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“The aesthetics industry is being driven by this desire to drill down more and more specifically into what you can do, all the way down to little molecules,” says Carolyn Chang, MD, a plastic surgeon whose San Francisco practice attracts a heavy Silicon Valley clientele. “It’s tapping into the need that people have to optimize themselves to the nth degree.”

pulated, often heavily filtered and now, increasingly, AI-generated, and it’s impacting what people are asking for when they actually go see a professional. According to Melissa Doft, MD, a New York-based plastic surgeon and founder of an eponymous skincare line, because of all that, nowadays women want a snatched look and glossy skin with nary a pore or wrinkle in sight. “I can’t tell you how many young patients I have getting preventative Botox in this movement toward no wrinkles and asking about facelifts,” says Doft, adding that they often use online speak like “mini” to describe what they’re looking for. A mini facelift is not a technical or anatomically correct term, says Alemi, who often spends a significant amount of time in consultations unpacking this topic with patients who come in armed with a lot of information, but without the basis to really understand it. The proliferation of doctored images of results poses a challenge for real doctors too. “When patients see photos that are manipulated, it creates an un-

realistic expectation of what’s possible,” says Alemi. Doctors who once competed with Photoshop are now up against advanced filters and AI, whose morphing ability is unparalleled. “There’s no way is going to take a 70-year-old and look 22 or give someone with small shaped ones,” says Doft. “Certain impossible, but tech and AI have expectations so high.” Tech is making it more difficult to see the news. “It’s never been harder to tell what’s real and what’s not on social media,” as she was born with it, or is it a double-edged sword? Tech is impacting what we collectively con-

“You are programmed now to think X, Y, and Z looks good because you’re watching it over and over again,” says Chang. And how is AI determining what is deemed attractive anyway? Often symmetry, thinness, and a Caucasian—read: biased—value system of beauty. “It’s homogenizing what we think of beauty in a more concrete way than the Kardashians ever did,” says Chang.

a more concrete way than the Kardashians ever did,” says Chang. Many whose business is aesthetics (and whose practices are often in coastal zip codes) are steadfast about preserving their patients’ individual beauty markers. And advancements in treatments and procedures (facelifts have indeed come a long way) have arguably made the “you, but better” model more viable, at least if you have the financial means to achieve it. The desire to stall the aging process is age-old, but amidst our increasingly filtered existences the desire for difference is powerful too. Anything that diverges from the sea of chiseled jawlines and doe-like eyes and pouty