

WORKING

Renato Calabria

Plastic surgeon 'molds' new faces, bodies

Grace E. Jang
OUR TIMES

■ He is a renowned plastic surgeon with practices in Beverly Hills, Westlake Village.

BUFFER TO AGING'S DOWNSIDE

The woman is almost 80 years old, but she doesn't look a day over 50. She works out regularly, the crow's feet around her eyes are barely visible, and her forehead is clear of creases.

Yet, she is unhappy with how she is aging and is back in the doctor's chair for a cosmetic procedure. This time, the Westlake resident, who preferred anonymity, is requesting work on her eyebrows and "sagging" chin.

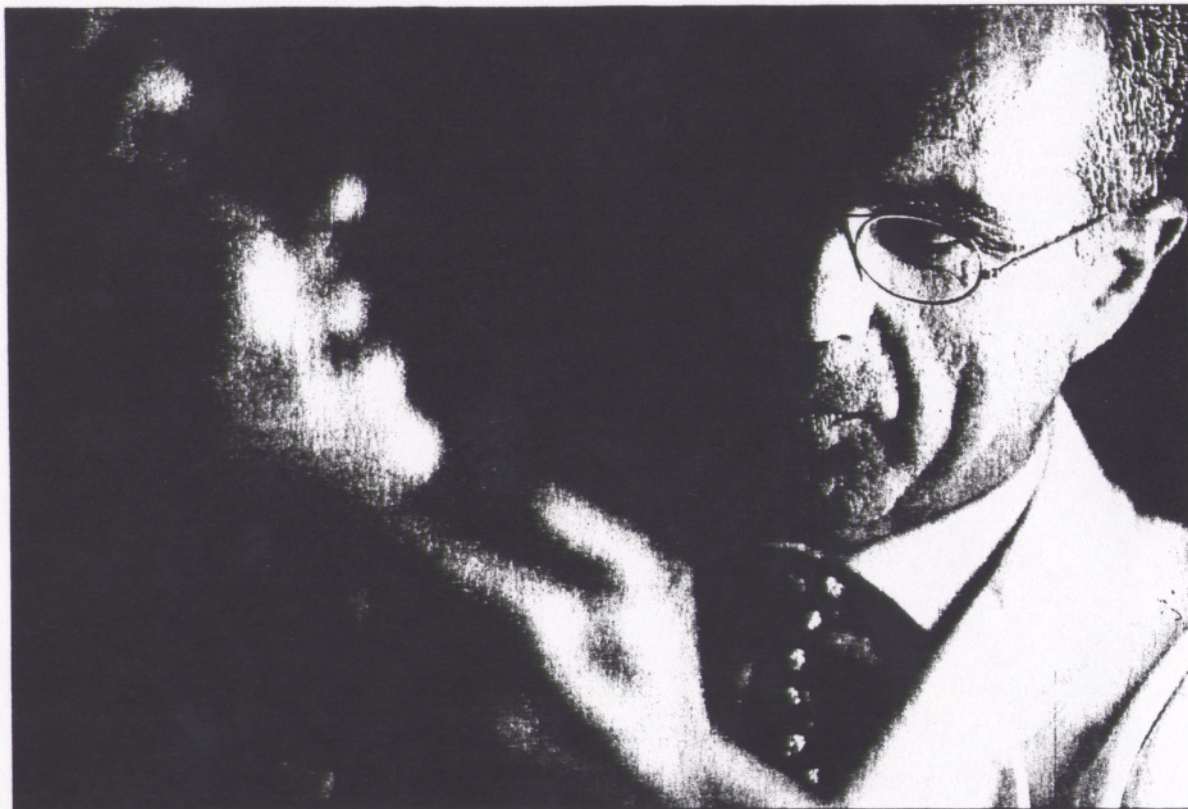
"It's hard to get old," she sighed. "My husband doesn't think I need this, but women are vain — not all of them, but most of them."

Calabria, who will perform the procedure, passes no judgments. He tells her she has beautiful features and that he will merely "refresh" them.

He is surprised to learn she is 78 years old, but raises no objections to his client's desire to preserve her youth.

"It is important to look as young as you feel," said Calabria, who sees the great demands made upon the aging process as imposed by a society increasingly fixated on beauty.

"If you look at all the magazines, they



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stress that women, and now even men, look good," he said. "Especially in California and New York, which are health-oriented, it is very important to look good."

'PLASTIC FITS MY PERSONALITY'

A doctor with 15 years of surgical experience, Calabria limited his practice to plastic surgery seven years ago because he found it "more challenging" than heart surgery.

"With heart surgery, it's just valves and bypass. But with plastic surgery, I enjoy the challenge of the technical aspects," he said. "With plastic surgery, there is more than one solution to a problem."

Calabria said he enjoys most the creativity his field offers.

"Being Italian, I love art," he said. "Plas-

tic means 'to mold.' Plastic fits my personality."

Indeed, plastic surgery is Calabria's life. Even when relaxing, at a party for example, if he sees a "loose" neck on a woman, he will not be so bold as to approach her, but he will make mental notes on how he would improve her appearance if given the chance.

He may sound fanatical, but Calabria said he knows when to draw the line. He advocates gradual changes, "nothing dramatic."

"If someone doesn't need work, I tell them," he said. "And if a patient is getting surgery to please someone else, I have a problem with that. But if they are doing it to please themselves, that's OK."

MORE THAN IMPLANTS

Calabria's days are full, beginning at 7:30 a.m. and often ending as late as 7 p.m. He said he sees 10 to 15 patients a day, ranging from the demanding procedures performed on soap opera stars to the house calls he makes to lower profile clients.

The most rewarding aspect of Calabria's work, however, is not necessarily the gratitude received from clients who receive augmentation or liposuction procedures.

He said the volunteer work he does during the two or three trips a year he takes to South America to help children born with physical deformities is more fulfilling.

"There is nothing more rewarding than the smile of a mother," he said. "I love what I do. I love to see the results."