

THE IMAGE OF IDOLS

WHO DO WE WANT TO LOOK LIKE – AND HOW FAR ARE WE WILLING TO GO?

A few years ago, A New York woman made front page news around the world when her bizarre tale of cosmetic surgery became public. The ex-wife of a billionaire, Jocelyne Wildenstein appeared to have undergone extensive surgery to make herself look more like a cat. What was truly astonishing was that before pictures of Wildenstein show her to be an extraordinary beauty. Why was she tampering with her already lovely features? And while Wildenstein's case was certainly unique, how many women wanted to change themselves to look like someone specific, like Jennifer Aniston or Michelle Pfeiffer?

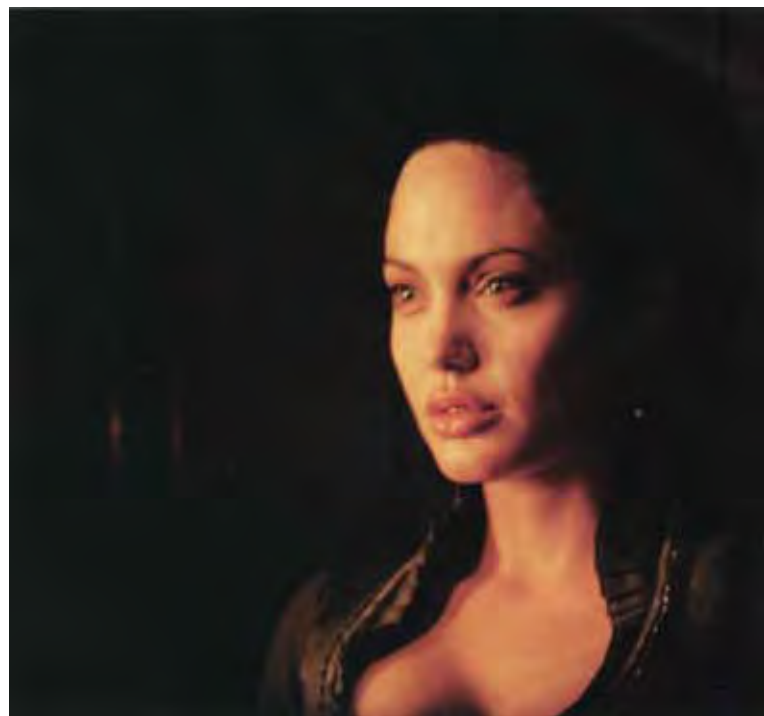
According to Dr. Trevor Born of the Institute for Esthetic Plastic Surgery in Toronto, people are definitely influenced by Hollywood and the fashion icons they see in magazines. "But I don't find they necessarily vocalize that. They won't say they want to look like a particular movie star or model." Born says they are more likely to see a specific body part and choose a nose shape or cheek shape they think would be flattering.

"Most people are very realistic about what they want and what they can expect. They don't walk through the door and say "I want to look like Angelina Jolie," continues Born. "They want to look good, but they want an 'unoperated' looking appearance."

Unlike Born, Dr. Sol Weiss of The Art of Dentistry in Toronto, finds that his patients often bring in pictures of actors and models whose teeth they like. "Elizabeth Hurley, Farah Fawcett, models Paulina Porzikova and Cindy Crawford are all popular choices," says Weiss, who says he has no problem with a patient's desire to copy a certain smile. "However, in the end, there are so many factors that have to be taken into consideration—shape of mouth, size of the mouth and size of the arch – that determine if you can fit that smile into that face."

Despite people's expectations, Weiss says that successful cosmetic dentistry is really a matter of communications. "If a patient can tell me what they want, and I can show them what I can do, then we can usually achieve a look that's right for them."

Both Born and Weiss acknowledge that the influence that celebrities have is not just one way. "Stars are also influenced by what the public wants," says Born. "Beauty is the first draw, then talent." In fact, he considers fashion a greater influence. "Styles of beauty change. What you see on the runway impacts what we consider attractive. Look at the new stars in Hollywood – they are beautiful, of course, but the trend is towards a 'waify' look."



DO WE WANT TO LOOK JUST LIKE ANGELINA?

For Weiss, the irony lies in the fact that patients will bring in a photo of a star who obviously has had cosmetic dentistry. "So many celebrities have had work done," he adds. "When you see super-white teeth, that's a dead giveaway. Models in particular are likely to get their teeth fixed."

So what's the consensus? "I don't think esthetic standards are ultimately a matter of being influenced by celebrities," says Born. "I think we now have more leisure time, more money and are more aware of the importance of fitness in our lives. We want to look and feel better. Cosmetic surgery is just one aspect of what you can do to achieve this." Just like the stars!

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