

IN SEARCH OF A NOSE

IN THE NAME OF VANITY, RICHARD DENNEN NEEDED A NEW HOOTER. BUT WHERE WAS HE GOING TO FIND IT?



I wish I could say I'd wrecked mine in a rugby match on the playing fields of New Zealand. Or twisted it in a horrific go-karting accident in Cape Town. But I hadn't. This was unadulterated vanity. It's not that my life could not have gone on with the nose I was born with, I was no Cyrano de Bergerac. I just decided I wanted a smarter one. When I lost weight, I had my suit adjusted by a tailor. So why not my nose?

To get a great nose, you need a great surgeon. Growing up, I'd spotted 16-year-old girls huddling in the basement of Joe's Cafe, on Sloane Street, drinking Diet Cokes and trying to avoid getting their nose casts wet, but I had never thought to ask where they'd had them done. So I did the obvious and hit Harley Street. I sat in a weird, chintzy, yellowed waiting room, surrounded by identikit Persian girls, all clutching Grazia tear sheets of pictures of Angelina Jolie. "Your nose is large, with a hook on the end — you would like to address this?" the surgeon asked. I bolted. Farther down the street, another doctor explained how he used the Fibonacci sequence to redesign noses. This golden ratio is found throughout nature, but when the screen flashed up to display his suggested changes, it looked more like the nose of a pig.

Simon Withey, who is actually on nearby Wimpole Street, is the go-to nose guy in London, and of all of the doctors I saw, he was the only one who tried to dissuade me. "There would be a lot of issues to think about with your nose," he said. "It's not a straightforward one." He planned to untwist the twisted cartilage at the tip. Just the sound of that made me nervous.

So I thought about it: if I am really going to go through with this, to be this absurd, I want to do it in the most fabulous way possible. "I love Los Angeles. I love Hollywood," Andy Warhol once said. "They're beautiful. Everybody's plastic, but I love plastic. I want to be plastic." I agreed with him. So I took my nose to LA.

Andrew Frankel, in Beverly Hills, is the nose surgeon by appointment to Hollywood. He does a lot of revision cases: patients come to him unhappy with the results of other doctors' work. "They've had two or three, or nine or 10, prior rhinoplasties, they've used their ribs and their skull and their ears — patients most nasal surgeons avoid," he says. Ouch. "Sometimes the patients are psychologically such that they get themselves into these messes. They always try to go for a little more. Surgery begets more surgery."

Well, I would never be like that, of course. But he went on to tell me about Simon: the Single Immature Male who is Overly Narcissistic. "The difficult male patient is much more scary than the difficult female patient. I'm always on the

lookout for males who are obsessing about small details," he said. In the 1990s, several plastic surgeons were murdered by unhappy male patients. "There can be male patients who are a little psychotic. And they have testosterone." Did he just give me a funny look?

A few blocks away, I happened on the holy grail of rhinoplasty, Dr Raj Kanodia. This is a doctor who hops from Philip Green's yacht to the Bamfords' as effortlessly as he chisels away at a nose. At the party for the American Foundation for Aids Research, an Indian princess spotted him across the room, cried out "The man who saved my face", then introduced him to all her friends. In the garden of his Bel Air mansion (next to Elizabeth Taylor's old house, of course) are flowers given to him by friends such as Trudie Styler. He's been working for 31 years and has a large celebrity roster, rumoured to include Jennifer Aniston, Ashlee Simpson and Cameron Diaz.

Celebrity clients attract patients from all over the world. Kanodia does 300 noses a year, "200 of which are 16- to 20-year-olds", he says. "The summer holidays are busy — seven to eight noses a week. With digital photography, everyone sees their defects much more than they did 20 years ago." He looked at my nose. "It takes me less than a minute to design and see what I want to refine. It's just one of those things — like a good pianist can play — that is not something you learn. The design element is the artistic element. The

Richard before and after surgery. It's easy to see the difference in photographs, but in real life few people noticed





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51

execution part is where you have the best teachers — how to bring the nose closer to the face, how to lift it up, how to break the bones, how to sculpt the tip. Noses look ‘done’ when they look too surgical, too refined.”

Kanodia is a practitioner of closed rhinoplasty, where all the incisions are on the inside of the nose. Some patients who have had open surgery ask if he can fix their scar. (The bottom of the nose is cut and peeled back so the inside can be worked on more easily.) He can’t. “Open surgery defeats the purpose. Would you cut a Rembrandt in the middle? The nose dictates the persona of the face. You have to preserve the character, so you can’t change the whole nose. There’s no such thing as a perfect nose that can be fitted to every face. You need to appreciate what’s attractive about the nose and only change what needs to be refined.”

In my case, I had a nice tip, so he would preserve that, and that would preserve my nose’s character. He would strengthen how it looked from the front. But it was my profile that was the problem: it projected out from the face a little too far. And, when I smiled, it was dropping down to the lip a little too much. Where most doctors just scrape a bump, he is also passionate about breathing. “Most noses — 90% of septums — are twisted,” he explained. “Your obstruction is 50%. After, your breathing will be 100% on both sides. You’ll sleep better, have better endurance.”

So we did it. Kanodia gave me specific instructions to speed the healing process: no smoking for four weeks before and after; no alcohol or coffee for two weeks; arnica tablets to be taken for the week before surgery, to minimise bruising. The operation took about 2½ hours. He straightened my septum, using pieces of cartilage to open the inside nasal passages. The bridge of my nose (the upper half is bone and the lower half cartilage) was reduced, the

bone by 2mm and the cartilage by 4mm. The tip of my nose was lifted 2mm and the bones were narrowed and straightened.

Afterwards, I checked into the Pearl Recovery Retreat, at the trendy SLS Hotel, in Beverly Hills, where I stayed for two days of five-star nursing, gourmet food and Vicodin. Getting the full Beverly Hills nose treatment does not come cheap: Kanodia costs about £11,500, including £2,000 for the operating room and anaesthesia; the best suite at Pearl is more than £700 a night; and you’ll need to stay in LA for eight days until it’s safe to fly again. (I stayed for 10, just in case.)

A week later, Kanodia removed the cast. This — like Extreme Makeover UK — was my big reveal. I stood up. It looked so different. I freaked and immediately had to sit down again. I was still feeling woozy from the op. There was light bruising under the eyes (which was gone in a couple of days). The next morning, in the bathroom, I glanced up. It was like that verse in the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13:12: “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face...” Well, sort of. It was a revelation, it was cool, it was what I wanted.

As drastic as the change seemed to me, Kanodia warned me that others would feel differently. “If you don’t ask your friends, they won’t know,” he said. “The emotions you want to provoke are ‘You look good’, not ‘Who is this person?’” He was right. Nobody noticed. And I was furious. “What are you going to have done next?” they asked when, finally, I told them. My answer? “Who nose?” ●

ST Richard reveals all in his nose-job audio diary at thesundaytimes.co.uk/style