

# TOWN & COUNTRY

SEPTEMBER 2013

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A Back to Boarding School Memoir

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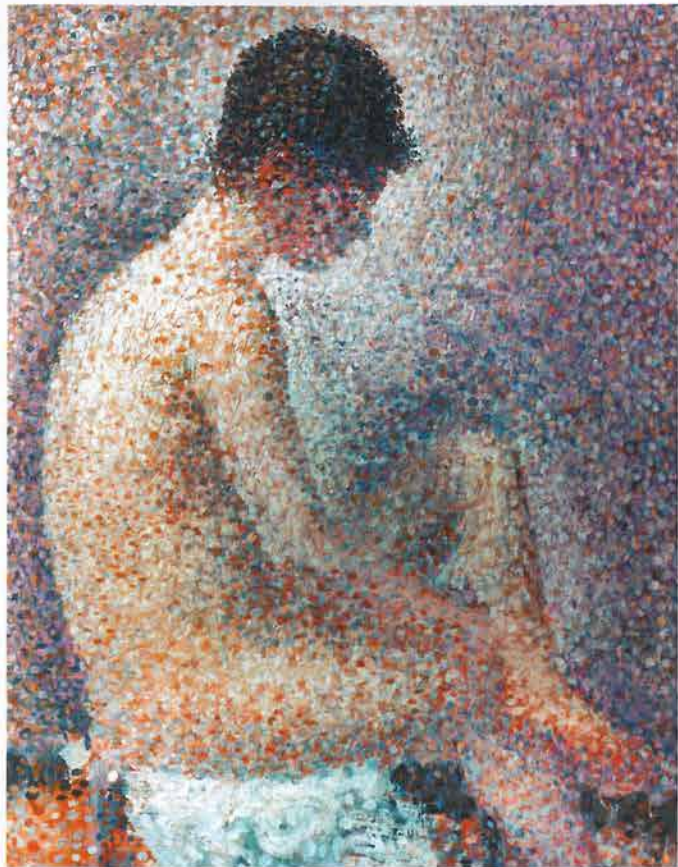
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ON POINT

The Dermapen uses tiny needles to prick the skin, encouraging collagen production and allowing serums to penetrate deep below the surface.



## PINNING CEREMONY

The latest anti-aging treatment involves an army of tiny needles and no downtime, but do the pricks pack enough of a punch?

BY KARI MOLVAR

DERMATOLOGISTS SOMETIMES USE THE EUPHEMISM “social plans” in discussing the time it takes to recover from the redness, scabbing, swelling, and pain that follow a transformative treatment. (For example: “It should be three days before you get back to your social plans.”) This circumlocution does not prove necessary for my first session with the Dermapen, in the Fifth Avenue office of facial plastic surgeon Jon Turk. I am told that the new tool will quickly prick my skin with a cluster of fine, super-short needles and the treatment will help soften lines, tighten pores, minimize scars, and make dark spots vanish—all without making me wince or leaving me an unfortunate shade of Nantucket red.

“I call this the complexion corrector,” Dr. Turk says, referring to the tiny holes he’s poking in my skin, a process known as **micro-needling**. The procedure creates “controlled wounds” that stimulate the production of collagen, leading to improved tone and texture. Doctors have long touted the technique to help rejuvenate skin for women from their thirties to their sixties, describing it as a step up from microdermabrasion, an alternative that’s not as intense, agonizing, or costly as lasers. But until now micro-needling tools, such as the manual

derma-roller, moved across the face in a slow and clunky fashion.

By contrast, the Dermapen perforates the skin at a rate of 90 pricks per second, with 11 minuscule needles that can be adjusted to different depths around sensitive areas, such as the forehead and lips. **The slim tip can also zoom around the finer contours of the face, where scars and wrinkles can be difficult to treat, according to New York City dermatologist Paul Jarrod Frank. “It takes the old micro-needling procedure to a predictably enhanced level that was unseen before,” he says.** The result, Turk says, is “a healthy, clean look that’s nothing like the tight or waxy look you often get with lasers.” He recommends four treatments over an eight-week period, which costs about \$2,000. Afterward, touch-ups are needed only every few months. “With regular treatments, the skin will continue to look younger and younger—in some cases, up to 10 years younger,” he claims.

Not all doctors are so enthusiastic. Macrene Alexiades-Armenakas, of the Dermatology and Laser Surgery Center in New York City, says that the Fraxel CO<sub>2</sub> laser is “far more effective” at firming and revitalizing the skin. “The heat generated by lasers changes the nature of collagen, which leads to longer-term results,” she says. The downside is that lasers usually hurt. A lot. Turk’s aesthetician Emilia calls the Dermapen a “tickle” and the laser a “slap across the face.” The Dermapen treatment is also half as expensive.

One benefit nearly all doctors agree on is that the Dermapen can help work topical anti-aging products far down into the dermis, boosting their absorption. “These micro-punctures make the skin more permeable for a short time, so whatever you apply on top will penetrate about a hundred times deeper,” says Beverly Hills dermatologist Ava Shamban, who likes to bathe the skin with “antioxidants and hyaluronic acid for an instant plumping effect.” But everything from glycolic acid to plant stem cells to a patient’s own platelet-rich plasma can be used for the ultimate youth fix.

The technique is also catching on at spas. Circ-Cell Skin Care recently unveiled a Transdermal Delivery System facial that lifts the skin, bringing it into contact with hundreds of .25-millimeter needles covered with wrinkle-fighting peptides and lightening kojic acid. “It makes your skin look fantastic, so plump and luminous,” Circ-Cell cofounder Melanie Simon says. In the future, doctors expect to see gadgets that combine needles with energy that tightens and lifts so that patients won’t have to go under the knife at all—another innovation worth watching out for.

### THE RESCUE CREAMS

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