

I got cheek implants today. No, I didn't get work done on my flat ass (although I'd like to), but I did get sculptured by Sculptra, a product recently approved by the Food and Drug Administration for treatment of lipoatrophy.

Lipoatrophy, or the loss of fat beneath the skin, results in sunken cheeks, indentations and hollow eyes. While dozens of people treadmill to nowhere would love to lose their fat, mine results from HIV and the drugs used to treat it. Men and women on long-term regimens and those over 40 seem especially susceptible. Being a protease prodigy for almost 10 years, and way over 40, I (unfortunately) qualify.

A quick Google and I discovered Dr. Marla Ross of Dermatology Associates in Tigard. It turns out Dr. R has impeccable gay credentials: At her wedding, she was given away by her gay uncle; her mom was walked down the aisle by his partner of 40 years.

In the waiting room I sit surrounded by information about cosmetic procedures I've heard about on Oprah. There's

The other cheek

Dermatologist gets under my skin

even a brochure for men about using Intense Pulsed Light to diminish facial redness (doesn't eliminating alcohol do that, too?) and Superficial Chemical Peels (for superficial gay men?).

The examination room lies behind a locked entry door. Strange, I think, isn't Tigard safe? Maybe it's to protect the doctor from dissatisfied patients with botched procedures.

A vision of Joan Rivers banging the metal casing and shrieking at the top of her lungs enters my mind as I enter the inner world.

I sign an informed consent, which reiterates the side effects (including redness, tenderness and acne-like formations—isn't one of the benefits of middle age outgrowing acne?), and Dr. Ross draws lines over my cheeks with a purple marker. These will guide her as she injects the milky liquid. The lines look like a crow has stepped in grape

juice before landing on my skin, and suddenly I feel like a 9-year-old at a face painting party. (See? I feel younger already.)

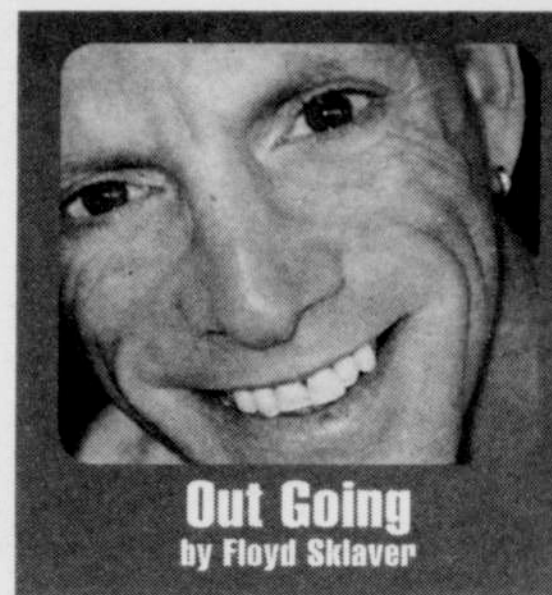
She injects a local anesthetic into each cheek and then the Sculptra itself, including a little extra to fill in my canyon-like laugh lines ("strictly for beauty," she adds cheekily). I don't feel any pain or discomfort, but I worry that I'll get that strange guppy look, like Barbara Walters or Meg Ryan.

The entire procedure takes about 20 minutes. Afterward, I peek in a mirror, and while one side of my face looks normal (in fact youthful), the other appears swollen, as if I had an abscessed tooth. I look a bit like a chipmunk hoarding food for winter storage.

She assures me that the plumpness results from the saline that Sculptra dissolves in; within a few short hours, my face looks like before—beauty is so fleeting—although a bit sore.

Unlike many reconstructive procedures, the results with Sculptra build over time. The synthetic material gradually increases the skin's thickness to fill in the folds and sunken areas, and studies show the results last at least two years.

Treatment takes anywhere from three to six visits, spaced six weeks apart. While it ain't



Out Going
by Floyd Sklaver

cheap, financial assistance is available: Treatments are free if you make less than \$40,000, with a sliding scale up to incomes of \$80,000. Prices should come down once it becomes more common.

After my next appointment in October, I'll fill you in on how my cheeks are filling in. But until I'm beautiful, let's talk about the beauty at Last Thursday.

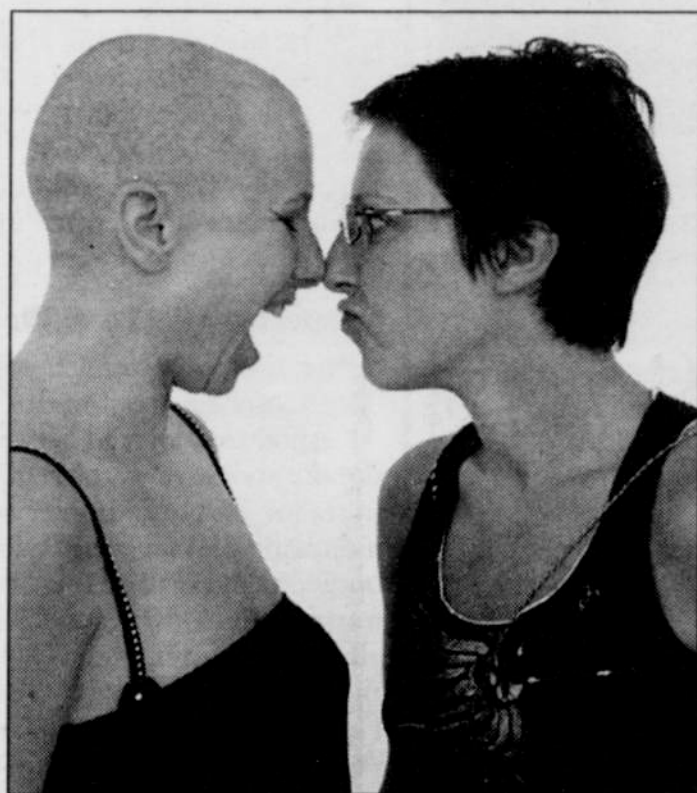
Begun eight years ago, Last Thursday abounds

with artists and craftsmen of all calibers and attracts swarms of the tattooed, pierced and just plain eccentric. There, on the corner of 27th and Alberta, I assisted lesbian photographer Jan Sonnenmair, who recently relocated from Los Angeles, as she invited folks at the festival to strike a pose in front of an 8-foot-wide sheet of white paper.

The results, a fascinating combination of Cindy Sherman and Richard Avedon, present an eclectic mix of ages, races and sexualities. Approximately 70 will be displayed in the gallery space at Office, 2204 N.E. Alberta St., when Alberta Street celebrates its 100th Last Thursday on Sept. 29.

With galleries, retail spaces, sidewalk artists, street musicians and performance art everywhere, self-expression is the byword. At Last Thursday, lose your inhibitions and let yourself be Out Going. [E]

FLOYD SKLAVER wants to know about your event. E-mail him at floydsklaver@comcast.net.



Office will display photographs by Jan Sonnenmair during the 100th Last Thursday celebration Sept. 29.

Know Where You Stand:

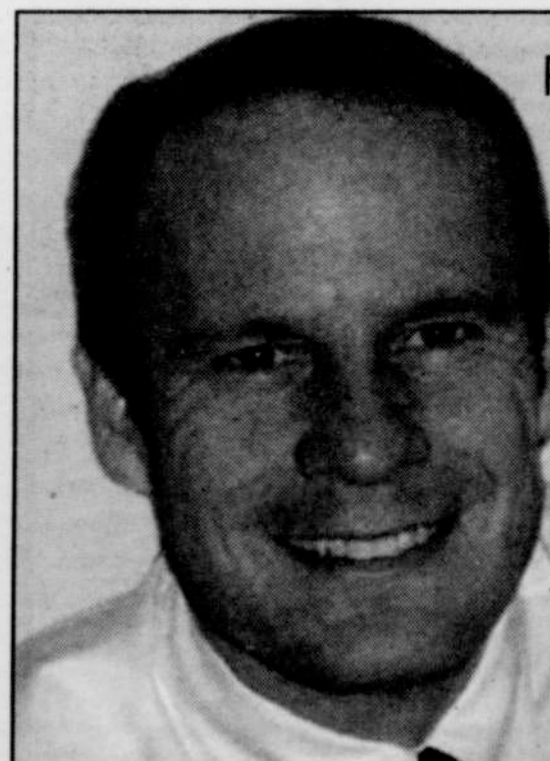
Everyone has an HIV status. Knowing yours means that you can take control of your health and lifestyle.



Brother to Brother is a support and advocacy organization for black gay and bi males living in the Portland metro area. Brother to Brother is committed to reducing the rates of HIV/AIDS within the African American gay/bi male community. For more information or if you would like to volunteer please contact us:

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