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Don’t hate her because she’s beautiful. The new you, too, could be flawless—but it would require serious effort and major discipline. From the craze for injections to raw foods to raw meat and backbreaking workouts, your transformation starts now. Photographed by Helmut Newton.
no gain
needle nation
The most potent new beauty fixes are increasingly delivered with a swift—and sometimes painful—prick. Julia Jones reflects on how she became a human pincushion.

mesotherapy, a nonsurgical “fat melting” technique, is the latest miracle cure. Like so many popular near-instant beauty transformations, it is a needle-based treatment, during which a cocktail of vitamins, minerals, plant extracts, and FDA-approved pharmaceutical drugs is injected into the mesoderm, or middle layer of the skin, to “liquefy” the body’s fat cells, which will then be either burned as energy or excreted from the body.

Despite my boundless enthusiasm, I’m curious to know if a few pricks of a needle—or, to be precise, around 500 injections per $500 session—can really improve the appearance of my squishy lower limbs. And is mesotherapy truly the Holy Grail for skinny, dimple-free thighs, then why, in a country obsessed with quick fixes, is there no Manolo-shod stampede?

Though developed in 1952 by the French doctor Michel Pistor, the meso- I was a veritable injection junkie, yet I still looked like me, albeit an airbrushed, well-rested, soft-focus kind of me

movement is just getting started in the United States. “Everyone here does it,” swears a Parisian girlfriend. Indeed, in Europe and South America (where it is practiced by approximately 15,000 doctors), it’s about as shocking as a nose job.

According to Leroy Young, M.D., a St. Louis–based plastic surgeon and the chairman of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons’ Emerging Trends Task Force, since there have been no formal studies conducted in this country (though extensive medical literature has been written in French, Spanish, and Italian), the official jury is still out on mesotherapy’s actual efficacy. But, he says reassuringly, it’s not dangerous, so there’s no harm in trying.

Buoyed by the convincing example of the svelte former chili Fest party, and my friend’s ringing endorsement, I find myself in the Upper West Side offices of osteopath Lionel Bissoon, D.O., to try the tantalizing procedure for myself.

Bissoon, the president of the American Board of Mesotherapy, is the man credited with kick-starting the meso trend Stateside when he began practicing it five years ago. His self-published book, The Cellulite Cure, is due out this month. He studies my legs and backside. “You have half-grade cellulite on the front of your legs and Grade 2 on the back and sides,” he says calmly. Grade 2? “You have to look to see it, and it disappears when you lie down,” explains the doctor, which makes me wonder if I should go everywhere horizontal, on a stretcher. “Grade 3 is what I call terminal,” he adds. “Getting women down to a Grade 1 is my goal.” I feel marginally smug that I’m already a 2.

The next thing I know I am lying face-down on a treatment table, anesthetic cream spread all over my body, watching Bissoon fill an alarmingly large syringe with a concoction of liquids that he then jabs diligently, repeatedly, at my naked flesh, creating a series of scarlet dots that resemble a nasty case of the measles. Even with the numbing cream, this is way more painful than I expected—a swarm of bees stinging springs to mind. He promises it will be over in less than ten minutes. So, clenching my toes, I grit my teeth, the occasional sharp intake of breath interrupting a grim determination to prance, unapologetic, along a beach one day.

What can I expect from the ten-week roster of torture treatments I so rashly signed on for? Two inches from your abs and back.” Bissoon assures me. “And the cottage-cheese effect on your legs will practically disappear.” Sold.

How It All Started: The Injektibles

The man I credit for my addiction to syringe-induced beauty is Fredric Brandt, M.D., the wildly charismatic celebrity dermatologist and so-called king of Botox, whom I met several years ago when he wiped a decade off my face with a few vials of the just-emerging toxin. Wielding his needle like a magician, he used it to instantaneously smooth my crow’s-feet, forehead, and frown lines, firm my neck, elevate my brow, and even raise the tip of my nose (yes, Botox can do that). Quickly hooked, I began to dabble (continued on page 598)
in upstate New York. (David says he sees no more than five woodcocks in an entire season.) And there are so many recipes I now must try. Michel Guérard roasts the birds, then removes the meat and the inards and prepares a complicated sauce with port and foie gras. My next chance will come in October, when the season opens in New Jersey and England simultaneously. I can drive with George Faison to the Delaware Water Gap and stand endlessly in a cold bog in my new Chameau boots, praying for luck, or go to the butchers in London, snag a dozen woodcocks, and cook them in a friend’s toasty kitchen in a dozen cunning ways.

**NEEDLE NATION**

*(continued from page 572)*

in other cutting-edge injectibles from Brandt’s bag of tricks. Soon there were regular Restylane injections (a new wrinkle filler, then used by Brandt in clinical trials and officially approved this past December by the FDA) to impart cut-glass cheekbones and to add height to the sagging midportion of my face. I signed on for collagen injections, too, which gave me a Bardotesque sex kitten pout and plumped the lines from my mouth to my chin, which had made me look like a marionette.

Soon I was a veritable injection junkie, and yet I still looked like me, albeit an airbrushed, well-rested, unabashedly soft-focus kind of me. Maintenance, I called it. All part of staving off a major overhaul somewhere down the road.

**The Acupuncture Facial**

My needle obsession didn’t stop there. During a surprising Zen moment, and upon hearing that even acupuncture—the centuries-old alternative medicine rooted in Chinese philosophy and prescribed for everything from allergies to migraines—had gotten in on the wrinkle-fighting act, I found myself in the SoHo offices of acupuncturist Mitchell Wolf.

“Acupuncture works from the inside out,” said Wolf as he carefully unwrapped a frightening number of slender prepackaged needles. “It’s only by becoming truly healthy internally that we can improve our appearance externally.” Right. Whatever. So how does it actually work? “Imagine underground subway lines running through your body. These are the meridians,” he explained. “I’ll stimulate them to release the block-

ages of qi, or energy flow, by placing needles into various acupoints.”

He began by inserting a tiny needle just below my knee. I wasn’t quite sure how something that far from my face could produce a tangible result, but moments later I felt a surge—a distinct, dull heaviness and a tingling around the insertion point—so something had to be happening. Next, Wolf placed a neat row of needles from my forehead into my hairline. “Think of it as if I’m pulling up and tightening the skin, pinning it into place,” he whispered softly. I relaxed with my eyes closed for 20 minutes, occasionally conjuring up nightmares of accidentally falling asleep, rolling over, and impaling myself in the name of extreme vanity.

That evening, I peered intently at my face. Was there a difference? Tough to say. Yes, I looked more alert, definitely rested, possibly firmer, but time would tell. “Everyone’s skin is different. With weekly sessions, you’ll see a real difference in as little as five weeks,” Wolf had told me.

Hopeful, I added weekly acupuncture to my ever-growing must-do list.

**The Roller Ball**

When I heard of a new skin-pricking device (this one for use at home) that everyone on the West Coast was raving about, I wasted no time in placing a call to Rand Rusher, R.N., at Solutions Skin-care Medical Clinic, to get the scoop. “Ah, yes, the Environ Cosmetic ROLL-CIT,” said Rusher, who shares an office with celebrity plastic surgeon Norman Leaf, M.D., and is known among the Hollywood glitterati as a complexion miracle worker. “But you can only have one if you promise to use it every day,” he said solemnly. “And that means adding another fifteen minutes to your beauty routine.” I was baffled. Did he not realize that I was a woman obsessed with her beauty routine?

The principle behind my new $550 toy was this: The spiky contraption, not unlike a Barbie-size paint roller, is covered with tiny, fine needles that create little channels in the skin’s surface. Clinical data (provided by Environ, using its own product) show that this allows the active ingredients in skin care to penetrate further into the skin’s deeper layers. Rusher also offers a more intensive in-office skin-pun- cting treatment that stimulates collagen production—during which your face is essentially tenderized like a piece of meat—but that requires local anesthetic with sedation and a week’s recovery time.

I ripped open the box and unwrapped the tiny roller curiously. “Apply it carefully up, down, and across the face,” instructed Rusher over the phone from Beverly Hills. He said that followed up with the right cream—something formulated with proven antiaging properties such as potent, fat-soluble antioxidants vitamins A, C, and E—my skin-care routine would become “5,000 times more efficacious.”

“Does it hurt?” I asked, running my fingers over the roller. “Kind of feels like a cat’s licking you,” he replied. For someone who’d been routinely stuck with meso needles, this felt like spun silk.

That night, I perched in front of my bathroom mirror studiously rolling my new toy up and down my face. My boyfriend calls from the bedroom. “What are you doing? You’ve been in there for hours.”

**Perfection, Nearly**

Now, after seven mesotherapy sessions, the cellulite that’s plagued me for most of my adult life has practically vanished. However, I spend several days between visits black-and-blue and popping arnica tablets (an herbal remedy prescribed to reduce bruising). When questioned by my unsuspecting boyfriend, I tell him the marks are the result of deep-tissue massage. He believes me. “Your progress is even better than I had expected!” Bissoon says when I return for my eighth session, reminding me that after this, I have only two more appointments before the end result—official status as a Grade 1. Though not nearly as supple as it was ten years ago, my backside is showing dramatic improvement. The promise of an as-perfect-as-I-can-be body has inspired me to really get it together: Now, due in part to consciously altering my eating habits (less carbs and fatty foods, more fruits, veggies, and proteins) and twice-weekly workouts with a trainer, I’ve lost six pounds. I find myself at Barneys considering spring’s short skirts and audaciously planning mini-vacations to Miami and Anguilla.

My complexion—even-toned, and line-free thanks to Dr. Brandt—also appears slightly firmer, as a result, I logically deduce, of the acupuncture and roller ball.
CALL OF THE WILD (continued from page 576)

YMCA in Quincy, Massachusetts, explained: “Unless they are exercising, women between the ages of 25 and 85 lose about five pounds of muscle every decade. However, they can replace two to three pounds of muscle doing just 20 minutes of resistance exercise three times a week for eight weeks. The more muscle mass gained, the more calories burned on a daily basis. In order to build muscle, you must use enough resistance to fatigue the targeted muscle in 90 seconds or less. If you are able to continue that same exercise after 90 seconds, then the resistance is not great enough to be beneficial.

Considering that getting through each move for a mere 30 seconds is a challenge for me, these workouts must be doing some good. In fact, in the month or so since I began, my body-fat percentage has gone from 26 percent to 23 percent.” Each class is a one-hour journey and the journey is different every time,” said George Brescia, who lost 20 pounds since he started going to one such exercise class—IntenSati at Equinox Fitness—a year ago. I don’t know about the journey part, but the possibility of going from an 8 to a 4 while still being able to eat apple pie is definitely an incentive.

UNDERWORLD (continued from page 580)

to-measure slips in twelve shades of nude. She makes camisoles that, like eyelids, devolve at their selvaged edges into laces. Lace, however, she doesn’t do: “I don’t want it close to my skin. It doesn’t feel good; it never has. Chiffon is the modern equivalent.” Her chiffon pieces are too gorgeous to stay under wraps—but if they do, that’s fine by her. “The proper foundation is a good skin-tone camisole or slip,” she opines. “Most women I know invest a great deal in their wardrobe, but there isn’t anything in their wardrobe to support that investment.”

When I meet Christina Stott, a tiny 26-year-old with a three-month-old baby, she pulls up her pink sweater and teases me that even a nursing bra can have something going on: in her case, a black leather demi-cup with a front buckle closure. The designer’s self-named label is overtly erotic in the kitschy, kinky tradition of Agent Provocateur (“I was always into sexy things, being sexy, sex, all of it”), but the level of detail and craft would arouse the most discerning fashion instincts. There are shell-pink bras with small laced-up apertures; underpants tied at the hips with strings; and all manner of teasing, feminine bits that would work a treat with not-so-feminine basics. (Says Marriana Bracone of Mixona, a supercool retailer of underwear in New York’s Nolita: “My ex-boyfriend’s pants with Stott’s laced-back long-line piece over it? Oh my God. I just want to wear it out.”) When not wearing her own stuff, Stott likes Passion Bait (“even though my husband doesn’t really like it”) and vintage stockings (“I’m big into stockings that don’t stretch, that bag at the knees when you bend”).

Not all of us have Stott’s or Bracone’s (20-something) bravado. Exposure can leave us feeling a tad…exposed. To avoid that sinking feeling, it may be worth heeding the following advice. One, be cautious with lace. “Personally,” says Bartlett, “I’m not into lacy bras” being seen. It’s a way of exposing yourself too much.” Jeffrey Costello, her partner, adds, “And it’s a little antiquated at this point.” Two, when wearing a mini corset, treat it as a wide belt, not as an actual cincher. Lace it loosely. Three, if you desire to show your slip in order to soften a hemline, wear a whole slip and go the whole hog; make it clear that the skirt is subservient to the underdress, not vice versa. Four, reveal underwear only with very dressed looks. The point is to be a lady, not a tramp. Five, remember to wear it as a layer, not as a statement. Lace-trimmed jewel-tone silk cami under suit in place of shirt? Old. Lace-edged jewel-tone silk cami under whisper-thin cashmere cardigan under suit? New. Skinny tank top and jeans? Old. Layered skinny tanks in blush, beige, cream under silver summer tweed jacket and jeans? New. Six, under no circumstances disclose a thong under low-slung trousers. Jemima French of Frostfrench: “Thongs with a hipster trouser is the most revolting thing. Big knickers in chiffon, that’s acceptable. But thongs are just vile.”

So in the postrevolutionary struggle it’s the guillotine for the Cosabella strings, and three cheers for the boy shorts. For now, that is. If history teaches us anything, it’s that the underclass enjoys only a brief moment in the sun. Enjoy it while it lasts.