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C beauty



SAVING FACE

As plastic surgery zealots push the limits of natural appearance, doctors keep dreaming up techniques to meet their demands BY PETER MCQUAID

c57

beauty | SAVING FACE

There was a time when whatever else transpired, humanity could rest assured the passing years would mete out justice to those folks who, conferred with great beauty, assumed that such conveyance was accompanied by a dispensation entitling them to all sorts of misbehavior.

"She's living proof that sooner or later you get the face you deserve," my mother once remarked of a particularly ill-tempered, self-infatuated aunt who had been what was known as a "Great Beauty" in her youth.

What mattered was her aunt had become as ugly on the outside as she was on the inside. Presumably, the reverse could also occur: Given sufficient time, grace of character could straighten teeth, construct cheekbones where there were none, and clear the skin of all blemishes—or at least make all such flaws invisible. It would then follow that when it comes to one's breasts, saggy=evil and pert=good?

But this is Hollywood—no, make that America, baby—and why waste precious years on random acts of kindness (and a less-than-perfect face) when a cut, stitch, peel, fill or burn can accomplish in seconds what used to require a lifetime of forbearance and good works?

And why pretend that nature or character had anything to do with that infant-like visage, when money (or its implied abundance) says something so much more compelling?

After decades of assuring patients that, oh yes, after a reasonable period of recuperation (preferably safe from prying eyes in a cave in Katmandu), they would emerge looking incredibly well-rested, doctors now find their best efforts at subtlety openly disdained by a growing group of, let's call them, Beauty Abusers.

You see them everywhere now, not just in L.A. Women and increasingly, men, who, by human standards, have gone way too far. Expressionless, with no lines, creases or even folds of skin, they walk amongst us, exulting in their appearance, pitying those who must suffer the humiliation of looking human.

Heather John, former style editor of the *Los Angeles Times Magazine* who lives in L.A., grew up in Napa and watched the influx of dot-com millionaires and vanity wineries in her hometown and tells of an old-line Napa doyenne remarking of a trophy newcomer, "We don't do cleavage in the Napa Valley."

Maybe they didn't, John reports, but they do now. "It's a badge," she observes. "They want you to know 'I have a three-karat ring and \$20,000 tits.' They want it to look fake."

"Better to rent than to own," counsels L.A. dermatologist Dr. Jessica Wu. She reports seeing "a backlash against perfection. People, even patients who used to want to be completely smoother are asking for more subtlety—less Botox, less filler."

Like the rest of the beauty doctors, Wu tries to steer her patients away from "getting" someone else's features. "I always say, instead of Angelina's lips, let's give you your lips from 10 years ago."

But should you insist on Angelina's lips, the Restylane Wu uses to make them will eventually disappear, she observes. "The beauty of what we do is that you can change your mind. Once you go under

the knife, there's no going back."

Dr. Larry Koplin concurs with Wu; there's an aesthetic move away from perfection: "We don't want people to look perfect. We just want them to look like they did when they were younger," he notes.

Koplin parts CONTINUED ON PAGE 60

TOP 5 SURGICAL PROCEDURES*

- 1 Liposuction (455,489) ↓ 5%
- 2 Breast augmentation (364,630) ↑ 9%
- 3 Eyelid surgery (231,467) ↓ 20%
- 4 Nose reshaping (200,924) ↑ 21%
- 5 Tummy tuck (169,314) ↑ 12%

THE CUTTING EDGE IN COSMETIC SURGERY

TOP 5 NON-SURGICAL PROCEDURES*

- 1 Botox injections (3,294,782) ↑ 16%
- 2 Laser hair removal (1,566,909) ↑ 11%
- 3 Hyaluronic acids: Hylaform, Restylane (194,222) ↑ 35%
- 4 Microdermabrasion (1,023,931) ↓ 7%
- 5 Chemical peel (556,172) ↓ 50%

THE COST OF PERFECTION

- Americans spent approximately \$12.4 billion on cosmetic procedures in 2005.
- Americans spend more than \$12 billion per year at health clubs and \$5 billion on personal gyms.
- Americans spend some \$17 billion annually on dietary supplements.
- Americans spend more than \$33 billion on weight loss products and services every year.

c58

beauty | SAVING FACE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 58 company with Wu, however, on the subject of fillers. "All those temporary fillers give you what I call schizophrenic lips. With Restylane, their lips are one size when they've just had it done and another size when it's time to go back."

The man who is rumored to have given Barbara Hershey her luscious kissers for *Beaches* prefers fat grafts to injectable fillers. "We steal from the rich and give to the poor," he explains. The rich, in this case would include the butt, thighs and abdomen, and the poor would include the cheeks, lips and under the eyes. "Young people have very full, round faces; that's what you want to achieve."

Perhaps the most interesting new development in aesthetic enhancement is the pre-procedure test run. Using a combination of medical glue, saline injections and computer imaging, the beauty consumer can get an idea of exactly what they're going to look like once the real filling, cutting or burning commences. Or the re-filling, re-cutting or re-burning commences.

Dr. Robert Kotler of E! Network's "Dr. 90210" and author of *The Essential Cosmetic Surgery Companion* offers a non-surgical technique for fixing botched nose jobs, which has the added benefit of allowing patient input. But before he does any permanent filling on a nose job "revision," Kotler injects areas in question with incremental amounts of saline solution, which gives the patient an idea of what their com-

pleted nose will look like before Kotler injects silicone, the permanent solution.

Dr. George Semel, co-author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Plastic Surgery*, utilizes surgical glue similarly when he's doing a face lift. Semel observes, the "try it on" approach minimizes the "pulled" look. Which is something plastic surgeons have been trying to get away from, says Kotler, for years (Joan Rivers presumably notwithstanding). "We're trying to get patients away from looking like they've been strapped to the wing of a 727."

And coupled with the right laser treatments, fat grafting can now eliminate the last bane of aging—the dreaded Spotted Claw, a definite disability when it comes to showing off that three-karat diamond, if not those \$20,000 knockers. "We can now graft fat into the hollows of the hand and then laser all the skin discoloration and age spots off," reports Beverly Hills dermatologist Dr. Peter Kopelson.

Kopelson, who is something of a mad scientist/pioneer in the field of pulsed light not only offers rejuvenation, tightening and hair removal treatments for the face, neck and nether regions, but he has also developed a treatment to reverse the effects of sun damage on the legs, arms and torso.

What lies beyond the horizon, however, goes further and deeper than grafts, fillers, cuts, pulls and controlled burns. The next frontier in beauty, contends Semel, is a three-way marriage not only of techniques in use right now, but also of hormone manipulation and genetics. "A lot of what we blame people for now as a lack of willpower really is genetically pre-determined," says Semel. "I had a patient come in, and he's a couch potato and he looks it. But we got a genetic checkup on him and no matter what he does, his body is pretty much programmed to look the way it does. The trick is understanding his predispositions and then keeping those parts of his genetics from expressing themselves."

To do that, Semel explains, requires behavioral changes, attention to nutrition and depending on the age of the patient, hormone manipulation, usually meaning supplemental testosterone or estrogen. "It's very exacting and something of a wild and dangerous frontier," warns Semel. "But it means you're taking care of the whole patient rather than just shoeing the horse."

Safe to say he should expect a stampede. •

MOST WANTED

When requesting cosmetic changes, these three are at the top of the wish list:

1. All things Victoria's Secret
2. Angelina Jolie's lips
3. Salma Hayek's nose

