

REMEMBERING  
THE GREAT  
ALEXANDER McQUEEN

# VOGUE

APR

## SHAPE UP FOR SPRING

The Brady  
Bunch

Gisele  
BABY, BODY,  
BEAUTY BRAND

DIET TRUTHS  
Juice Fasts  
Sugar Substitutes  
+ Shedding the  
Last 5 Pounds

MY THREE  
FACELIFTS  
A 20-Year Nip  
& Tuck Diary

LOSING IT  
A Foodie  
Gets Fit

QUITTING IT  
A Smoker  
Kicks  
the  
Habit

BEATING IT  
A Model  
Fights  
Her Eating  
Issues

## Fashion to Flatter Every Figure

\$3.99US \$4.99FOR  
04>  
0 357079 1

# A FACELIFT, REVISITED

Nearly two decades after recounting her first foray under the knife in the pages of *Vogue*, Joan Gage takes stock of what still looks great, what needs a little modern intervention—and how times have changed.



## 1992: THE BEGINNING

Eighteen years ago, I wrote a story for *Vogue* called “Diary of a Face-Lift.” At 51, I looked older than my age, and I could see incipient jowls threatening. My mother had a perfect jawline, but my father had jowls of the Richard Nixon variety, and I bore a striking resemblance to him.

The 1992 article chronicled my odyssey as I consulted three Boston plastic surgeons near my Massachusetts home, then decided to have the procedure done by Daniel C. Baker, M.D., in Manhattan. He was the only doctor who calmed my fears, did not try to sell me unnecessary procedures, and did not patronize or preach. The piece also recorded my

**CUTS LIKE A KNIFE**  
IRVING PENN'S TAKE ON THE NEW “INSTANT FIXES,” *VOGUE*, 1988.

emotional roller coaster afterward: post-operative relief, followed by alarm (when half my face became swollen and black), the embarrassment of going out in public, and the reaction of my husband (supportive), my teenage kids (not so much), and friends—most were fascinated, some horrified, and one didn't even recognize me. Most opinions, solicited and unsolicited, were that I looked ten years younger.

That piece caused something of a sensation when it came out because it was evidently one of the first times a woman had confessed, under her real name, to having had plastic surgery and revealed her doubts and fears along with the true pain and rewards of making what was then regarded as a shameful and desperate attempt to hold on to youth. (Although the hushed rumors, even then, were that many had taken the same path: “I'm seeing Jackie's surgeon,” I would hear. “No, the one who did her second lift.”)

Now, all these years later, I was taking stock once more, finding flaws, and considering my options—again. When, back in 1992, I'd asked Baker how long my facelift would last, “seven to ten years” was what he replied. *up front >114*

Joan Gage's two-decade-long journey, which witnessed everything from the first light of lasers to the rise of the injectables.

beauty

## diary of a face-lift

W

What did Joan Gage discover when she set out to shop for a facelift? Hokey offering opinions—and prices—from among the country's leading plastic surgeons. Here, the candid, step-by-step story of the surgery and its aftermath.

### 1992

JOAN GAGE, AT 51, BEFORE AND AFTER HER FIRST FACELIFT. ABOVE, THE SEPTEMBER *VOGUE* ARTICLE CHRONICLING HER EXPERIENCE.



### 2002: TAKING THE PLUNGE—AGAIN

And indeed, ten years later, I felt that gravity was finally starting to defeat the doctor's work, deepening the parentheses around my mouth (nasolabial folds), softening the jaw with the threat of a double chin, and even bringing my eyelids lower. So I had a second lift at age 61, this time in Brookline, Massachusetts, with a doctor Baker recommended. Afterward, I was satisfied—but not as much as before. Both doctors had cut into the crease of my upper eyelids to counteract any drooping, but the second time, I wound up with visible crescent scars on my eyelids, evidently because the doctor had cut too high. I also began to see faint “pull” lines visible on one side of my jaw—I later learned that this was, let's face it, from pulling my thin skin tighter. A man can end up with his sideburns behind his ears, I've heard, and my skin was now so thin that, like overstretched fabric, it showed the tension. I resolved there would never be a third facelift, or I could end up resembling a friend who looks permanently startled and scarily taut, like an astronaut experiencing 3 G-force gravity as his spaceship blasts off.

The years passed, and I became the recipient of Social Security checks and senior-citizen discounts. I began to notice brown patches of sun damage on both sides of my jaw and, even worse, on my upper lip. I didn't mind the crow's-feet radiating from the corners of my eyes, but I was sad to see that I had inherited my mother's under-eye shadows. And slowly my *bête noire*—nasolabial folds, certainly the most aging lines—began to creep downward again.

### 2008: RESEARCH

A lot has changed in sixteen years—the evolution of laser resurfacing and light therapies, the rise of line-filling injectables—and as I began to research my options, I realized how many more choices, and combinations of choices, are now available on the cosmetic buffet. I heard about a seminar given by a local plastic surgeon describing the next-generation Fraxel laser, which could go deeper into the dermis than its gentler predecessor, tightening skin and attacking deep wrinkles and discoloration. Tweaking problem areas was my new focus, and this time around the knife was not the solution.

I called the Westborough, Massachusetts, offices of the plastic surgeon who had given the seminar—Min S. Ahn,

M.D., at the Aesthetic Wellness Center—and scheduled a consultation. When I entered his offices, I found him to be young, natively dressed, preppy, and full of enthusiasm for the new Fraxel Re:pair machine he'd been using since the month before it was unveiled on January 31, 2008. At the time, his was the first of these machines in Massachusetts and one of only fifteen or so in the United States.

Ahn had earned degrees at Harvard, George Washington University, and the University of California at San Francisco and specialized in facial plastic surgery. He told me that, like many of the new generation of surgeons, he valued the many different dermatologic treatments that complemented traditional surgical procedures. “You need different tools

“I resolved there'd never be a third facelift, or I could end up resembling a friend who looks like an astronaut experiencing 3 G-force gravity as his spaceship blasts off”

for different problems,” he said, and agreed with me that a third facelift would not be a good idea in my case, pointing out the deep hollows under my eyes (partly, he said, from my having had the fat removed during surgery) and the pull marks on my jaw.

He described the difference between the “old” Fraxel (Fraxel Re:store) and the new CO<sub>2</sub>-powered one, Fraxel Re:pair. The original Fraxel had almost no downtime between treatments, but erbium lasers did not blast so deep, and the results did not include tightening of the skin: “minimal recovery time and a moderate effect,” as he put it. (The “fractional” quality of Fraxel is that, instead of burning the entire face like the original CO<sub>2</sub> lasers, the machine shoots “columns” of light energy that “vaporize” the tissue, as he said, leaving healthy skin in between.) “It's like aerating the lawn,” Ahn explained. “Fraxel Re:pair shoots deeper into the dermis, encouraging the growth of new collagen—tightening the skin without surgery.”

### 2009: THE NEW STRATEGY

Ahn often uses Fraxel Re:pair to complement his facelifts, and this, he thought, was the answer for me. It would eliminate the patches of brown, the fine lines under my eyes and on my upper lip; it would reduce the scars on my eyelids and the pull lines on my jaw from the previous facelift. I would need only one procedure (cost: \$4,500).

But first, he suggested injections of the hyaluronic-acid filler Juvéderm (\$750) to plump the hollows under my eyes before the laser eliminated the fine wrinkles. *up front* >116



**1995**  
THE LASER ERA HEATS UP WITH COHERENT'S INTRODUCTION OF THE ULTRAPULSE CO<sub>2</sub>.

**2002**  
THE FDA APPROVES BOTOX COSMETIC.



**2004**  
GAGE, AT 63, AFTER HER SECOND PROCEDURE.

It was a breeze. I came into the office, held tiny ice packs to my eyes, then Ahn injected the gel to fill. It didn't hurt, and the bruises he warned me about were tiny and easily covered up with makeup. I went out that night.

### LASERS ARE THE NEW SCALPELS

A month after the Juvéderm injections, my husband drove me through a blizzard to the 8:00 A.M. appointment for Fraxel Re:pair. Ahn's nurse took a set of "before" photographs, then led me to a room with a reclining chair. She handed me three pills—Ativan, Vicodin, and Phenergan—to relax me, turned on some soft rock, put damp gauze over my eyes, and dimmed the lights.

After putting black contact lenses in my eyes to protect them from the laser's light, the doctor worked over my face with the tip of the machine, using an electric point that sizzled as it touched skin. At first I didn't feel the passes—back and forth, up and down to make a crisscross pattern—but when he put in a narrower tip and worked around my lips and eyes, I could feel it smarting. Still, there was no smell or actual pain—not enough for me to say "ouch."

Afterward, I waited for my husband in an adjacent room, which had a mirror. I wasn't supposed to get up unaided, but of course I did, to look at my face, which was swollen and studded with red scabs. At home I took a photo of my face and E-mailed it to two friends who had been avidly asking about the procedure. The first thing that everyone asked is "Does it hurt?" But I was so numbed and relaxed, it was easier than a day at the dentist. (The subsequent days of healing, though, with a face full of crusty, itching skin, would be no picnic.)

As instructed, I doused squares of gauze with vinegar water and pressed them on my face, followed by liberal dabs of Aquaphor, which left my hair plastered to my forehead. I took the prescribed Valtrex and antibiotics to prevent infection and slept most of the day. Ahn called that night to see how I was doing and seemed amused that I'd let anyone see my postop photo.

### THE MEANING OF "DOWNTIME"

The next morning, I was horrified at how my face had swollen. My eyes were shut to the point that I could barely see. The red scabs were gone, replaced by universally reddish-brown

skin. My face looked like a giant tomato. My ugly brown patches looked darker than ever, and my new skin had the texture of parchment. The doctor had warned me that I would look pretty bad, but I had no idea how truly awful. After the original facelift, I'd had no qualms about my husband's seeing me—I looked like a much younger version of myself who had suffered black eyes and bruises in a fall. After Fraxel, I looked bovine, porcine... not a face to show to any romantic partner! So for several days, I spoke to my husband by phone, even though he was in the same house, and hid my face behind a magazine whenever he approached.

The hard, crusty skin felt like one of those exfoliating masks you pull off after they dry. I had always received compliments on my fine, fair, delicate skin, and I didn't want to exchange that for this red-brown layer of cardboard. I went to bed in the guest room, discouraged.

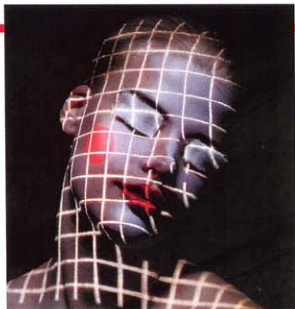
But soon I could wipe away the bad skin in spots. Underneath was new skin, pinkish-red and shiny. The hollows beneath my eyes were plumped and totally wrinkle-free (although the doctor reminded me, the jury's still out until all swelling is gone. It could take up to six months before "after").

On Friday, day four, most of the crust was gone, except on the jawline. Baby-smooth skin was emerging, free of the dreaded brown patches. On day six I took my face outside, and no one at the bank, post office, or market remarked on it, but the antiques-store owner—clearly no stranger to the dermatologist—made a beeline over to ask if I'd had a laser procedure. When my niece came to visit, she took one look and burst out laughing.

On day ten I went back to the doctor. My new skin was itching a lot, and I felt guilty as I denied scratching. Ahn mentioned that his very first Fraxel Re:pair patient had just come in (for Botox) and said that fourteen months after her procedure, the results were still good, including an improvement in the nasolabial lines. He was delighted because Fraxel Re:pair is so new, no one really knows how long it will last.

Sixteen days after the procedure, he snapped an "after" set of photographs and E-mailed them to me along with the prep ones. The brown patches had disappeared and most fine lines, too, including the scars on my eyelids. The chin and jawline looked marginally tighter, but again, he reminded me, because I was swollen, it was too soon to judge. *up front* >118

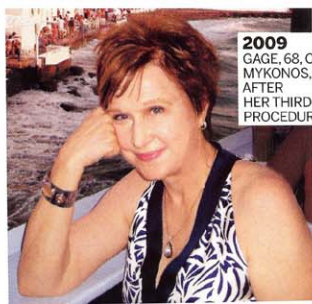
“For several days I spoke to my husband by phone, even though he was in the same house, and hid behind a magazine whenever he approached”



**2005**  
FRAXEL—A KINDER, GENTLER, PIXELATED TAKE ON LASER RESURFACING—MAKES ITS DEBUT.



**2006**  
JUVEDERM, THE LATEST HYALURONIC-ACID INJECTABLE FILLER, HITS THE MARKET.



**2009**  
GAGE, 68, ON MYKONOS, AFTER HER THIRD PROCEDURE.

# OLAY

## INTRODUCING THE REGENERIST STARTER TRIO

AN EXCEPTIONAL  
VALUE LIKE THIS  
DOESN'T COME  
ALONG EVERY DAY.

There's no better time  
to start using Regenerist.  
Prestige. Performance.  
And no fancy department  
store price tag.



Olay.com/bonusevent

# up front

## DIARY OF A FACELIFT, PART III

### (RE)MEETING MY MAKER

Thinking back to my first facelift, I dug through my files for the mug shots I had made by my husband take of me on the day before that first surgery in 1992. I hadn't looked at them for nearly two decades. When I did, I was shocked. Drooping upper eyelids, notches on either side of my chin caused by the nasolabial folds extending to my jawline, plus the starting-to-sag neck and chin were the killers—especially the drooping eyelids. Preop, at 51, I looked older than I did now, at 68! Clearly, the effects of surgery had lasted to a surprising degree.

I decided to (re)meet my original maker, to see what he thought of his work these years later and to ask what he might do differently if I walked through his door today.

When I saw Baker in his office near Park Avenue, he was just as lean, handsome, and full of energy as seventeen years before. After a long day of surgery, he sat on the edge of his chair, frequently jumping up to show me photos from an album titled *Longevity*: patients who had experienced first and occasionally second facelifts with him. All the women, including a few in their 80s, looked younger than their preop selves in photos taken ten and more years later.

Baker does not include lasers in his practice, but he told me that the face- and necklifts he does today do have several complementary procedures that were not available when he did mine. He often accompanies his surgeries with a TCA peel "to resurface the skin, if there's sun damage," and dermabrasion, for deeper lines. "The most significant thing that I've been doing for the last ten years," he said, "is autologous fat transfer—the use of the patient's own fat as a filler around areas like cheekbones, the chin, and mouth, to give definition to the lips. Unlike other fillers, the purified fat, which is spun in a centrifuge, has stem cells in it, so the quality of the skin on top is improved."

How else has his surgical technique changed since my procedure in 1992?

"Smaller scars," Baker replied, "and I don't just inject fat, I sculpt the fat that's beneath the skin, as well as the muscle." (Both he and Ahn remarked that adding volume and contour to

sunken areas—rather than the old philosophy of removing fat in the process of tightening slack skin—is the chief way facelifts have changed. Presumably, if I had my first facelift today, I would not have had to deal with such deep hollows under my eyes.)

Then he studied my face. He agreed the brown patches and most fine lines had disappeared, but, to my chagrin, he predicted that much of the improvement done by Fraxel Re:pair would not last. (It is his opinion that laser procedures are less enduring and more expensive, in the long run, than surgery.)

### 2010: THE RESULTS ARE IN

But now, a year post-Fraxel, my skin is still free of discoloration and has fewer and less obvious fine lines; the pull lines on my jaw are entirely gone, and the eyelid scars are almost invisible. In the past year my under-eye hollows, plumped by Juvéderm, have retreated a bit, and the frown lines between my eyes have reappeared, albeit less deep than before. But this is the nature of most injectables—they're not permanent; it becomes a maintenance game.

All in all, I'm pleased with the result, which has left my husband (who's a year older than I am) gallantly smiling when he gets comments about his "much younger" wife. There are some problems that only surgery can fix (especially the sagging jawline that inspired my original procedure), but with the variety of new treatments that can complement and extend a facelift, it now seems possible to hold the (chin) line and to look more like a peach than a dried apple after 60—maybe even into 80. We'll see.

As far as I'm concerned, future invasive surgery is out, but using new tools for resurfacing and recontouring—and anything else that might come down the pike—will continue to interest me. This is an ongoing process, not meant to hide or deny my age, but to let me wear the years gracefully.

"You look good," Baker told me as we said goodbye. "Fifteen years younger than your age."

So that means I look... 53. Or maybe, to paraphrase Gloria Steinem: In the twenty-first century, this is what 68 looks like. □