

The New York Times

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NEW YORK, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1998

\$3 beyond the greater New York metropol

The Dream Team

With their metaphysical belief in color, Tony and Tina are the new kids at the counter. *By Mary Tanner*

ON A THURSDAY RIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS, ON THE MAIN floor of Bloomingdale's, there stood an étagère with Tony and Tina nail enamels and a table where two manicurists were giving customers free nail-overs. Tony (Anthony Gill) and Tina (Cristina Bornstein) were advising on choice of shades.

TONY (to a woman getting red nails): "Most of your energy comes up from your feet — red on the toes makes the energy flow."

TINA: "White cleanses your energies. It wards off negative energy."

A woman was having her nails done coppery brown.

TONY: "Brown stimulates common sense. It's very grounding."

WOMAN: "I don't believe any of this. Actually I'm going to a party tomorrow and I'm wearing a brown dress."

Tony, impervious to skepticism, was conversing with Red Nails, who was telling him that sometimes she has trouble breathing.

TONY to Tina: "What's a good color for asthma?"

TINA: "Yellow."

Tony and Tina, who call themselves artists and cosmetologists, have elaborate theories about the therapeutic properties of color. To quote from their brochure: "Each color frequency affects different areas of the body, mind and spirit. Correct attention to color will heal and rejuvenate the human energy system." Their ambition is to promote a higher consciousness in man. Tina has her eye on a Nobel Prize. They are willing to start small.

The enterprise began only a year ago as a conceptual piece in a Chelsea gallery: nail polish to activate chakras. Chakras, according to yogic thinking, are the seven energy centers of the body, each represented by a different color. Friends, sensing commercial potential, alerted investors. The concept was so powerful, says Tony, that "we were getting orders before we even started."

Tony, who grew up in a council flat in London, designed the bottles with bulbous silver tops and a radiating atomic logo — sort of 50's futuristic. Tina, a downtown New Yorker, came up with shades. Some are transparent, some are matte and some have sparkle, and there is a clear sparkle top coat. The remover is two different color liquids, one floating on top of the other, kind of like a lava lamp. Tony and Tina say it can also be used as an aid to meditation.

Nine shades of hair mascara (temporary color applied like mascara) should be hitting counters any day now. Why hair mascara? To feed appropriate color energy directly into the brain. This spring there will be scented bath colors, which reinforce the therapeutic effect of each shade, as well as an antidepressant lipstick with Saint Johnswort; shades, however, will be strictly fashion.

Available at Bloomingdale's, Nordstrom, Fred Segal and Liberty of London, the new brand seems to be riding the crest of three waves at once. The first is the merging of cosmetics and health. Concepts like foundations that nourish skin and scents that foster healthy emotions already exist. Tony predicts, "The department store cosmetics bay will shift to a wellness center."



Tony and Tina are capitalizing on the cult of personality.

Another trend is the marketing of personality to sell products. Cosmetics have always carried the name of fashion designers, and lately it seems that any makeup artist with a modicum of name recognition has her own line. Tony and Tina are streamlining the process by not waiting to become famous first. Their brochure, a counter-beauty photo album of the scruffy pair in their East Village apartment — slurping soup, taking baths or looking despondent — promotes their image as much as the product.

The third is a mystical-meditative connection that companies have tapped into by emphasizing natural ingredients and biodegradable packaging. (Origins and Aveda come to mind.) Tony and Tina, with their acid colors, bypass the natural ingredient route and cut to the crux. Transforming inner being is their primary goal. Their comic-book physics and pop philosophy may sound kooky — "I have a strong feeling about other dimensions screaming out to us to be aware," says Tina — but the beauty industry smiles on eccentrics with vision. After all, Estée Lauder, rumor has it, was not above secretly spilling Youth Dew around the main floor of Saks Fifth Avenue. It is not inconceivable that Tony and Tina could be the Lauder of the 21st century.

In the meantime Tony is working on an Out of Body Kit in which a meditation tape will align the right and left hemispheres of the brain while the user is sleeping. Leave it to an outsider to come up with the ultimate beauty tool. After we've tweaked the physical self to perfection, we simply float away from it. Free at last. ■