



# Inventive surgeon MICHAEL EVAN SACHS

Many people divide plastic surgery into what is worthwhile - reconstructive operations - and what isn't the cosmetic procedure," says Michael Evan Sachs, MD whose practice encompasses both. Although cosmetic surgery may conjure images of Narcissus in love with his reflection, Sachs, Director of Research, Division of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at New York Eye and Ear Infirmary/New York Medical College, definitely believes that the effects of cosmetic surgery are more than skin deep.

"The greatest misconception about cosmetic surgery is that it's based on vanity and therefore frivolous. It's just the opposite," Sachs says. "With many patients there is a history of cosmetic pathology. Often in school, kids made fun of a nose, ears or scars. People carry these thoughts through their lives. As I've explored the experience of cosmetic surgery over the past decade, I see it as a powerful force in helping people believe in themselves."

He also dashes another misconception: Cosmetic surgery is only for women or movie stars. Recently, his patients have included an increasing number of male business executives. According to the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons, about 13 per cent of patients are men. Male patients account for 50 per cent of Sachs' New York practice. "At a certain level of success" he says, "having something fixed that can be fixed is synonymous with good grooming and being perceived as affluent and successful."

The most popular operations for men are those that fix scars, eyes and noses. Sachs, who specializes in facial surgery, notes there is a big difference between the perceptions of these operations and a face-lift. "For most people a face-lift means aging, and that's scary," he says, "but the interesting thing about face-lifts today is that there are methods that are so sophisticated

they actually stop aging for a significant period of time. Plastic surgery has really embraced technology. We're always trying to find ways to help people safely."

For Sachs, an intense and confident 41-year-old, the possibilities of new technology in plastic surgery are especially intriguing. He has even invented a number a visionary plastic surgery operations."Every technique I've invented has been a simplification, a streamlining of the necessary steps, thus minimizing the amount of surgery," he says. "For example, finesse sculpting rhinoplasty, or nose surgery without breaking the bone, brought an hour operation down to 10 minutes." With this technique there is less pain, less chance of infection and a much shorter recovery period. The same is true for Sachs' fat melting blepharoplasty technique for under-eye fat pockets, commonly known as bags. In this procedure, he makes no incisions but uses a specially developed instrument that heats the fat, removing the water content and shrinking the bags.

Perhaps the most fascinating areas Sachs has been pursuing is the "tissue clay", where protein is combined with the patient's own blood to create a substance that mimics tissue and is used to rebuild parts of the face. He has established the Sachs Foundation for Advance Research in Plastic Surgery and is now developing customized tissue clay in which tissue from the patient is used for transplantation.

"This is going to open up a whole new era in research," says Sachs, eyes alight with the possibilities he foresees. "Wouldn't it be great if we could put tissue clay in a child's leg so that it becomes structural bone? The possibilities are endless."

*Text by Rita D. Jacobs/Photography by Shonna Valeska*