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AMERICAN ACADEMY  
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REDESIGNED AND FULLY DIGITAL



A STROKE OF GENIUS:  
Where Fine Art Meets  
Cosmetic Surgery



INTERNATIONAL UPDATE:  
Cosmetic Surgery  
in Argentina

# A STROKE OF GENIUS

## WHERE FINE ART MEETS COSMETIC SURGERY

Larry Guthrie

Looking intently at the face in front of him, he quickly, but deliberately goes through the aesthetic checklist he has in his mind. It's one that he's honed over years of experience and one that has served him well. "The chin is relatively proportionate to the face. Check. The nose needs to be narrowed a bit. Soften the feature to create a more feminine aesthetic. Check. The eyes could use some refinement, especially the way the light is hitting them. Hmmm, couple of options I'll have to think about that for a moment. The cheeks could use a bit of work to really accentuate the rest of her aquiline features. Perfect. [Let's get to work!](#)"



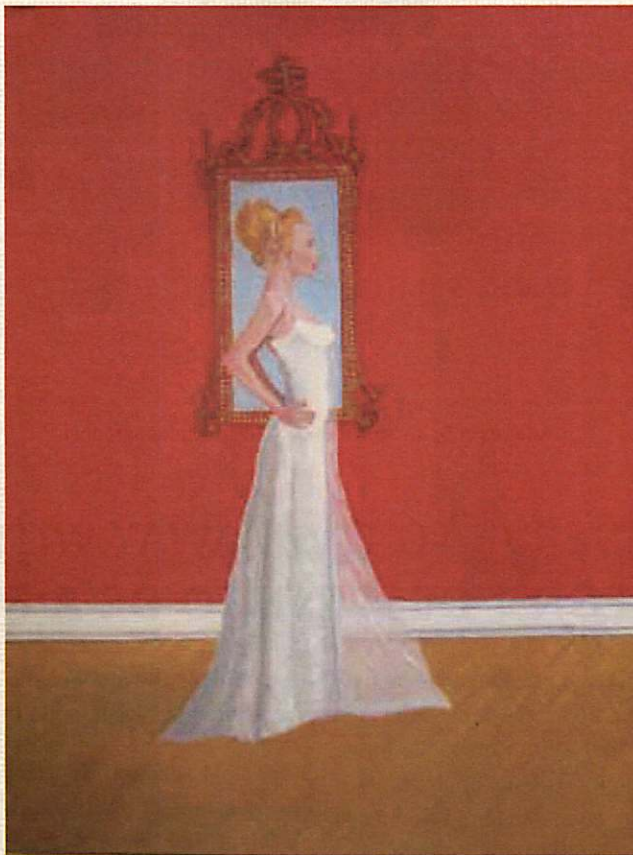
Dr. Kevin Sadati began exploring oil painting while in his ENT facial plastic residency.

And with that he grabs his palette and paintbrush, carefully mixing hues of titanium white, cadmium red and a touch of Prussian blue to blend just the right skin tone for the oil painting he's been working on for weeks now. You see, painting remains one of his great passions in life, as does his family and thriving cosmetic surgery practice.

An artist's eye with a surgeon's hand – it's almost cliché to see these words used in advertisements for cosmetic surgery these days. As with most phrases when overused in our culture, they begin to lose their meaning and relevance over time. The travesty is that this particular tagline for the field of cosmetic surgery is really the perfect shorthand for a doctor's success. Especially given that the heart of an artist beats in many talented cosmetic surgeons worldwide. It is not only core to their being as a person, but is also at the core of their eminence as a doctor. But what exactly is the relationship between artist and surgeon? The answer may lie in exploring another cliché, "What came first, the chicken or the egg?" or in this case, "the artist or the doctor?"

Even as a child, Dr. Kevin Sadati knew he wanted to do something that would help people, but didn't know how or what that would look like. When he began volunteering for blood banks and elderly care facilities in college, he realized his future was in medicine. During his medical school rotations, he discovered his passion for surgery and quickly found that cosmetic and plastic surgery suited his personality to a T. Dr. Sadati felt strongly that a solid training in the arts would be essential to achieving the level of success he envisioned for himself as a cosmetic surgeon. As a result, he began taking night classes in oil painting and sculpting at the Philadelphia School of Fine Arts on top of his already hectic ENT facial plastic residency schedule. "I wanted to understand the human form in a different way than how I was studying it in med school," explains Dr. Sadati. "When I would watch live surgery and hear the doctor describe the patient, technique, procedures and results, I was able to look at it all through another important filter, that being one as an artist."

He even credits his marriage to art. Introduced through a mutual friend, he took his future wife, a scientist and artist, to the Degas exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art on their first date. And their mutual love of art endures to this day. With two thriving careers and two children, they still find time for nurturing the artist in each of them. In fact, it's a family affair. His wife, who he says is "way beyond me as an artist," is currently taking art classes on Saturday while he stays at home with the children. Once she's done, they'll switch and he'll take classes. They've provided the children with art stations, complete



One of Dr. Sadati's original oil paintings.

with little easels and canvasses, to foster their creativity, too.

Dr. Sadati uses painting as a form of relaxation and expression, as well as a form of education. During consultations, he uses his art background to expand his vocabulary in effectively communicating with his patients his recommendations and managing their expectations. "Art helps soften the science," he states. "When you speak of the face as a work of art or canvas, it helps the patient understand the entirety of their beauty. They may come in focused on the bulbousness of their nose, but when I share with them how their nose relates to all of the other features of their face, their focus shifts. It's important for them to see their face as a whole. How artistically relevant the change will be to their entire face."

What's more, he finds that cosmetic surgery is a true marriage of art and science. "Rhinoplasty is very challenging," says Dr. Sadati. "So it helps to really understand the three dimensional aspect of the nose when it comes to aesthetics. An art education helped with this. Equally as important is the function – that's where the medical education is invaluable. As a surgeon, you combine these two to create a nose that functions properly, is aesthetically proportionate to the facial features and pleasing to the patient. Function before form."

While many doctors end up in similar positions professionally, their journeys can be quite diverse and equally compelling. Take, for example, Dr. Grant Hamilton. Dr. Hamilton cannot remember a time when he wasn't expressing himself artistically. "I've been drawing ever since I could hold a pencil," he remarks. "From an early age, I knew that I never wanted to not be able to draw something." He followed his artistic heart all through grade school, middle school and high school, filling up stacks of Mead spiral notebooks with his renderings, illustrating for the school newspaper and designing covers for the yearbook. In fact, it's ultimately what drove him to switch from studying pre-med in college to graduating with a bachelor's degree in fine arts in industrial design from the University of Illinois. Only after working for a consulting firm in Chicago for a time did Dr. Hamilton return to school to pursue plastic and cosmetic surgery.

Fast forward to 2004. Dr. Hamilton is enjoying a successful career as a cosmetic and plastic surgeon in the Midwest and becomes more



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Smile  
+ ©2008/Seattle, WA: SA70 F100 +



ROY G  
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A series of Dr. Grant Hamilton's Polaroid photographs.

## "IT DOESN'T DESERVE TO FADE AWAY WITHOUT ANYONE CARING, DOESN'T DESERVE TO BE A FOOTNOTE."

than casually interested in an art form that had previously been just a hobby, photography. As his interest grew, he quickly moved toward Polaroid photography in particular as it “put a little humanity back into his subject matter” versus the more popular digital photography. Much to his chagrin, in 2008 it was announced that Polaroid would be discontinuing production of its instant film. By this time, Dr. Hamilton had developed his Polaroid photography into much more than a pastime, with his pictures garnering the attention of art critics and the public alike. He was not only crushed by the news, but also by the apathy he sensed from everyone around him, including the media. “No one seemed to be bothered by the announcement. And it bothered me that they weren’t bothered,” he states. “Whether or not people had any interest in using the film, I felt that Polaroid was such a significant part of our cultural fabric. Polaroid is so deeply ingrained in our culture that the picture is used as an icon on websites for a photograph. That square photo with a white border – Polaroid has become the visual word for photograph. It doesn’t deserve to fade away without anyone caring, doesn’t deserve to be a footnote.”

What followed was truly a labor of love. Dr. Hamilton decided this story of lost Americana needed to be captured, and quickly, before it was too late. Initially, he reached out to family friend and acclaimed documentarian, Patrick Creadon (“Wordplay”, “I.O.U.S.A”). While Creadon was unable to help due to his own filming schedule, he encouraged Dr. Hamilton to do it himself. After six months of wrestling with the idea, Dr. Hamilton made up his mind. He took a crash course in filmmaking, reading tons of books on the subject and started his own *production company*. From there, he travelled all over Europe and the continental United States, amassing over 80 hours of footage and interviews. After an arduous editing process, “Time Zero: The Last Year of Polaroid Film” was born. Recently submitted for consideration to the 2012 Sundance Film Festival, the documentary illustrates the cultural relevancy of Polaroid. The official trailer summarizes the film

best: “This is the story of the photographers who loved it, the ones who wanted to save it, and the man crazy enough to try.”

Surprisingly enough, Dr. Hamilton finds many parallels between his dual passions of photography and cosmetic surgery. To begin with, he offers this interesting perspective, “People talk about painters starting off with a blank canvas and deciding what to add. But photographers start with everything and figure what to leave out. And from my perspective, surgery is the same way. I think it’s just as important what I don’t do as what I do.” He continues by highlighting a distinct difference, “I try to do almost the exact opposite thing with my photography that I do with my surgery. The things I photograph are things that are out in the open that people never notice and I try to force them to see it. And more specifically, I try to show them the beauty in it. With surgery, my goal is to make it entirely invisible. So here’s something [surgery] that is out in the open that I’m trying to hide. So if someone notices it, they don’t say, ‘Did you get a facelift?’ They say, ‘Did you get a haircut? What’s different?’ But they don’t know.” This philosophy has been crucial in his patient consultation, explaining what wrinkles and characteristics will remain after surgery to ensure that it maintains the natural appearance they desire. Dr. Hamilton also impresses upon his patients that any wrinkles that remain are to be celebrated as evidence of having lived and smiled. He jokes that it also gives them “plausible deniability.”

Another parallel, one shared by both Dr. Hamilton and Dr. Sadati, is that art and cosmetic surgery tap into the same part of the brain. The two doctors describe it as the part that brings satisfaction. They also agree that this satisfaction is two-fold – achieving the result, either surgically or artistically, that they envisioned beforehand and seeing how their work makes an impact on the lives of others. Dr. Hamilton tells the story of one such patient. A five-year-old boy visited his office for an otoplasty consultation. The young boy had a speech delay

problem as well, so Dr. Hamilton had some initial concern whether or not fixing his ears was indeed what he wanted given how quiet he remained during the consultation. However, when he saw the patient next for a post-op bandage change, Dr. Hamilton watched as the young boy caught the first glimpse of his new ears. At the sight, he not only completely beamed, grinning ear to ear, but turned around and literally gave the doctor two thumbs up, his silent seal of approval. No words were exchanged even then, but it was crystal clear that at five years old, he knew in that moment what this meant to his life – no more merciless teasing or physical harassment by bullies at school. So proud of his new ears, he even switched to a crew cut shortly thereafter.

Dr. Sadati shares another of a young lady who visited his office for rhinoplasty. She felt her nose was disproportionately large for her face and was so self-conscious that she would go to work and head directly to her desk to hide from everyone. The shame she felt extended outside of her work environment to the point where she couldn't handle socializing with others. After the surgery, the difference was astounding. She came back excited to share stories of how she now looks forward to going to work. A highly skilled professional, her enthusiasm was not just toward the work itself, but toward working with her team and making closer personal bonds with them that would never have happened before. It's easy for the media to distill cosmetic surgery down to a vain, superficial endeavor, but when you hear stories like this you realize that the results are – to borrow another cliché – much more than skin deep.

Whether as an artist or a cosmetic surgeon, many doctors find great reward in both of these pursuits. Where exactly is the line where these two worlds meet? And why is it that so many cosmetic surgeons have an artistic side? In short, the answer to both may be “depends”. Some were born artists that integrated their passion with their profession. Others nurtured their talent to elevate their professional results to a work of art.

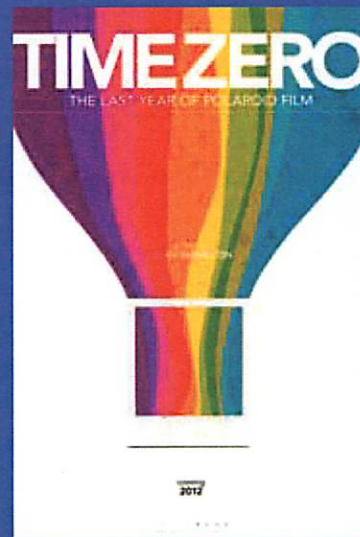
Cosmetic surgery is not a paint-by-numbers field of medicine. Of course, a surgical procedure can be taught and skills honed. But amazing, life-changing results stem from more than just rote memorization of a series of techniques. The difference lies in the level of artistry to sculpt and affect change in the face or body of a patient. Equally as impressive is the deep psychological impact these physical changes can have in the minds of patients. Dr. Sadati shares, “It's so joyful. It's like having a canvas that you work on every day. And when the patients come back thrilled with their results, it's like your art's being auctioned off for millions of dollars! That's how good I feel about hearing the satisfaction of my patients. When you feel that way, it's not really like business anymore. It's more about the joy of what you're doing.” ■



Scan the QR code to download the trailer for “Time Zero: The Last Year of Polaroid Film”. For complete instructions on QR codes, check out the News & Notes section on page 28.



(above) Dr. Hamilton being interviewed about his documentary, "Time Zero: The Last Year of Polaroid Film." (below) Dr. Hamilton composing one of his Polaroid photographs.



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