



the **NEW FACE** of **PLASTIC SURGERY**

Dr. Shah steps up to the plate with innovative, new techniques that have changed the face of the industry.

BY ASHLEY DAVIS

It is hard to know what to expect when arriving at the office of facial plastic surgeon Dr. Anil Shah. Dr. Shah's reputation precedes him; I am fully aware that he is a top surgeon in the field of facial plastic surgery. Dr. Shah has recently moved his Fifth Avenue, Manhattan practice to his hometown of Chicago, and now I visit his office in hopes of learning more about how Dr. Shah is changing the way doctors practice plastic surgery.

While I wait to meet with Dr. Shah, I scan the waiting room. It is decorated with modern, clean furnishings—attractive, but not overly-fussy. There are a few patients waiting, but the mood is calm and serene. Naturally, I begin to look at the others waiting and ponder what might be bringing them to see Dr. Shah today. To my left, there is young, attractive girl who looks as if she has just walked off the runway. Perhaps she has. Across the room is a fifty-something woman, impeccably manicured and decked in Chanel. I cannot decide who here is coming in for a follow up after a procedure or who might be a new patient. I don't have much time to wonder, though, because a nurse calls me back for my meeting with the doctor.

Dr. Shah greets me, and I am immediately struck by how tall he is; he looks a little over six foot. He has a youthful face, which could easily pass for someone in his 20s, but there are enough subtle signs of aging—such as the scattered gray hairs and smile lines—to reveal his age, which is perhaps more accurately somewhere in the late 30s or early 40s range.

We briefly begin to discuss his background. After attending undergrad and medical school in the Chicago area, Dr. Shah was selected to a fellowship in facial plastic surgery at both New York University and Cornell. He was later recruited to stay at NYU as a professor of facial plastic surgery at NYU, and ultimately established his practice on Fifth Avenue.

It was there that Dr. Shah developed and pioneered his unique techniques, including his innovative use of Botox to shrink pores and combat facial oiliness as well as his discovery of the platysma muscle, which has changed the way facelifts are performed. While Dr. Shah enjoyed great success in New York, his dream was not to base a practice on Fifth Avenue, but on Michigan Avenue near his family and friends.

Two years ago, Dr. Shah did just that. His office lies rather unassumingly atop one of Chicago's most prestigious buildings—Water Tower Place, and, according to Dr. Shah, lacked a sign on the door until very recently, giving it the air of an exclusive club. Now, one may point out that they have yet to hear Dr. Shah's name on the radio, or see it on a billboard. This appears to have been very much intentional. Dr. Shah is not a fan of advertising and has found himself the subject of a vast whisper campaign from those in the know. It seems that patients have no

trouble telling their friends and family about Dr. Shah through word of mouth.

Reading through his long list of accomplishments and discoveries, it seems that Dr. Shah is one of those rare individuals that comes along once in a blue moon—young, confident, exceedingly talented and educated, eager and passionate about his craft, and destined to change it forever. It is easy to compare him to perhaps a young Coco Chanel or Yves Saint Laurent, setting up shop quietly amidst the bustle of Chicago's Gold Coast; a master craftsman changing the way we view and accept what is beautiful.

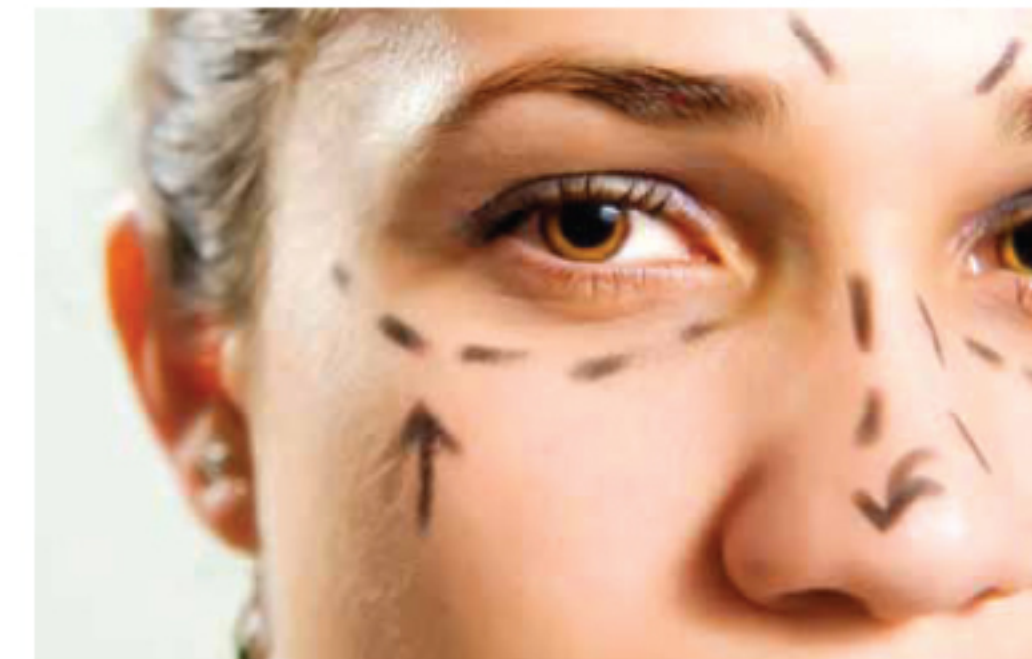
It is clear that Dr. Shah does not fit the mold of a stereotypical plastic surgeon.

But then what is it that makes Dr. Shah stand out among the rest? For the answer, ask a random sampling of people for their views on plastic surgery today, or what frightens them about having something done. You will likely hear much of the same sentiments, such as a dire fear of looking plastic, cheap, fake, and obvious. It also seems that plastic surgery practices have become more and more like factories in recent years. Volume and numbers are valued over craftsmanship—a quantity not quality approach. Dr. Shah's practice is the antidote; a boutique, where every patient is treated with the utmost attention. In fact, Dr. Shah will only operate on one rhinoplasty case per day, in order to ensure the highest level of precision and care.

Unique to Dr. Shah is his fervent desire to create the most natural results possible. "Each nose requires a uniquely tailored approach to create the most beautiful and natural results. No two noses are the same. Sometimes I will leave a slight elevation on a nasal bridge to create the most natural and beautiful harmony on the face. Patients do not want to look like they have had plastic surgery," he says. It is at this point that I ask, "Why concentrate on faces?" He replies,

"Our faces are our unique fingerprint on the world; they define who we are. It is a privilege to change or enhance someone's identity, to make them more confident." It is such an earnest and profound answer, I almost cannot tell if he is being serious. But, of course, he is.

Dr. Shah is perhaps most known, at least in Chicago, for his work with noses—specializing in a gamete of rhinoplasty types. But today, I am especially interested in hearing about facelifts, specifically his work with the discovery of the platysma muscle. Through some research, I learned a little about this procedure. This new discovery is the next evolution of facelifts. The first facelifts pulled and tightened



only the skin, which was ineffective for a number of reasons. The next evolution was to pull back the fascia or fibrous layer on the face and was called a SMAS technique. This is currently the most popular facelift technique in use today. It has the benefit of not putting tension on the skin, however, it still creates a "windblown tunnel effect" (one need not look much farther than *Us Magazine* to see the evidence of this plastered all over Hollywood).

I ask Dr. Shah to explain why his technique, which he developed with a colleague in New York, is superior. Dr. Shah speaks about his procedures as a scholar and explains how he discovered that the platysma muscle, which was thought to be only in the neck, actually extends into the face. By sliding back

this muscle, a youthful face and jawline can be revealed. "Youth has a softness, a roundness. It isn't hard, pulled, or gaunt," he says. "With the platysma muscle, I have the ability to give women and men a restoration of youth without the consequence of looking 'done.'" He pulls up some before and after photographs to show, and I am indeed impressed, the results are beautiful and above all else, natural. I think back to the fifty-something woman in the lobby, and wonder if she is perhaps a seventy-something woman who has received one of Dr. Shah's facelifts.

After a while, it is time for Dr. Shah to head to the operating room. I am

fortunate enough to have prearranged a quick peak into the operating room with his office. I am given scrubs and brought into the OR. Here, Dr. Shah has already begun his surgery, a rhinoplasty. It is an incredibly calm environment; Dr. Shah works mostly with soft music playing in the background. He has photo after photo of the patient displayed in front of him, showing different

views and a myriad of proposed changes. As I watch, Dr. Shah glances at the photos often, making slight adjustments here, a small change there. This does not feel like watching a surgery, but rather like watching a sculptor work on his masterpiece. Seeing Dr. Shah work is a great end to my day. It brings home all that I have learned about him. After all, thousands of physicians inject Botox every year, but Dr. Shah was the only one that discovered its effects on pores and oil control. And hundreds of facelifts are performed every year, but Dr. Shah was the only one who decided to go the extra mile and make the process even better. After all I have seen and heard, I have no trouble believing that Dr. Shah will change the way things are done in plastic surgery. But can he do it alone? I think so. ■