

TOM WOLFE'S
MIAMI MAMBO

DIAMOND MONOPOLY
Jewels that Top the Market

THE CHEF WHO
DEVoured HONG KONG

TOWN & COUNTRY

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LOOKING GLASS

ABOUT FACE

shortlist

GENTLEMEN

BUD LIGHT

Thanks to Le Labo and Tom Ford, men have recently warmed to fragrances featuring rose. But the boutique brand Arquiste is roughing up the delicate gardenia for its latest scent, *Boutonnaire No. 7*. Founder Carlos Huber brought out notes from the flower's leaf and stem, then added



lavender and bergamot for a green, almost mossy freshness. The name comes from the French tradition of men (such as Marcel Proust, above) wearing just-cut gardenias in their tuxedo lapels. "The whole point was for a woman to smell something nice on a man," Huber says. That's still a perfectly good reason to spray away. \$195 for a limited edition set with *M. de Phocas* gardenia stick pin and silk knot cuff links, at the Webster, Miami, 305-673-5548

physiotherapist, respectively) in Paris in 1978. His approach combines a holistic ethos—that skin is an organ that's interconnected with all the body's other functions—with a strict regimen of no-nonsense products and salon treatments using a device called the Remodeling Face Machine. All of this has earned him a faithful—and well-heeled—following in 47 countries, many of which Dr. Allouche visits on a regular basis.

Recently, Dr. Allouche decided to offer an upgrade from his prêt-à-porter approach with the Haute Couture program, launching this year. Which is how I found myself at Aida Bica's salon on East 75th Street in Manhattan on a crisp, autumnal morning, soothed by Jacques Brel's voice as Dr. Allouche made a careful analysis of the current state of my skin. The usual culprits—sun, alcohol, the odd cigarette, and, most damning of all, age—were quickly identified, and then it was time for the "individualized measurement session." With his magic diagnostic machine quietly whirling away, Dr. Allouche measured my skin's elasticity, sebum level, melanin index, wrinkle depth, and moisture rate. The information would be relayed to what he described as "a committee of scientists in a lab in Paris," who were going to whip up my very own couture collection of creams and serums that would be delivered to me in a white *coffret* (that's a box to you and me) in New York each month. In the meantime I would begin my journey toward dermatological nirvana with an "induction" phase, using potions with pure, concentrated ingredients (such as peptides, wasabi extract, and hydrolyzed pea) to prepare my skin for the adventure ahead. I would also get regular treatments—not facials—at Aida's salon.

"No, no, never facials," Dr. Allouche insists. "We need to help the epidermis renew itself, not traumatize it. That's why exfoliation is so destructive. Your epidermis isn't just dead cells, you know. It is the roof of your entire house, and I'm here to rebuild it. My role is to be the carpenter of your skin!" I tried to picture this dapper Frenchman clambering around a construction site with a hammer and nails, but before I could conjure up this improbable image, we'd moved on to a discussion of the desperate American desire for instant gratification: too much Botox, too many injections, not to mention the dreaded peels that shave off the top layer off the skin. I have to admit that I agreed. Just walking up Madison Avenue that morning I'd seen enough examples—rigid foreheads, pneumatic mouths, perma-surprised eyes—to prove his case in court several times over.

And so, for the next six months, every morning and every night, I faithfully followed the protocol. I didn't skip a day or a single stage, and I never, ever allowed another product to touch my skin. At first, for somebody who'd been used to Clinique's easy-peasy

one-two-three system, the process seemed crazily complicated. As I read through the four pages of instructions and stared at the sacred contents of the *coffret* (each jar and bottle with "Mme. Wells" handwritten on its label) I thought, You must be kidding. But once I'd gotten used to the routine I discovered that not only was it incredibly soothing (both to my skin and to my soul), but it really didn't take that much time. First came the cleansing milk, then the Lotion P50-V, which works as a combined toner/exfoliator, then four separate serums, applied one after the other, then two creams, then the eye cream, and finally the "finishing" serum, Yall o2. Plus a twice-weekly face masque.

Midway through my treatment Dr. Allouche blew back into town en route to Beijing, where presumably there are plenty of Chinese ladies eager to fork over \$12,500 for the six-month treatment. Yes, that's what it costs, in case you were wondering. He came just to check up on me. "*Mon Dieu*," he said, examining my face. Had I been in the sun? I nodded like a naughty schoolgirl begging forgiveness, and about a week later a whole new *coffret*, with powerful new serums and creams, arrived by messenger at my house.

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Every month I had a session with Aida, a willowy Kosovan with a predictably flawless complexion, who measured my skin and then applied a masque. That was followed by a session with the Remodeling Face Machine, which uses three gentle electric currents to improve the skin's volume. Then, with her fingers, Aida gave my face lots of soft, feathery tap, tap, taps. "I'm giving memory to the muscle," she said, though it felt to me as if a butterfly were fluttering across my pores. And, yes, after a few months, when I looked in the mirror—expecting nothing to have changed—I really did look rested. My eyes were less puffy, my skin was plumper, and my lines were far less noticeable.

It wasn't just my imagination. A few days after my final treatment I was having lunch with Mark, a gentleman in the beauty biz whom I hadn't seen in a while, and I noticed that he was examining my face with what I can only describe as professional interest. Never one to beat about the bush, he said, "You said you never would, but you've had some work done, haven't you?" I just gave him my best Mona Lisa smile and said, "Certainly not!" But I'm thrilled to report that he clearly didn't believe me.

Biologique Recherche Haute Couture, 212-989-6077