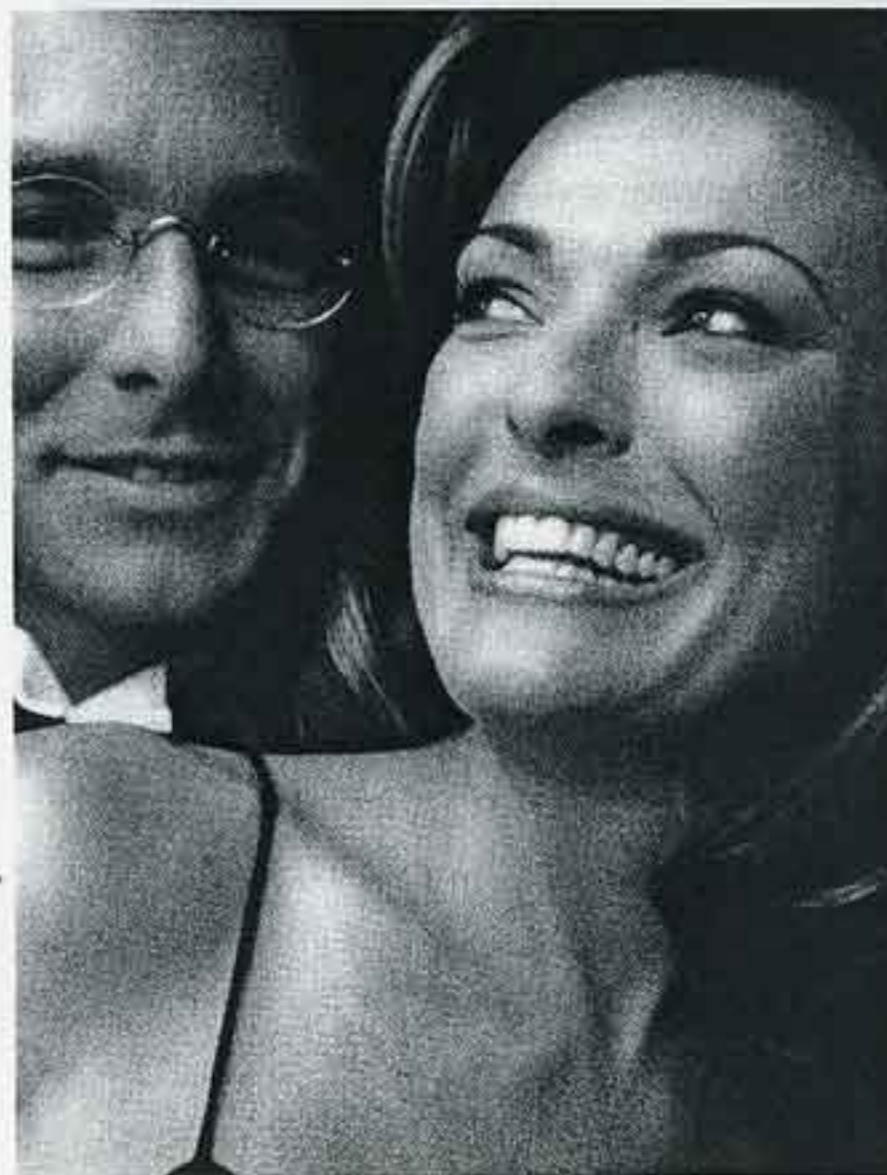


## BodyMind&Spirit

### Taking The Bite Out Of Aesthetic Problems

One of the most common changes in facial aesthetics as we age is a change in facial proportion. Compare a photo of yourself 30 years ago versus now and you will likely see a decrease in the height of your lower face, measured from the tip of the nose to the lower border of the chin. In dentistry, this measurement is called the vertical dimension of occlusion (bite). Imagine a denture wearer without their dentures in place: the jaws are over-closed and the nose comes very close to the chin, resulting in a Popeye kind of look. Obviously this is an exaggeration, but the teeth do play an important role in facial aesthetics, and any abnormality can be indicative of a serious bite problem.

Changes in bite can happen in varying degrees. As we age, our teeth wear and become shorter, or can be made shorter by dental work. Incremental changes are small and therefore not obvious until cumulatively they become significant. It is important to recognize this phenomenon when considering any cosmetic dental treatment. If the vertical dimension of occlusion has decreased significantly, there may be some bite problems that compromise treatment.



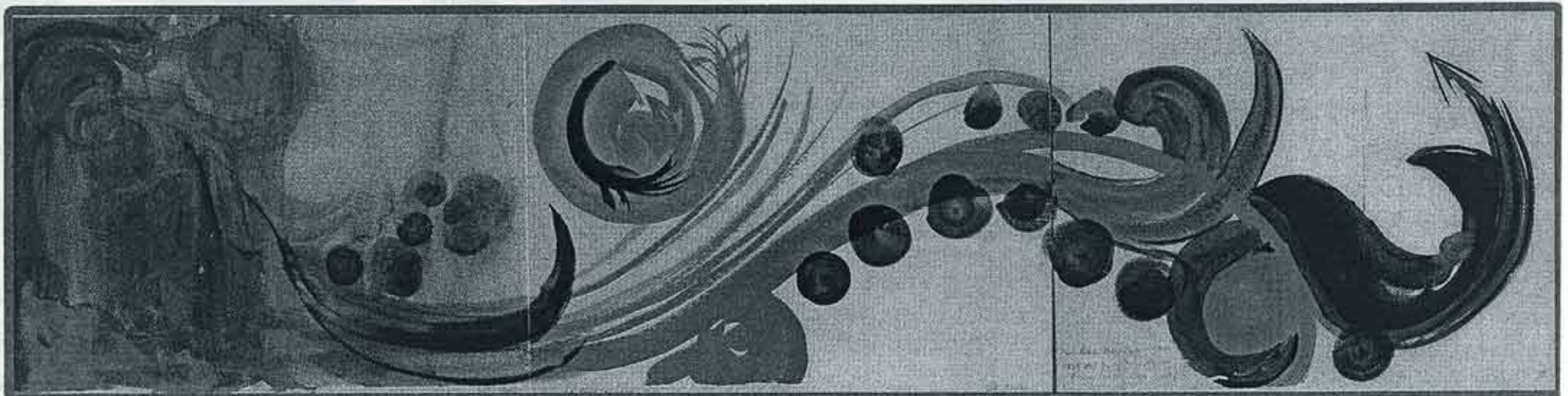
Sometimes it may be a risk factor that only means modifying the treatment, but in other cases it may be a complete contraindication.

Probably more significant than aesthetic issues are the chronic pain and discomfort that may result. Bite problems can be a part of what is commonly known as "TMD" or "TMJ," and can significantly and adversely affect every day life. Many symptoms may not obviously be related to the bite or decreased lower face height. Chronic neck and shoulder pain or tightness or seemingly unrelated ear problems are some common signs. Also, excessive wear on the teeth and headaches are indications there may be a bite-related problem. Fortunately, with the help of computer analysis, there are now ways to determine how much of the lower face height has been lost. Using that information, and by restoring the teeth to their proper length and bite, many pain issues as well as aesthetic problems can be eliminated. — Martin Abelar, DDS

*Dr. Abelar is an instructor for the prestigious Las Vegas Institute for Advanced Dental Studies, which teaches practicing dentists contemporary techniques in cosmetic and restorative dentistry. He can be reached at his practice, the La Jolla Center for Cosmetic and Restorative Dentistry, at 858/457-7994.*

### Express Yourself

Relieving stress and achieving a sense of well being can be attained by a number of methods, but one of the most enlightening is expressive arts therapy. Local expressive arts therapist Lindsay Duff's weekend seminar, Create Your World, is one of the better places to begin such a journey. Her hands on approach to helping clients express their desires through art has been touted as a "life changing experience." The seminar will take place September 10-12 at the Zen Mountain Center. (760/487-1992). — Charles Union



Watercolor (11" x 45")

Dragon

Lindsay Duff 2002