



This Year's Model: Fashion, Media, and the Making of Glamour

Elizabeth Wissinger

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Over the last four decades, the fashion modeling industry has become a lightning rod for debates about Western beauty ideals, the sexual objectification of women, and consumer desire. Yet, fashion models still captivate, embodying all that is cool, glam, hip, and desirable. They are a fixture in tabloids, magazines, fashion blogs, and television. Why exactly are models so appealing? And how do these women succeed in so soundly holding our attention?

In *This Year's Model*, Elizabeth Wissinger weaves together in-depth interviews and research at model castings, photo shoots, and runway shows to offer a glimpse into the life of the model throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Once an ad hoc occupation, the “model life” now involves a great deal of physical and virtual management of the body, or what Wissinger terms “glamour labor.” Wissinger argues that glamour labor—the specialized modeling work of self-styling, crafting a ‘look,’ and building an image—has been amplified by the rise of digital media, as new technologies make tinkering with the body’s form and image easy. Models can now present self-fashioning, self-surveillance, and self-branding as essential behaviors for anyone who is truly in the know and ‘in fashion.’ Countless regular people make it their mission to achieve this ideal, not realizing that technology is key to creating the unattainable standard of beauty the model upholds—and as Wissinger argues, this has been the case for decades, before Photoshop even existed. Both a vividly illustrated historical survey and an incisive critique of fashion media, *This Year's Model* demonstrates the lasting cultural influence of this unique form of embodied labor.

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