

**THE RIGHT FIT**  
Customize your smile by giving yourself the best and most suitable teeth-enhancing options

## SMILE BY DESIGN

*A recognized dentist both here and abroad, Dr. Pio Tripon is known for his artistic skills and his unrivaled techniques for creating the most beautiful and natural looking smile*

BY KIM REYES-PALANCA

### HIGH REGARD

**TUCKED AWAY, AS IF SECRETLY, IN A BUILDING OF A BUSY STREET IN MAKATI IS DR. PIO TRIPON'S CLINIC.** Outside, not even facing traffic, you'll see a very modest signage that tells you that you're in the right place. For those who have never met, or had the privilege of having their teeth done by this expert, it's just an ordinary place. For those who know him well enough as a patient or through friends, it is where the best smiles are made. Dr. Tripon is a very humble, refined and consummate professional by nature. He is not a highly publicized figure and had done only a few interviews. His own website does not even contain a profile photo (we're probably the first to even take one of him). This dentist's reputation precedes him. And to all his patients, prominent figures or not, it is undoubtedly a very good one. His drive to give the most suitably perfect smile to each patient, whether through minor modifications that may or may not involve

veneers, makes him someone you can fully trust with your teeth. You'll find what is called a "Triponized" smile on pages of magazines (MEGA included), in politics and on TV. You may not even be aware that some of your friends or friends of your friends had something done by him.

### THE ARCHITECT

Having gone through braces in my teens and having perfect teeth up until after college when my impacted molars wreaked havoc, you could imagine why I was quite hesitant to display my pearly whites in front of this dentist. But I was comfortable even as he politely asked if he could offer some suggestions on how I could improve them: "Imagine if the whites of your eyes were the same color of your teeth." My eyes immediately lit up. My eyes weren't as clear as they should be, but just reflecting the same shade of white on my teeth already sounded good and adequate, rather than having a super white Chiclet color. After

mentioning the history of my teeth, he ruminated on another idea: "If you decide not to have braces again, you can just trim a little [here and there] and make it appear straight." With a mirror on my hand, I instantly visualized how I, not just my teeth, would look better. I was excited and suddenly felt relieved I had options other than having braces at my age.

Dr. Tripon may be known for his cosmetic work but most people tend to forget that he is simply a very good, all-around dentist. He is not just a master of veneers. He finds the best way to keep your teeth healthy and at the same time make you feel good about them. "You have to remember that veneers are nothing more than a way of restoring teeth. I usually don't end up with just using veneers on the patient," he says.

Some dentists would ask patients why they would want to have veneers, or why they would want to change teeth that, medically speaking, have nothing wrong with them. Of all of his patients who have veneers,

### SOURCE CODE

Above The Golden Divider is a ruler that helps the dentist follow the proportions of the golden ratio; Right Dr. Tripon uses a craniometer as a guide in finding the ideal vertical height for teeth, based on other skeletal landmarks, specifically the outer corner of the eye to the inner edge of the ear's opening



50 percent have their teeth intact, but are unhappy with what they see. Dr. Tripon says, "Deep inside the patients are really unhappy with their teeth and what they see in the mirror every morning when they brush. That's when they ask their friends and find their way to me."

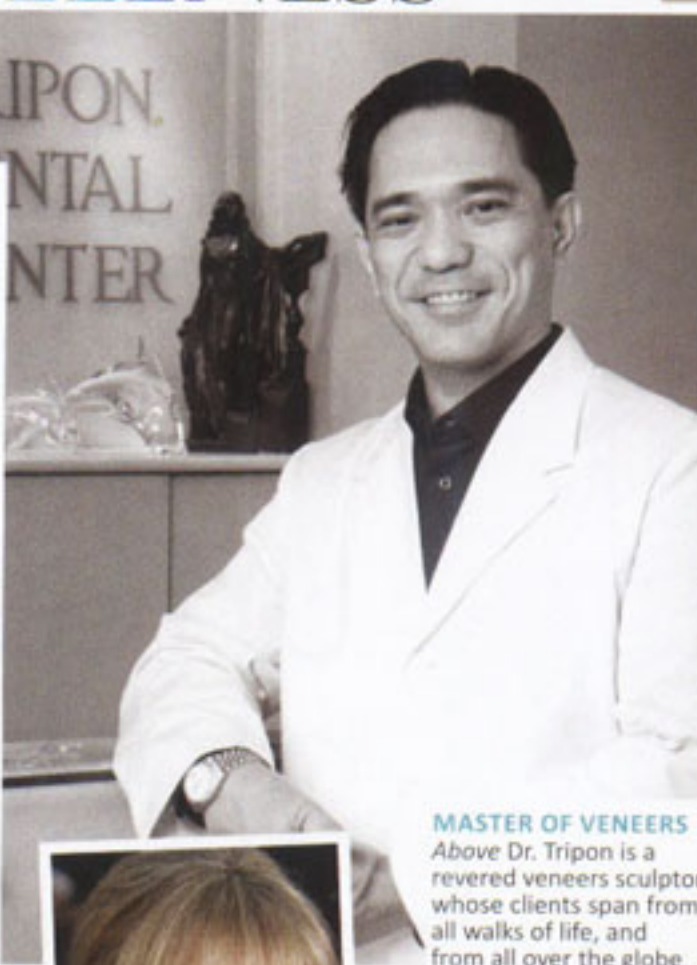
The moment you have a consultation with Dr. Tripon, or even the moment you flash that smile at him, he is already dreaming up of a plan on how to make that smile even better. "At the very onset, the dentist has to know what's going to look good for a particular patient," he says. This is the reason why, whenever a patient comes to his clinic, the first thing he does is to complete the records that would help guide him to that end.

**"IT'S A MISCONCEPTION THAT VENEERS ARE ABOUT THE AMERICAN APPROACH OF HAVING [FAKE] HOLLYWOOD-WHITE TEETH. THERE'S A EUROPEAN APPROACH WHICH IS MORE NATURAL."**—DR. TRIPON

He admits that there's a lot of subjectivity involved with cosmetic dentistry. Unlike treating a dental condition or problem, like doing a root canal or doing fillers which is something a patient needs, veneers entail a lot of studying and detailing that require a dialogue between dentist and patient. "There's a lot of subjectivity to it, but we try to find the guidelines to make sure that whatever we do would be of the proper proportions, proper dimensions that would fit each and every patient's face," he explains. This teeth designer, like a meticulous tailor, finds the perfect fit. By taking time to do all the necessary preparations to get the desirable look, his aesthetic is what has made him an innovator in his field. He finds gratification calculating and testing the littlest detail. He abides by the golden ratio by using a special ruler for the ideal measurements, examines the perfect size and shape for each tooth, studies the perfect shade of white and sources the best materials for his "work of art."

## THE SCULPTOR

Since he was a child, Dr. Tripon has been inclined to the arts, sketching for as long as he could remember. He had wanted to take up a different path in college but his father, a dentist himself, urged him to try out dentistry first. The idea of what could make his patients' teeth look nicer hit him in the early 90s when veneers in the country were not commonplace. With only a few materials he could use, he eventually called his friends who were dental suppliers and asked them to bring veneers in slowly. Soon veneers, he says, became "less exotic and more



### MASTER OF VENEERS

Above Dr. Tripon is a revered veneers sculptor whose clients span from all walks of life, and from all over the globe



### BRIGHT BITES

Top The "Hollywood" way; Bottom Natural looking veneers



### GRAY MATTER

Above Dr. Tripon's clinic is colored a neutral gray so it won't distract him from finding the "right white" for his patients' teeth

### HEIGHT MATTERS

Left Correcting teeth based on the right vertical height (measuring from the bone under the nose to the bottom of the chin) can diminish wrinkles, make you look younger and improve your overall look

predictable." Unlike some dentists, especially in the US, who rely on the laboratories or suppliers to do the work for them, Dr. Tripon is hands-on with everything—the reason why you don't get that typical, contrived Hollywood smile. He does not rely on templates, he does everything according to his personal definitions of what is most natural-looking for each patient. "It's a misconception that veneers are about the American approach of having [fake] Hollywood-white teeth. There's a European approach which is more natural," he points out. With the right accoutrements, you can shape the porcelain veneers to the anatomy you like.

Once the dentist has addressed the health of your teeth, cleared it of any condition that could interfere with affixing the veneers and done all the necessary prep work (including teeth impressions that serve as a working model), then it's time to give that smile a makeover. After repairing, cleaning and polishing teeth, a thin shell of either a composite (plastic) or porcelain

veneer is bonded to the tooth with a glue that is extremely strong. The adhesive virtually becomes part of the tooth. It is not necessarily the case that teeth always need to be trimmed to accommodate veneers. "Some [patients] need a little bit of trimming, others need no drilling at all. It depends on the [state of] teeth at the time that they see me," Dr. Tripon explains. If a tooth is flared out, for example, then trimming may be necessary to make the veneers look nicer. A little sacrifice may be needed, but Dr. Tripon assures that it won't damage teeth.

This veneers sculptor believes that each face shape corresponds with a certain look to the teeth. For example, a square face is complemented by squareish teeth usually uniform in size, while a long face needs long, more prominently shaped teeth. Apart from this, teeth apparently can be molded through veneers to give you a specific type of smile. A sweet and feminine smile, according to Dr. Tripon, has pointed cuspids and are shorter than your two front teeth; the lateral teeth (teeth at the sides



**MOTHER OF PEARLS**  
A great smile is your best accessory. Give your pearly whites the proper care they deserve.

of your two front teeth) are significantly slimmer. Want an "aggressive" smile? He once had a patient, a lawyer, who wanted a look that would make her colleagues respect her. Dr. Tripon designs this smile by creating canines that are usually longer than the two front teeth.

Aside from the shape, Dr. Tripon gauges the right level of white that suits you. "What was white 10 years ago is no longer white now. People want teeth even whiter," he says. Despite this, Dr. Tripon is not influenced by other people's perceptions. He takes teeth whiteness so seriously that his clinic is painted a dull, neutral gray color. He said that his walls shouldn't interfere with the way he matches the right white and that "there are different dimensions of color like brightness and intensity."

#### THE TEACHER

There are many reasons why people decide to have veneers. In the earlier years, it's because of conditions that include broken down teeth caused by smoking, grinding, poor habits, or even Tetracycline (antibiotic) stains. Dr. Tripon says that braces are still the most conservative choice to fix teeth, but others don't have the patience to get them. But you need to have realistic expectations. The reason why some people who have had braces still need to wear retainers is because teeth can be unstable and move a certain direction. Ideally, braces should be worn during your teens because by the time you are 12 years old, your two lower cuspids,

wherever they are, will stay where they are. If the orthodontist pushes them apart or pushes them together, they will eventually go back. You need to ask your dentist on how to address this problem on how to keep teeth where they should be. If you are just unsatisfied with the way your teeth look, there's no need to rush into getting veneers.

Dr. Tripon reminds patients that veneers aren't for everyone and are only one way of improving and restoring teeth. "If you're considering having veneers, you need to research. I have a patient who even asked 10 people I've done before going into it. Check on the work of the dentist [before and after] and take your time," he advises. It's a permanent change and you need to find out if it's for you and your dentist can help you make plans for it.

You also need to decide which type of veneers to use: composite or porcelain. Porcelain veneers are top of the line and therefore more costly and won't discolor, noticeably. Just like porcelain plates, you can always just wash dirt off—the dentist can do a cleaning and it will look new every time. Stains are removable and are not permanent. Plastic or composites on the other hand, practically have the same look and finish of porcelains but can chip off a little overtime and wear like natural teeth. They are also prone to stains which can still be cleaned up but not necessarily still look as white as it was before. Maintenance for veneers is just the same as natural teeth—brush well, floss, use a mouthwash and regular dental visits every six months. ■

## 10 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ORAL HEALTH

### 1 Tooth decay is a contagious disease.

You heard that right. According to Dr. Tripon, having cavities is not genetic. 70% of the time, it is passed down from one person to another. Kissing someone or just being in close contact overtime can transmit bacteria-causing cavities. Say a nanny wiping her mouth and touching the spoon to feed a baby, a mother passing on bacteria to her child through kissing, or even kissing your better half.

### 2 Avoid acidic drinks.

Teeth are mostly calcium so do not take a lot of acidic drinks. Acidic drinks include soda, athletic or power drinks and even some juices that can break down teeth. If you will indulge, drink water afterward to wash it down.

### 3 Wine and caffeine aren't the only culprits.

Wine and coffee may cause teeth to stain but unlike what most people think, these are not the only leading causes of teeth darkening. Dr. Tripon says that teeth may appear glossy but are actually microscopically porous so basically, anything that you take in that has color can be absorbed by your teeth over the years and stain them overtime.

### 4 Don't smoke.

Aside from giving you bad breath (since lack of saliva leads to dryness in the mouth that allows bacteria to thrive), it leads to oral cancer.

### 5 Don't chew ice.

Chewing ice can split teeth. When you chew ice, you don't have the reflex to stop before teeth could avoid impact.

### 6 Visit your dentist regularly.

Dr. Tripon says whether you have veneers or not, you should visit your dentist every six months.

### 7 Grab the scissors.

Teeth are not tools for opening a bag of chips, cutting tape or tearing anything for that matter. Using teeth as such greatly causes damage to them.

### 8 Stress is a 21st century disease that leads to teeth damage.

Leading a less stressful life will prevent you from damaging teeth by grinding or other subconscious reflexes like nail-biting.

### 9 Learn about teeth contouring.

According to Dr. Tripon, enamel contouring or trimming to round up corners to make teeth less jagged can leave an enhancing effect on teeth's overall look.

### 10 Ask your dentist about a natural, non-surgical teeth/face lift.

"We use vertical height to take out wrinkles on the sides of the face," says Dr. Tripon. By modifying the dimensions and proportions of the teeth relative to the vertical height from nose to chin, skin around the mouth is stretched out and lines are thus deminished.