



SMILE DESIGN

We all recognise an attractive smile when we see one. We also appreciate beautiful objects and works of art, but what makes one smile or painting stand out in a crowd whilst another just doesn't seem right? Questions like this have occupied the great artists for thousands of years and they understand more than anyone else that creating beauty isn't just about having an artistic bent or a special talent. There are also simple rules that, if followed, give an appearance that is pleasing to the eye. Art critics and art historians know this well and we have all seen great paintings analysed and their underlying forms broken down into their constituent parts. The human mouth is no exception and a growing number of cosmetic dentists have started to analyse the smile in order to achieve beauty and harmony in their dentistry.

Dr Stephen Franks, cosmetic dentist at the Moor Park Specialist Dental Centre, explains: 'Modern cosmetic dentistry is a blend of art and science; there are simple rules that need to be followed, and when these are applied, with the addition of a little artistry, the results are a stunning smile'.

A typical smile analysis may involve looking at over thirty different variables from lip position and gum form to tooth proportions, symmetry and surface texture.

The lips and gums make up what dentists call the 'pink aesthetics' and they are often overlooked. Together they set the scene for the stars of the show, the teeth themselves. For example, the lip

position on smiling dictates what dentists call the smile line. If the lips are low whilst smiling then the gums are often hidden but if the smile line is high more attention needs to be paid to the shape and form of the gums.

There is a current trend towards having lighter and lighter teeth, spurred on by the prevalence of tooth whitening and gleaming celebrity smiles. This has become so common that dental manufacturers have had to bring out new materials to match these bleached teeth. The basic colour however is only part of the story. To look natural, crowned or veneered, teeth will need to have similar optical properties to natural teeth. They will need a graduation of shade, being yellower at the neck, where the enamel is thinner allowing the underlying dentine to shine through, and lighter and more translucent at the tips. A skilled dental technician will build the crown or veneer in layers using different porcelains with different optical properties to skilfully mimic those of a natural tooth.

Most people will focus on the front teeth when looking at a person's smile but it is important not to overlook what dentists call the labial corridor. This is part of the smile back from the canine or eyeteeth. Often the teeth are set too far inwards giving this part of the smile a dark appearance. This can be especially problematic if only the front six teeth are veneered. The front teeth will look great but the back teeth seem to disappear into the shadows and the smile just doesn't look right.

The two front teeth are the most important in the mouth in terms of aesthetic impact. They are the stars of the show and need to be just right. A common error is to make them too small when providing crowns or veneers. This results in a smile that lacks impact and character. They are also the only two teeth in the smile that need to be a perfect match. A skilful dental technician will often sacrifice perfect symmetry of the lateral or second incisors, where it won't be noticed, in order to achieve it for the central incisors, where it is critical.

Most people don't have symmetrical faces and it is not unusual for the midline of the smile not to match the midline of the face. A more common finding is for the midline of the lower teeth not to match the midline of the uppers. Surprisingly this difference needs to be quite extreme for it to impact on the smile. Far more important is the vertical line made between the two front teeth. If this isn't perfectly perpendicular to the horizon the observer will notice straight away that something isn't right.

These are just a few examples of details that need to be considered in designing smiles, and there are many more. Put them all together and in the hands of a skilled dentist supported by a skilled technician, the result can be that winning smile.

To contact Stephen Franks or to request a Moor Park Specialist Dental Centre brochure, please contact the practice on 01923 823504 or email: info@moorparkdental.com