



I TATTOOED MY FACE IN PURSUIT OF PERFECT BROWS AND LIPS

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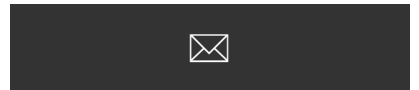


By Megan O'Brien Nov 17, 2015 **Beauty**



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Saying full lips are a beauty trend implies—falsely—that the tide will soon change and small, thin lips like mine will be all the rage again. But the fact is, skinny lips haven't been in fashion since Clara Bow was Hollywood's It girl. In 1927. I've been in search of a fuller top lip from the time I was eighteen and started doing very painful collagen injections. I was living in Manhattan and doing some modeling work and my agency told me that without better lips, I'd never book a gig. It was 1994, the early days of injections, and

to say the pain was excruciating would be an understatement. But I looked fantastic. I would be back in four months.

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Needless to say, advancements have been made. I've been seeing cosmetic dermatologist **Dr. Simon Ourian** (you may know him as Kylie Jenner's guy) for injections for years and yes, over time, my top lip has gotten bigger. No one is mistaking me for Angelina, but there's something there. But while Dr. Ourian is great and the pain factor has drastically decreased since my early collagen days, it's still not fun and it's maintenance of the every-four-months variety. So, as someone who is always looking to try the latest and greatest, I wondered, "What if there was something else out there?"

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I'd been hearing amazing things about a semi-permanent makeup artist from Europe named Emilia Berry, who runs **Permaline Cosmetics** out of New York City. Berry specializes in what she calls Micro-Stroke Brows (\$950, includes a free touch-up) and Ombré Lips (\$1,050, includes a free touch-up)—a new, subtle cosmetic tattooing technique with results that last three years. Now, I've never gotten a tattoo in my life, but I have had marriages that lasted longer than three years, so this seemed like a commitment I could handle. After seeing Emilia's work, I promptly booked a flight and traveled 3,000 miles to meet her—first for the brows, which I overplucked to the point of no return in my youth and have been drawing on every morning since. (When I walked into her office, I was in shock—she could pass for a European supermodel. I don't want to get hate mail from the Association of Face Tattooing, but she was not fitting the image I had in my head of a borscht-loving, heavysset woman with a thick accent.)

Emilia got right down to business, picking a natural-looking color for my brows and drawing it on in the

most flattering shape with makeup artist precision. She numbed the area with lidocaine cream, turned on the tattoo pen and got to work shading my brows with micro "brushstrokes" that mimic real hair. The process was slightly uncomfortable but not painful—a completely manageable 2 on a scale of 10. When she finished, I looked in the mirror and couldn't believe how real my eyebrows looked. It opened my face up and made me look younger. I would have to come back to New York within eight weeks for my touch-up, at which time I planned to do my lips.

BEFORE



AFTER



Back in Los Angeles, I decided to talk to **Dr. Richard Ellenbogen**, a Beverly Hills plastic surgeon, to find out what happens to our lips as we age. I'm turning 40 in July—which I'm fine with!—but it's the age when it seems, at least in L.A., society starts to fade you out. Turns out, that's not in my mind: "Caucasians lose

about 35% of pigment in their lips starting at age 35," said Ellenbogen. "The lips also start to lose fat, but the top lengthens and folds over, giving an unhappy, sagging appearance."

My friends were not as understanding. "You're doing what?!" my best friend Kristen, who is usually very supportive of all my cosmetic endeavors, yelled into the phone when I asked if I could stay with her in New York on my next trip back. "You're going to tattoo your lips? I'm saying this out of love: I think you're really crazy." Her response was not unlike others, who told me horror stories about their elderly aunt or grandma who got bright red lip liner tattooed around the mouth and now resembled a clown who forgot to apply lipstick. But I trusted Emilia and I know her work is going to be the next big thing, so I went back for my brow retouching and lips.

The Ombré Lip takes your natural lip shade and punches it up a tone or two (Emilia and I went with a subtle rose shade)—it's like waking up in the morning already wearing your favorite pinky-nude lipstick. The technique doesn't actually make your lips bigger (I'll still be visiting Dr. Ourian a few times a year), it just gives the appearance that they are and adds youthful color and definition—remember, this lasts for three years! I was a bit more nervous about the pain this time, so I took a Xanax before we started. Combined with the topical numbing cream, I was good to go for the hour-long session, during which Emilia carefully shaded around the edges and the Cupid's bow. When she finished, there was no blood, no sharp, freshly tattooed looking lines, no soreness—I was able to go straight out for drinks and dinner. (Later that evening, I saw my friend Kristen, who greeted me with, "OK, seriously, your lips look amazing.")

BEFORE



AFTER



I can't stress enough the importance of researching this decision. Emilia spends half her day correcting the mistakes of other semi-permanent makeup artists, so take your time finding a skilled professional, insist on seeing before and after pictures and ask to speak to a current patient. You can shop at Nordstrom Rack and go to Trader Joe's, but you are not allowed to hunt for a bargain tattoo for your face.

SEE THE CONVERSATION!