

TOKYO SKIN CLINIC

Story and photo by Jim Merk

I found myself taking an immediate liking to Drs. Yuri Okabe and René du Cloo. Perhaps it was their bedside manner, perhaps it was the way they unfolded their story, but something about them felt very familiar and approachable.

Dr. Okabe usually answers first, while Dr. du Cloo listens and fills in. He has long, artistic fingers, which must stay busy. She has a persona which fills the room and feels like a gentle hug.

Tokyo Weekender: Tell me how you found each other.

Dr. Okabe: I used to be a linguist. In fact my first masters was in linguistics. I went to the University of Amsterdam to do research in the field of sociolinguistics, especially with language Frisian (minority language). I met René while researching the language. I grew tired of linguistics, though, and changed to medicine.

Dr. du Cloo: I didn't start



with medicine either. For me it was physics, but it was too dry and I moved to medicine. After Amsterdam we came to Japan and studied plastic surgery at the Nippon Medical School. Plastic surgery is quite limited in Japan (mostly burns patients) and this was not our concept. We wanted to move into cosmetic surgery.

TW: How would you define your clinic?

Drs: We are a multi-disciplinary clinic. Outside our specialty,

cosmetic surgery, our primary service is dermatology. The threshold is low for dermatology, so many types of patients come to us for this. Then, as their needs expand, they come back for our other services, for example, gynecology.

TW: Who sees the patients?

Drs: About the same number of patients is seen by each of us. Sometimes the same patient is seen by both of us for different problems. Sometimes we see them together. It brings a diverse experience and a couple of viewpoints if the problem is complex and multifaceted. It is like an immediate second opinion. We find this approach can be reassuring for the patients.

TW: What are the benefits of a clinic over a hospital?

Drs: The biggest advantage is the personal care. We cannot see so many patients, but we get to know them very well.

In a big hospital, doctors get

moved. They have lots of testing areas, but many don't know your particular issues. Many people tend to just answer questions and not open up the channels of communication, which is very important for a complete and accurate diagnosis.

Also, we feel lucky to spend more time with patients.

TW: Concerning cosmetic surgical treatments, can you explain your philosophy?

Drs: We feel most people are pretty satisfied with themselves and only want to go back to the way they were, for instance, for their job. We are not here to recreate people, just renovate them.

We are both meticulous and our styles are quite similar. We have similar ideas and tastes; we hardly ever disagree. We complement each other well in other ways—René does most of the liposuction work, for example. He is stronger and it takes a lot of strength to complete the procedure. On the other hand, I do most of the eye work.

TW: How old is the clinic?

Drs: We have had a clinic since 1992, but we moved to Roppongi in 1996.

TW: Tell me about your clientele.

Drs: Our clients are usually non-Japanese: American, Canadian, British, Australian, and people from continental Europe, Africa, South American and English-speaking parts of Asia.

Located in Roppongi, multilingual and multi-disciplinary, it is a clinic to remember.

Usual office hours:

Monday, Thursday and Friday from 2 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday, 9 to 11 a.m. and 1 to 4 p.m.

Closed on first, third and fifth Mondays of every month. Also closed on the first and third Saturdays of every month.

Visits are made by appointment. Please call 3585-0282 in English.

www.tokyo-skin-clinic.com ■