



Hot COCO

Canada's most expressive supermodel on following her convictions, her new job with Naomi Campbell and her thoughts on motherhood.

By ELIO IANNACCI
Photographed by GABOR JURINA
Styled by ZEINA ESMAIL

WHEN BRITISH COLUMBIA'S COCO ROCHA ARRIVED on the fashion scene in 2006, it was as if she had tramped in. The blue-eyed, five-foot-10 model exemplified a jubilant shift away from '90s heroin chicsters of the Kate Moss and Jaime King varieties. Rocha's elfin looks and effervescent poses were in stark contrast to the frosty glares and vacant gazes on so many catwalks of the time. With a slew of standout moments—dancing an Irish jig to open Jean Paul Gaultier's Fall 2007 show, appearing on the cover of U.S. *Vogue*, red carpet reporting for *ET Canada*—the 24-year-old beauty has earned her place in fashion history.

Rocha's profile is about to get another boost courtesy of *The Face*, a new reality TV series focusing on aspiring models. Slated to debut in 2013, the show has tapped Rocha, Naomi Campbell and Karolina Kurkova to coach teams of young women competing for a major endorsement deal. It's something Rocha—who was scouted at a Celtic dancing competition when she was 14—wishes had been around when she signed on with her first agent. "I could have learned so much from it," she says from

THIS PAGE: TOP, \$4,960, AND PANTS, \$9,425, BOTH BY MARY KATRANTZOU. SHOES, \$915, BY BRIAN ATWOOD. EARRINGS, \$455, AND RING, \$355, BOTH BY ALEXIS BITTAR.

OPPOSITE PAGE: JACKET, \$2,835, DRESS, \$3,905, AND SHOES, \$1,900, ALL BY ROBERTO CAVALLI. NECKLACE, \$790, AND RING, \$420, BOTH BY MAWI.



her house in Hastings-on-Hudson, a New York suburb she recently moved to. "I'm still learning from it myself." Rocha claims the main priority on the series is not to make "good TV" but to help develop emerging talent. Although Rocha admits that things do get "emotional" during some episodes, she feels "connected to each and every one of those girls." Rather than knock off its predecessor, *America's Next Top Model*, *The Face* positions Rocha as a teacher and guidance counsellor. This means none of Tyra Banks' faux-fierce talk or André Leon Talley's franglais will be coming out of Rocha's mouth to crush contestants.

"We know what it feels like to be models so we understand what they go through," Rocha says of the show's wide- and smoky-eyed cast. "We're definitely there to help—we're not there to bring them down." Rocha sees the biggest draw for the show as being the dissimilar curricula each instructor brings to the table.

"It's fascinating having three different mentors on the show—Naomi being the generation of the original supermodel Trinity, Karolina being part of the whole Victoria's Secret world and me, who's known for edgy editorial."

Rocha's biggest trick of the trade is something that cannot be learned on a TV show. According to fashion photographer Albert Watson, Rocha doesn't simply pose for the camera, she performs. "She has a very good understanding of the body because of her dance background," he says. "That's why she's in demand from a lot of young photographers. She makes them look good." »

A YouTube video filmed behind the scenes at Zac Posen's Z Spoke lookbook shoot gives you a taste of her work. Directed by Rocha's husband, James Conran, it captures her in front of the camera, all jaunty and Josephine Baker-like, conveying 100 emotions per minute.

"When you dance, you have a bank of moves that you can always go to. I reach into that when I'm on set," she says. "Some people think it's annoying that [I] will not stop moving, but I've made it my thing. Early on, I worked in Taipei and it was like modelling boot camp. I had to pose for a catalogue in 60 or 70 outfits a day. I'd continually change poses [and] change outfits all day. I never stopped working that way."

Rocha's connection with the East continues. One of the only top Western models on Sina Weibo, a popular Chinese social media site, she's racked up more than two million fans overseas—in addition to her nearly 400,000 Twitter followers. "In Asia, models are their celebrities," she says. "I'm always wondering how we can work with them. Now stores are popping up in Asia and shows [are being presented] there."

Much of her motivation for branching out past the confines of the catwalk has to do with Cindy Crawford, a model Rocha has looked up to over the years. "She's a smart businesswoman. Think of [MTV's] *House of Style*... her agents were telling her, 'Don't do it, it's a bad idea,'" Rocha says of Crawford's choice to host a TV program in the '90s. "She showed us how to brand ourselves on TV. She's still the perfect example of a modern model."

Like Crawford, who famously turned down millions when cigarette companies asked her to pose for their ads, Rocha has held tight to her own convictions. She never partakes in shoots that promote violence or require nudity, and has consistently taken a stand against industry players who use underage or underweight models, as well as mags and ads that misuse Photoshop.

"It's important for every model to have a voice. When I started modelling, people said to me, 'You're going to have to throw away your beliefs in order to be a successful model.' But I didn't," she says. "At the beginning of my career there were photos and moments I wish I wasn't a part of but I didn't realize I could say 'no.' Now I know that. I grew up—and still am—a practising Jehovah's Witness and believe in everything the Bible has to say. I'm a Christian first and a model second."

When or if her career slows down, Rocha—who celebrated her two-year wedding anniversary this summer—says she will eventually start thinking about a family. "Right now it would be unfair to have a kid in the mess of all my life, but when my work is done, I would love to have kids with James."

Currently the couple is focusing on Rocha's online empire and making sure every message she sends to fans—via her 13 social media platforms—is authentic. "James knows my voice. When all the celebrities and models out there allow their PR groups to speak on their behalf, that doesn't feel right. Followers are very savvy nowadays. You have to keep up with the times in a true way." □



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Christian
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a model
second.”

OPPOSITE PAGE: DRESS, \$5,900,
BY GUCCI.

THIS PAGE: TOP, \$1,440, AND
PANTS, \$1,850, BOTH BY
ROBERTO CAVALLI. EARRINGS,
\$1,200, FROM CAROLE TANEN-
BAUM VINTAGE COLLECTION.
RING, \$295, BY ALEXIS BITTAR.

HAIR AND MAKEUP BY GREG
WENCEL FOR P1M.CA/COVER-
GIRL. MANICURE BY LEANNE
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