



A NEW LEASE ON LASZLO

The Institute spa in Manhattan.

Hungarian-born Dr. Erno Laszlo was a medical doctor of many firsts—the first celebrity dermatologist, the first doctor to create his own medically based skin-care line, and the first to cater to the who’s who of old Hollywood. (His clients included Marilyn Monroe, Greta Garbo, Katharine Hepburn, and Ava Gardner.)

“Beautiful skin requires commitment” was one of Laszlo’s expressions when he opened the Erno Laszlo Institute of Scientific Cosmetology in 1939, then located at 53rd Street and Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. Dubbed the “House of Silence”, it was a place where the beauty secrets of the biggest stars were tucked away. That theory is still in full force—and is now reincarnated—at the Institute spa, which opened in November in SoHo at West Broadway and Spring Street.

The 8,000-square-foot space feels like a townhouse, with its three floors and red-leather staircase, which curves around a chandelier of 20,000 Swarovski crystals. It houses six private treatment rooms and also has a library/lounge, which mirrors Laszlo’s original study, and a rotating art collection, curated by author Patrícia Eszter Margit, where a Marilyn Monroe retrospective recently wrapped up; the exhibit included clothing, accessories, and photographs from her personal collection. The spa will also be a venue for lectures, musical performances, readings, and screenings.

“Laszlo believed if you surround people with beautiful objects and create a beautiful space, they will feel more beautiful,” says Charles Denton, CEO of Erno Laszlo Inc. “We took

all of the elements of Laszlo, all his history, all of his influences, and recreated them, whether it be his private collection of books, antique ceramics from Budapest, or the design cues and elements of 1920s, ’30s, ’40s, ’50s, which represent his life through the years.”

The annual fee is \$3,000 (U.S.), and a series of at least 15 customized treatments throughout the year are available only to members. “Good skin requires hard work,” Denton says, echoing one of Laszlo’s other mantras. “The miracle is your skin—it’s not what’s in the jar. It requires effort and commitment, and that’s why we have the membership.”

Laszlo’s philosophy of creating tailor-made products specifically formulated to confront the signs of premature aging, environmental hazards, and the stress of a modern lifestyle is as prevalent now as it was back in 1927, when he developed the precursor to today’s healing Phormula 3-9 skin-care collection. Aside from his famous following, Laszlo is also fondly remembered for creating the black Sea Mud Deep Cleansing Bar, which is still on the market. The Institute spa also employs a youth asset management program—which was developed by Dr. Scott Wells, a New York-based plastic surgeon—and all spa services are personalized with everything from enzyme peels and advanced technology treatment options to Erno Laszlo’s Super Serums.

Although Laszlo passed away in 1972, his presence is felt in this new space, in his distinctive and forward-thinking products, and among the clients who still flock to buy them. **ALIX STRAUSS**

BOTANICAL KAUAI

Allerton and McBryde Gardens.

The lush garden isle of Kauai is a natural spot for the unconventional duo known as the Allerton Garden and McBryde Garden, part of five sites that make up the National Tropical Botanical Garden (the other three are in Florida, Maui, and northern Kauai). Between rugged cliffs in the secluded Lawai Valley, the two neighbouring gardens of Allerton and McBryde comprise 350 acres of land, showcasing a magnificent variety of tropical plants.

Guided visits reveal a bit of the quirky history. Once a retreat of Hawaii’s Queen Emma, the Allerton Garden was bought in the late 1930s by the Allertons, world travellers and wealthy philanthropists. Robert, an artist, and his adopted son John Gregg Allerton, an architect, created unique outdoor “rooms” with walls of plants, featuring European statuary, fountains, gravity-fed pools, and cascading waterfalls. Jacqueline Kennedy enjoyed visiting their garden estate—in part, rumour has it, because the Allertons had an impressive collection of ballet slippers. The garden’s towering Moreton Bay Figs were featured in *Jurassic Park*, where their enormous exposed buttress roots hid raptor eggs; it’s a favourite spot for visitor photo ops.

The McBryde Garden is a veritable Noah’s ark for plant conservation, protecting endangered tropical plant species from around the world from extinction, in particular endemic Hawaiian plants, including 27 canoe plants that the early Polynesians brought with them in their voyaging canoes to Hawaii to sow for food, medicine, and shelter. Even world hunger is being tackled: thousands of breadfruits originating here have been shipped to developing countries, with information on how to grow the trees for food. **JANICE MUCALOV**

