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Cosmetic Enhancement
for Men



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Saving Face

At a downtown Toronto clinic, men turn to cosmetic surgery in an effort to look their best. To their discomfort, they find out the process isn't always pretty Words and photograph by Martin Patriquin

ERIC THE OPERA SINGER IS NERVOUS. Dressed in a dark blue button-down shirt, he stands on the margins of a large gallery of men, gazing at portraits with eyes wide in the room and above all trying to keep his mouth shut. His lips are set in a firm, unyielding line. He looks to have very little control of his tongue. "I hate needles," is one of the first things he says when approached. It's been awhile since he's had a needle.

In 30 minutes, after a PowerPoint presentation on the wonders of cosmetic surgery, Eric will lie on a linen-draped table in front of two dozen men and have his lips pumped full of Botox, a lip-filling agent that happens to be a hot new plastic surgery treatment. Eric will be fuller and those white lines around the edges will all but disappear. And along with them, Eric's lifelong dislike of his thin, unattractive lips will.

Eric, 44, is a quiet pig. In return for the free Botox treatment, he has agreed to have the procedure done in the waiting room of Visage, a cosmetic surgery clinic in downtown Toronto. The occasion marks the clinic's first all-male plastic surgery party, and the room is packed with men between 31 and 47. Eric is here about the latest in

plastic surgery: exchange business cards and watch Eric (and later a second gentleman) shed tears from his face.

As Eric sits about his impending transformation with the hypodermic needles, Dr. Marc DuPéré walks the room, shaking hands, laughing at jokes, and otherwise making himself known to the room full of potential clients. There are men of all kinds here: actors, businessmen, academics, lobbyist assistants and art directors, and to mention one star-career actor.

"Guys' Night In" is DuPéré's baby and he's happy with the turnout, as well as with the predictable buzz around the procedure table at the back of the room. DuPéré opened Visage in the spring of 2003 with the idea of attracting younger men to his practice. His timing is impeccable: according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, more men are heading to the plastic surgeon's office than ever before, their insecurities and imperfections now. In addition to Botox treatments, men are having dermalabrasion to smooth away scarred skin; body reduction surgery to "correct" bulges; liposuction to remove fat around the waist; rhinoplasty; "short scar" surgery for hair loss; and skin whitening and scrubbing called chemical peel surgery, which covers the upper and lower lips to create a more

homogenous profile," according to Visage clinic website. And, of course, there's Botox.

For some time now, women have rejected the stigma attached to the act of altering each appearance by participating in group consultations and focus meetings. Similarly, it used to be the case that only women—and gay men—were worried about plucking, grooming, waxing and exfoliating, but not anymore.

As DuPéré points out, cosmetic surgery is fast becoming part of the standard male personal-care regimen, right alongside exercise and good nutrition. Hence, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* stars three amazing Gays: their models. Because the average man's plastic surgeon that blue line between medical procedure and pornography is thin. Men are beginning to understand what it takes to look their best, and it isn't a happy party.

Which isn't to say things can't remain pleasant. Invisibly the conversation table, DuPéré's display of hypodermic needles and the somewhat frank PE screens who is bounding around the room, are the inaugural "Guys' Night In" could be an after-work cocktail party—minus the cocktails. Alcohol, says DuPéré, would detract from the "medical nature of the evening.

In a semicircle, more guests stand and others sit

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