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“OPENAIR” & “INHOME” OPERATIONS

(Excerpt)

Dear Reader,

Would you want to undergo cosmetic surgery in your own garden? Or on a glacier with a view of the Matterhorn? I think I know what your spontaneous answer is. An undertaking that perhaps seems crazy at first, but which I performed successfully many years ago as a plastic surgeon with my team and a total of nine patients: cosmetic surgery with extraordinary people in exceptional places - in the open air, in a concert hall, on a yacht or in a penthouse. In total there were six facelifts (some of which were combined with eyelid correction and/or micro lipofilling), one upper and lower blepharoplasty, one breast enlargement and one liposuction.

The operations, which were carried out without any complications in exactly the same way as those taking place in my clinic, were performed in accordance with strict standards of hygiene. They took place in a context which was by no means inferior to a medical facility. The process of healing was incredibly good for all the patients and the results achieved were excellent. Relaxing music, the fresh air, the natural light, the disinfecting effect of the sun, the calming effect of Nature and the joy and enthusiasm that prevailed amongst everyone involved had a very positive influence on the well-being of the patient and the surgical team. Each of these unique events became an unforgettable experience for all the people concerned.

I awarded a specific focus to each of these extraordinary events: in one instance it was hygiene (the number of pathogenic germs in the air of the operating site); in another it was the beneficial effect of being surrounded by nature on the health of the patient and of the surgical team; in a further instance it was the therapeutic effect of the music and in another the positive influence that being at home in her own surroundings had on the patient's well-being. I will expand on these individual areas of focus in the descriptions of the “open-air events” that follow. The main priority at all these events was always the welfare and absolute safety of the patient.

Long before I carried out the first “Open-air” operations in Cologne (Geneva) in August 1993, I dreamed, as a young surgeon, of being able to operate in the open air, just like Albert Schweitzer, who operated in an open-air hospital in Lambarene under very simple conditions. What seemed to me merely a dream in those days actually became reality at a later stage, and not just once but on a number of occasions, although this was much later, after I had performed more than a thousand successful cosmetic surgery operations.

After opening a private specialist clinic for cosmetic surgery in 1990, I only operated in my own operating theatre. Instead of ventilating the air in the room by laminar flow (a homogenizing system of ventilation), as is normally the case in hospitals, I installed an operating theatre supplied with fresh air. I was always convinced that letting fresh air that contains fewer germs into the operating theatre, by opening the window on a regular basis, prevents the danger of nosocomial infections, which occur relatively frequently in public hospitals (I talk about hospital infections in detail in the report on the operation on Albert Klöti in Cologne). In order to give scientific credence to this conviction, I carried out a range of measurements of the germ count per cubic meter in my operating theatre. Each time, I found that the germ count was quite a lot lower when compared to the germ count in conventional operating rooms equipped with the laminal flow system. The renowned German orthopedist Professor Julius Hackethal (1921-1997), with whom I was having a lively exchange of ideas regarding the problem of “nosocomial infection” at the time, had made the same observation in his own clinic. On taking further measurements on the roof of my clinic, I

found that the germ count recorded there was even lower than in my operating theatre. I took further measurements in completely natural surroundings. Here the air was, as expected, practically germ-free, which proves that outside air is the cleanest air from a bacteriological perspective. When taking these measurements, I thought back to the dream I had had as a young surgeon, which I mentioned at the beginning.

There are various reasons that support the idea that cosmetic surgery can also be performed, if necessary, outside of a conventional medical environment....

Facelift on the terrasse of a luxury villa in Cologne (GE)

53-year old Albert Klöti was the man, who set in motion not just one "Open-air" operation, but a whole series of them. This innovative Swiss entrepreneur lived in Germany and had been successful in several different industries, including car distribution and selling fashionable women's clothing and equipment for the wellness sector. Eventually, he even launched his own line of dog food. With his lively, innovative imagination, Albert Klöti felt most comfortable in the company of young people. He drove to Geneva for his consultation in a sporty Mercedes prototype with gullwing doors on the sides and in the company of an attractive young woman dressed in a red mini-dress.

Before his visit to my practice, he had bumped into an acquaintance, an actress from Munich, at a charity ball. Seeing her, he immediately noticed that her face looked a lot younger than it did the last time they met almost a year previously. Upon complimenting her on how well she looked, she let him in on the secret of her youthful-looking face: she had had a facelift done by a renowned cosmetic surgeon in Switzerland. Some of her friends had also had facial rejuvenations done by this surgeon and the results had been very natural and harmonious. This immediately peaked Albert Klöti's curiosity and he asked for the name of the doctor she had trusted so completely with her rejuvenation. Albert Klöti wanted to have a facelift himself and had already consulted with several well-known surgeons in the USA, Germany and France. He had not, however, decided to go ahead with the operation.

Shortly after this fateful meeting, Albert Klöti came to my clinic for a consultation. He had a clear idea of the result he wanted to achieve: it should be clearly visible but natural enough that nobody would ever think that he had had a facelift. He simply wanted to give his face, which showed clear signs of ageing, a younger, fresher and more relaxed appearance. The skin on Albert Klöti's face had become visibly laxer, as was normal for his age, and his upper and lower eyelids had aged noticeably due to herniated adipose tissue and surplus skin, giving him a sad and tired look. Clearly visible wrinkles had formed in the area of his neck and adipose tissue had accumulated under his chin. Compared to the young, attractive people who worked with him, Albert Klöti said he felt like a grandfather. For him, he said to me, the time had come when he wanted to have his face rejuvenated in order to look a few years younger. He showed me a photo of himself taken around fifteen years previously: this was just how he wanted to look after the operation.

During our initial, extensive consultation, which was the basis for establishing the medico-surgical indication, I explained the options and limitations of a facial rejuvenation to my patient and used his face to show him how he may look after his surgery. I deliberately avoid using computer simulations, since I feel they do not pay enough attention to the individuality of the person concerned and his/her specific needs in terms of rejuvenation. By lifting the excess skin on his face and neck with my fingers and simulating the upper eyelid blepharoplasty by means of a small pen, I was able to show him what was surgically feasible. What he saw was entirely in keeping with what he had in mind. In his case, the facial rejuvenation was also combined with a micro liposuction (a technique of extracting fat) to remove the small accumulation of adipose tissue in the area of his neck. To illustrate my intentions and the envisaged result, I showed him a lot of pre-

and post-operative photos of male patients, in whose cases I had clearly rejuvenated their face, neck and eyelids....

.... Two weeks after Albert Klöti's operation, the rejuvenation act was closed with a celebratory dinner at a beautiful, exclusive restaurant with a Michelin-starred chef, attended by the star of the event himself. This restaurant was none less than the famous gourmet restaurant "Les Continents" (it operates under a different name now) at the Intercontinental Hotel, located very close to the legendary "Place des Nations". The hotel had also been host to many different countries' heads of state and royalty around the world over the years and was therefore the perfect way to thank everyone involved in this event for their great - and smooth - teamwork. There was champagne, a fine red wine and a dinner truly fit for a king to delight the palate and warm the soul of all those present.

Three weeks later, this time in Germany, Albert Klöti was once again interviewed in front of the camera by Markus Holubeck. Through the successful facial rejuvenation, Albert Klöti not only seemed younger than before in his appearance and his posture, but also in his words: "*The age of each individual is relative; we are as young as we feel!*" Klöti said and also commented that he now looked like he had done "*twenty years ago*" and therefore not only felt younger in spirit but also had a correspondingly youthful appearance. His example proved once again what a positive effect a successful surgical rejuvenation or harmonization can have on the psyche of the person involved. Albert Klöti made this clear, for example, by dressing differently after his operation, "*as befitted a younger man,*" he said. His posture demonstrated self-confidence and increased self-esteem. The rejuvenation and harmonization of his face had also given his spirit a new freshness. Klöti assured his interviewer that he no longer felt like an old man alongside his young attractive girlfriend, who was 25 years younger than him. He was ready for new adventures - both personally and professionally. I could only wish him well with this ... I had done my part: I had fulfilled Albert's wish for a harmonious, clearly visible yet natural facial rejuvenation. Now it was up to him to enjoy this outstanding result to the full and in all respects...

Facelift on the Längfluh Glacier

The legendary Matterhorn - four thousand four hundred and seventy-eight meters of dreams and fantasies that consume the minds of numberless mountaineers, regardless of whether they are young or old, beginner or old hand. And this is why, every summer season, year after year, they tread on one other's toes at the top of the mountain. But is the top of Europe's most distinctive mountain really the only place where one can find promise and fulfillment? To enjoy its majesty or get a sense of its power, you actually don't have to climb this "Mountain of Mountains", with its two summits - the Swiss summit and the Italian summit - that transform Switzerland's most prominent mountain into a conduit of cosmic energies. Sometimes, it's more pleasant to observe this proud, free-standing, tooth-like rock, which is the most attractive of all the Swiss Confederation's peaks and enjoys legendary status all over the world, from a slight distance - from the Längfluh glacier between the Matterhorn and Monte Rosa, for instance...

It was not the first time Liliane Inard d'Argence, an attractive fifty-year-old woman from an aristocratic family, had visited my practice. Ten years previously, I had performed aesthetic rhinoplasty (a nose correction) for this healthy, energetic woman from Geneva. Delighted with the result, she now wanted a facial rejuvenation to lend youth to her face's inherent beauty.

"I already knew back in 1989, when Dr Burki improved my nose so skilfully, that he was the only surgeon I would have do my facelift. I could never have known then, however, that rather than having this operation in Dr Burki's elegant clinic, I would have it in the midst of the mountains, in air that carries with it none of the dangerous (and often antibiotic resistant) pathogenic germs that are becoming increasingly prevalent in public hospitals and can lead to serious post-operative complications."

The beauty ideal is part of human nature, and so the need to alter one's face in keeping with this ideal is a completely understandable, legitimate one. Liliane Inard d'Argence had been considering this idea for some time now and therefore, when she consulted me, knew exactly what she wanted: upper and lower lid blepharoplasty and facelift. After studying her face more closely, I suggested what is known as a multilayer facelift, which is a combination of SMAS, platysma and Botox injections, the latter aimed at correcting the slight hyperactivity of the muscles in the forehead area and between the eyebrows. I also suggested a slight correction of the upper eyelids with the removal of herniated adipose tissue, the removal of a small amount of skin from the lower eyelid and a micro lipofilling of the upper and lower lip. Because her forehead had only been touched slightly by the ageing process, there was no need for a forehead lift.

As soon as I had changed my clothes, I visited the patient to make sure that no post-operative complications had arisen and that she felt well. She was still buzzing with the immense power that had emanated from the mountain landscape and felt inspired by the beauty and grandeur of these silent witnesses to this unique operation. I felt the same. I complimented her on her inimitable pioneering spirit and thanked her for this unforgettable day, which I had only experienced because of her. As so often was the case in her life, she had brought to fruition the idea that was in her head: an "Open-air" facelift beside the Matterhorn. She couldn't have given me a better gift. The operation on the Längfluh glacier was far and away the most beautiful, unparalleled experience in my career as a cosmetic surgeon to date....

The nurse, who had worked the night shift in my clinic for many years and was looking after the freshly-operated Liliane Inard d'Argence after she came back to her room, also cared for her during the night. She regularly placed damp compresses on her eyes and icepacks along both sides of her head to minimize post-operative swelling. It was also her responsibility to check regularly whether any post-operative hematoma was forming under the dressing. Furthermore, she checked the patient's blood pressure and pulse regularly and asked the patient whether she was feeling any pain so that she could administer a mild painkiller if necessary. The night nurse also made sure that Liliane Inard d'Argence walked up and down the room every now and then until she went to sleep. I visited the patient again before supper to make sure that no hematoma had formed and that healing was on its normal course. The patient felt good and could hardly wait to see the result of the facial rejuvenation surgery once the bulky head dressing was removed the next day. After eating a nutritious soup and being administered a light soporific, she slept soundly the entire night. Upon waking, she felt a slight pressure in the head and face and only diffuse pain but she didn't want to treat this with pain medication.

Before going to breakfast, I carried out the follow-up examination on the patient with the assistance of my instrumentalist, who had taken over from the night nurse. First of all, the dressing was removed. Then I carefully checked the sites of the surgery and was surprised by how well they were healing. My assistant cleaned the sutured areas and washed the patient's hair. The time had now come for Liliane Inard d'Argence to look in the mirror. She was delighted with the result, even though the skin was very slightly discolored in places and her face and eyelids were slightly swollen. This discoloration and swelling was much less than was usually the case, however. The patient stayed in her room for the day and took a few steps out on the balcony from time to time, as well as a few deep breaths in view of the Matterhorn to draw in the power of her beloved mountain. By its presence at her rejuvenation, the King of the Mountains, which attracts over 1.5 million tourists from all over the world to Zermatt every year, as if on a pilgrimage, had become her secret ally. When asked by the journalist from RTL why she had recovered so quickly from the operation, she answered, without a moment's hesitation: *"It's all down to the Matterhorn"*. With just a little light bruising and swelling, the post-operative photos illustrate just how very well the healing process went. Three days after the operation, which had been extremely successful in every respect, the patient left Zermatt....

"The result was so natural and harmonious that nobody even noticed that I'd had the operation done. The only thing I was asked was whether I'd just come back from holiday, to which I said yes, I was on the Matterhorn." She thought she looked as if the ageing process had been turned back

by at least 10 years. *“An act of magic”*, she commented. In a letter written to me a few days after her return to Geneva, she added: *“I had the sense of being a pioneer in something that, in my opinion, deserved the attention of both the public and of the Medical Association. This was a profound, one-of-a-kind experience in my life. The operation site was splendid. It was a place of beauty, purity, peace and calm.”*

Operation on the Silbersattel

Once my assistant had pulled on the sterile surgical gown and the sterile gloves for me and my colleague, I began injecting a small dose of a morphine derivative to put Eliane Guichard into a semiconscious state. I then injected the botulinum toxin and administered the hyaluronic acid injection. Following this, the local anaesthesia for the face and neck was administered. The combination of sedation and local anaesthesia meant that the patient felt no pain whatsoever during the operation. Once I had made the incisions for the eyelid surgery, I performed the upper and lower blepharoplasty. I then carried out the mini facelift and the gentle neck lift. The assistant surgeon constantly monitored the oxygen partial pressure to ensure that the oxygen saturation level in the patient's blood was normal. In order to prevent the risk of a post-operative haematoma as far as possible, I took care to ensure meticulous coagulation of the small blood vessels. It was astonishing how small the tendency to bleed was during the operation. On one occasion during the facelift, the patient also expressed her delight with the operating venue, despite the fact that she had limited feeling in her lips and face. In spite of her semi-conscious state, she was able to appreciate the wonderful mountains from time to time. Two and a half hours after the patient had arrived on the Silbersattel, the operation was finished and the dressing was applied. The facelift was carried out without any intra-operative complications and the patient felt no pain at all during the surgery. The weather conditions at the operating venue were perfect during the entire procedure; there was no wind and it was warm enough (approx. 8 degrees centigrade) that we did not get cold fingers in our sterile latex gloves, even without wearing silk gloves. And none of us had any problems due to the altitude in which we were working. During the time we were on the Silbersattel, which was a maximum of three hours, the mountain guide was constantly in contact with the helicopter office in Zermatt, in spite of the stable weather conditions, in order to keep the traffic controller informed about the timing of the operation. He was responsible for our safety on the site and he observed and monitored every movement we made; he reprimanded the photographer on one occasion since she had strayed a few metres over the marked border of our work area to take an especially good photo. He said in an authoritative tone that safety was the priority and he was in charge up there.

Since we had been focusing wholeheartedly for two and a half hours, in a state of self oblivion, on our mutual objective, the successful rejuvenation of Eliane Guichard's face, and we had achieved this goal, I suggested that we should take a 15-minute break in silence, during which each of those present could consciously find him/herself and take something significant for him/herself from the quiet communion with Nature. Now that it had become completely still around me, I was overcome by a feeling which people only experience at moments that are of paramount importance in their lives, if at all. In my body and soul, I felt the immense power of the huge mountains surrounding me; they had witnessed an event which, compared to the size of these white-covered natural beauties shining in the sunlight, seemed irrelevant and insignificant to me. As a human being, I also suddenly felt very small and unimportant. And yet I felt at that moment that every individual person and all other creatures in this cosmos were of immeasurable importance in their uniqueness and originality. In this gracious moment, I was aware that we are not separate from this cosmic whole, but a living part of it, and that every individual thought that we have and even our most insignificant action influences the whole of the cosmos. The real truth does not lie buried in books, but in Nature itself. Up here, so close to the firmament, I had the feeling that I was well and truly alive, a single entity, but one that is also part of a greater whole. As never before, I recognised the existential threat which lies behind divisive egocentricity (the social and intellectual methods of gaining power over external things and people, the drive for personal and social power), and which

lies in wait for humanity like a sword of Damocles. It seemed to me that only a radical transformation of our consciousness towards a desire for unity, which goes beyond the centrifugal passions and vested interests of a number of competing egos, can prevent the apocalypse of our civilisation. Up here, where the law of harmony prevails unflinchingly, there was no sign of the social and political chaos and the general psychological void, which people face in our world today. On the Silbersattel, between the Dufourspitze and the Nordend, I was able to contact my own centre and, from this state of perfect equilibrium, I was able to say, for the first time in my life, "*I am*".