

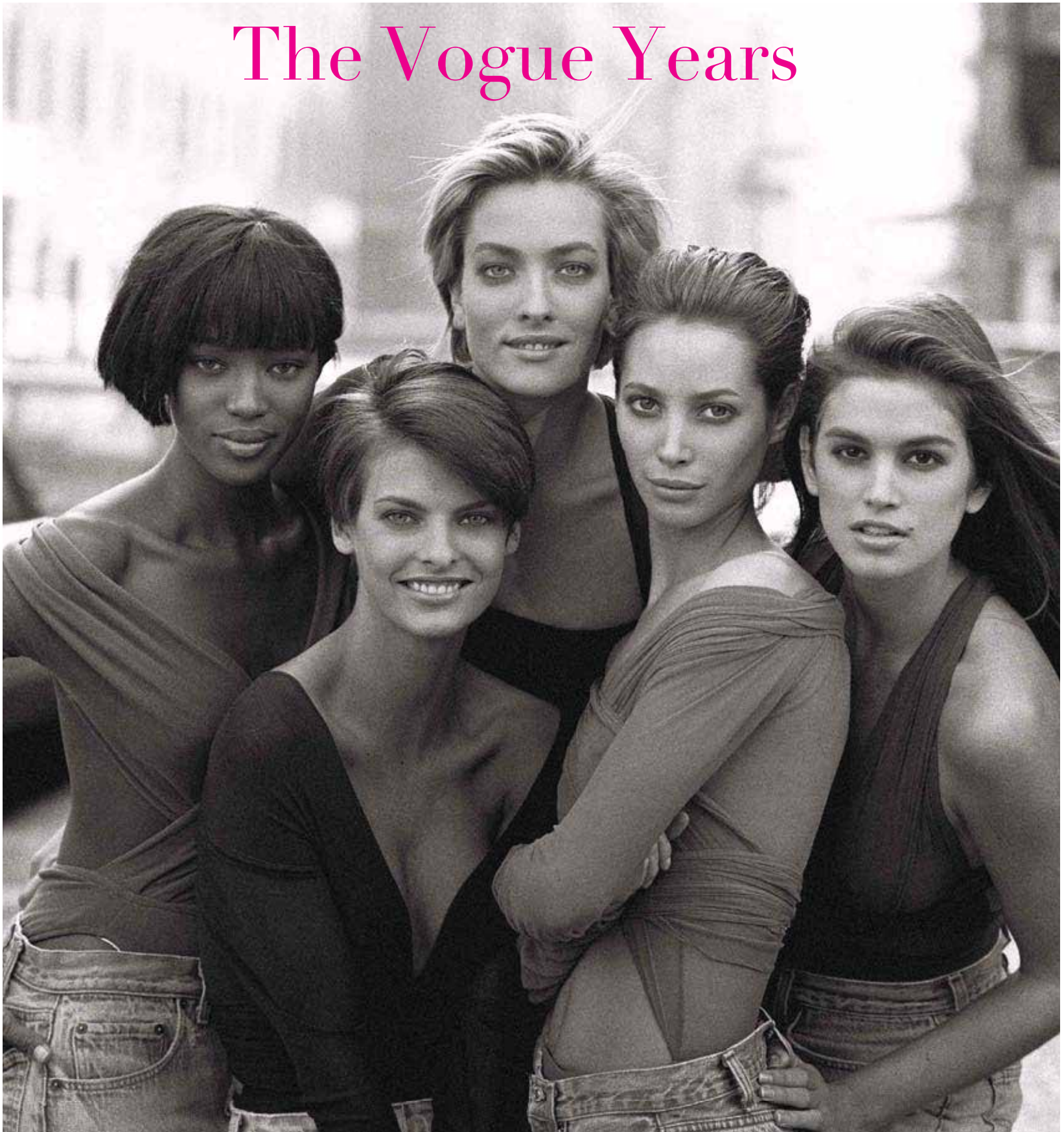


SIDDHARTH  
Writer. Designer. Wanderlust.

BAZAAR

LEAD FEATURE | PUBLICATION - HARPER'S BAZAAR

# The Vogue Years



As snapshots of a generation go, this one pouts and preens its way to near unforgettable status. Five angelic women are staring straight at the camera, in their eyes a heady mixture of seduction and simplicity. They could have been any five pretty faces picked from an ocean of models. Except the women in this case happened to go by the names of **Cindy Crawford**, **Linda Evangelista**, **Naomi Campbell**, **Christy Turlington** and **Tatjana Patitz**. Photographed by **Peter Lindbergh** for the **January 1990 cover of Vogue**, that monochrome image, offset memorably by a plain pink magazine identity, captured the birth of a popular culture phenomenon – the Supermodel. In this our 'Hot' Issue, **the buzz** profiles some of the searing impressions of the time as we take a catwalk down memory lane.

"We don't 'vogue'; we are vogue." Though not as oft-quoted as her "we don't wake up for less than \$10,000 a day" salvo, Linda Evangelista's pithy one-liner just about encapsulated what generation supermodel was all about – brashness, attitude... and that certain je ne sai quoi. For a heady decade or so, these larger-than-life mannequins strode the global stage of fame and infamy, pushing haute couture firmly into the larger public consciousness. Never had commercial modelling enjoyed such prominence, and never had its purveyors been such iconic symbols. As the highly-paid elite of the fashion fraternity, these were the names who commanded and received acres of acclaim, headlines and moolah in equally extravagant measure.

While the term Supermodel had been vaguely tossed around the block since the forties, there hadn't really ever been a strong enough coterie of women to collectively substantiate the phrase. Before Cindy & Co. brought girl superpower onto the ramps of the fashion capitals as a very real movement, the supermodel had been very much a lone, occasional occurrence through the likes of **Lisa Fonssagrives**, **Twiggy**, **Lauren Hutton**, **Janice Dickinson**, **Margaux Hemingway**, **Jerry Hall**, **Iman Abdulmajid** and **Christie Brinkley**. But by the time fashion impresarios began taking their visions of grandeur onto larger canvasses like television and huge billboards in the eighties, the conditions were ripe for the explosion of model as muse and media mistress.

A curious symmetry of events proved to be the final nudge in the evolution. In 1986, **famed photographer Steven Meisel** had brought along a striking California teenager called Christy Turlington into his Park Avenue studio to shoot her for British Vogue. Shortly after that, Turlington introduced Meisel to a then-unknown Brit named Naomi Campbell, both of whom were in turn introduced to a ravishing Canadian model - Linda Evangelista. Thus was born "**The Trinity**" of supermodels, soon to be found hitting the runways and nightclubs of New York with equal abandon. Alongside the names already mentioned, throw in the likes of **Kate Moss**, **Claudia Schiffer** and **Stephanie Seymour**, and you have the nucleus of a movement that left an indelible imprint on the nineties cultural landscape.

Playing muse to designers of the likes of **Versace**, **Armani** and other top fashion labels, project supermodel began playing itself out across TV hostess gigs, product endorsements, high-profile ad campaigns, the requisite celebrity romances, massive editorial spreads and even homages in the form of music videos from the likes of **Madonna ('Vogue')** and **George Michael ('Freedom')**. And then, just as sudden as their dizzy ascent had been, they were gone... burnt out or simply over-exposed by the mid-nineties, victims of their own strange success in a way. The very fashion labels which had championed them, pulled away, afraid that the personality of the models had begun to overpower that thing for which they had been recruited in the first place – the clothes.

As a result, the supermodel became an extinct breed talked about in the past tense, with a myth to go with every memory. Indeed, the last decade in fashion has been characterized by a nameless horde of assembly-line ramp-walkers, save for the odd scorcher like **Laetitia Casta** or **Gisele Bündchen**. Leaving the Supermodel as a polaroid for the history shelves.. albeit a decidedly gorgeous one.

