

sacred spaces

transforming your salon into a retreat

Over the past ten years, we have seen the “Beauty Salon” become the “Skin Care Center” and the concept of the combination of skin and body treatments lead to the “Day Spa.” At the recent ISPA (International Spa Professionals Association) conference in Banff, Canada, the discussion was on the overwhelming demand from clients to embrace “Total Body Wellness” in their daily lives.

a generation of seekers

All trends that we like to think we have created, in reality come from our clients’ demands. It is our response to those demands, and our sensitivity in understanding and interpreting those needs that creates actual change. Our clients have demanded the integration of body therapy and spa treatments into their skin care programs, and they are now demanding the new concept of a “retreat.” This is, in essence, a reflection of our desire to embrace our spirituality in our lives. The interior design of our skin care centers, day spas or salons must now begin to reflect this growing spiritual journey.



Photo provided by Les Nouvelles Esthétiques PGA National Resort and Spa

In his recent book, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journey of the Baby Boom Generation*, author Wade Clark Roof says, “Members of this generation have few inhibitions about multiple associations, such as being a Protestant while at the same time exploring Zen Buddhist

teachings”. Our clients are looking for a life that is rich in spirit, with a sense of continuing self-discovery. This is a part of global awareness for the 21st century.

the trend to spirituality

Transforming our skin care centers into a “retreat” or a “sanctuary” provides our clients with a place to escape to. A haven of tranquility. It can be as simple as the way in which we serve them mineral water, or turning an alcove into a Yoga zone. Spiritual decor for the soul is the design trend of the moment. House and Garden magazine recently polled its readers about what they considered “the finer things in life.” Their finding was that 82% of the respondents said “a quiet place for meditation or spiritual contemplation” was not a luxury, but a necessity.

the ancient asian arts of design

The Yogi that introduced the world to transcendental meditation forty years ago has now codified his beliefs into architecture, which he says is in accordance with *natural law*. The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi



believes that people who live and work in buildings designed to embrace these laws of nature will be more creative with an enlivened consciousness. His system is based on knowledge that is thousands of years old, but is available through technology of the 20th century; you can learn more about his beliefs by visiting his WebSite at the Maharishi Global Construction site at www.MGC-Vastu.com.

Creating a sense of "spirituality" has little to do with a religious, monastic or even "new age" look in decoration. It has to do with creating a harmonious space, a space that has balance and a sense of stillness and tranquility. The ancient Chinese art of placement is called Feng Shui,



which literally translated means wind and water. It is about designing buildings, and placing furniture and articles for the most beneficial "flow" of positive energy.

transforming salon design

At all of our corporate International Dermal Institute training centers, we have followed the edicts of Feng Shui for the past fifteen years. The basic principles dictate that natural materials of wood, metal, earth, sunlight and water create a harmonious flow of positive creativity. Classrooms are flooded with sunlight, and skylights are used in the hallways to create atriums with student seating. The walls are all curved to ward off "Sha Qi," or negativity, as the Chinese believe that negative energy can only flow in straight lines, whereas positive energy flows in curves like a river does.

Appealing to this sense of curiosity through our salon design is critical to creating that sense of sanctuary. Multi-layered decorating incorporates Asian elements into Western Interiors to help create a peaceful, meditative environment. In doing so, we appeal to our clients innate sense of relaxation, and embrace their needs for stress reduction.

starting at the reception area

I prefer to call the front area, the reception area, rather than the front desk area or even the retail area, because it reminds us of what should be taking place. We receive our clients in this area, as if they were our guests. Certainly, there should be a desk there and also retail products available, but the main purpose is to welcome. The area should therefore be "welcoming."

Clients should be greeted immediately, and made welcome by being offered a beverage. The choice of refreshment should reflect an awareness of spirituality, and comprise of chilled mineral waters (sparkling and still), fruit juices, fruit spritzers, iced and hot herbal teas and maybe green tea as a featured choice, due to its high antioxidant qualities. It only takes a few minutes

and a few pennies to offer a unique choice and serving style of beverages, and yet so few salons do. Serve the beverage with a choice of fresh fruits on an individual tray to each client. Small lacquerware trays are available in the Asian shopping areas of most large cities, or at stores such as Cost Plus Imports for a very small price.



our attitudes reflect our beliefs

Do you truly believe in customer service? Do you really desire to serve clients? The Asian reputation for unrivaled service is well deserved. Asia has earned that reputation, because their attitudes reflect their true belief that it is an honor to serve another. What does your attitude, and that of your staff reflect? The manner in which we meet and greet our clients, each and every time, tells them if we are truly welcoming them as guests to our business.

Our manner of speech and the subjects we discuss reflect our professionalism and commitment to

providing them with a "sanctuary." The way in which we dress and comport ourselves is a direct reflection of our own self-esteem and confidence. Our "healing touch" is without a doubt, the key element in our clients desire to return to us. It is time to take an honest evaluation of exactly what we reflect, and improve upon it.

The brochures, service menus and literature we display tells our clients about what we do. The design of the brochure, the paper and ink that we

your clients change? The overwhelming trend is to separate changing areas, with lockers and grooming areas set up. This allows the client to literally lock away their external packaging (their clothes) and transform into yours. It helps them to lose their inhibitions and stress. They can quite literally undress themselves of their outside worries.

Leave nothing to chance, and make every decision for your clients where possible. That means providing everything they might need in the changing area. Spa supplies, shampoo, conditioner, cotton buds, etcetera. Do not skimp on the quality by giving them inferior products to those you recommend. I am always amazed at how many large Spas provide pots of cream from a drug store in the changing area, while encouraging the purchase professional-quality products afterwards!

The robes should be of the highest quality, and the lighting and music choices should reflect a calm, relaxing and meditative mood. If you cannot create a separate changing area, then have each clients robe and slippers folded in a personal bag (sweater bags are perfect), with their name handwritten on a card on the front. This personalizes your treatment to your "guest," and takes just a few moments to do. The package can be given to the client at the front desk check-in, and they can then change in the treatment room.

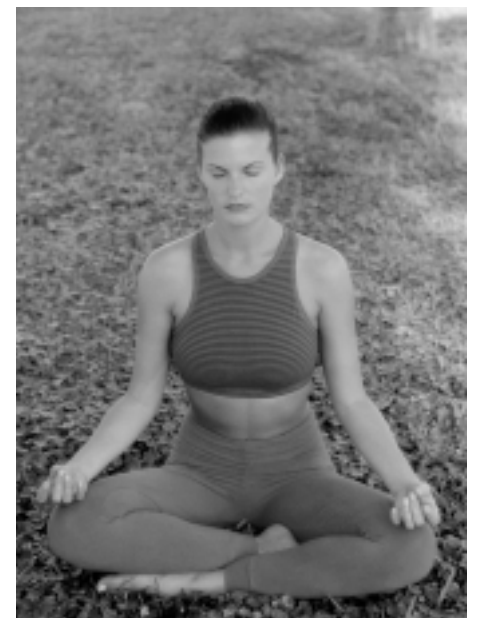
the treatment as therapy

Our treatments should be more than a "treat," they should be therapeutic. Not just therapy for the skin, but for the mind and spirit also. The lighting in the room should be conducive to the goal of the treatment, the music should be transportive, the aromatic oils diffused in the air should encourage reflective meditation, and your touch should be healing.

The trend in professional skin and body treatments reflects this growing



quest for our spiritual selves. Having pioneered the introduction of "Alternative" therapies to be integrated with traditional treatments, The International Dermal Institute has seen an enormous demand for these classes. Starting with the Aromatherapy "boom" in 1984, through to the fully booked classes we offer in Ayurvedic techniques, all of our post-graduate attendees, at our eight locations, tell us the demand is from



have used, and the policies and procedures it outlines, all give the client an impression of exactly who we are. If your brochure is dominated by cancellation policy notices, late charge penalties and tipping policies, it hardly leads them to expect a haven of tranquility. Of course, every business must have those policies in place, and communicate them to their clients, but the main reason for having a brochure is to communicate to and entice the client.

the treatment environment

Before the treatment begins, the client must change clothes. Where do

the clients. Dr. Diana Howard, Director of Worldwide Education says, "The Asian disciplines tend to reflect a sense of spirituality within their benefits. The leading treatments that we see a demand in classes for are Ayurvedic Techniques, Acupressure, Reflexology, Aromatherapy and Chinese Facial Diagnosis."

Even the decade-long popularity of day spa treatments has developed to include many treatments that embrace more than just direct skin and body care. Ayurvedic Detox Linen Wraps, Shirodhara treatments that encourage meditation as a part of the treatment, and Rhythmic Massage to music are just a few illustrations of this trend. One of the fastest growing design elements within Spas currently being built, is the inclusion of "Quiet Rooms" for meditation after the treatment, and the use of videos inside the treatment room for guided imagery during massage.

The Power of Touch is the most unique aspect of everything we do as skin care therapists. Each of us is totally unique, with an individual ability to touch our clients in a very exceptional way. In order to accomplish this though, we must concentrate and focus on that goal. Our thoughts will be reflected in our touch. If you are distracted, thinking about something else, hostile towards the client or simply negative in your thoughts, it will be translated through your hands. Make no mistake, the Power of Touch is a gift and an offering we give to our clients. We give a treatment, not do a service. Remember that and focus on it for every client.

think quality not size

When I am teaching, I will often have a class attendee approach me after the program with the same concern. They are worried that if they do not own or work in

a large "super spa," they cannot compete or compare with that type of competitor. It is not the size that matters, it is the quality. I have received treatments in large, luxurious and beautiful spas that do not compare in quality of treatment to a one-room operation. If your skin care center comprises just one room, it can be a jewel. The smallest space we will ever occupy is the womb, and it is also the most comforting, nurturing, healing and spiritual place we will ever be.

Anthony Lawlor, architect and author of the book *A Home for the Soul* puts it well. He says, "With the eyes to see it, and the hands to create it, we can recover the home that the soul desires." By providing our clients with that "home" in our skin care centers, we can truly be a part of the Healing of the Future, and a return to our spirituality.



Jane Martin-Wurwand is the Founder and Owner of *The International Dermal Institute* postgraduate skin care training centers, the dermalogica product line, and the international chain of *Leonard Drake Skin Care Centres*. As a leader in the international skin care and spa body business, and a regular lecturer through numerous professional Congresses, video tapes, magazines and television interviews, her unique experience has earned her a worldwide reputation. Jane is both a C.I.D.E.S.C.O. and B.A.B.T.A.C. lecturer.