

AS SEEN IN

LONG ISLAND
PULSE MAGAZINE

MEDICINAL

Tattoo

*Eliminating Scars and
Improving Self-Esteem*

By Toni Munna

It's a long road from a career as an optometrist in Colombia to a tattoo artist helping cancer patients in Roslyn Heights. For Olga Lucia, the journey began when she graduated from La Salle University in Colombia, where for five years she studied anatomy, bacteriology, pathology, histology, physics and pharmacology. She was licensed as an optometrist in Colombia and practiced there for five years before immigrating to the US.

When she first began her practice, disposable contact lenses were quite new and not in general use in Colombia.

While providing one of her services, cleaning her patient's lenses, Olga noticed a buildup of makeup on these lenses. She also noticed the difficulty some of her patients had applying makeup without wearing the lenses to see. She became interested in the benefits of permanent eyeliner. This interest led to a new career as an esthetician

and makeup artist, and ultimately a tattoo artist and Certified Permanent Cosmetic (micropigmentation) Professional.

"At first, I was using permanent cosmetics, a form of tattoo, to offer women a convenience," she says. "It not only saved them the trouble of applying eyeliner with blurry vision, it saved them time."

But the more she learned about permanent cosmetics and became more adept through experience, she realized there was much more she could do with her talent. She began to work with burn victims, replacing lost eyebrows with her tattoos. Olga's education and experience as an optometrist enhanced her ability to work closely around the eyes and provide her clients with a level of comfort and trust they would not have with other practitioners.

Since moving to the US in 1994, Olga has become a Licensed Esthetician and makeup artist, a Fellow of the American Academy of Micropigmentation and is the only Certified Micropigmentation Instructor on Long Island. She is licensed by both the New York City and Nassau Departments of Health as a tattoo practitioner, specializing in micropigmentation for nearly 18 years.

"The word tattoo...we usually just think of decoration," she explains. "But to those with disfiguration, these replacements mean so much. They benefit self-esteem, a feeling of being 'normal' again."



Olga applies permanent eyebrows and eyeliner for cancer patients who are about to receive chemo treatments. This way she can follow the natural shape and when the hairs fall out, it is not as noticeable. She also uses her technique to camouflage small scars on heads where hair doesn't grow.

Once she saw firsthand how her work helped her clients, Olga expanded her practice to women who have undergone breast reconstruction due to cancer. She combines her artistic talents with her extensive knowledge of micropigmentation, using several different shades to create areolas with a three-dimensional look for her clients.

"When most doctors reconstruct the nipple, they use the same pink color for every woman. With my background in cosmetics, I know the right colors to use to make the skin tones suit the individual. This gives a much more natural look."

She can also hide white or creamy colored scars. You can see sample photos on her website, permanentcosmeticsbyolga.com. It's really quite amazing. One client, she said, had a dime-sized white scar just above her lip. "She told me people often thought she had sour cream on her face." Olga was able to use skin tones that made the scar invisible.

It is clear that Olga is not only proud of the work she does with these clients, but she also has a passion for it. According to the Federal Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998, health insurance is supposed to cover her work on breast cancer patients. Quite often, she says, she does not get payment from the health insurance companies, thus Olga's work becomes pro-bono.

"This is important. It's so much more than just about vanity," she stresses. "It's about restoring quality of life." ❧