

May
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FASHION

**DOUTZEN
KROES**

"I'M VERY LUCKY
I WAS BORN A
CERTAIN WAY"

LESS IS MORE

ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY

REIMAGINED BEAUTY STAPLES

POWERFUL PASTELS

MYSTICAL BODY TREATMENTS

+ MODERN MOTHERHOOD TALES



AURA, AURA

As mystical beauty treatments gain momentum, the basic body wrap suddenly seems passé. But is the trend here to stay?

By Wendy Schmid

If you still think that smudging refers to makeup blending and Himalayan pink salt is just a flavour enhancer, think again. We're suddenly living in an alternative universe where healing with crystals and other New Age modalities is commonplace and even the Kardashians go deep. On a recent *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* episode, fashion darling Kendall Jenner sought to quell her anxiety with a crystal sound bath session said to vibrate at a soul-soothing frequency. Her sister Kim designed her Crystal Gardenia fragrance bottles to look like clear quartz, and the Olsen twins gifted showgoers

with crystals at The Row's Fall 2018 presentation. But it was Gucci that took the trend to the next level, applying a prosthetic third eye to a model's forehead for its Fall 2018 show.

Things once considered counterculture have been gradually gaining traction ever since the beauty and wellness industries began merging. Consider, if you will, the signs: When model Miranda Kerr launched Kora Organics in 2009 and began infusing products with the loving vibration of rose quartz (massive chunks of the crystal also decorate her Malibu property), she opened the door for beauty brands, both indie and established, to enter the "stone age." (Her latest innovation, Noni

Radiant Eye Oil, delivers super-fruit actives and healing oils using—you guessed it—a pink quartz roller ball.) Meanwhile, fashion's favourite astrologer, Susan Miller, makes predictions on *Vogue* podcasts, Chanel did planetary prints last year and spas with a mystical bent have taken off like dandelion seeds on the wind.

The Now, a bohemian purveyor of chakra-balancing massages, crystal foot soaks and *palo santo* bundles, has quickly grown to four Los Angeles studios. Shape House, where you can detox sweat lodge-style, has seven locations from Los Angeles to New York. (California tends to lead the charge with woo-woo methods—toss a piece of pyrite here and you'll likely hit some sort of guru.) Now, holistic fans are flocking to salt caves in the hope of clearing both skin and mind with halotherapy. If you're conjuring angels, take a breath—quite literally. The centuries-old therapy involves breathing in mineral-rich salt vapour, and some studies show that it helps improve inflammatory skin issues like eczema and dermatitis as well as respiratory conditions. In 2012, geologist Mike McCaskey and his wife, Pam, built Salt Cave Santa Barbara, one of the first underground Himalayan pink salt caves in North America, to offer halotherapy. (Hundreds have cropped up since, including Healing Salt Cave wellness centres built throughout Ontario, as well as New York and Vermont.) "We do facials, body scrubs and sound healing, but about 800 people a week come for a meditative experience in the cave," he says.

"People are drawn to these types of treatments because they're looking for something beyond the physical plane," says Kari Jansen, an L.A.-based Ayurvedic practitioner and herbalist. "They're seeing that there are other ways to heal and to approach health and well-being." Part and parcel of the growing trend is the idea that you're getting an experience that nurtures the soul as much as the surface. "Skin to soul" is our tag line—our approach is about treating on an emotional as well as a physical level," says Leslie Kritzer, co-founder of Beverly Hills-based Skin Worship, a spa that does facials using vibrational skincare and infrared bio-mats embedded with amethysts. "The amethyst is said to amplify the infrared energy of the mat, helping to increase oxygenation and the anti-inflammatory effects. Clients come in totally frazzled from traffic; we get them on the mat and within minutes they melt." The two-hour Transformational Facial Ceremony incorporates results-driven therapies like LED and microdermabrasion plus topically applied growth factors and peptides. But there's a heavy focus on spirit, too, with a shamanic healer incor-

porating feathers and crystals during a chakra-clearing finale. Each client leaves with a rose quartz blessed by the healer and looking, says Kritzer, like they've been on vacation.

Jansen's otherworldly two-hour journeys could count as mini-holidays as well. Treatments are customized and often incorporate massage, cupping and a post-treatment salt soak amid jasmine and lemon balm in the outdoor garden. Finding and releasing energetic blocks is a key focus. "We're vibrational beings, and I can feel when a body is vibrating in an off way, so I'll use different techniques to subtly shift it back to a place of balance," says Jansen. A few of her mystical tools: handcrafted herbal- and crystal-infused skincare, alchemy bowls and a monochord tuned to the key of A. "It creates a soft vibration that helps with emotional release and relates to the third eye chakra."

If you're skeptical about crystal healing, results may be in the eye of the beholder. "I can't say that [using] crystals as an infusing agent will have any impact on the skin, but it's not impossible," says Dr. Robert Anolik, a Manhattan-based dermatologist. "The placebo effect could be playing a role. Or maybe there is something to it that no one has been able to demonstrate effectively yet." Either way, such mind-body nurturing makes basic body wraps and facials feel, well, basic. Still, healing stones, shamans and 120-minute spa escapes? These can seem like a stretch in today's world. But proponents say that's precisely why they're needed. The downside to so much digital connectivity can be a disconnection to the self. The Spa at the Mandarin Oriental recently instituted a Digital Wellness treatment using stones (shungite and black

tourmaline) said to help protect the body from electromagnetic radiation. "It's part of our global initiative to help guests manage their relationship to technology and the stress that can come with it," says Virginia Lara, spa director at the Mandarin Oriental Boston.

One thing is certain: Crystals and the like are resonating. Smudge sprays have turned up at Walmart. Free People stocks amethyst combs and blue sodalite face rollers. Neiman Marcus sells Girl Undiscovered crystal skincare. And spas in Snowmass (Viceroy), near Aspen, and Denver (Spa Vital) feature balancing treatments using Kailo Organic Chakra Therapy products. But will saturation dim the allure? Kritzer thinks not: "It's a sign that people want it. These things are going more mainstream because times are changing." □

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