

# SLEIGHT OF HAND

**NEW METHODS** | Now plastic surgeons smooth wrinkles there, when they're not fixing people's ears, toes and private parts

BY PAIGE WISER

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Maybe you wouldn't have noticed it. But it bothered Laura Garcia no end: One of her ear-ring holes was stretched out.

"I was wearing hoops back in the '90s, and I had my little cousin on my lap," says Garcia. Sure enough, he reached up and yanked on one as if it were a gym ring. "Months later I realized that my hole was not a perfect circle anymore." Over the past 10 years, it got worse.

The 30-year-old Garcia is a massage therapy student with a small budget, who lives in Pilsen. But now that plastic surgeons are offering cheaper and more inventive techniques, Garcia was able to repair her pet peeve. She had Restylane injected into her earlobe to correct any elongation. Within a year, she may need to do it again.

Plastic surgery used to be all about face-lifts, breast implants and nose jobs. But now, with patients like Garcia, doctors are focusing on the details: fine lines and imperfections that can be fixed quickly and relatively cheaply.

Despite the shaky economy, in 2007 there was an 8 percent increase overall in cosmetic surgical procedures. That's due to smaller procedures such as Botox injections.

Altogether last year, Americans spent \$13 billion on cosmetic procedures — \$8.3 billion for surgical and \$4.7 billion for nonsurgical.

Garcia understands why. Now that she's had a taste of plastic surgery, she's getting other ideas. "I have a really round face," she says. "I know that Botox can give you more of a chiseled appearance. We'll see."

Along with the industry, patients' attitudes have changed, too. The clients of Dr. John Kotis used to avoid him in church, so as not to arouse any suspicion. But now the Arlington Heights plastic surgeon is greeted warmly wherever he goes.

"It's accepted to talk about your

**BEFORE**



Once upon a time, hands were a dead giveaway of a woman's age.

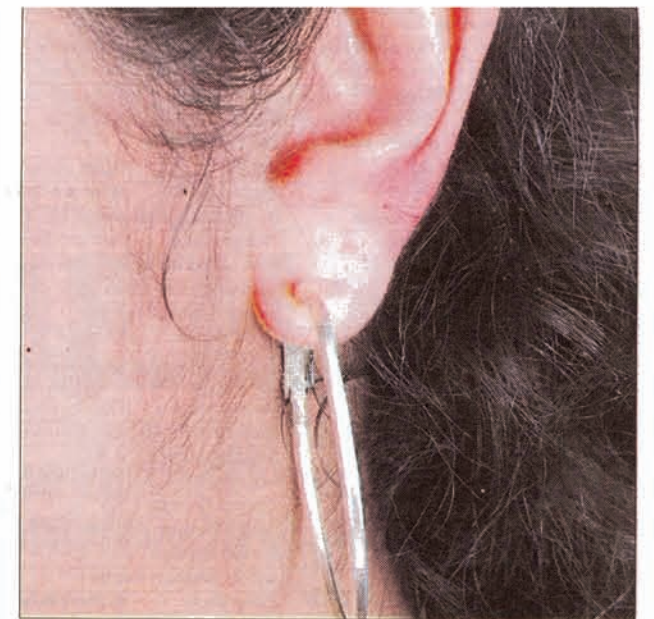
**AFTER**



Now dermal fillers can put mass back into hands and fill in the wrinkles, making veins less prominent.



**BEFORE** Laura Garcia's piercing was distorted after her young cousin pulled on an earring.



**AFTER** A decade later, she had it corrected with Restylane, which lasts about six months.

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## SURGERY | New methods for head-to-toe cosmetic fixes

plastic surgery now," Kotis says. There's a little show-and-tell, too. "I have people in my waiting room flashing each other. It's truly amazing."

Breast implants are still popular, of course, but there are more patients like Garcia. "There's plastic surgery for every part of the body," says Dr. Steven Dayan, author of *Instant Beauty: The Complete Consumer's Guide to the Best Nonsurgical Cosmetic Procedures*.

He feels particularly optimistic about the future of Botox. He is currently testing his theory that Botox reduces acne in clinical trials. "Botox, in my opinion, is one of the safest products in all of medicine," Dayan says. "Aspirin can kill you quicker than Botox."

Overdoing plastic surgery isn't really a problem, according to these doctors. Ethical plastic surgeons do know how to say no and encourage their patients to have realistic expectations.

"I had a woman who came to me who wanted me to stack her breast implants," Kotis says. "She wanted to be so big that the company didn't make the size she wanted. I turned her down. But by golly, she found a plastic surgeon who would do it."

He saw her again, after the surgery. "Her implants had shifted — one went up, one went down, and she had a straight line for a breast."

That's why more patients are starting small. "In general, plastic surgery has become more popular because it is more affordable due to increasing use of financing options," says Dr. Gregory Turowski, director of the New Horizons Center for Cosmetic Surgery in Skokie. "It is also more socially acceptable and safer than it used to be."

One thing's for sure: There are plenty more options on the plastic surgery menu these days.

Here's what's trendy and new:

### Labiaplasty

This procedure gained popularity — where else? — in Brazil, where the Brazilian bikini wax and the Brazilian butt-lift also originated. Labiaplasty reduces elongated labia, whereas vaginoplasty tightens vaginal muscles and surrounding soft tissues. Dr. Irvin Wiesman, a board-certified plastic surgeon in Chicago, says, "I am seeing a lot of patients interested in vaginal rejuvenation." Last year, the *British Medical Journal* denounced the "designer vagina" craze. Costs can run from \$3,500 to \$8,000.

### Hand enhancement

Doctors can give hands a more youthful appearance by using dermal fillers in a 40-minute procedure. Kotis did it for his mother. "They look fantastic," says Mary Ann Kotis of Mount Prospect. "It makes 20 years' difference. I would love to get something else, but he says I'm done." Putting back mass and filling in the wrinkles makes veins are less prominent. Kotis charges \$800 for both hands.

### Botox in soles of feet, armpits

Sick of sweating? Injections of Botox can stop the perspiration for six to 10 months. But the Botox alone for a set of armpits, say, can cost \$500-\$1,000.

### Transgendered touches

Women who used to be men have consulted with Kotis, because certain details ruin the illusion. "I've had people ask me to section their Adam's apple," he says, which would cost about \$5,000 or \$6,000.

Another giveaway: their hands. "Men who are now females want their knuck-

les sectioned," he says. "They literally want to remove a portion of the bone to not look as bulky, to make their fingers look more feminine." That's about \$8,000-\$10,000.

### Toe lengthening, shortening

"Toes are the new nose!" announced the media a few years ago. Toes that are too long can overhang women's strappy shoes. But "toe shortening doesn't happen as often as people think it does," says Dayan. It's a lot of trouble, and money — at least \$3,000 — when you can just buy a larger pair of shoes.

### Rib resection

A decades-old rumor had it that Cher had a rib removed for a thinner waist. Just gossip in Cher's case, say plastic surgeons, although rib resection is for real. "It is not commonly done, but it is definitely possible," says Chicago plastic surgeon Dr. Gregory Wiener. Patients can have their "floating ribs" resected, possibly at the same time as an abdominoplasty to avoid scarring. Costs can run from \$8,000 to \$16,000.

### Undo-plasty

Oops! Once patients go under the knife, there's no guarantee they'll be pleased — and many of them will pay plenty to get it fixed, or restored to the way it was. Courtney Love recorded on her blog how she has been on a quest to get her "old" nose back. "Plastic surgery is one of the most important decisions a person can make," Wiener says, "but in today's instant gratification society, patients are making snap decisions on cosmetic surgery without thinking about how it will affect the rest of their lives."

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