

What is Beauty?

Presented by River Region Facial Plastics

I recently saw an online video which gave me pause for thought. If possible, please take a moment right now and search the YouTube or Google for "Body Evolution Model before and after." If you can't watch the video right now, I will attempt to describe this dramatic video:



The one minute video opens with a backstage view of a modeling photo shoot. An attractive young woman strikes a pose on a small stage. Then, in fast forwarded motion, we see the relatively dramatic metamorphosis that make up, hair styling, and lighting can make. The shutter clicks, and we see a photograph of a beautiful model that appears fit for a magazine...

But then a tool bar appears on the left side of the screen, and the digital manipulation of the photo begins.

No part of the photograph remains untouched. An already beautiful face is transformed...larger eyes & pupils, smaller nose, enlarged lips, and digitally smoothed skin. Next, the model's already alluring proportions are further changed: she loses two dress sizes, gets longer and thinner thighs, elongated calves, more refined feet. Finally, all of her skin is airbrushed to a flawless bronze sheen.

I certainly understand and accept the benefits of professional makeup artists, hair stylists, and special lighting studios. However, the dramatic and almost physically impossible changes demonstrated in this and other videos online turn these advertising images from photographs into ultra-realistic cartoons. Those exaggerated characteristics created on the model in the video (enlarged eyes and bust, tiny waist, and extended legs) are the same as a female cartoon or caricature (i.e. Barbie doll or Jessica Rabbit). The problem is that these manipulated

images look like normal photographs and so our brains assume that they reflect an obtainable reality.

There is certainly skill and artistry needed to create/manipulate these photographs. However, these photographs are advertisements which insinuate: "Use this service, wear these clothes, or buy this product and you can look like this." As such, there is an implicit deception in these photographs.

After watching that video, I had to think about facial rejuvenation and how it relates to this kind of digital manipulation.

In contrast to the exaggerated and unrealistic changes seen on the manipulated photographs, our success and the satisfaction of our clients at River Region Facial Plastics (RRFP) has been dependent on our ability to communicate and deliver realistic and natural looking improvements in appearance. I go to great lengths to make sure that each and every patient has appropriate expectations about my recommendations so they know what to expect after any intervention, from skin care to a Quicklift.

In addition, our interventions at RRFP allow our clients to look in the mirror and enjoy what they see. Our personal choices in personal hygiene, clothes, hair are external manifestations of our persona. To varying degrees, our outward appearance does reflect on our inner qualities and beliefs. Furthermore, our outward appearance certainly

impacts our interactions with those around us. For the same reasons many of us take a little extra time and effort to ensure we are properly groomed and prepared for work, church or some other event, many people choose the treatments and procedures we offer at RRFP in order to help them look their individual best. Most of our patients report that they just want their external appearance to more closely match the more youthful vitality and energy they feel on the inside, and that is a very obtainable goal.

We can help everyone look refreshed and rejuvenated no matter what their age, but we don't want to turn a human being into caricature.

In summary, we at River Region Facial Plastics strive to help people love their face by delivering beautiful, natural results. On the contrary, I fear that our current advertising culture is pushing all of us into pursuing these unrealistic images as a goal to be attained, especially for young women. Using these "photographs" as a benchmark for human beauty is bound to damage self-esteem. I hope we will see Madison Avenue and the fashion & beauty industry ditch the digital manipulation and embrace natural human beauty.



Yours in good health,
Dr. Michael Bowman
334.270.2003

In order to keep this column relevant we want your input! Please call or email us with your questions or suggestions for next month's column! 334.270.2003 or Doctors@RiverRegionFacialPlastics.com