

SEPTEMBER 2003

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## SLEEK & SIMPLE

TRU, SAN FRANCISCO'S NEWEST DAY SPA

**THE MALE CLIENT:**  
How to Attract,  
Cater To, and Keep Him

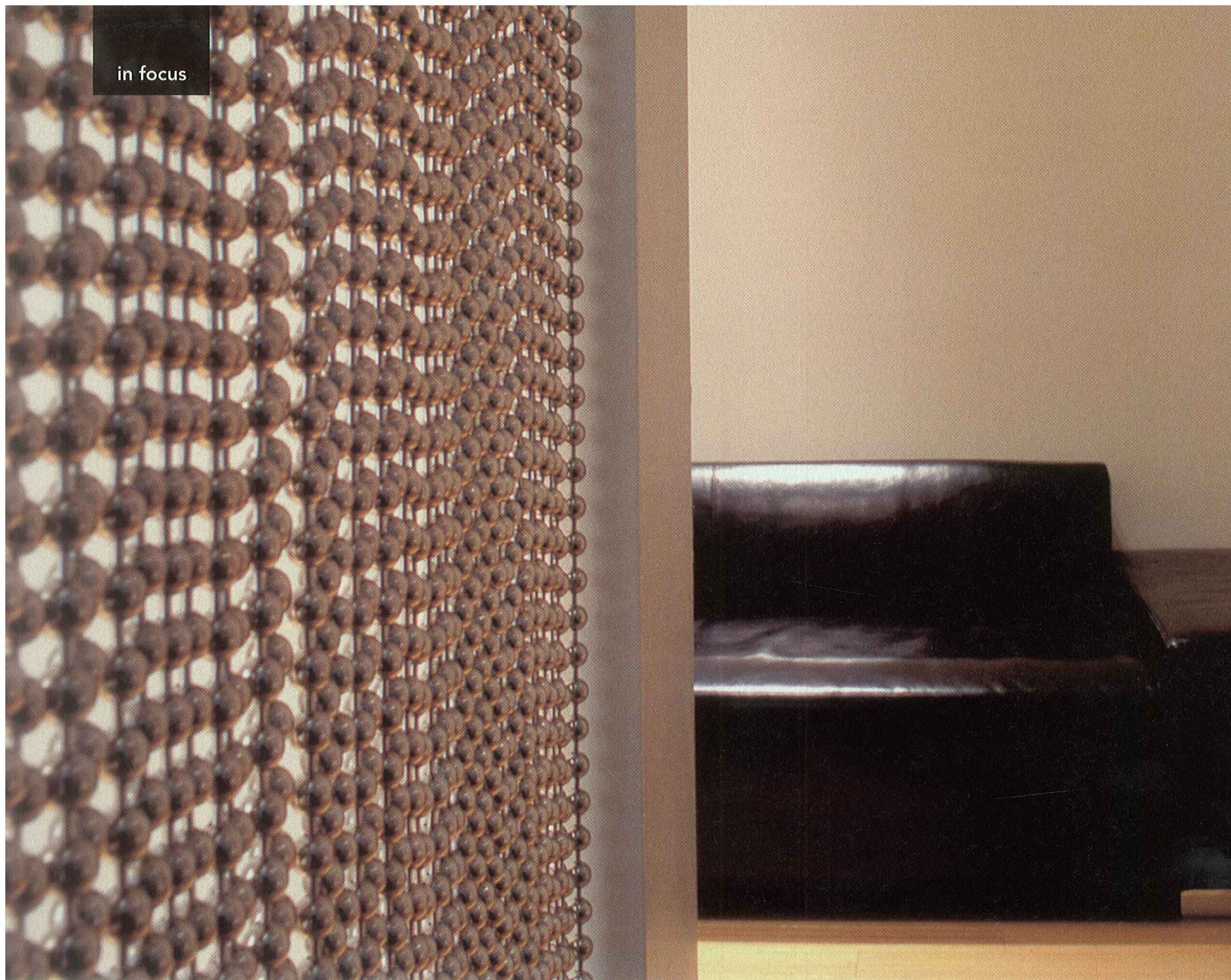
**MIGHTY MASKS:** A Roundup  
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# trū

A San Francisco day spa offers results-oriented treatments with plenty of pampering on the side.

**PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC LAIGNEL**

TRU ISN'T A SPA FOCUSED SOLELY ON MALE CLIENTELE, BUT IT IS THE brainchild of two men who had a vision of what a spa should be. "Knowing what I like as a consumer and as a spa-goer was my basis for building a successful spa," says owner Craig Fossella, who brought his vision to life with the help of architect Chris Kofitsas. Noting a lack of spas designed for busy clients in San Francisco, Fossella chose to build his spa in the City by the Bay. "There are a lot of traditional day spas designed around the premise that people go to be pampered for a whole day, but that's just not realistic for everyone," he says. "Spa-goers today want a place where they can get a specific service while escaping from reality for just an hour or two."

Although originally looking in the Union Square area, Fossella opened Tru in a space adjacent to a Holiday Inn for business travelers, which is located between the Financial District and residential





A stainless steel ball chain curtain separates the men's lounge area, which features leather couches; the hallway fits into the spa's bright, modern decor.

areas of North Beach, Russian Hill, and Pacific Heights. With a separate entrance and a parking garage in the building (something unheard of in San Francisco), Fossella knew the location was an obvious choice for attracting clientele from the entire city rather than a specific neighborhood.

Once the space was secured, he began working in conjunction with the building's owners on finding the right architect for the project. When the owners suggested an architectural firm they had used many times in the past, Fossella got on a plane to San Francisco to meet with the firm and close the deal. While catching up on his spa reading on the flight, Fossella came across an article in *American Spa* about color light therapy that fascinated him, along with a feature story on Maximus in New York City. "I just fell in love with the design of Maximus," he remembers. He found the architect's

name in the sidebar of the article and called him as soon as he landed. "Chris answered right away, and we had a preliminary discussion about what I was looking for. He was very excited about the idea of doing a spa in San Francisco. Without even discussing money or details, we both decided we wanted to go forward with this," he says.

Tru's tagline, "Fresh. Modern. Day Spa." is reflected throughout the spa in both the treatments and the decor. Fossella purposely made a departure from the typical earth tones and opted instead for shades of white and blue bathed in natural sunlight throughout the spa. "Earth tones don't excite me. What excites me is the vastness and the beauty and depth of the sky. Everything is done in a palette of light colors because when I walk into a light space, I feel lighter and better immediately. That's how I want my clients to feel." By a stroke of luck, the building that houses Tru offers an abundance of





Left to right: The women's lounge area; retail products are displayed in translucent Plexiglas cubes backlit with warm light.

natural sunlight. All six facial rooms have windows, as well as the changing rooms and showers. There are none in the manicure and pedicure area, but each station does have an individual flat screen television to keep clients occupied.

The five massage rooms can be any color the client chooses. Tru integrates color light therapy into its body treatments by using colored light to bring about many of the same desired psychological changes that one would expect from a massage. "The article I read in *American Spa* talked about the scientific power of color, and that spurred something in my mind," says Fossella. "The more research I did on the effects color has on people's psyche, the more I felt like I was reading about aromatherapy." So Fossella decided to mate the two. For example, TruTherapy, the spa's signature massage, is focused on the client's choice of Energizing, Relaxing, or Detoxifying therapies. Each therapy combines a specially tailored massage with heat-sensitive aromatherapy balm and a unique program of coordinated light to increase the effectiveness of the desired therapy. Tru also offers extended massages (the minimum is 75 minutes) to ensure that the whole body is addressed properly, as well as facials lasting 70 to 80 minutes to allow plenty of time for necessary extractions and a massage. Like the menu states, "Can you really do a thorough, full-body massage in an hour? Maybe, but why try?"

Something else unique to Tru is the spa's Tropical Rainforest Room, which was born out of the desire for a creative alternative to typical water treatments. Upon entering the room, the client lays down on a table while the therapist applies a treatment product. The therapist leaves the room, and the second phase of the treatment begins. Instead of

incorporating body wraps to help open the pores and absorb the product (Fossella personally dislikes them), the Tropical Rainforest Room transforms into a steam room for 10 minutes while the client relaxes on the table reaping the benefits. Then the lights and music change, preparing the client for the "tropical rain" phase, where water mists softly down from the ceiling, pushing the steam to the floor. The client then walks under a 100-gallon-a-minute waterfall for a 90-second shower before being led to another area to dry off.

When designing the 900-square-foot retail area, Fossella wanted to ensure that it was large enough for clients to browse comfortably without feeling as though someone was breathing down their necks. All products were chosen by two of the spa's top estheticians, who hand-picked what they considered to be the strongest products from different lines. The estheticians also chose professional products to be used in the treatments as well. "I wanted to own our treatments, so we created them all ourselves using different brands," says Fossella. "For each treatment, our experts found what they considered to be the best product on the market to address that issue."

Uniformity is an essential part of Fossella's philosophy for a successful spa. Tru closes for half a day every week to train the 50 or so employees in every area. This involves massage therapists teaching nail techs how to perform calf massages and facialists learning about new product lines. "In most spas you can go in and get two different facials from two different estheticians, but not here," says Fossella. "I didn't want to build a spa unless I knew it was going to be better than what everyone was used to, so that's what we created." And that's Tru.—*Nanci McArdle*





Windows in the facial rooms allow for natural sunlight and bamboo floors throughout the spa give it a natural feel.

## TRU

(San Francisco)

**Owner:** Craig Fossella

**Spa Director:** Craig Fossella

**Opened:** June 2003

### • CLIENT BASE

80% female

20% male

ages 22 to 45

### • SPACE

5,500 square feet,  
11 treatment rooms, plus  
a Tropical Rainforest Room

### • COST OF SPA

\$2 million

### • SERVICES

- body treatments
- facials
- hydrotherapy
- manicures and pedicures
- massage
- microdermabrasion
- packages
- waxing

### • MOST POPULAR

**TruO2 (\$120, 80 minutes)**

### • PRICE RANGE

**\$12** for a lip or chin wax to  
**\$200** for The Full Monte,  
which includes the application  
of a ginseng-based body  
mask, 100-minute massage,  
and hair and scalp treatment

### • PRODUCT LINES

- Astara
- Decléor
- Essie
- Farmaesthetics
- Karin Herzog
- Korres
- MOP
- Ole Henriksen
- Peter Thomas Roth
- Rescue Beauty
- Skinceuticals
- Sun Laboratories
- Z. Bigatti

### • EQUIPMENT

- Earthlite
- Echo2Plus
- PowerPeel

### • ARCHITECT

Chris Kofitsas, New World  
Design Builders  
(West Paterson, NJ)