hair, the hoop earrings. And for them, that aesthetic is, it's about expressing pride in their identity, but also setting themselves apart from Anglo-Americans who were pretty racist against them, right, and they were expecting them to look in a certain way. And then that chola esthetic was then, in Western media for many years, associated with gang culture. There was this idea that like, "Oh, well, if she, if she's, you know, wanting people to perceive her in this way, then surely she's dangerous." And that to me actually really underscores this idea that, like a white woman in eyeliner is not perceived in the same way as a woman of color in eyeliner. And then that really speaks to ideas or themes of identity and cultural appropriation, because we then saw that show the chola aesthetic being appropriated. Like Gwen Stefani had this video call, *Luxurious*, where she was like a white chola right? So there's a lot of intersectionality there in terms of like the celebration of one's heritage whilst also rejecting Eurocentric beauty norms. And we see that in other communities, other minority communities, where like drag queens are actually expressing themselves physically by this very elaborate, distinct makeup as sort of a rejection of what you would expect from, you know, how a certain person would present themselves based on their gender, right. So they're kind of bending these, these gender norms or these expectations and saying, "Look, I'm proud to be who I am and I'm going to present myself unapologetically to you." And eyeliner is one tool in this wide range of tools in a makeup arsenal that can be used to express oneself, but also to reject certain expectations or societal expectations.

JVN // Where else did you go? Where else was eyeliner?

ZAHRA HANKIR // Yeah, so I traveled to Petra in Jordan to write about how the Bedouin community there wear eyeliner. So the men really, really glam themselves up right; they're giving *Pirates of the Caribbean* vibes. It's really funny because I actually met a Bedouin man, and he said to me, "You know, people always say that I look like Johnny Depp in *Pirates of the Caribbean*." And then he stopped and he said, "Is it me who looks like him or does he look like me? Like he looks like me, those are my vibes. Those are the original vibes where I'm the O.G.," which I found to be very funny. So I traveled to Petra to do that. I traveled to Chad, to the savannahs of Chad, where I camped out. I'm not a camping girl, okay? That was hard work for me. That was the hardest part of my research, where I was like, 12 days in a tent, like in the desert, like literally observing this nomadic community. Basically the Wodaabe Community there, the onus is on the men, not the women, to be beautiful. And every year there is a beauty contest called the *Worso*, where the women judge the men for their looks. So they glam themselves up by lining their eyes. They actually prize eyeliner so much in that community that they will wear it in vials around their neck. So they cover their face with different colors of foundation. And they sort of, for them, their beauty standards. This is another element, part of the book, the interesting exploration of how beauty standards vary from community to community. So what's considered beautiful there would not be, for example, considered beauty and beautiful in Eurocentric beauty norms. So like a high forehead for them is really quite beautiful, so they will shave their heads back, their hair lines back, right? So that was really interesting to observe. But eyeliner for them is very important. Darkening the eyes is very important because for them, contrast is beautiful; the contrast of the whiteness of the eye, and then the blackness of the

framing of the eye; the whiteness of the teeth, and then they will darken their lips. So that was a component of my research. And then I also went to India, I went to Kerala in India, where I wrote about the Kathakali dancers there. So dance is such a profound part of their culture and they have very extravagant makeup for most of their dance. And the Kathakali do something called eye dance, where they literally move their eyes to tell stories. And then the framing of the eyes is very important.

I went to Japan to write about the geisha community where I hung out with a millennial geisha in Kyoto to write about how beauty for them is really important and how the lining of the eyes is important. So red eyeliner for them is called mebari. It guards against evil spirits. And again, we see some intersectionality there where these different communities are using eyeliner differently and wearing it differently, but for similar purposes. And then I also traveled to Berlin to see Queen Nefertiti, myself. It was like a pilgrimage for me, you know, bow down. It was great. And then I went to Los Angeles to write about the chola community, which is the Mexican-American community. And so a lot of this work really involved travel and on the ground research as well as reading a lot of books, watching a lot of movies. I have a chapter about Amy Winehouse, who I adore so much. And I have a chapter actually about drag queens in New York, which was one of my favorite chapters, too, because I got to bond with a couple of drag queens. And I write a lot about how this item of makeup is very transformative, particularly for communities of color and minorities. So like people who are queer, who identify as queer, non-binary, trans like eyeliner is such an important element of the transformation for them, depending on what they're, what what message they want to convey to the world; eyeliner helps them do that and it plays a really big role, and especially as you can imagine, for drag queens.

JVN // Where did your research take you for queens? Where did you go?

ZAHRA HANKIR // It took me to Fire Island, which I love. Yea, so Miss Fire Island is this incredible beauty contest where they, you know, they'll have, like, best entertainer. Miss...the drag queen of the year will be Miss Fire Island. So they also have Drag King as well. So the, the event is basically a series of performances to just this incredible music, incredible vibes. Everybody's getting drunk, everybody's having fun. The costumes are amazing, the makeup is amazing, the hair is amazing. And it's just this beautiful moment of celebration for the queer community, the drag community. However somebody identifies, they're welcome in that space. And it was such a beautiful experience for me to be in that space, welcomed into it and to observe it and to see just the transformative power of eyeliner, not just aesthetically, but also in terms of like how this person is expressing themselves.

JVN // Did you find any like big misconceptions about eyeliner? Just the whens, the wheres, just like any misconceptions?

ZAHRA HANKIR // Yeah, I think this idea that it is a makeup tool that is reserved for women, is one of them. Actually, so many men wear eyeliner all over the world. For me, I don't even think of eyeliner as makeup. Like, I think of it as so much more than makeup. And it's sort of ubiquitous. It's you know, it's men, women, non-binary people. Actually, some men wear it

in certain Asian cultures where there's this sort of idea that like, oh, maybe men shouldn't be beautifying themselves. So they would like, wear it in such a way that it's not very evident that they're wearing the eyeliner. I found this in Japan, that they're wearing it in a very, very subtle way so as to beautify themselves, but, but not to look like they're putting the effort in there to beautify themselves. So I found that to be very interesting as well.

JVN // Like they're giving the no makeup makeup look.

ZAHRA HANKIR // Yes, exactly! They're giving me the no makeup makeup look. So I found that to be really interesting, that it is really, really not a tool that is limited to women. Like, people really think that it is, but this book is not; like I would hope that anyone would buy this book no matter what their gender is, because really, eyeliner plays such a significant role, no matter what gender you are. And you'd be surprised who's wearing it.

JVN // What do we make of the history of eyeliner?

ZAHRA HANKIR // Really what I want people to take away from this book is that there, there are layers to eyeliner. It is not simply a beauty product and when you are applying these lines around your eyes or when you're stenciling your eyes, that you need to understand that there is actually so much more to those lines than simply the pigment. There is a whole history there. There's a history of kings, of queens, of nomads, of poets, of writers. You know, you're traveling or traversing the world with this one item of makeup, and that the roots of that item of makeup are in ancient Egypt. And what I try to say is that we there are so many discussions around cultural appropriation, right. And how to sensitively, you know, celebrate other cultures or to take elements of that culture and to incorporate those elements into our own aesthetic. And it has been problematic historically how eyeliner has been used in the sense that this channeling of the exotic look of Nefertiti actually occurred against a backdrop of serious racism, where there were cherry picking, there was cherry picking of these, these elements of beauty, in the sense that, okay, let's take these elements of beauty, but then let's not have let's not have dark skin be attractive or considered beautiful, right. So it's that cherry picking that became quite problematic in terms of like how people use makeup and wore makeup. And what I want people to try to do when they use this makeup is to consider the history, to consider the heftiness of that history, and to celebrate or to acknowledge that the, that the origins of this makeup is actually in communities of color, right. And in doing that, we give credit where credit is due. But we also have a nuanced approach to how we wear makeup. And we understand that makeup is not just aesthetic. It's not surface level. It's very deep. You know, there's so much more: when we make the decision to wear eyeliner, when we make the decision to present ourselves in a certain way, we're telling people's story about ourselves and about our identity. And that is actually so much deeper for people who come from these communities, particularly in the global South, particularly in communities of color. So I would hope that people think of this as a beautiful object, but as a beautiful object that has the potential to tell so many different stories, right. And eyeliner is worn in so many different ways all around the world by so many different communities and people. And I would hope that, you know, people now feel, okay wow, this this actually carries weight, the weight of history. And that's what I, that's what I hope people take from it.

JVN // So looking ahead, how do you see eyeliner application evolving in the future like trend wise? And I feel like celebrities and influencers are a lot of the kind of gatekeepers and like, you know, purveyors of eyeliner. So where do you see the eyeliner street value, street cred, trends...where do you see it all going?

ZAHRA HANKIR // Love this question because the last chapter of the book is actually about influencers, and the title is hashtag graphic liner. Because we are now in the age of influencers and social media. And eyeliner is such a major tool for the expression of sort of beauty trends. And we're seeing a lot of very, very creative looks where the lines take on almost a life of their own. There are stars, there are hearts, there are rainbows, There are you know, there's there's a book influencer who would like do her eyeliner based on book covers. There are movie eyeliner influencers where, like, people will, like, watch a movie and think, how do I, how do I actually tell the story of the movie through the eyeliner? It's so creative. It's next level creativity, it's explosions of color, explosions of designs. And we're seeing a lot of very, very unconventional looks where eyeliner is really a tool for people to express their creativity. It's almost like a canvas, right, where you're, you're like an artist, where you're taking the paintbrush to your eyes. And I find that to be so exciting. So there are, there are a lot of sort of great looks online. And I actually spoke to a lot of these influencers. A lot of these people will not have significant makeup on their face other than their eyeliner because they want to highlight their eyes.

A lot of these people actually might have certain skin conditions, for example, whereby for them, they're using their eyes as this sort of self-expression that turns the attention towards the eyes and away from other areas. But not in a way that they're trying to conceal any skin conditions they may have. It's just that they want to express themselves by focusing on their eyes. So I found that to be quite beautiful as well. And I really think that there's scope for more creativity there. We're just seeing so many different colors and formulas and some of those looks end up being sort of emulated on the red carpets. You're seeing some, you know, Doja Cat is one: you know, she she has very creative eyeliner. And it's been, it's been fun to kind of observe how...this is not entirely new, though I do want to say in the '60s, in the '70s, there was a lot of creativity in terms of how eyeliner was worn. So graphic eyeliner is not necessarily new. I just think that it's taken on sort of a new lease of life in the age of social media, where people are posting so much on Instagram and it's really about how they look on the camera, not necessarily in real life. And what I've seen also what I've noticed is this move away from like the idea of the Instagram face, like I'm sure you're familiar with it. Jia Tolentino of The New Yorker came up with that phrase where, like, people were really heavily contouring their face and, you know, it was actually the roots of some of that look were actually from drag queens, right. So there was that heavy contouring of the face, the button nose, the big lips, the big eyes. We're kind of moving away from that into sort of the—how do we put it—the snatched face, right. And actually the snatched face also comes from there's so much...

JVN // It's all contour, honey. It's all contour.

ZAHRA HANKIR // Yeah, it's all... And a lot of this is taken again from from drag queens, right? From the looks of drag queens. But this idea of the snatched face where, like, the eyes are sort of...they're elongated rather than made to look bigger, right. So we're entering that period. But I think that a lot of these graphic liner influencers are actually saying, "I reject the Instagram face, I reject the snatched face, I want to be creative. I'm going to use my face as a canvas and I'm going to draw all these extravagant lines around my face and I'm going to draw your attention to my eyes." You know, the eyes, as they say, is the windows of the soul. So I actually I quote a makeup artist in my book who says something like, "This is serious business when you are lining your eyes. Because when you look at somebody, that is the first thing that you see: their eyes." So it's fun to see all of these graphic eyeliner looks on Instagram.

JVN // But it really is so true.

ZAHRA HANKIR // Yeah.

JVN // That's so true. Has your relationship with eyeliner changed over the course of your research for this book?

ZAHRA HANKIR // I love that question too. Actually, as I was writing the chapter about Amy Winehouse, I found that my lines were, or my wings were becoming bigger and bigger and bigger, such that when I would go places, people would say, "Has anyone ever told you that you look like Amy Winehouse?" And I realized it was because my wings were so big, because she was sort of like an...I guess she was like guiding me with her aesthetic from the grave. And I love that. So my wings became much bigger and much bolder for a long period of time. I use kohl, so like the natural kohl along my waterline, and that's from kohl that I get from the Middle East, which is made from natural materials, usually from the sap of a tree that is then burned and then the ashes become the coal. So that's what I use along my waterline and then along my lid I use NYX liquid eyeliner, which is great and has great longevity. But I've started being a bit more creative: I actually have rhinestones on today, so I'm kind of taking some of what I've learned from my research and low key kind of experimenting with eyeliner looks myself. When I went to Japan, actually, they experiment a lot with colors there, so I got a lot of different colors of eyeliner from Japan. So I'm experimenting with colors as well. Gen-Z over there really experiment with colors and different graphic styles. So I ended up just buying like ten different colors of liquid eyeliner there. But most likely you are going to see me in like the classic cat-eye Nefertiti-type wing. That's just been my look for like as long as I've been wearing eyeliner. I've been wearing eyeliner since I was like 14...so, probably younger actually.

JVN // Is that what inspired you to want to take your relationship to eyeliner to the next level and like write a whole book about it?

ZAHRA HANKIR // Yeah. So I'm, I'm Lebanese with some Egyptian ancestry as well. And I grew up in the UK and really I used to watch my mother when she would apply eyeliner. My mom—like we were six kids—she was away from Lebanon during the civil war. It was a really hard time for her. My dad wasn't really around and she she was surrounded by chaos. But

really when she applied her eyeliner, it was very ritualistic for her. So it would almost be like everything around her would stop and come to a standstill when she would apply her eyeliner. And I grew up watching her do that. It was kind of like self-care for her, and I felt that that connected me to my ancestry and my heritage because I felt like she was kind of coming into her own and like things were coming into focus for her despite all the chaos around her because she was connecting herself to something that was so central to our culture, which is lining eyes. In the Arab world, women darken in their eyes all across the Arab world, eyeliner is ubiquitous everywhere. And like the beauty of an Arab woman is like her having these big darkened eyes. So I felt like it connected me to my heritage, watching my mother applying those lines around her eyes. And then around about the same time I discovered Nefertiti through my father, through his Egyptian side of the family, because he used to love anything to do with Egypt. So he would have like magazines, books about Egypt. And that's how I discovered Nefertiti. So I kind of started becoming obsessed with the idea of eyeliner really through my mother and then through Nefertiti because I felt like it connected me to these, like, beautiful Eastern women. And then the first time that I had eyeliner applied to my eyes was through an Egyptian friend of mine in England, in the U.K., where I grew up. And I really felt like that was the first time that I felt like I came into focus. Like I kind of felt like, "Wow, I look really pretty with this eyeliner on." So it was like a coming of age moment for me. And eyeliner has always been central to my beauty kit. I always have eyeliner on me, like if I leave the house, it's like keys, phone, cards, eyeliner.

JVN // Did we get like all the most iconic people to wear eyeliner through history? We got our Nefertiti, we talked about Cleopatra a little. Was there any other major people who we missed?

ZAHRA HANKIR // Yes. Yes. So, God, it's impossible to list them all. There are so many iconic, eyeliner icons. Yeah: Nefertiti, Cleopatra, David Bowie, Freddie Mercury. Just so, so many um Amy Winehouse, obviously. Icon. Queen Latifah. Lauryn Hill, Sha'carri Richardson is was more, of sort of a recent one. Just so, so many. It's almost impossible for me to list all the...and I have my own icons, right?

JVN // No worries, honey, I just wanted to make sure we didn't miss any in your research.

ZAHRA HANKIR // Twiggy's a big one too. Yea, yea, so many.

JVN // Yes! Okay so Zahra what's next for you and your work and how can we follow along?

ZAHRA HANKIR // Well, I am going to be promoting the book for the next few weeks, so I'm going to be focusing on that and writing a bunch about eyeliner as well. But really my my focus is on culture and the intersection of culture and society and politics. So I will be continue, continuing to write about that. So do follow me on Instagram. You know, my work's on my website. DM me, I love talking about culture with literally anybody, so yeah.

JVN // Yes! Okay, we will definitely put your links to your Instagram wherever you're listening to this. Zahra thank you so much for coming on Getting Curious. We are like just ready to go put... Before I, before we leave any did you learn any like especially cool tips

and tricks that you use for eyeliner? Do you like ever be using like the credit card to like wing the eye or like a little tape or...

ZAHRA HANKIR // I think it really comes with practice for me. Like it came with practice. But I will say that I find using like using my my finger actually to be sort of one of the easiest ways to like just to fine tune the lines when you smudge a little bit and you can get these really great like stencils on, you can find them like on Amazon and for like a couple of bucks where it will be like a cat eye stencil. Those are really helpful too, if you want to start mastering your, your lines. But for me, actually it's just easiest for me to do just to sort of go by my own, you know, by the natural line of my eye. I just kind of follow that line and bring the wing up and then I will just fine tune it with my finger or with like a cotton... What do you guys call it in America, sorry.

JVN // Oh, yes. Q-Tip! Yes, Queen. I love it. I'm all up with my Q-tips.

ZAHRA HANKIR // Yeah. So, So, yeah. So really, really that I just keep it very basic, very simple. But the stencils are really helpful for beginners. And if you want to do sort of the bolder, bigger looks, the stencils are helpful.

JVN // And it's like practice, practice. I've been on a makeup journey myself and it really does...sometimes I'm like, "Oh my God, what do I do?" But that's part of the fun. And we get better every time.

ZAHRA HANKIR // Well, you are an icon!

JVN // No, get out of here. You're amazing. Thank you so much for coming on Getting Curious and sharing your your research with us. We're so appreciative and this was so much fun.

ZAHRA HANKIR // It really was so much fun. Thank you. I'm just so excited to hear this and thank you for taking the time.

JVN // Oh my god it's our pleasure. You've been listening to Getting Curious with me, Jonathan Van Ness. You can learn more about this week's guest and their area of expertise and the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on. You can follow us on Instagram @curiouswithjvn. And can I just say our social work has been so good. We are just slaying over there. So give us that follow. You can catch us on here every Wednesday and make sure to tune in every Monday for alternating episodes of Curious Now and Pretty Curious. Still can't get enough, honey? Neither can I! You can subscribe to Extra Curious on Apple Podcasts for commercial free listening, and our subscription only show Ask JVN where we're talking sex, relationships and so much more. Our theme music is Freak by Quinn. Thank you so much to her for letting us use it. Our engineer is Nathaniel McClure. Getting Curious is produced by me, Chris McClure, and Allison Weiss with production support from Julie Carillo, Anne Currie and Chad Hall.