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Face odyssey: Tanya Gold puts her visage on screen (above)
The bust is yet to come: A non-surgical breast enlarger (left)

love tension-induced tissue growth. Will it work on my nose? 'No.'

At the Consulting Room stand, I have a chat with Lorna about what's new in plastic surgery. 'Breast implants and facelifts are still the bestsellers, but today people are looking for things they can have done in their lunchtime,' she says. Non-surgical procedures like Botox and dermal fillers, laser treatment for hair removal — waxing is dead!

Microdermabrasion — that's a mechanical exfoliation with crystals that takes a thin layer of skin off — and laser skin rejuvenations are the other main growth areas.

The minimally invasive procedures — non-surgical and the injectables — are popular. 'The trend to look young,' she sighs, 'will continue. People feel the pressure to look good for a partner or to retain their jobs. It's truer for women but lots of men are going for eye surgery to look young, especially executives.'

Lorna clearly knows her stuff. Does she know a surgeon who can transform me into Liz Taylor (before she put the weight on)? Lorna clucks at me. 'You are exhibiting Body Dysmorphic disorder,' she chides. 'These are people who are obsessed with plastic surgery and believe they are ugly.'

Lorna is wrong. I don't believe I'm ugly; I believe I'm just slightly less beautiful than Liz Taylor (before she put the weight on).

'It's the anorexia of beauty,' says Lorna, 'and any surgeon worth their salt will turn them away. And people who are too fat. Liposuction is not a cure for obesity.'

I'm clearly not a candidate for liposuction so I wander off, passing Carole Caplin, Cherie Blair's beauty guru, who is dressed in white and clutching a London Centre for Aesthetic Surgery carrier bag. Is Cherie considering breast augmentation? Botox? An extra breast? Or hair implants for La Tone?

A particularly glossy and beautiful stand catches my eye. It's Bergman Beauty Care, a skincare line developed by Swiss plastic surgeons. I'm shown a £269 jar of moisturiser. It looks like a giant diamond. It's lovely. I want it. 'Give it to me!' I beg.

The smiling owner of the jar splits out the incomprehensible science bits — something about molecules — and lets me touch it. It feels like molten lava. 'It works from the inside out,' she says. I fight an urge to lie down on top of the moisturiser, marry it and cook it risotto.

But before I purchase any skin creams I really ought to have my skin photographed and analysed by the Visia Complexion System. Dermatologist Dr

Chy sticks my face into a plastic box of mirrors and photographs it; then we stare at a screen for the results.

She zooms in on the photos and weird electro maps sprout across them. 'I have tested you for all types of skin quality,' she says. 'Texture, evenness, pore size, spots, sun damage and wrinkles.'

As I wait for the computer to pass judgment, I am petrified. I do not want to look like the horror actress Ingrid Pitt or a corpse or the surface of the North Circular when I am 40. 'Not too bad,' says Dr Chy. 'Pore size — good; wrinkles — good; porphyrins (huh?) — good; evenness — OK.' She keeps zooming in on blemishes; on her screen a tiny broken vein on my nose is the size of a fist. I don't like it and I wish she would stop.

Then crisis comes. Dr Chy says I have serious sun damage buried deep within my skin. 'You need sun block and an anti-oxidant,' she says through gritted teeth. I hand over my credit card. Dr Chy sucks £115 out of it and I am given a cream. The name of the cream is too long to type.

RECOVERED from my skin crisis, I realise I'm in heaven. At Body Beautiful 2005 any physical defect can be salvaged (except position of eyes and size of jaw) and any bodily sin forgiven. If the Hunchback of Notre Dame walked in, a gaggle of cheeping beauty experts would bustle forward and two hours later he would emerge looking like Robert Kilroy-Silk.

As I leave Olympia for the imperfect world outside I see a husband having an existential crisis in the Champagne Bar. 'Where does this end?' he asks his polished wife, who is fondling a mountain of carrier bags. 'This is madness, madness! And I know you'll get the pets done next.'

I pause and ponder. Is the husband right? Is it decadent to spend £110 on a Skinceutical combination anti-oxidant treatment? Is it futile to buy a derma sponge or a hypoallergenic wrinkle remover?

Am I, Carole Caplin and the other women drifting round Body Beautiful chasing a youthful loveliness we should happily abandon, and merely exfoliating ourselves into madness and death? I may be a lost soul drowning in the 'beauty-centric' West but I still want to be hydrated. Moisturiser is a woman's inalienable right.

I try to ignore the man's ravings. I have seen the future of beauty. It's unspellable, unpronounceable and incomprehensible, but that's nothing a lunchtime lobotomy won't fix. Doctor!

Pictures: BEN LUSTER

