

Seeing With Your Fingers...

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The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics & Spa Therapy

As a make-up artist I am drawn to different textures, different colors and different shapes. Texture gives depth, interest and personality. It is one of the variables used in studying the canvas upon which to paint. As an artist I create a story on a client's face. My brush paints upon the bone structure underlying the skin – a bone structure upon which the skin drapes and folds and leaves beautiful highlights and lowlights. Every face has its unique identity. The vision I see is through my eyes. My brush enfolds the beauty as I sculpt with color. As an aesthetician I study texture through my fingers.

My eyes are closed...Seeing without eyes is seeing with your fingers and palms. Feeling the texture is seeing the landscape with your mind. The landscape will tell you a story. It is the skin of your client.

Underlying structures creates textures. These structures are the threads, which weave a pattern. The pattern can be rough or smooth. The threads can be heavy or delicate. The weaving between the threads can be slippery or dry. Some threads feel frayed. Your fingers feel the location...the density and the scarcity. Your eyes are closed as you stroke your fingers and palms over the client's skin. It tells a story. Your mind puts the pieces together – skin type, skin condition, client's business & personal lifestyle and client product usage.

Knowing the physiology and biology of the appendages of the skin and knowing the terrain of the epidermis is important in forming the mental picture of what you are feeling. Trust what you feel. Skin products are texture upon texture. Make-up is texture upon texture also. Powder eye shadow goes on top of face powder. Cream eye shadow goes on top of cream foundation. Understand the relationship between the texture of your client's skin and the texture of the skin care products you use in your treatments. There is simplicity. There is a sensibility. There is an "it feels good" response from the client. Feel with your fingers. Stop seeing with your eyes.

Forget for a moment the literature you have available regarding a specific skin care line for a specific skin type and specific skin condition. Forget the products that you carry in your salon or spa. Free your mind and think your way through what you feel. Come up with your own analysis of what is recommended for this client. Every skin is different. Texture is the key. Skin care recommendations do not come out of a pamphlet. They come out of the feel that the aesthetician has once the fingers and palms are placed upon the skin. This is what aestheticians are equipped to do. This is what we study. This is what we get better and better at with the more skin we touch. We become experts at diagnosing. The client does not have that expertise. We do. A piece of paper does not have this expertise. We do. We use this expertise and then make selections based on the ingredients we need to resolve the particular problems at hand.

What we should have available to us is an assortment of different textures of products from which to choose. Skin care is texture upon texture with the correct treatment ingredients supplemented to solve bacterial growth, hydration, sensitivities, nourishment, etc. When we place our hands on a living breathing tissue it will tell us what is happening there. We ascertain why it is happening based on our knowledge of biology and skin physiology. We understand the cause and effect of sebaceous glands, hair, glasses, eye cream, telephones, men's beard, dirty fingernails, etc. The skin is a history of what has happened to it, is still happening and will continue to happen unless something is changed. The client comes to us for advice, change and results. Let's get started with the art of touch using imagery. Let's see with our fingers.

Let's start by cleansing the skin of your client. Let's say she is a female although this would apply to either male or female. Place both of your hands on her face with your fingertips folded over her jawline. What sensation does the skin give you? Smooth... thick... heavy... fragile...loose... firm? Now gently drag your fingertips over the face towards the forehead. Is the skin smooth? Stop where there seems to be a bump. How big is it? Does it seem to be superficial or deep? Is it recent or old? Are there pockets of congestion? Open your eyes and look to see what color it is. Where do the problems seem to be located? Are they symmetrical on the face or only on one side? Is the oil distributed evenly or in certain areas? Do the bumps appear to be something other than a pimple? Are they possibly the cause of an irritation? Are the sebaceous glands draining properly?

Now take the information you gained by your first touch and think through what you felt. You have to put it all together quickly because you are now formulating what to do in the facial. This is where your storage house of knowledge is important. Always learn and learn and learn. The client wants results. She also has to get out on time. The facial has to have flow and continuity and the sequence of what you do needs to make sense. Where do you start? What lays the groundwork of what to do with the skin? What type of product would go on this type of skin? What type of texture should the product have? Texture is the first part of the equation. This is the first thing at which you look. From here you add the procedures of how to achieve the desired results. Then select the ingredients, which should be within that texture...calming, anti-bacterial, nourishing and hydrating. Now you are ready to treat the skin. You are not just following a standard routine. You are thinking.

The reason why texture is important is because we are applying something topical onto the skin. It has to be absorbed. Some skin types have large pores while others are miniscule. Some skin is so easily irritated it gets inflamed with the slightest touch. Thick skin needs to be exfoliated to reduce the thickness.

To really grasp the concept of texture let's do some visualizing. This will reinforce what your fingers are feeling. Imagine stroking your fingers over a silk cloth. It feels slippery and wet. What type of product would adhere to this type of texture? Surely not a slippery one, the product would slide off. What ingredients give slip and slide? The answer is "oils". Therefore someone with this type of wet slippery skin would use something that is more of a loose gel texture with great spread ability and cling. A hydrator with water as

the carrier, water gives traction. Are you starting to understand why this is the first key to your treatments?

Now imagine stroking your fingers over a crepe cloth. The fibers feel dry, smaller and closer together. Would you put a heavy night treatment on this type of texture? Wouldn't that suffocate the fibers? Perhaps something "wet" would be better. In this instance you should use something loose that would soften the texture and "bathe" the fibers. Perhaps light essential oils or serums. These penetrate into the epidermis. Perhaps we want to strengthen the weak, small fibers and at the same time plump them up. This skin type may be on the dry side.

Now imagine a cloth with a rose pattern in it. It feels as if the fibers are unevenly distributed. Some are heavier than others. Some are raised. They feel irregular. Could this skin be irritated by something? Could it be sensitive to your touch or any other type of environmental abrasion? Rather than fray the fibers one would be extra careful to avoid snagging. Perhaps a product that sits comfortably "on top" of the fibers would calm and protect them. A heavy clinging gel that clings and wraps around the individual fibers would surely protect them from any environmental influences...perhaps a thicker hydrating gel . This skin type may have rosacea. Aren't most treatments for rosacea in a gel form?

Now imagine a wool cloth that has both a roughness and thickness to it. You also feel different sizes of bumps both on top and underneath the epidermis. Your fingertips also sense an oily thick film. Your interest lies in what is underneath the epidermis. There seems to be a lot of congestion there as well as on top. Some bumps seem to have a "crater" in them. You open your eyes to see if there is any redness indicating inflammation and sensitivity. Could this skin be acne prone? Don't you just want to "heal" it? It needs "treatment products". The skin has lesions and is crying for help. Bacteria can enter the systems of the body if it is not controlled. It needs anti-bacterial ingredients. It also needs deep, deep cleaning.

Skin care products have to be thought out. Remember: First we established the texture of the product. Secondly, we determine the type of ingredients we need within that texture to solve the skin condition. You will get the results you want. The client will say "it feels good". That is your clue. Her nerve endings in the basement membrane can tell it is right. You need to trust the nerve endings within your fingers. Now you are the professional that you trained to be.

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