

THE TIPPING POINT

With cosmetic treatments and surgery becoming more affordable and commonplace, PENNY McCORMICK contemplates the perils of going overboard

“I want the name and number of Julianne Moore’s surgeon!” texts my friend Vanessa. She and I have been friends for two decades, sharing a love of celebrity gossip, swapping beauty triumphs and errors and issuing our own annual POY list (Product of the Year). Hourglass’s Ambient Lighting Palette, Charlotte Tilbury’s Full Fat Lashes, This Works Deep Pillow Spray, Dr Organic Deodorants, Oribe Dry Texturising Spray and Lancôme’s Miracle Cushion Foundation are just a few that have made the cut. The fact that Vanessa used to be a head honcho for Estée Lauder is vital background information. She takes looking good to a completely different level than I do; grooming is her *raison d’être*. She has detected that Moore has had work done, though I don’t see the signs. Those being the raised eyebrow, the puffy cheeks, the glassy looking skin or the “bunny lines” (that develop on the side of the nose to compensate for frozen eye muscles) that I’ve spotted on, say, Courtney Cox or Charlene of Monaco among many others. Or the slightly-off-can’t-put-my-finger-on-it face as revealed on the red carpet to much brouhaha by Renée Zellweger and latterly Lady Gaga, who stepped out at the British Fashion Council Awards in December, a mere hologram of herself. I try to give Julianne Moore the benefit of the doubt but Vanessa is having none of this. She is poring over this year’s Pirelli Calendar and critiquing the actresses’ faces.

It’s photographed by Peter Lindbergh, who is credited with inventing the supermodels when he photographed the power posse of Cindy Crawford, Tatjana Patitz, Linda Evangelista, Naomi Campbell and Christy Turlington for *Vogue* in 1988. Fast-forward 30 years and he’s still working his magic with (forgiving) black and white portraits of 15 actresses including Helen Mirren, Robin Wright and Kate Winslet. Lindbergh’s idea was to “celebrate natural beauty and femininity”. Yes, it was a change from the usual scantily clad swimwear shots of younger models but really, who are they kidding?



Nicole Kidman and Uma Thurman are not “natural”. Envious genetics and bone structure aside, they’ve admitted to having help with erasing the fine lines and a lot of expression to boot. Meanwhile, Lindbergh and assorted stylists deployed a wind machine, undone hairstyling, artful chiaroscuro lighting and a top make-up artist to achieve this supposedly truthful beauty. Lindbergh also photographed Giorgio Armani’s recent campaigns, called The New Normal, in his iconic style. In the latter, we’re supposed to believe that the addition

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of a white shirt and a pair of classic black trousers will give us the Armani poise and allure that Nadja Auermann and Yasmin Le Bon exude. It’s neither fair nor particularly honest. Le Bon is an advocate of the Venus Freeze (combining pulse magnetic fields and radio frequency, it raises skin temperature to stimulate repair). Deconstructing these sorts of images, celebrity make-up artist Lisa Eldridge has shown, via her YouTube tutorials, that she uses no less than a dozen products to achieve the “no make-up” make-up look.

Last year, when we both had milestone birthdays, Vanessa and I went our separate ways in addressing the inevitable signs of ageing. After much research, she decided on a course of Botox perfectly timed during the Christmas holidays so that when she returned to

work her colleagues would notice how “well-rested” she looked. She now counts down to top-ups every nine weeks. I keep asking if she has a photo of Melanie Griffith on her fridge door as a warning, and she joins in by adding the names of Priscilla Presley, Olivia Newton-John and, of course, Jocelyn Wildenstein. Though we laugh, she shows no sign of desisting.

For my part, I have trialled a loose “wellness” approach that comprises Pilates, aesthetic dentistry (Invisalign works wonders), regular facials and all manner of products with a side sprinkling of cinnamon and a pinch of turmeric thrown in for good measure. I’m conversant with Mirielle Guiliano’s seminal book (*French Women Don’t Get Facelifts*) and I’ve interviewed many a supermodel (Elle MacPherson, Adriana Lima, Natalia Vodianova) to ask them for their anti-ageing secrets. I’m always amused when they say water and sleep. If only. As per the *#iwokeuplikethis* Instagrams, I am having none of it as they resolutely keep mum about their cosmetic surgeons.

In the spirit of authenticity, my body brushes languish in the bathroom cabinet alongside my Sarah Chapman’s Facialift and assorted bee venom formulas. My latest regime is the SoKo approach. “Are you doing the 12 steps?” used to be a reference to alcoholic recovery; now it’s about the South Korean cleansing routine. These multi-step regimes use a variety of products with decidedly weird ingredients. Snail mucin, donkey milk, starfish extracts, sea kelp, bat droppings and maple tree sap are all staples. Look out for this year’s wonder treatments that include “sparkling” cleansers with carbonic acids, rubber masking and an increased use of egg white. Is my skin any better for all this? Possibly,

BEAUTY

but I'm dying to try the award-winning Erasa XEP30 serum as endorsed by Linda Evangelista, and Biotulin the topical organic gel as used by Michelle Obama and Kate Middleton; both hailed as quick, natural Botox fixes.

FaceGym's newly opened premises on the King's Road is my next port of call when I visit London - a collaboration with A-list facialist Alexandra Soveral, it promises to lift and realign features with swift, firm facial massage and a bespoke mix of aromatherapy oils.

If I were to go the surgical route (never say never), like the steady stream of Irish women beating a path to his door, I'd consult Dr Dirk Kremer, who works between Harley Street and Dubai (and is cited as "the best cosmetic plastic surgeon for neck and facelifts" by *Tatler* UK and *W* magazine). His speciality is celebrating individuality and recognising the beauty of each face. Less is more, he tells me: "Most of the time there is just an imbalance of a single facial feature; correcting just one feature can harmonise a patient's face, though nowadays it is less about perfect symmetry and more about harmony in face and body." He points out, as I have also noted, there's no point having an unlined brow when your décolletage is crepey, your hands ridden with age spots or your neck is veering towards turkey territory. As long as you are fit, age is no limit, though Dr Kremer is quick to add that he does say no when necessary. One of his most recent patients was an 82-year-old who wanted a neck lift to show off to her bridge partners. "Patients are my business cards and I refuse surgery when it is against my aesthetics or feel the health and expectations of the patient are in question."

Dr Kremer has developed his own SkinDoc formula to help with skin rejuvenation, while his trademarked TBT (Turn Back Time lift) for the eyes and face is far removed from the old-style wind tunnel look. He's not a fan of the traditional facelift, and favours repositioning facial fat and lifting the skin in a vertical manner against gravity. In so doing he reconstructs his patients' younger natural anatomy of their faces. The result is a lift that often goes unnoticed by friends and family yet can prolong youthfulness for at least a decade. Ultimately, for Dr Kremer, it's about giving women confidence in themselves that translates as beauty.

Of course, Vanessa has already researched "threading face lifts" and I am sure she will go for an eyelid procedure, before going the whole nine yards. For now, she is almost at the end of a lengthy IPL course. She rationalises that the expense will be worth it in the long term, though is tight-lipped when I ask if she is healing. An inexperienced practitioner burnt her and she ended up in A&E with her Brazilian the subject of much scrutiny (ouch!). This has not put her off her stride. Latterly, she has been sending me links to features on permanent eyebrow tattooing. I make non-committal noises and go back to using my trusty Bobbi Brown Natural Brow Shaper & Touch-Up. Eyebrows can take ten years off your age, we are told, so Vanessa has followed through. "What do you think?" is her first question when she shows me the before and after pictures of the procedure done during a lunch break. Fortunately, we are on email so she can't read the non-verbal clues my little white lie would reveal. Yes, it's a good job, done well, but I am totally against it. The reason: Vanessa's face is slowly changing in front of my eyes. Soon I fear I won't be able to recognise my friend. That's the new normal. ■

WHAT TO DO WHEN...



YOU'VE OVERDONE THE BOTOX

"Fillers, particularly hyaluronic acid fillers, can be dissolved if overdone; Botox on the other hand cannot. If too much is injected you have to let it wear off, which normally takes about five or six months. At the Mulrooney Clinic we employ a more conservative approach; we inject a very small dose of Botox initially and review all patients in two weeks (the time it takes for Botox to fully take effect). If the patient needs more we then add it in, thus ensuring you never overdose, and all patients are followed up. Celebrities with good work are the ones who don't look 'done', even though all celebrities are having treatment! Jennifer Aniston looks really natural and I feel she has more laser and Ulthera treatments with less Botox and fillers. Angelina Jolie, on the other hand, has a lot of Botox and fillers but it's well done and looks good." **DR JANE MULROONEY**, Dr Mulrooney Clinic, Ballsbridge, Dublin; www.drjmulrooney.com



YOUR FACELIFT IS TOO TIGHT

"An over-operated face with hollowed upper eyes and tight, stretched skin, the so-called 'wind tunnel' look, is difficult to reverse. Too much skin and facial fat has been removed and pulled to the side instead of repositioned. A wrinkle-free result after a facelift is not always the best. An overdone face will need time to relax again. This can take years and I would recommend waiting instead of rushing into corrective surgeries. Too early a surgical intervention could worsen the result. Eventually, facial fillers to the cheeks might help to restore some volume. But don't rush from a 'wind tunnel' face to a 'feline' face caused by overdoing facial fillers." **DR DIRK KREMER**, Harley Street Aesthetics, www.harleystreetaesthetics.com



YOU'RE EN ROUTE TO A TURKEY NECK

"Ulthera (ultrasound therapy) is the best non-surgical treatment for a sagging neck. The crepey, wrinkly skin can be helped with laser, such as CO2, Fraxel, mesotherapy while pigmentation and redness can be improved with IPL and Fraxel. To prevent some of these changes apply SPF50 daily and never apply perfume directly to your neck." **DR ROSEMARY COLEMAN**, consultant dermatologist with a special interest in aesthetic and laser dermatology. Blackrock Clinic, Dublin.



YOUR CHEMICAL PEEL GOES WRONG

"Getting hooked on chemical peels can have a detrimental, long-term effect on your skin. There are three different types: AHA (fruit acid) offers a superficial peel, TCA (Trichloroacetic acid) is a medium-depth peel and Phenol is the deepest. AHA and TCA can be relatively harmless if you don't overdo, but it is important to have a Phenol peel performed under strict clinical conditions, with proper downtime; if not, unwanted side-effects include permanent hypersensitivity, abnormal healing, scarring and skin colour changes as well as the possibility of infections, allergic reactions and permanent skin damage. The primary treatment is to focus on boosting collagen, as this valuable protein is crucial to the health and strength of the skin. For maximum benefit the collagen needs to penetrate into the lower layers of the epidermis. Only pure collagen is suitable; it must not contain any bacteria, germs or viruses, and the most important thing is to provide collagen molecules in a form that can penetrate the epidermal layers. This is the basis of our MED Day Collagen Protection and Night Collagen Repair, specifically formulated for highly sensitive or damaged skin. These stimulate cell regeneration and improve the elasticity of the skin, while their anti-irritation complex diminishes redness." **DR ERICH SCHULTE**, collagen pioneer and founder of QMS Medicosmetics, www.qmsmedicosmetics.com



YOU'VE GOT IPL BURNS

"IPL burns are similar to second-degree burns and should be treated as such. Use a cold water compress to cool the skin and seek medical advice. It's important to remember the burn must be kept moist by using an ointment that keeps the skin hydrated so it doesn't dry out, as this helps prevent scarring. Something like petroleum jelly would work. A doctor can then prescribe the appropriate antibiotic ointment or, in more extreme cases, oral steroids or antiviral medications. Once the skin has healed we can then look to treat the hyperpigmentation that often follows. Murad Advanced Active Radiance Serum (€95, Edvard & Pink, Dundrum Town Centre) is ideal as the Resilient-C Vitamin C complex in the formula is 50 times stronger than ordinary topical vitamin C, with the power to help brighten and reduce any pigmentation and help skin repair." **DR MURAD**, board-certified dermatologist, www.murad.co.uk