

FINANCIAL TIMES

FTSI

30 MAY
2026



FERRARI REBORN

A LEGEND GOES ELECTRIC

PLUS — IRIS VAN HERPEN TALKS TASTE, GAUDÍ'S BARCELONA, THE RADICAL COOL OF CALI SURF STYLE, STAIRWAYS TO HEAVEN

Right: Melanie Grant in her new Mayfair studio, designed by Rose Uniacke. Below: the view of Mount Street. Bottom: one of the treatment rooms



BEAUTY

GLOW GETTER

Victoria Beckham's skincare guru Melanie Grant has a new London salon. Alice Cavanagh books an appointment

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER FLUDE

There is a frame in David Beckham's Netflix documentary *Beckham* that has become a meme. In it, Victoria Beckham pretends to her husband that she's heading off to work, when in fact she is off for a facial. "The joke became that a facial can be work," says Sydney-born Melanie Grant – whose long relationship as Beckham's go-to aesthetician did, as it happens, result in actual business: in 2024, they launched The Daily Cleansing Protocol, a twin-product line.

Grant, a glamorous porcelain-skinned fortysomething, moved to London from Sydney in 2022 and has since become the city's best-kept secret. With studios in Sydney, Melbourne, LA and New York, she's spent more than two decades as the world's go-to aesthetician. Clients come for her bespoke treatments – a combination of clinically proven products, the latest technology and a protocol that improves tone and texture to achieve luminous, healthy-looking skin. "I still cleanse in exactly the same way, and many of my massage techniques are from 25 years ago," she says of how some things haven't changed, adding that she doesn't jump on trends. She grimaces when recounting a face-slapping technique she saw on TikTok or the skincare formulas promoting bee venom as a legitimate ingredient. "There's a lot of fluff. My advice is don't believe

everything you see on social media and when in doubt, seek professional advice." Grant's vocation came to her through misfortune. As a baby and toddler, she had multiple skin grafts following third-degree burns suffered in a house fire. "I had to understand from a really young age how to take care of my skin," she says. She recalls that, as a teenager, she was one of the first of her peers to embrace Clinique's three-step system, a straightforward approach that preceded her own philosophy: "You only need a few good products: you'd be surprised

"I WANT THIS TO BE A DESTINATION. DO SOME SHOPPING, THEN COME TO ME"

at what can be achieved simply by keeping skin clean, hydrated and protected from the sun." After school, she went on to study aesthetics, working first in a luxury spa and then a clinical practice before deciding to go it alone. She opened in Sydney's Double Bay without a single client. "I didn't think it through," she admits. "But if you start with one and do a really good job, there is nothing better than old-fashioned word of mouth." That proved to be true – and Grant has always been ahead of the curve. I can recall facials with her involving LED 18 years ago at a time when, she says, "people thought that because it didn't have downtime, it probably wasn't very effective". She introduced the high-end French and German

MELANIE GRANT'S MUST-HAVES



CHANEL La Solution 10 De Chanel Sensitive Skin Cream, £69 for 30ml



AUGUSTINUS BADER The Rich Cream, £450 for 100ml



VICTORIA BECKHAM BEAUTY The Daily Cleansing Protocol, £100 for 200ml

skincare brands Biologique Recherche and Augustinus Bader to Australia early on. In 2021 she was appointed global adviser to the latter, a role that reflects her standing as something of a tastemaker in the industry. Beckham says Grant introduced her to the cult line. "I've worked with Melanie on my skin for years and have learned so much from her," she adds. Grant has also persuaded her to submerge her face in ice-cold water each morning. "I absolutely swear by it," says Beckham, "particularly after a glass or two of red wine the night before."

GRANT OPENED HER THIRD site on Melrose Place in Los Angeles in 2019 before setting her sights on London. Around 20 months ago she signed the lease on her new place on Mount Street – a former office on the third floor of a red-brick building typical of Mayfair's late-19th-century streets. She was seduced by the fashionable neighbours: The Row (on regular rotation in her wardrobe), jeweller Jessica McCormack and, rumoured to be joining them, Phoebe Philo. "I want this to be a destination," she says. "You can have lunch at Mount Street Restaurant or The Connaught, do some shopping and then come to me." The studio – where she will be in residence for most of the year – has just two treatment rooms, a lounge room with its original marble fireplace and a kitchen. "It really has a residential feel in the same spirit as Melrose Place. It's cosseted from the outside world."

Her friend Rose Uniacke designed the space and the furniture: the palest of blush walls; warmth underfoot from Douglas fir Dinesen flooring. Grant, whose own interiors and daily wardrobe tend towards monochrome white, admits she had to be convinced by the pink, but not the canopy bed by Uniacke, which sits in the centre of the largest treatment room. Fit for royalty.

Most appointments (which start from £300 with one of eight senior therapists) run for a minimum of 90 minutes. All trained by Grant, they use IPL, lasers, and microneedling with exosomes, which is very popular, as are tightening non-invasive ultrasound treatments such as Sofwave. Grant's approach is to layer several modalities and never break contact with the client, offering a hand and foot massage while they drift off under the LED lamp. "The experience needs to feel as restorative as the results," she says.

That attentiveness, she admits, has made scaling difficult – but intimacy and doing things properly are what she values. She is horrified by rushed lunchtime "tweakments", at-home microneedling and the broader lack of regulation in the industry. "My expertise is in skin treatment and improvement. Not injectables, hair removal or weight-loss treatments. I'm a firm believer that a jack-of-all-trades is master of none."

Rosie Huntington-Whiteley is a loyal client. "Over the years Melanie has become a close friend, and my skin is at its best – healthy, clear and glowing – when I've been seeing her regularly," she says.

Grant would call this "skin health", attentive to what the body is doing from the inside out. "The skin reflects our internal health, so it's not always about laser treatments or topical skincare," she says. "I love skin that is perfectly imperfect – a flush in the cheeks, freckles, smile lines that reflect a life well-lived." ■HTSI

IS IT WORTH IT?

WEIGHTED VESTS

Fergus Scholes finds out if the extra kgs go the distance

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICO WILLS



MIRAFIT Tactical Weight Vest, £60



AION women's Weighted Walking Vest, £223, healif.com

YES The purpose of a weighted vest is to allow the body to carry extra mass during exercise. By adding artificial load – typically between five and 15 per cent of the wearer's body weight – it forces you to work harder to maintain pace. Weighted vests can turn a walk, hill climb or strength exercise into a more demanding metabolic task. Part of their appeal lies in that simplicity.

A 2022 study published in *Ergonomics* found that wearing a vest during a 30-minute run raised the heart rate by an average of 11 beats a minute – which indicates that in the long term it could help to lower blood pressure and improve cardiovascular fitness. There were also increases in oxygen uptake and energy expenditure. "The best data available suggests that weighted vests will increase calorie burn during exercise," says Sarah Wherry, an assistant professor in geriatric medicine at the University of Colorado.

The vest can also function as a tool for "passive" trunk conditioning, helping to strengthen the abdomen, back and hip muscles by supporting the extra load. If your goal is core strength or to improve your posture, "wearing a weighted vest while walking can help achieve this", says Wherry. Slimmer models such as the Aion Workout Vest (available in male and female versions from 2kg to 5kg) use a body-hugging compression-style design with lighter loading, making them better suited to running and hiking. For more loaded strength work, try a plate-carrier style such as the adjustable Mirafit Tactical Weight Vest, which uses front and back steel plates and can be loaded up to 10kg.

Weighted vests are particularly useful when other forms of resistance are impractical. Lora Giangregorio, professor of kinesiology at the University of Waterloo, points to "people who cannot grip things" and those who don't have access to a gym. For at-home trainers, weighted vests can turn bodyweight lunges into legitimate resistance training without dumbbells.

There is also a narrow case for bone health. A five-year study of postmenopausal women by Oregon State University's Bone Research Laboratory found that a programme combining weighted vests with jumping exercises increased femoral-neck bone density by 1.5 per cent; those who didn't wear a weighted vest lost 4.4 per cent over the same period.

Right: the author in Richmond Park, London, wearing the AION Men's Workout Vest, £284



NO The main risk of wearing a weighted vest is mistaking added load for proper training. Lancaster Medical School's Dr Chris Gaffney, one of the authors of the *Ergonomics* study, says that a physiological spike was clear on steep gradients, but weighted vests had "little impact at casual walking speeds or lower gradients". Metabolic gains therefore depend on how the vest is used.

Similarly, wearing a weighted vest won't fix a slouch unless the wearer is "actively working to correct" their position, says Wherry. Otherwise, the added weight may aggravate existing back problems. She advises a strict "15 per cent rule", warning that going higher than 15 per cent of one's own body weight offers no meaningful benefit and can increase stress on the spine and hips.

While a vest adds weight to the torso, it cannot work the core as precisely as a dedicated routine. Adds Wherry: "You can target different parts of your core doing a 15-minute core session in ways that are much harder – or impossible – to achieve with a weighted vest."

Giangregorio is most concerned about the claims surrounding bone health; in her view, the evidence is unclear. A 2025 randomised clinical trial led by Kristen M

Beavers at Wake Forest University involving 150 adults aged between 60 and 85 living with obesity found that wearing a vest for several hours a day failed to prevent hip bone-density loss during a year-long weight-

loss programme. Giangregorio says that bones tend to respond more to higher-impact exercise or more varied loading, such as jumping, hopping or resistance training. Rather than a miracle fix, the weighted vest is best understood as what Gaffney calls "a small incremental stressor". It's a simple way to make certain movements more demanding and nudge ordinary exercise closer to resistance training. ■HTSI