

The Knife Marker

M. COSTAGLIOLA

In plastic surgery, the preoperative marking is always a problem, a not very difficult one but an irritating one nevertheless. *Before the start* of the operation (preoperative phase), we can use a marker. *But when the patient is under anesthesia*, and the surgeon is in sterile dress, everything has been tried:

- Tooth picks
- Picks
- Pen nibs
- Stylets
- Brushes
- Pencils
- Tooth forceps
- And also sterile markers, which can be used once and thrown away

But I do not think anyone has found these to be very satisfactory. So the problem of finding a good marker for use during the operative phase remains to be solved.

My first idea was to use the same instrument to mark and cut. So, I transformed the the superior extremity into two parts, like a scholar's pencil. But the result was not good because it was too sharp.

My inspiration came when I saw a tailor's chalk. It is one of the tools of the trade used by tailors and dress-makers and it is used to draw lines on cloth and fabric quickly, easily and precisely. The chalk has a flat rounded shape and this shape reminded me of the flat end of a normal scalpel. And it is much easier to draw with a flat rounded object than with a pointed object.

After several trials, we came up with the model seen in Fig. 39.1: there is a tiny hole at the extremity of the

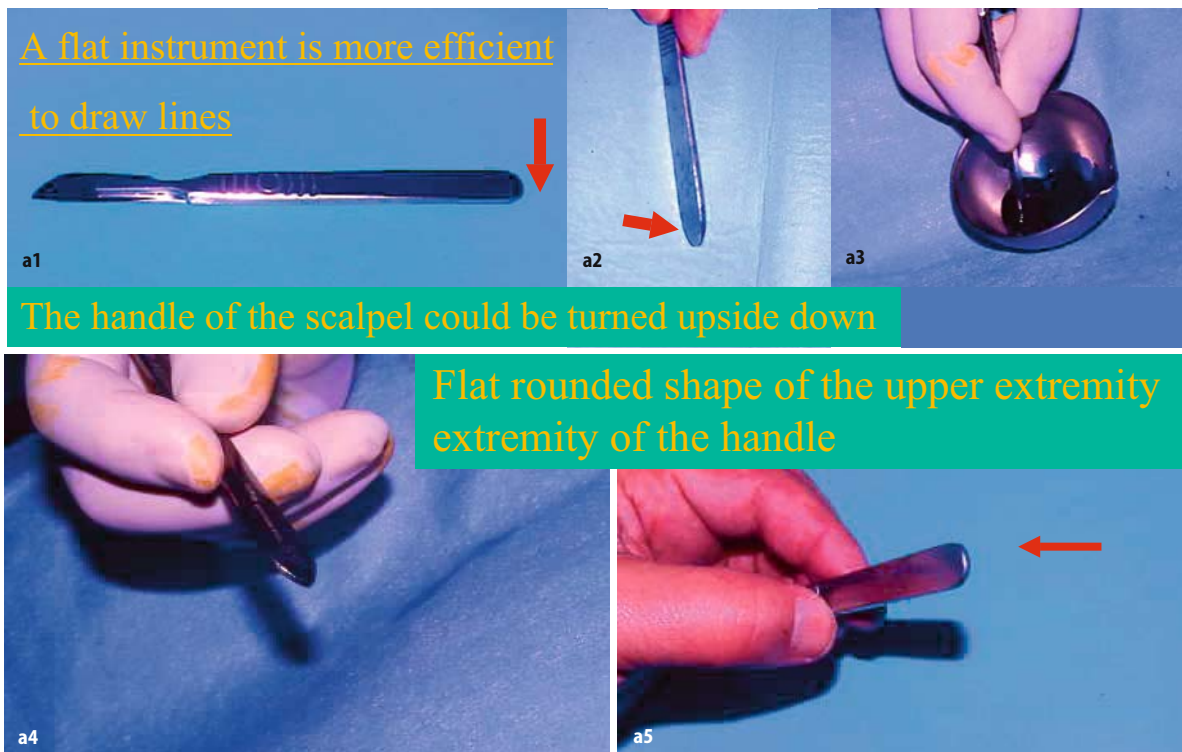


Fig. 39.1. The knife marker

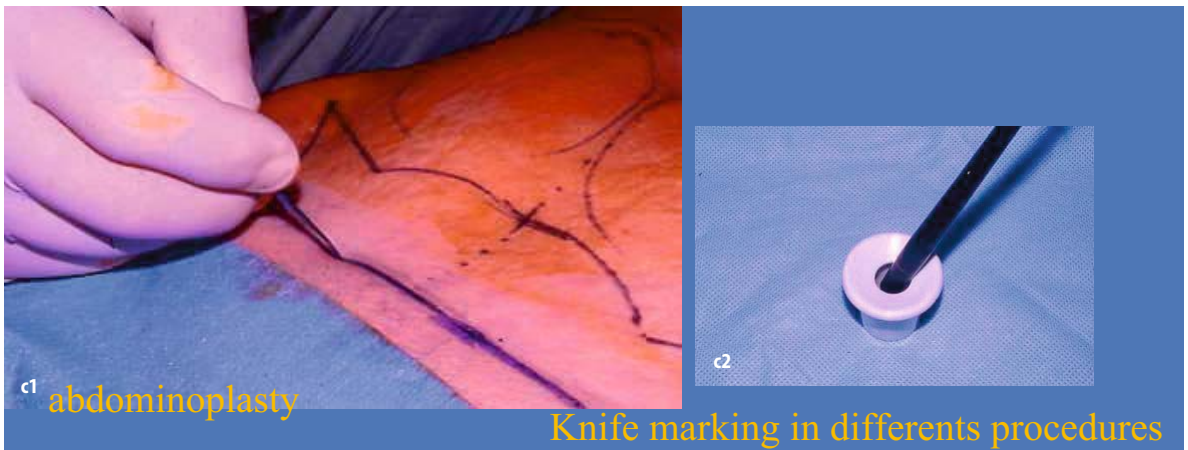
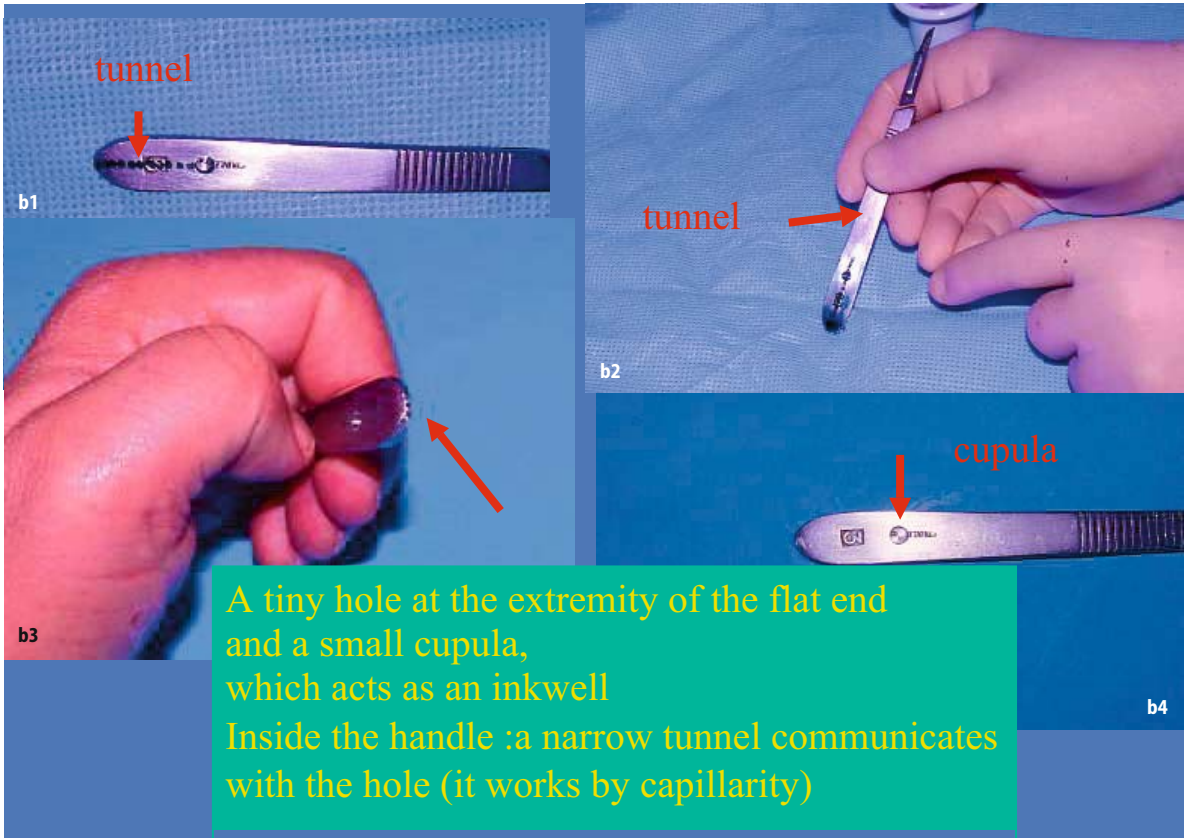


Fig. 39.1 (Cont.)

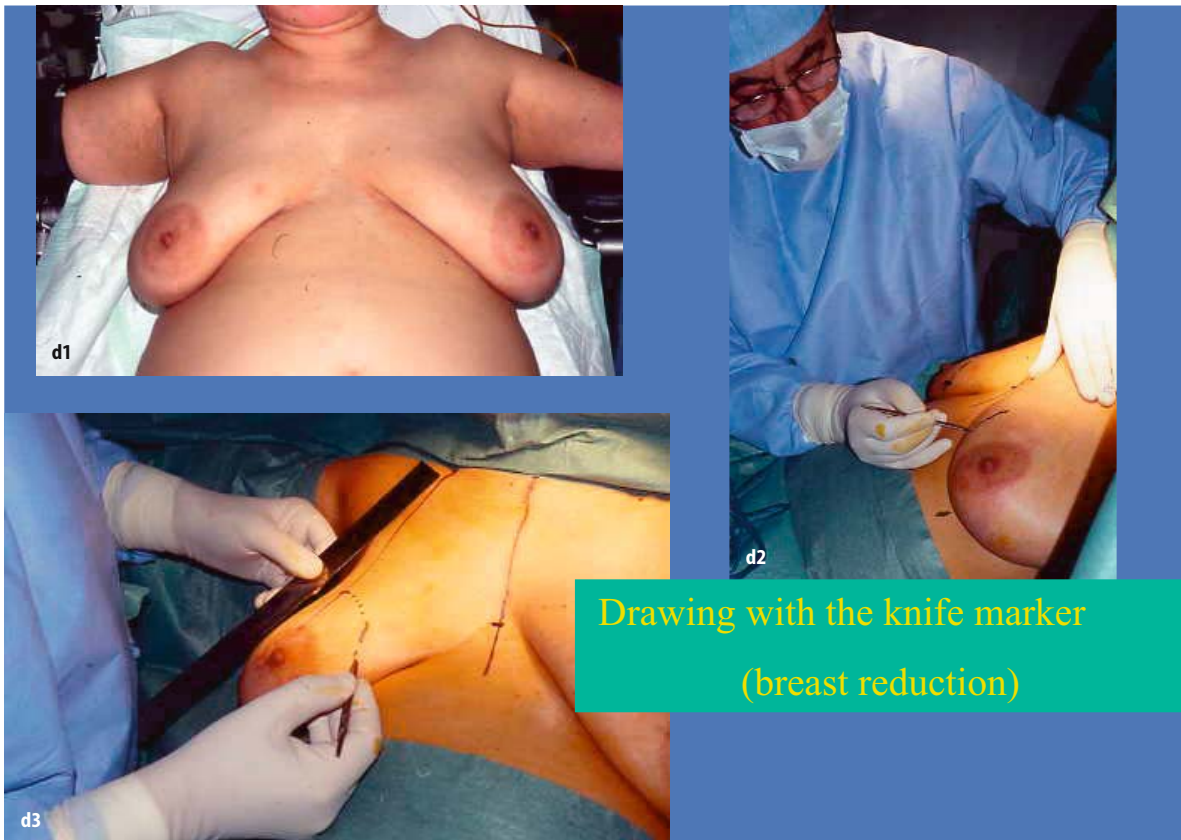


Fig. 39.1 (Cont.)

flat end and a narrow tunnel communicating with an inkwell (a small cupula or tank). The ink then flows by capillarity.

We therefore have a perfect “two in one” instrument: a marker combined with a scalpel: the Knife Marker. It is easy to use and to mark out the incision line or the

lines of the flap, then to turn the instrument round and start cutting. The name of this device in French is “*le bistouri traceur*.” This tool is not specific to breast surgery; it can be used in a variety of plastic surgery procedures.