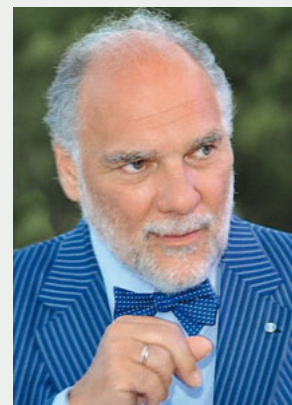




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Facts and Fashion in dental esthetics



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“*Kallos* will save the world...”

... that is to say, that goodness and beauty – according to ancient Greek classical thought – are the ultimate virtues that possess the unique power of positive influence on Creation. Yet the absolute value of *Kallos* possessing such miraculous potential, when seen through the shortsighted vision of human beings, is threatened with deformity when we obey the relativity of Fashion. Esthetic dentistry, being the doctrine of dental *Kallos*, is bound to serve with excellence the factual nature of human beings, and save the Creature. While *Kallos* is the expression of the physical and spiritual beauty of Truth, esthetic dentistry in Fashion – influenced by technology and commercialism – becomes vulnerable, in that it misses the Facts related to its immediate and natural context, which is the human face.

In Greek, the two words “face” and “person” are expressed by a single word, *prosopon*. Firstly, *prosopon* refers to the countenance – the external appearance of the front part of the head. Secondly, and most importantly, it refers to the essence of the person; that is, the

manifestations of volition and character, the reflections of the inner world, the characteristics of the mental gifts, the degree of individual freedom, and the depth of human existence. All these elements determine each human being’s identity and personality.

What is the context of the teeth, the field of work of us dentists? Firstly, the context of the teeth is the lips, the area around the mouth, the eyes, the cheeks, the chin, and the entire countenance – features that in unison compose a unique human gift, the smile. The context of the teeth, however, is not only the mouth and the face; above all, it is the person. Primarily, anything that safeguards the uniqueness of the face and does not disturb the balance between soul and body, face and person, image and content, also forms the context of the teeth. This means that every addition or correction to the face is a responsible act when it concerns one’s own self, but becomes a sacred act when we doctors apply it to our patients.

A correction may be esthetic in order to make the face as natural as possible, as true as possible, free from the



ugliness of disease or mutilation. The responsibility of medicine is to cure illness or to correct defects; it is not to change the facial expression, create a false appearance or, worse, allow dental practice to be controlled by commercial demands or mass media and advertisement interests – the tools used by fashion to establish a contemporary look or style. The image of people with a bright snow-white uniform dentition rather than the natural individuality of their teeth induces fake expressions, introduces standardized beauty, and an outcome incompatible with a person's age. This makes the external appearance false, removes the signs of truth, and finally offers the image of a non-genuine beauty.

It is obvious that the interventions concerning the face greatly affect the person. That is why the protection of a patient's personality involves the safeguarding of that person's dignity, integrity, and identity. In this sense, a dentist is not simply a skillful technician, a well-informed scientist, or a charismatic artist; above all, a dentist is someone who performs a sacred act. The psychosomatic balance and the sense of human sacredness constitute the aim for the *ariston* (excellence) of the *prosopon*.

Thus, esthetic interpretation during oral reconstruction cannot become simply a subject of personal taste, either from the dentist's point of view or from that of the patient. Patients who seek oral rehabilitation have their own smile to begin with. They have had it for years; it is part of their personal image – obviously the one they need to improve – yet it expresses their “oral personal-

ity”, which can be defined as the dental composition that reflects the individual's personality at the level of his or her facial appearance. All the effort during the restorative intervention for improvement should be directed toward maintaining this oral personality fundamentally unaltered.

Dental esthetics, therefore, before anything else, needs to be related to the unique and factual elements that characterize the oral personality of the individual. The esthetic dimension, determined by the preoperative size, form, function, and position of the teeth, as well as by the line of the composition, provides the objective references from which the personal oral image can be identified. These elements are the guiding facts. After careful examination, they could be incorporated into the restoration in such a manner that the image is not changed, but simply improved.

For the last 30 years, the European Academy of Esthetic Dentistry has fostered the pursuit of excellence in dental esthetics by simultaneously defining the highest ethical standards in serving our patients. Over the years, these standards have been established as the safeguarding facts upon which its academic and scientific profile has been established. Thus, the launched theme of the Academy's 31st Spring Meeting, as a natural expression of its profile is: New Trends in Dentistry: Facts and Fashion.

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