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Maye Musk Is Amazing and I'm Not Sure How to Feel About It

Have you seen Maye Musk lately?

In case you haven't, here are the facts:

She's a scientist and dietitian. She's the mother of three successful children, one of whom designed a little car you may have heard of. She's also a model taking the fashion world by storm, doing magazines, CoverGirl spreads and runway work.

And she just turned 70.

[Editor's note: That's not a typo.]

I have to admit, I'm conflicted.

What's Not to Love?

To sort out my complicated feelings about Ms. Musk, let's start with the long list of things to admire. First, she's an inspiration for women in the sciences. She earned not one but two master's degrees in nutrition at a time when women weren't exactly encouraged to do so. I would also point out that she did this after she was married and had three little kids nipping at her heels. I know from experience exactly how hard it is to finish your master's degree while changing diapers and stepping on Lego bricks barefoot, so *respect*.

She looks great. Like, inspirationally great if you're the kind of person who keeps a vision board around. As a dietician, she clearly takes good care of herself, which is also completely admirable -- we could all stand to be more watchful about what we eat and how much exercise we get to make sure we have the best health possible in our golden years. Even though she's enviably fit, she seems pretty down-to-earth about it in interviews, talking about her weakness for brie and desserts. She's also honest about makeup and its alchemy, freely admitting that she looks like a totally different person walking the dogs without it. Real talk!

And of course, it's outstanding to have actual footage of women of a certain age kicking butt and looking great. That sneaking suspicion that you've faded into invisibility by the time you turn 50 is an actual thing, and the media has an awful lot to with it. We're bombarded non-stop with images of teens and twenty-somethings hawking anti-wrinkle creams (ha!), and there's precious little out there in the way of gorgeous role models for actual humans who are older than 40. Representation is important for self-esteem and to remind people that we're still here.

The Big But

Okay, so there's plenty to love about Maye Musk's runaway success as a 70-year-old supermodel. But.

This is way too much pressure for the rest of us.

I mean, this raises the bar on physical appearance astronomically. It's one thing to flip through a fashion magazine at the doctor's office and look at impractical clothes and glittery makeup that are clearly designed for the young. I don't look like that in my sneakers and yoga pants, but nobody expects me to, either. I can easily get away with telling myself that they only look so smooth because they are barely legal.

But what if the old-lady modeling revolution is upon us and the media somehow becomes saturated with images of Maye and giddy grandmothers in couture and full makeup? Then I don't have have an excuse. I'll have to admit that my lack of thigh gap, often-unshaven legs and sparse eyebrows are a choice, not just a result of the inevitable march of time.

And it's a choice I make, on a regular basis. I'd rather not spend my time on makeup and a blowout, thank you very much. It's way too much work! For one thing, once you start dying your hair or waxing your lip, it's very hard to stop -- people will wonder if you're ill.

Who needs the insecurities of their 20s following them into their 60s? One of the best parts about growing old is growing *wise*. It's embracing your remaining time doing the things you love and feeling fully secure in who you are, no matter what the person looking back at you from the mirror looks like. Filling the media with impossible images of physical perfection in older women will make that all a lot more difficult, just as it does for women in their teens, 20s and 30s right now.

And that's because the images of Maye Musk are all designed to make us feel that she looks great "for her age" -- meaning that she looks young. Thin. Traditionally feminine in the way all magazine models do.

At the end of the day, that's still too limiting. There are so many shapes and sizes of women out there, and only a very small slice of body types are represented in advertising. Most of us will still never look like that, especially after menopause. Give me a model with a thicker middle, thinning locks and a hint of a mustache, and then we'll talk.

Of course, none of the very narrow vision of human beauty presented by advertisers is Maye Musk's fault, and she should keep on with her bad self doing the things she loves and being beautiful. But if you don't want to put in that amount of effort on your facade, you should never be made to feel like 60 is the new 20 by cosmetics companies looking to separate you from your money. Because it's not.





Let's let 60 be 60, and see what happens when that's given the respect it deserves.

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