

On the Town

Carolyn Chang enjoys visiting the Clyfford Still paintings at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.



Russell Yip / The Chronicle

Carolyn Chang

Popular plastic surgeon to the famous (but nameless) supports the S.F. Ballet, donates time to breast cancer groups

By Carolyn Zinko

Sure, Dr. Carolyn Chang cuts a nice figure in an Alexander McQueen ball gown. But can her skills with the knife cut it in the competitive world of plastic surgery?

Colleagues and clients say yes. Chang, who trained at Stanford University and is vice chairman of plastic surgery at California Pacific Medical Center, was voted by her peers as best plastic surgeon in Marin Magazine's Best Doctors issue, and best in San Francisco by readers of the Nob Hill Gazette, a demographic that knows a thing or two about keeping the years at bay.

Chang, one of the few female plastic surgeons in the Bay Area, studied with Dr. John Owsley, a San Francisco surgeon who pioneered the SMAS face-lift technique. It produces longer-lasting results by moving entire muscle groups and not just tightening the skin on top. In a world in which bigger is often seen as better (see: breast, butt implants) she is known for a natural aesthetic. Her clients include actors, musicians, artists, dignitaries and socialites, whose

names, due to doctor-patient confidentiality, she declined to spill here.

Her skill at sculpting the human body may be one thing she has in common with her husband, painter J. Patrick King. That artistry, combined with her penchant for designer clothing, have put her for three years running in the Vogue 100, the fashion magazine's list of movers and shakers known for distinctive taste in fashion and culture.

Beyond the superficial, Chang is a volunteer reconstructive surgeon for California Pacific's African American Breast Health Program. The Ivy Academy Foundation of San Francisco awarded her work with breast cancer patients, and she is on the advisory committee for the development of California Pacific's Comprehensive Cancer Center.

To decompress, Chang heads for nature, art museums and boutiques. Here are some of her favorite nonwork activities.

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Chang's favorite hangouts

Marin Headlands, Conzelman Road overlook west of Highway 101. "I love driving up to the top of Conzelman Road in the Marin Headlands to look at the spectacular views of San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge — it's a perspective that's unique from my city vantage point. If you're lucky, on a clear day you'll see the Farallon Islands."

San Francisco Ballet, 301 Van Ness Ave. "As a serious supporter of the San Francisco Ballet, I'm wowed by the athleticism and grace of the extraordinary performers. I think our ballet is especially unique in the depth of its male dancers. The set of the recent 'Onegin' production was the most beautiful that I have ever seen. Floral-trimmed chandeliers in the garden scenes and sumptuous decorations in the red ballroom were a feast for the eyes. There's no more enjoyable way for me to spend an evening than at the Ballet."

Susan, 3685 Sacramento St. "Everybody knows Susan for clothing — I've been going there for 10 years, but her lesser-known secret is her exquisite jewelry selection. Susan chooses to show artful one-of-a-kind fine jewelry pieces. And she's not afraid to push the envelope into the avant-garde. The bags and shoes at Susan are also among the most unique in San Francisco. One of my favorite new shoe designers is Nicholas Kirkwood. And for bags, Olympia Le Tan's clutches, fashioned to look like books, are whimsical and special. I haven't seen these anywhere else in the city."

Quince restaurant, 470 Pacific Ave. "This is where I go for the most luxurious dining experience in San Francisco. It's the most beautiful restaurant in the city. I love being surrounded by the sleekly elegant and clean decor and the utterly professional and gracious service. But what puts Quince on my personal five-star list is the

exquisitely prepared and presented food. The house-made pastas in particular melt in your mouth. Quince is superb. Need I say more?"

Fiona's Sweetsoppe, 214 Sutter St. "I have a soft spot for hard candy, and Fiona's Sweetsoppe is my hard candy paradise. This charming store is lined with row upon row of perfectly symmetrical glass jars, filled with mouthwatering sweets from the U.K. and Europe. My personal favorites are Lemon Fizzballs and Cola Cubes and traditional English 'hard-boiled sweets.' Yum!"



Torinne Chosate

Birch, with two San Francisco locations, specializes in artistic floral arrangements.

Birch, 3263 Sacramento St. "Birch gets my aesthetics. Their decor is black and white and Lucite — I'm in heaven! The stunning floral arrangements are artistically minimalist and showcased in a modern environment. When I'm not in the store buying, I'm slowly driving by to window shop and pretend that I'm in Paris. The storefront displays remind me of what you see when walking in the Marais or down Rue Saint-Honoré, where the artfully perfect presentation is as important as what is inside."

Sundance Kabuki Cinemas, 1681 Post St. "The only way I have time to indulge in my secret love for big-budget action films is to get reserved, balcony seating at the Sundance Kabuki. There's nothing like walking into a movie five minutes before show time and sitting in your own private section."

Stephen Saltz Salon, 166 Geary St. "It's hip and it's happening! Stephen understands the sculptural proportions of an up-do like none other. Salon bonus — he's got the most adorable Yorkie you've ever seen!"

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 151 Third St. "There's nothing more decadent to me than taking a contemplative time-out with the Clyfford Still paintings at SFMOMA. Their sheer size and scale envelops you in glorious color, movement and beauty."