



Key to making great smiles... still our ceramists



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In 1976, I published the first edition of *Esthetics in Dentistry*, and during the process I experienced just how important it was to learn an esthetic approach from each dental specialty. This became the impetus for Charlie Pincus and myself to form the American Academy of Esthetic Dentistry (AAED). In future years, the European and Japanese Academies of Esthetic Dentistry would be formed, which gave impetus to the formation of the International Federation of Esthetic Dentistry (IFED). Who would have believed that what we started out in order to teach each other at the first AAED meeting in 1976 would so quickly evolve into the creation of new methods of teaching esthetic dentistry. The one-screen format became two- and then three- and went up to six-projector presentations with dissolve control. I remember just how happy I was to find a suitcase that would hold 30 Kodak carousels! Thank goodness for the digital revolution, so now even a small flash drive can hold multiple lectures.

I have been so impressed with the outstanding contributions made by members of the European Academy of Esthetic Dentistry (EAED), both in content and presentation methods, since the Academy's inception. And I want to congratulate Alessandro for his ongoing editorship of this excellent journal, and especially for the quality of the articles that continue to enhance our dental libraries.

One of the missing links I recognized early on was a lack of appreciation for the important role that dental technicians played in esthetic dentistry. My father was one of the first dentists in Atlanta to have his own dental technicians and a large in-office laboratory. When I entered the dentistry profession in 1957, technician training was done via apprenticeship programs usually created by both talented ceramists and dental laboratories. Absent were university programs for dental technicians and particularly dental ceramists. Famed Japanese ceramist, Masahiro Kuwata,



has run an ongoing course for dentists and dental technologists since 1972.

In Europe, it was my good friend of past memory, Professor Peter Schäfer, who was responsible for making the important connection between the dentist and dental ceramist. The university programs he created became world renowned. His legacy is being carried on by his graduate students, a list which reads like a Who's Who of esthetic and prosthodontic dentistry.

In Zurich, it took a former woodcut textile printmaker to enhance the way ceramic teeth were made. Willi Geller's vision to create more natural-looking teeth resulted in the layering system, used all over the world today. Geller became the guru for many of the master ceramists he trained over many years. In 1982, he founded the Oral Design International Foundation, which now boasts 108 members from 34 countries. I had the pleasure of watching Willi create a single central in his laboratory 34 years ago. What has always impressed me has been his no-nonsense approach to most everything. He tells it like it is! No doubt Willi's contributions to our dental world will live forever through his teachings, through those he touched indirectly, and most of all through the proud smiles of those fortunate patients he has benefited. I am also so pleased that the EAED has decided to recognize the important role Willi has played by dedicating a lecture to him at the upcoming 2018 EAED Annual Meeting in Sorrento. So well deserved!

One question that has often been asked is how will master ceramists fare with all the digital developments in dentistry? In a dental age where CAD/CAM seems to rule, the individual skills of the master ceramist still are and will always be needed by demanding patients who require the utmost in dental esthetics. I see an exciting future for esthetic dentistry, both in the way we practice it and in our laboratory support, mainly due to the upcoming role of artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality. Twenty years ago, I created a video that forecast just how we will be practicing our profession, using AI before, during, and after our patient interaction; specifically, improved holographic technology and automatic visual patient trial smiles using psychological profiles that will guarantee esthetic success. Whereas we are just in the first phase of trial smiles, the method of the future will be much more precise, to the point of creating unlimited tooth arrangement, different arch and tooth compositions with color, shading, texture, and layered effects, all based on what our patients consciously and subconsciously envision. The final choices will allow laboratory technicians to automatically process these results with greater speed and predictable success. However, for those of us and our discerning patients who want the utmost in dental ceramics, at least for the foreseeable future we will depend on Willi Geller and the master ceramists of the world.

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