

An expressive alternative to facial reupholstery

The conflict between camouflage and cosmetic surgery

By Carol Bruman

Ashamed of the puffy lids over her eyes, 33-year-old Marina Gauci resigned herself to a painful and pricey solution—cosmetic surgery. But after a one-hour consultation with Dr. Nabil Fanous, a Montreal physician, the registered nurse learned she could escape the surgeon's knife and improve her dour appearance merely by tweezing her eyebrows a different way.

So far, more than 100 patients—troubled by crooked noses, sagging faces and other unsightly problems—have opted for Fanous' new scientific art called Expression Plasty as an alternative to heavy facial reupholstery. The technique, perfected last summer, "focuses on correcting both facial expressions and features, rather than features alone." It records the precise tensions needed to reshape the face without altering normal appearances or expressions. The Egyptian-born physician is the first in North America to identify "false facial expressions" and develop a treatment for people who are troubled by uncharacteristic features that make them appear "sad, angry, tired or old." Explains Fanous: "Little attention has



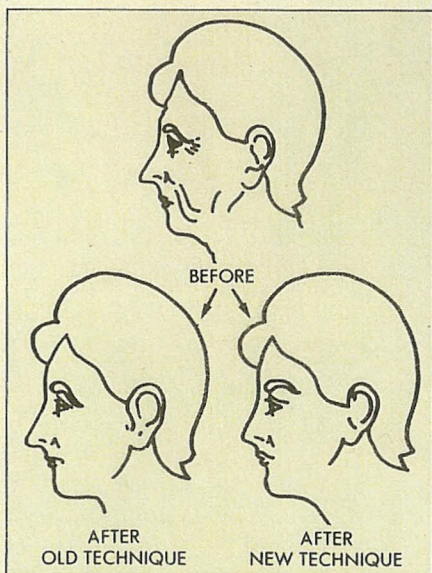
DAVID STREET

Silver practising cosmetic surgery: eventually patients return to old ways

been given to correct expressions because classical cosmetic surgery has mainly been concerned about fixing facial features." For most patients, anxious to wipe perpetual pouts, scowls and frowns off their faces, the 34-year-old associate professor of otolaryngology at McGill University advises such nonsurgical camouflage as changes in makeup, hairstyling or reshaping eyebrows. But some disturbing features—such as baldness, weak chins and baggy eyes—require esthetic surgery to fix, he says.

In effect, Fanous is bridging the gap between beauticians and cosmetic surgeons. While a beautician would rely on makeup to help a woman in her 50s hide signs of age, a cosmetic surgeon would remove skin that had lost its elasticity with age, producing sags and wrinkles. Fanous would operate on the woman to restore beauty and remove unwanted expressions. But following surgery, he would advise her to make eyebrow and hairstyling changes to improve what nips and tucks have ignored (see illustration).

This difference in approach has touched off a dispute between conventional cosmetic surgeons and Fanous about the necessity for Expression Plasty. Critics argue that face-lifts and nose operations are by far the most popular cosmetic procedures, and have been



Both conventional cosmetic surgery (left) and Expression Plasty (right) may use face-lifts and nose operations to rejuvenate the face. But to erase a dour expression, Fanous reshapes eyebrows and utilizes makeup.

FEBRUARY 9, 1981

CANADA'S WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE

VOL. 94 NO. 06

Maclean's