

Perfecting the Picture | by Sophie Hayward
and Dan Jung

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cover news fashion headshot 5 things



ON THE COVER:
Stacey Wilson, 27, student
Model is wearing own clothes and makeup

Stacey, touched up:



PHOTO IMAGE: Dan Jung

Thin, Pretty and' Airbrushed

Clicking the shutter is just the beginning of model beauty

The arsenal of fashion photography has always included teen-agers with great bone structure, chic clothes and a good makeup job. But now it has another weapon: 19 years worth of computer-graphics technology to help models look flawless on the page.

Since the advent of Adobe Photoshop in 1982 and other design programs, the fashion and advertising industries have been airbrushing pimples, removing wrinkles and shaving off thighs with abandon.

"Everything gets retouched to death," says Eric Feinblatt, a fashion photographer and photography professor at the Fashion Institute of Technology in Chelsea. "There's nothing you see on any [fashion magazine] cover that hasn't been manipulated."

Though the industry does not pretend to mirror real life, many are critical of the way that photo manipulation alters an already staged image, accusing it of removing life from people's faces and contributing to poor body image.

Stacey, au naturelle:



Michael LaMount, a freelance photographer in Los Angeles, said he could hardly recognize the face of actress Julia Roberts on the March 2001 cover of InStyle magazine. "There was no skin tone, no definition," he says, "The face on the cover had so little to do with her that they might as well put a mannequin there."

LaMount objects to digital manipulation because by removing lines, chins and shadows retouchers are erasing people's individuality. "Once you start airbrushing, it becomes void of any kind of humanity," he explains.

But in the world of commercial photography even the models know the point of the picture is to create an image, not a portrait.

By the time a photo is taken the model has already been heavily made up, and her clothes pinned and tucked to her body. "How real is it anyway?" says Candy Frisbe, a model who participated in Fashion Week in Bryant Park in mid-February.

Megan Shoemaker, who also modeled at Fashion Week, says readers are savvy enough to know fashion photographs do not represent real life. "I think that most people know that the images can be manipulated; consumers are aware," she says.

But not all consumers are old enough to be so wise, critics say.

"Kids see that stuff and think 'the reality I see around me is the expectation I have for my body'" says Betsy Levin, a spokeswoman for the Center for the Study of Anorexia and Bulimia, part of the nonprofit Institute for Contemporary Psychotherapy near Lincoln Circle. "Just to be exposed to the truth of the cutest of the cute makes for unrealistic standards, and then you [alter] that picture?" she says.

"There's nothing you see on any [fashion magazine] cover that hasn't been manipulated."

- Eric Feinblatt, fashion photographer & instructor, Fashion Institute of Technology

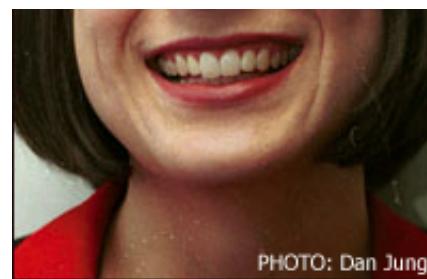


PHOTO: Dan Jung

What we did to Stacey:

- Whitened teeth
- Whitened eyes
- Thinned face
- Removed lines
- Reddened lips
- Airbrushed skin
- Added eyelashes
- Enhanced eyeshadow
- Thinned eyebrows
- Changed background

Time it took us:

- 5 hours
- Links:

- [About-Face: combatting negative images of women](#)
- [Fashion Institute of Technology](#)
- [Institute for Contemporary Psychotherapy](#)
- [Vogue](#)
- [Elle](#)
- [Allure](#)
- [Bazaar](#)
- [YM](#)



In YM's March 2001 issue the magazine wanted to see what singer Christina Aguilera would look like with darker hair, neutral lipstick and thicker brows.

Physicians and psychologists have long blamed fashion magazines for contributing to eating disorders. They claim the fashion industry portrays an ideal body that is far different from a normal healthy person.

About-Face, an organization that combats negative and distorted images of women, posts a "top ten offenders" list on their Web site. The list includes Allure and Elle magazines and points to their ultra-skinny cover girls.

"Until women are confronted with their own mirror images they will continue to measure themselves against an inhuman idea," the organization says on its Web site.



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