

THE PHILANTHROPY ISSUE

TOWN & COUNTRY

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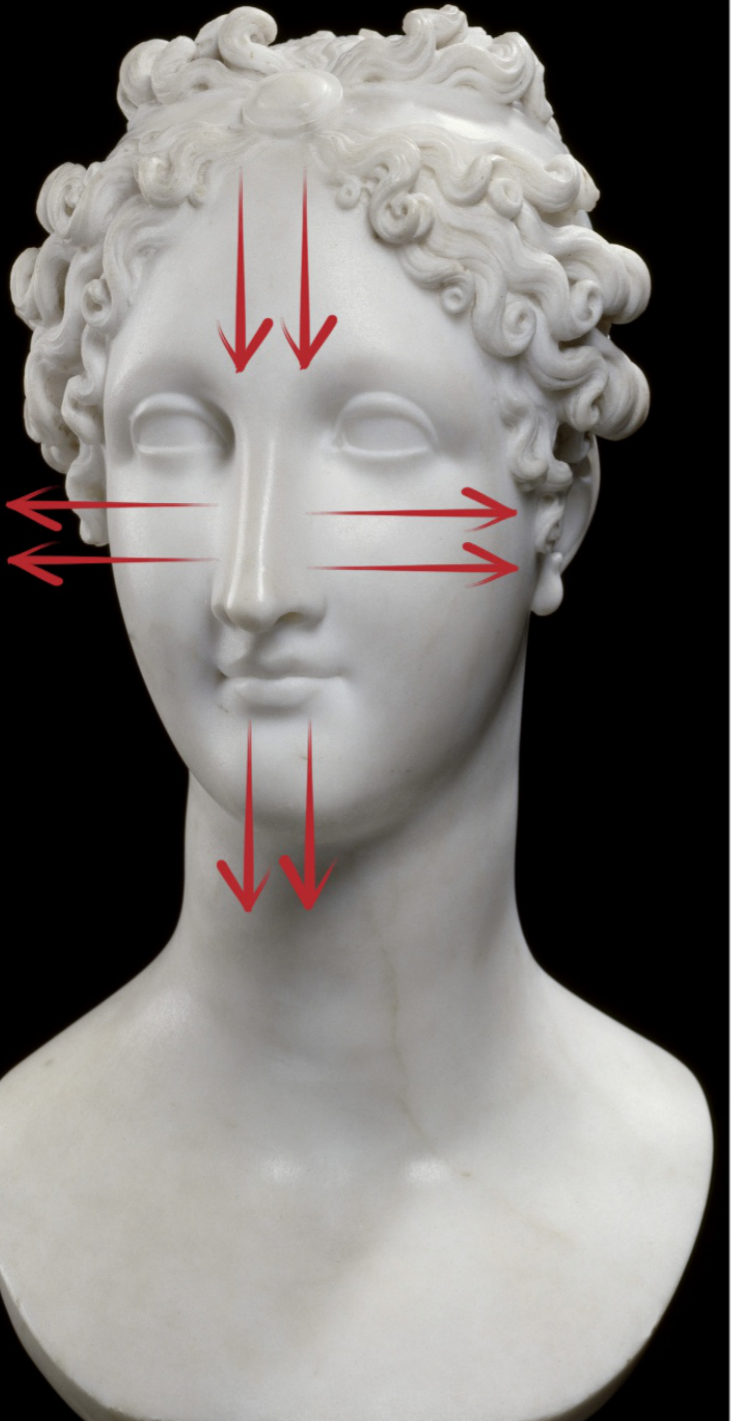
SINK or SAG

Are you aging vertically or horizontally? Here is what that means.

BY JAMIE ROSEN

I have spent 20 minutes a week, for the last month, with three wide, sticky patches attached to my face. Once they're hooked up to BTL Aesthetics' facial toning device, Emface, in the musically themed Elton John room at the West Village office of dermatologist Paul Jarrod Frank, I submit to the sensation. It feels as if hundreds of tingly insects are trying to do pull-ups to lift my cheekbones and my forehead. My cranium is buzzing. Hold me closer, tiny dancer.

Emface and a host of new topical launches are aiming to reverse vertical aging—that is, the slow slide caused by gravity and lower muscle mass, as opposed to horizontal aging, which manifests as those fine lines you get from UV damage, ➡➡



LOOKING GLASS

facial expressions, and other environmental factors. There are countless creams and procedures that can successfully treat wrinkles, but until recently, drooping proved to be a much more complex issue to tackle.

“The facial anatomy is so poorly understood,” says Sebastian Cotofana, an associate professor of anatomy at the Mayo Clinic who has become known for research that focuses on the aging face and how it’s affected by outside interventions such as fillers and lasers. “In the past it was thought to be two-dimensional: left and right, up and down. In the last couple of years there’s a third dimension that is deeper to the skin. And three dimensions over time gives you a fourth dimension, which is time itself.”

But why is it that some faces seem to get longer over time, while others wrinkle in place? The reality is that we all have bone, fat, muscle, fascia, and skin, Cotofana says, each one changing at a different rate. All kinds of factors can come into play, including sun exposure and lifestyle, when it comes to how signs of aging manifest. “The better the knowledge of physicians about each process, the better they can treat the needs of each patient,” he says. “You want to have individualized treatment, and you want to have safety.”

Similar to its body counterpart, Emsculpt, Emface uses high-intensity electrostimulation (to contract muscles) and radiofrequency (to stimulate collagen and elastin). More than 170 subjects in nine clinical studies were measured to have a 30 percent increase in muscle tone and a 23 percent increase in lift after the recommended series of four treatments, which will be priced from \$4,000 to \$6,000.

“The goal is to target what happens naturally as we age, which is that we lose muscle

tone, and skin elasticity decreases,” Frank says. According to BTL Aesthetics, we lose three to eight percent of our muscle mass per decade after age 30. Repeated neurotoxin injections can weaken muscle further, Frank says, which has led doctors like him to search for a more well-rounded approach. “We’re looking for things that are not injectables,” he says, mentioning a “Cabbage Patch” effect he sees in patients who have been overfilled. “Now we’re all about keeping the facial structure intact.”

“Why is it that some faces seem to get longer over time, while others wrinkle in place?”

According to Frank, the ideal Emface candidate is someone who is needle-averse or who wants to dip her toe in the water of noninvasive dermatologic treatments, particularly younger patients in their twenties or thirties or, he says, “semi-old people who are well maintained.” In other words, if you’re thinking about a face-lift, this isn’t the answer, but if you want something with no downtime and very little discomfort, it’s a compelling option. In my experience, it didn’t hurt per se, but the vibrating sensation at the top of my head was odd—like marching my little face muscles to the gym so they can keep everything else from slacking off. In the end, the results were pretty subtle: a tightening lift

that lessened a slackness in my jaw and lower face that I had just started to notice, particularly in pictures.

Emface is indicative of a wider trend in the aesthetics field to treat the face as a whole rather than focusing on a single line or wrinkle. Energy-based techniques, like at-home microcurrent devices, aim for a lifted result at home, while in-office procedures Ultherapy, Thermage, and thread lifts offer tightening and lifting without surgery. At the topical end of the spectrum, La Prairie has developed a way to address the vertical ligaments that keep skin contours firm. Its new Skin Caviar Harmony L’Extrait serum purports to significantly redensify the skin with an ingredient called caviar infinite, which is made up of 300 caviar-derived components, including lipids, proteins, peptides, nucleotides, and nutrients. Chanel’s new Le Lift Pro Concentré Contours uses a tensing biopolymer to immediately create a tightened look; de Mamiel’s Gravity Fix has gained a following at Ayla Beauty in San Francisco for addressing the effects of long-term stress on skin. Ayla founder Dara Kennedy says that one of her testers said the serum led to skin that “reminds me of how I used to look.” Kennedy is also about to launch her own eponymous Sea Serum, an algae-packed gel made with five seaweeds and plants from California, France, and Ireland, to increase firmness without irritation.

Eventually, most of us are going to show signs of both horizontal and vertical aging. Cotofana says the goal of his work is to help clinicians confirm their instincts or guide them toward new ways of diagnosing and treating patients who are responding to gravity in their own unique ways. “The physicians,” he says, “need to play detective.” **TAC**

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VERTICAL

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