

daily basis of who you are. I wonder how many people in the future will say, 'Yeah, that was post-COVID.'

Change was certainly in the air. "No one's coming in here saying, 'I want the same as last time.' Not one," notes Ashley Javier, the editorial stylist who sees clients at the Parlor, his one-on-one atelier in downtown Manhattan. "It's, 'What should we do? Go shorter? Cut bangs? Go platinum?'" One client with long Malibu-blond hair sent me a picture of Mica in the Saint Laurent ads—all of a sudden she wants a curly shag."

Succession actress Annabelle Dexter-Jones has just been in to see Javier the day I call, and though she had been growing out her back-grazing, wheat colored hair, she opted for a sharp-angled jaw-length bob instead. "She wants to look in the mirror and feel excited. With Zoom and FaceTime, it's a very neck-up silhouette right now," he explains. If we're not dressing up in as many new clothes, at least we can dress up in new hair. "Normally I'm the one pushing for change," adds Javier. "Now there isn't much of a push."

The same is holding true across the Atlantic. David Mallett—who, in addition to an outpost at the Ritz in Paris and his Notre-Dame des Victoires flagship (a French Girl Hair hot spot famously presided over by a taxidermy ostrich), also operates a chic hair hideaway at The Webster SoHo in New York—reports many a Parisienne easing away from her formerly nonnegotiable "lifetime look" and embracing rather radical change.

"All of a sudden they're coming in with three months of regrowth, roots, and gray, and they've started to think

about variation and possibilities," said Mallett. "I've got women I've known for 20 years blowing my mind saying, 'What do you think if we just cut it off?'" The result is a wave of soft pixies and short, textural crops peppered across the French fashion capital. "Not sharp. Not Sassoon. Soft, bohemian," underscored Mallett. "They're a little bit bowly, not punk at all. I've done four of them today."

Northwood goes as far as to proclaim "the return of the haircut." After a particularly extended period of "long, swishy hair," he explains, "women who would never have gone for a chop are going for it. They're bored of having long, grown-out hair. They want it off their necks. They want shape and lines."

Indeed, the long-hairs—who, over the course of spring and summer, became much-longer-hairs—are going short in exhilarating "If not now, when?" fashion, while the short-hairs, who, like me, had been stranded in lockdown's dicey hair limbo, are exploring their options anew, too. I realized I'd been in a sort of stasis for years: I always looked pretty much the same. Quarantine had gotten me halfway to somewhere. It wasn't that much of a stretch to keep going.

Sitting in Oscar's chair, we locked eyes in the mirror, both grinning beneath our masks. I held my breath while he evened out the back, erasing the last remnants of the wedge that had defined me for so long. He worked the below-the-ear length into a swingy, graduated bob, with longer pieces creating movement in the front, a few subtle layers adding bounce to the back. It was not a vast departure—we only had a few extra inches to play with so far—but it was the beginning of something new. □



In the Buff

The manicure of the moment is low on pretense—and high on shine.

The notoriously pared-back stylist Danielle Goldberg has a piece of beauty advice for her coterie of A-list clients, which includes Laura Harrier, Camille Rowe, and Katherine Waterston: Start buffing your nails. "I instantly feel more done because my nails are polished in this natural way," Goldberg says of rubbing her nail bed with foam blocks until a natural sheen emerges that rivals the fresh-from-the-salon finish of a glossy top coat. "It's a very minimalist, low-key look," confirms Amy Ling Lin, the founder of New York's Sundays nail studios, who launched her own do-it-yourself buffing-and-shaping set—an extensive 23-piece collection that includes two smoothing buffer blocks and a hydrating cuticle serum—in April after finding success with virtual classes on the art of at-home nail maintenance. And it seems to have staying power. In the weeks since New York governor Andrew Cuomo declared that nail salons could reopen, many of Manhattan manicurist Jin Soon Choi's regulars made the switch away from lacquer, selecting her add-on buffing service for a polish without the, er, polish that can last about a week. Perfect for the quarantine era, the utilitarian-but-still-considered manicure is also a boon to lives spent increasingly at home. "I imagine buffed nails on someone in the garden planting bulbs or at the studio sculpting," says Los Angeles-based jewelry designer Sophie Buhai, another buffing convert. Or, as the mother of two adds with a knowing laugh, "someone in the kitchen deboning a chicken." —ZOE RUFFNER