

Prelude

INSIDE From China, With Love p.16 | That's a Rap p.18 | Green with Beauty p.20

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Dr. Amy Taub, Portrait of an Artist

When you think about it, dermatology can be quite an art form. Almost like medical portraiture. With the right tools, someone like Dr. Amy Forman Taub can literally resurface our skin — smoothen wrinkles, reduce scarring and improve blemishes — in the same way that a good art conservationist can brighten the faces on an aging fresco or deepen the smile lines in a portrait that's suffered years of abuse. In February 2008, Taub became the first dermatologist in the Midwest to use Matrix RF, a new device recently approved by the FDA that uses patches of radio-frequency energy to perform “nonsurgical face lifts.” But precise hand-to-eye coordination and an understanding of pattern and texture is needed as well, the same skills that Forman mastered as a painter working in New York in the late '70s. A doctor using Matrix RF has to make small, careful brushstrokes over the skin with a small wand that looks like a hair drier, which in turn creates microscopic holes in our skin (sort of like tiny, tiny pointillism pinpricks) that prompt our bodies to replace the old cells with new ones. Taub says that the new procedure still leaves patients with some short-term redness, but it involves less pain, quicker recovery times and smaller bills (\$700-\$1,200 per procedure as compared to \$10,000-\$25,000 for a surgical face lift). Taub, who grew up on the North Shore, also says that her success proves that all those admission reps at Northwestern in the mid-1980s who sarcastically said, “*I see you're an artist. That's going to really help you in medical school,*” were dead wrong. She doesn't know about life imitating art, but in this case at least, medicine sure has.

-Eric Johnson

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