

LOOKING GLASS

Is it worth trying this time-honored disappearing act?

BY FIORELLA VALDESOLO

There's a particularly memorable scene in Terry Gilliam's 1985 dystopian cult classic *Brazil* in which actress Katherine Helmond's face is being pulled and prodded by a man in quasi-medical garb. "Just try to relax, and I'll make you 20 years younger," he says, laughing as he dramatically pins her skin back with binder clips and wraps it all taut with cellophane. It's a bizarre exaggeration, but it nails exactly what has long been the primary fear of anyone pondering a face-lift. "Everyone's afraid of looking tight," says New York plastic surgeon (and author of *The Park Avenue Face*) Andrew Jacono, alluding to that telltale stretched effect we all dread.

The traditional approach to face-lifting—one still employed by the vast majority of surgeons—involves separating the skin on the lower jaw from the muscle layer and hoisting it upward, thereby addressing the laxity of the jaw, jowls, and neckline that comes with age for most of us. "It makes your jawline tighter, but it can sometimes look like a beach ball on a popsicle stick," Jacono says. It also can require the use of filler or fat grafting to fill out the cheeks, and it comes with the potential for noticeable scars and lengthy recovery periods.

Now there's a wave of plastic surgeons cultivating a new, and decidedly more subtle, approach to the face-lift, fine-tuning techniques that are minimally invasive and require significantly less downtime (a week versus a month). One is Jacono's MADE (minimal access deep-plane extended) procedure, which he calls a deep structural repair of the face, albeit one that remains "ponytail-friendly" (his incisions are a third the traditional length and are tucked far behind the ear). Jacono keeps the skin, muscle, and fat together as

used very judiciously over time, injectables can support needed volume while also minimizing the excess movement that can wear at tissue, thereby putting off the need for surgery. Jacono, though, thinks that for substantial aging concerns, fillers have an expiration date. "When women start doing fillers in their late thirties and early forties, it accelerates the aging process," he claims. "Fillers expand the facial tissue, so as you continue to use them you have to add more, because the face gets looser, but that actually weighs the face down, making it look wider." Carolyn Chang, a plastic surgeon whose San Francisco practice serves a large Silicon Valley clientele, considers injectables an excellent way to give people an idea of what their skin could look like with a temporary anti-aging assist. "But at the end of the day, surgery is always going to win," she says.

Not only are people still going under the knife, they're doing it younger than ever before. "The average age for a face-lift in my practice right now is 47," Jacono says. The rise of social media may have helped provoke the shift by casting a new and omnipresent spotlight on appearance. But there has also been a gain in life expectancy, with people living and working longer and wanting to maintain their youthful looks.

"People in their sixties now look the way those in their forties did 10 years ago," White says. And there may be a benefit to starting earlier. "You don't gain anything by saving up aging," Chang says. "When you get a good face-lift when your skin is still better, you get a more complete correction that lasts longer. You cheat nature that way." It's a trick that more men are signing up for as well; Jacono reports seeing a jump in male face-lifts from 2 percent of his procedures to 20 percent. "Men are even more motivated by workplace pressure than women," says Chang, who tends to a lot of male CEOs who find themselves surrounded by a much younger workforce. Men tend to bruise less than women, because their skin is thicker, she adds, which means they often heal faster, too.

While injectables can lend themselves to overuse, a phenomenon sometimes referred to as "Instagram face," the most dramatic aspect of the 2020 face-lift may be that it's not that dramatic. "The biggest change is that the modern face-lift doesn't look like a face-lift," Chang says. The best work has always gone unnoticed—and now that's easier than ever to achieve. **T&C**

READY TO COMMIT?

Here's who to call.

NEW YORK: Dr. Andrew Jacono,
NEWYORKFACIALPLASTICSURGERY.COM;

Dr. Matthew White, DRMATTHEWWHITE.COM;
Dr. Melissa Doft, DOFTPLASTICSURGERY.COM

CHICAGO: Dr. Julius Few, FEWINSTITUTE.COM

L.A.: Dr. Chin Chi Kao, KAOPLASTICSURGERY.COM

SAN FRANCISCO: Dr. Carolyn Chang,
DRCAROLYNCHANG.COM



ESCAPE PLANS

Tell the truth, or tell everyone you've been to Biarritz? Your post-procedure playbook.



SPEED IT UP

Most patients need to lie low for up to two weeks after surgery, but there is a secret hack: Jacono sends high-profile clients who can't be off the grid to Hyperbaric Medical Solutions in Manhattan (HYPERBARICMEDICALSOLUTIONS.COM), where they log time in a hyperbaric oxygen chamber, cutting recovery time by 50 percent.



OBEY THE RULES

Best practices to ensure a smooth recovery: no strenuous exercise, no flying, no retinol or retinoids, no alcohol ("It promotes bruising, so no alcohol two weeks prior and one week after surgery," White says), no herbal supplements with a *g* in their name (ginseng, ginkgo, ginger, green tea), and no overdoing it on the salt. So that means no Sancerre and french fries in bed.



THROW THEM OFF THE TRACK

There are a few tried-and-true tricks that can help deflect suspicion during your disappearing act.

Exhibit A: the turtleneck.

Exhibit B: the fabulous silk scarf. And since most people will guess you've lost weight post-face-lift, tell them you're doing a cleanse or going on a yoga retreat before you check out of society for a while.

Or try pre-gaming with vacation face:

"I've had patients fly to the Caribbean for three days, get a tan, and fly back for surgery," White says.