

QUINTESSENTIALLY ASIA

THERE ARE A HOST OF SKINCARE PRODUCTS ON THE MARKET BUT FEW ARE BACKED BY THE LEVEL OF TECHNICAL EXPERTISE AND DEVOTION TO DETAIL THAT IS FOUND AT BIOLOGIQUE RECHERCHE. AS DANIEL HOFFMANN DISCOVERED, WHEN IT COMES TO GREAT SKIN, THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS.



FINELY

TUNED

There is a time machine on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris. I went there in 2008 and came out as myself in 1908, at least I looked that way after a one-hour treatment in the Biologique Recherche spa that hides down a little courtyard ten minutes from the Arc de Triomphe. That's the magic of the Biologique Recherche, technique developed by the company's President and professor of potions, Philip Allouche, who insists on treating the skin solely based on its role as the body's largest organ.

"The skin may also be the body's most important organ," says Allouche, a charming Frenchman in his forties who has a rosy glow suggestive of eternal youth. "People treat their skin like it's bubble wrap, covering something more valuable, but the skin needs just as much care as the heart and lungs."

Allouche has been repeating this mantra since he took over research and creative direction at Biologique Recherche from his father 14 years ago, but he is no snake-oil salesman. His treatments have won a loyal and powerful following among celebrities, for the singular reason that they work. Hitherto the main problem with the brand has been getting to Paris at a time when the Champs-Élysées spa was not fully booked. Now that issue is being resolved, as Allouche, company President Rupert Schmid and CEO Pierre-Louis Delapalme roll out a series of Biologique Recherche spa partnerships in Europe, the US, Asia and Latin America.

The latest tie-up is with the Four Seasons in Hong Kong and the brand will soon be spreading its wings at other Four Seasons spas throughout the region. Clients who visit the Hong Kong spa will find that every Biologique



Recherche treatment begins with an assessment stage to establish the condition of the epidermis, so that the most appropriate treatments can be recommended. Allouche bases the Biologique Recherche approach on the fact that nobody has one "skin type" but a skin condition that changes several times every day – he calls this the Skin Instant, and the concept has become one of the company's registered trademarks.

"The artificial categorization of skins as normal, dry or oily provides a poor psychological definition of a skin's condition," says Allouche. "It only gives a stationary image of the epidermal cosmetic imbalances. We like to go much deeper and determine how the epidermis is interfacing with the skin's deeper structures. We then start building a surface for youth and radiance at the epidermal level."

If the good doctor sounds a bit technical at times it's because he approaches the issue of making people look young and beautiful with the earnest dedication of a scientist, and one who has devoted his life to making new discoveries in his field. His research led him to build a three-stage treatment process that begins with the assessment and then moves to an "Initialization Phase" in which a special developed lotion (Lotion P50) is applied to eliminate impurities while respecting the acid pH balance of the epidermis. Only after the skin has been prepared can clients proceed to the treatment phase. For me, in Paris, this was the best part, making me feel like I had been caught up in a charming science experiment by a benign Dr Frankenstein figure, who, rather than turning me into a monster, was ready to unlock whatever inner beauty my skin might still possess. The focus of the treatment phase is 20 minutes of "face re-modelling", during which three different types of electricity are passed through the skin. It tingles, but in a vaguely sensuous way. There follows an application of a customized cocktail of Quintessential Serums, another proprietary range in Allouche's armoury. This revolutionary approach was derived from Allouche's time as a doctor in a hospital that treated injured soldiers. >>

