

LOOKING GOOD

A French skincare regime gives instant results and may do away with the need to having 'work' done writes Orna Mulcahy

## Cool creams cold hands

**A**T THE FAR end of Temple Bar where pubs give way to boutiques, bookshops and bakeries, there's Sanctum, a quiet little spa that's building a name for itself among the very well groomed. It's run by Rachel Walsh, a woman with reassuringly fabulous skin, the kind the rest of us yearn for but assume cannot be ours because of bad genes, drink, cigarettes or just a generally slap dash approach to skincare.

Sanctum is the Irish outpost of *Biologique Recherche*, a French beauty company whose products are available in similarly low key salons across the globe and that famously offers one of the most expensive beauty routines in the world, a couture regime that can cost up to £25,000 from start to finish over several months, and that, if the beauty press is anything to

go by, gives astonishingly good results. It's billed as a credible alternative to getting "work" done, and while the full programme is mainly the preserve of oligarch's wives and Chinese billionnaires, there are more modest options for the rest of us. I've been invited to try one of the treatments that promises, if not a new face, then a thorough cleanse and detox before winter sets in.

First I need to be assessed to see which of the company's 150-odd serums and creams will best suit my weather-beaten face and I'll be told how to use some samples so that the good work can be continued in my own bathroom, or possibly kitchen as, ideally, the products should be kept in the fridge. Chilled lotions and cold hands are part of a routine devised more than 35 years ago by Yvan and Josette Alouche, a bi-

ochemist and physiotherapist, who together set up *Biologique Recherche* in Paris, where the products are still created in a factory on the outskirts of the city, while head office is a swish salon on the Champs-Élysées. The lovely thing about this treatment is the cool hands of my therapist who, with a series of taps, gentle pinches and upwards strokes, makes my skin feel wonderfully alive, and that is before she applies what feels like a little bag of ice cubes for extra zing. There are unguents galore – starting with a cleanse and then liberal use of BR's P50W lotion – its hero product – a toner, a tonic, a face brightener and a base for the serums laced with marine and biological extracts that are designed to balance, hydrate and plump out the skin.

Half way through the treatment I am show a mirror and ask to spot the differ-

ence from one side of my face to the other. To me both sides look a lot fresher and I'm just glad that we're only half way through.

Three weeks on and my skin feels cleaner and, call me deluded, but I think actually looks brighter. This could be simply down to sticking to a routine morning and night, instead of my usual slapping on of random products.

Previously I favoured the heaviest moisturisers available. But the *BR* products seem infinitely lighter and easier to apply. What I really need is the patience to apply the requisite series of taps and upward strokes that are an essential part of the regime. It's a learning curve.

Sanctum Skincare Clinic, Essex Street West, Temple Bar, Dublin 8.  
Tel 01-6745 707. Facials from approx €95

