



EXTREME GLOW-UP WITH TOM FORD BEAUTY

AS PLASTIC SURGERY CONTINUES TO CREEP INTO MAINSTREAM AESTHETICS CONVERSATIONS, OUR ASPIRATIONAL BEAUTY BENCHMARK IS SHIFTING TOO.

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Plastic surgery never went away, but it’s currently experiencing a renaissance. “The pendulum is turning back towards surgery,” says Melissa Doft, MD, a Manhattan-based plastic surgeon and founder of her eponymous skincare line. Part of that is because some patients are discovering the limitations of less invasive forms of rejuvenation—so-called “filler fatigue” has driven many to get it dissolved or to consider biostimulatory options (like Sculptra or Radiesse), which build long-term collagen instead. Another part is the steadily growing market for GLP-1s—particularly among Gen Z; a new study found that a quarter of them are turning to the drugs in 2025—which has created a new demand for procedures to address the drug’s accompanying skin hollowness and laxity. Most importantly, plastic surgery technologies and techniques have continued to improve. Doctors predict that in the year ahead we’ll see more upper eyelid blephs (“a go-to outpatient procedure that easily improves many faces,” Alemi says); lip filler being outpaced by lip lifts (while they require surgical incisions can have a more subtle outcome); a move towards smaller breasts

Plastic surgery shaking off its taboos is in many ways a good thing, but by increasing our collective comfort level, have we minimized its seriousness? Just as we have “baby Botox” (a term for smaller amounts of the injectable), you can now find cutesy names like baby-, mini-, or ponytail-lifts being used to market surgical facial procedures. Will we get to a place where the Western plastic surgery industry is more like that of South Korea, where going under the proverbial knife is so commonplace that it’s widely offered, frequently discussed, and not so prohibitively priced? “In South Korea they’ve been doing the glow-up for a decade and it’s so pervasive that everyone thinks they need to look like that,” says Carolyn Chang, MD, a plastic surgeon in San Francisco. “There’s a uniform beauty standard that is extreme and very homogenized.” While there is now—thankfully—a wave of patients once again embracing a more restrained approach to plastic surgery and cosmetic dermatology, Chang says that uniformity exists in the US too. “So many people still want high cheekbones, a slim jawline, big lips, and doe eyes,” she adds, pointing to the Kardashian effect on our aesthetic zeitgeist.

Our algorithms are to blame, too. The regular bombardment of morphed images has distorted our sense of beauty, bolstering looks that aren’t rooted in fleshy corporeal reality. Frequently filtered existences have not only skewed our notion of what’s real, but what’s possible for plastic surgeons to achieve—thereby creating unrealistic expectations. Particularly among younger generations, there has also been a perception shift around plastic surgery. “They’re thinking about these things not as corrective, but as preventative, as self-care,” echoes Hartman. And they are more willing than Gen X and boomers ever were to go straight to surgery: “The younger generations are not afraid to jump in,” Doft says.