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INSIDE: MIAMI REAL ESTATE '08!

THE HOMES! > THE HOODS! > THE PLAYERS!

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THE RADAR BEAUTY

BY BROOKE SIEGEL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARIA LANKINA



NIPPED AND TUCKED: Dr. Gallo and a patient pose inside one of the Institute's state-of-the-art surgical suites.

PLASTIC CITY

Forget our beaches—the Miami Institute offers starlets and Saudi princesses a dip in the fountain of youth

It's frequented by socialites and celebrities who fly in on private jets and are granted access through a secret side entrance. But the Institute isn't South Beach's newest velvet-roped club—it's the epicenter of South Florida's posh plastic surgery scene.

Entrepreneur Steve Watson and Dr.

Julio Gallo opened the 9,000-square-foot Miami Institute for Age Management and Intervention in March 2005. The swank digs are housed at the Four Seasons Hotel, though both parties downplay any affiliation. Nevertheless, the Institute benefits from a private elevator at the hotel, which whisks paparazzi-shy celebrities from recovery room to hotel suite with nary a flashing lens in sight.

On the Miami Institute's menu: everything from facials and food allergy testing to boob jobs and labiaplasties. And while Watson's quick to tout the center's dedication to "beauty both inside and out," he does admit it's not the life coaching that's paying for the two quarter-million-dollar overhead lights in the surgical suite. Skepticism aside, the Institute does boast an array of wellness treatments such as hormone replacement, smoking cessation, weight management and an on-staff clinical sexologist—because, as Dr. Gallo frequently mentions, "Sex is very important."

Plus, sex sells. Both Watson and Gallo are young, single and cruising Miami in trig rides (an Aston Martin and Mercedes, respectively), which calls to mind two other young (if fictitious) Miami plastic surgery entrepreneurs. With a sly smile, Watson admits that *Nip/Tuck* gets "all their story lines from us."

Can the Miami Institute hold a candle to McNamara/Troy's outrageousness? They're leveling the playing field with Encore, a comprehensive package priced at \$250,000. After a private visit from Gallo, patients are flown via private jet to the Miami Institute, where they remain for most of the five-week program. Shacked up in a Four Seasons suite, the guest/patient has an all-access pass to a veritable Candy Land of plastic surgery (lipo, face-lift, eyes, nose, lips, breasts), along with myriad treatments (Botox, hormones, lasers) and a 24-hour, chauffeur-driven Bentley. The final recovery phase is spent at the chichi Casa Casuarina (formerly the Versace Mansion) before heading home with a year's supply of skin care and vitamins.

Clearly, the Institute caters to high-end patients. The question is, will they name names? With little prompting, Gallo warns, "Don't ask, because I can't tell." But a reticent source is no match for a smidge

of Google savvy: Paula Abdul, Nicky Hilton and New York socialite Tinsley Mortimer have all reportedly been seen coming or going. The Institute's director of PR, Lauren Foster, is less tight-lipped than the surgeon, listing among the clientele Saudi princesses, a past Miss Universe and, intriguingly, a former Secretary of State (Madeleine Albright never seemed the type).

The center's comprehensiveness does provide celebs with an out—starlets can always claim to have had a layman's facial. But since that rings as true as LiLo's claims to sobriety, the building is designed to protect clients' identities, starting with the side entrance, an unassuming door amidst the hotel's parking maze, with a pin code that changes daily. Even the architecture caters to privacy: sliding, opaque glass doors can transform an open area into a closed corridor. There's also a special security room to house bodyguards and publicists.

Of course, even those who lack the entourage can expect to have their ego stroked. Everything in the ultra-luxe space, from the high-end art (Gallo's a collector) to the bevy of beautiful receptionists, sells the dream, leading prospective patients to believe that with a little nip and tuck, they too can have the flawless looks and eternal youth of the Institute's world-class clientele. After all, it's not just plastic surgery—it's age intervention. **M**