

KISS AND TELL: what your mouth says about you

He sees her on a train, across the aisle. She's looking idly out the window. She has smooth skin, nice hair and a certain pleasant air about her. His glance lingers. Feeling his gaze upon her, she turns and their eyes meet, but only for an instant. Her eyes give nothing away, but the slightest smile turns up the corners of her mouth. The gesture is tiny yet bewitching. Reluctant to be too forward with a stranger, she turns back to the window.

He knows, however, he has won her over. He's asked, and she's answered—yes. So when he moves closer to take the empty seat beside her, he's sure she won't mind. He also knows she won't mind if, after a few minutes of quiet conversation, he asks her for a date. And he is right.

Mouths can speak volumes—even when they don't say a word. Eyes may get more attention, but the glance of a discerning man always takes in a woman's mouth. And his eyes will often linger, for it's there that a woman can be most revealing.

Almost every man knows that there is a vast unspoken vocabulary on every woman's lips: the broad, satisfied smile, the sly grin, the pursed lips that blow a kiss, the bitten lip that betrays anxiety, the open mouth of the lover entranced by her mate, the pout, the tightening of the lips in anger, the quivering at the corners of the mouth that signals tears.

Such a range of emotions might be read in the eyes, but it would take a true scholar to decipher them. More often, the eyes convey character; they allow a man to peer into a woman's soul. To see into her heart, however, he should look at her lips. It's the mouth, the one part of her face that can change its shape, that really shows a woman's feelings—the hurt, the happiness, the love and, yes, the lust.

I know men who have gone out with women just for their lips alone, unlikely as that may sound. Some mouths are that luscious. The classic example, the 36-24-36 type of mouth, is the Pia Zadora, sex-kitten look—the pouted mouth with the full lower lip that seems to be bursting with some rich, delicious juice. Men love its ripe sensuality.

But that's just the beginning. Probe a man on why he finds such lips exciting and invariably he'll confess they give him visions of other hidden territories—all of them overtly sexual. Advertisements and men's magazine pictorials play on this fantasy in the way they show a model sucking on a straw or licking her lips.

Other, more temperate men I know say the full-bodied mouth seems to promise too much too soon. "It's like big breasts or a big rear end," says my friend Roger. "It's not my style." These men prefer lips that are a little slimmer (although not too

thin, for that connotes coldness) and more refined, like Katharine Hepburn's or Greta Garbo's. Such lips are sexually aware without being sexually preoccupied. In their slimness, they seem almost abstract and entice a man because they don't reveal too much. When Marilyn Monroe puckers up, there is no question what's on her mind, and that has its own appeal. But when Katharine Hepburn does the same, she leaves a man uncertain about what she means. That is an elegant and formidable woman indeed.

Because there are so many types of mouths, it would be useless to try to classify them all. Still, there is a common denominator in the mouths that men find appealing, regardless of the type. And that has to do with the element of mystery: the mouths that hint but do not declare, or, to change the metaphor, the ones that whisper and don't yell.

As for smiles, the same principle of understatement applies. People talk a lot about the beauty of a big smile, but I don't know any man who really goes for it. A big smile invariably looks pasted on, something movie stars and politicians (remember Jimmy Carter?) wear to disarm a crowd. It might be all right for a moment, but, with all those teeth showing, a big smile soon begins to look more like a grimace, and it makes a man wonder, and then worry. Far more fetching is the little smile, the one that, almost shyly, just sneaks across a woman's face. That's the look men are talking about when they say a woman has "a nice smile."

The reason for the appeal of such an understated facial expression is that it seems more genuine. It takes a big effort to generate a big smile. It's self-conscious. Not so for a small one. While a woman's words may be the product of some consideration, and, therefore, of some deception, the little shapes her mouth takes are completely unintentional. The sudden pout, the quick grin, such looks seem to bypass consciousness, and seem to tell a man more truly than she can ever say what's really on her mind. I say "seem" intentionally. The wonder is, the man will never know for sure. ●

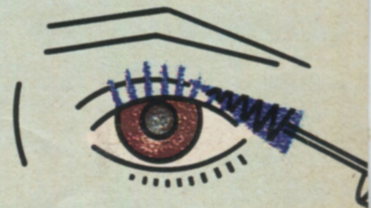
—JOHN SEDGWICK



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Color your lips a soft, feminine shade; give them an enticing upturned shape. Here are Rex's how-tos for making up an irresistible—and kissable—mouth.



1. To keep your

lipcolor long-lasting,

dab on base with your fingertips.