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The \$50,000 Smile

No one knows better than dentist Michael Apa what great teeth are worth.

By Katie Berohn

Dentist Michael Apa has Apa Aesthetic locations in New York, Los Angeles, Miami, and Dubai.

You might not be a dentist, but you know perfect teeth when you see them. As more and more people (famous or not) have suddenly-perfect smiles, social media has become fixated on “good teeth.” Central to the discussion are veneers—sliver-thin coverings for the teeth, often made from porcelain. A subtle status symbol, veneers represent a market that’s projected to reach \$4.6 billion. Bad veneers—teeth that are too straight, too white, too Chiclet-shaped—are like T-shirts plastered in logos: They’re tacky. Good veneers—teeth that show discernment and restraint in color, shape, and straightness—are like a Loro Piana cashmere sweater: They’re quiet luxury.

Decidedly in the “good veneer” column are patients of dentist Michael Apa. Clients of his sought-after dental practice, Apa Aesthetic—now with four airy, spalike locations—include the Jenner sisters, Chloë Sevigny, and the Olsen twins. (Publicity-shy patients can use a back entrance and a private floor.) Apa has over 600K followers on Instagram. He wears head-to-toe Brunello Cucinelli. He collects Ferraris. Consider him the Tom Brady of teeth.

Apa can make it look like you’ve had subtle work done on your face, even if you haven’t. If you’ve always wanted lip

filler, he can slightly arch and lengthen your front teeth to give the illusion of bigger lips. In lieu of buccal fat removal, Apa can gently slope your teeth inward to create hollower cheeks. And instead of cheek filler, he can “kick out” your smile, extending the sides just a touch for more volume and a bigger smile.

Good veneers can also subtly communicate youth, Apa says. Teeth are the support system for the bottom third of your face. Over time, smiles may become smaller and jaws weaker,

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but veneers can help fortify your face structure. As people age, teeth also become discolored—and Apa can tell the difference between shades of white better than an interior designer choosing paint swatches. Even if a patient wants a high-wattage movie-star smile, Apa’s ceramists blend multiple shades and opacities of porcelain to make the teeth white, but in a multifaceted way.

A smile redesign with Apa costs a cool \$5,000 per tooth, and he has a 10-tooth minimum. Key to his bespoke approach is fitting every patient with a set of temporaries to get used to their new smile. After making adjustments in a next-day appointment, patients wear the temps for two weeks before they’re replaced with hand-painted porcelain.

Apa’s longevity in the game, at 21 years of practice, also makes him Brady-esque. Yet he still finds meaning in the work, a chance to give patients the same confidence he found in good teeth. “I’ve met tons of people who, every time they speak, their hand immediately goes in front of their mouth—or when they smile, their lip shakes because they’re trained to not show their teeth,” he says. “It will inhibit so many different parts of your life. To be able to take it away in three hours, and produce something that looks real...that’s a superpower.”