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Christy Turlington

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2014 Fashion & Art Preview

MODERN BEAUTY

COVER PHOTO BY ALEXI LUBOMIRSKI






ENDURING BEAUTY

The original supermodel, Christy Turlington, is back on the billboards 30 years after she started her glittering career. HELENA DE BERTODANO discovers the secrets of her serene, lasting allure

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALEXI LUBOMIRSKI

STYLED BY LEITH CLARK

Christy Turlington wears white viscose dress with bandeau bra (worn underneath), to order, Calvin Klein Collection



White silk and linen jacket, £1,159; matching trousers, £539 both Calvin Klein Collection. Black lace bra (just seen), £29, Calvin Klein Underwear. Black and nude lace heels, £490, Manolo Blahnik. Yellow-gold bracelet, £4,400, Cartier

ALEXI LUBOMIRSKI

I

have had five husbands over the course of 20 years,' says Christy Turlington with a theatrical sigh. 'I can't even remember all of their names. I've been married and divorced a lot.'

She bursts out laughing. In case there is any doubt, she is not talking about her real life – in which she has only ever had one husband, the actor and director Eddie Burns – but her longstanding role as a model for Calvin Klein, in which she is paired with different men for its advertising campaigns, most notably as the face of the brand's Eternity fragrance.

More recently, and at the age of 44, she has once again become the body of Calvin Klein Underwear, modelling for its A/W 13 campaign, photographed by Mario Sorrenti. These days she models infrequently ('maybe 30 days of the year'), with the rest of her time devoted to her two children Grace, 10, and Finn, seven, and to her charitable organisation, Every Mother Counts, set up in 2010 to improve maternal health, following the difficult birth of her daughter. The campaign helps Every Mother Counts too: Calvin Klein is donating \$1 to the non-profit organisation for every bra purchased and has launched a \$5 million advertising campaign to help raise awareness.

But the thought of modelling underwear was far from her mind when Calvin Klein approached her earlier this year. 'At first, I thought, "Underwear? I don't really want to do that at this point in time,"' says Turlington with a grimace when we meet in New York. 'But then I thought that it's actually good for people to see images of women, not just young girls – proper women who have diverse lives and demands. I feel good about the fact that I feel fit and healthy and I haven't manipulated myself in any way.'

Of course, most 44-year-old women do not look like Turlington. If anything, she has become more beautiful as the years have progressed. Her cheekbones are more sharply defined, that famous 'having the best time of your life smile', as she once labelled it, as ready as ever. Years of yoga have given her an almost

regal posture, and she walks with grace and poise, whether she is modelling or not. Although she has fine smile lines round her eyes, she looks as perfect in the underwear now as she did when she first modelled it in her twenties. For all the online speculation about the images in the current campaign being airbrushed, I can testify, having seen Turlington in her underwear as she changes unselfconsciously into 11 different outfits for this photoshoot, that no airbrushing is necessary.

Yet Turlington goes out of her way to find flaws in herself. As she comes out of the changing area looking stunning in a black spaghetti-strap Calvin Klein slip dress and zebra-stripe stilettos, she casts a critical glance down at her legs. 'I've just realised that I haven't shaved my legs any time recently and that I have a huge bruise on one of them.'

Turlington shot to fame as one of the 'original supermodels' in the 1980s, alongside Cindy Crawford, Naomi Campbell and Linda Evangelista. In her 30-year career, she has appeared on over 500 magazine covers and, in 1992, the Metropolitan Museum of Art declared her the 'Face of the 20th Century'. More recently, the casting agent James Scully said of her: 'The greatest model of all time. You could combine every model to this day into one person, and they wouldn't come close.'

Turlington arrives at the New York studio for the photoshoot make-up free, her hair tied back, clutching a paper cup of coffee

and wearing a navy-and-grey-striped Alaïa sweater, loose-fitting black Helmut Lang trousers and shiny black tasseled Céline loafers, with a black leather Jason Wu handbag slung over her shoulder. Usually, she says, people don't recognise her. 'I've always been able to buy my own magazine without anybody knowing that it was me [on the cover]. Often I would walk into jobs in Milan or wherever and sit on the couch and they would look at me and look at my card and they'd be like "Is that really her?"'

So she always makes a point of introducing herself. 'Hi, I'm Christy,' she says, extending a delicate hand. Soon there is a happy buzz in the room – Turlington is no diva; she has no demands about the way she looks and is not interested in the resulting pictures. 'I find

it hard to say "I like that" [of a picture of herself]. It just feels weird to me,' she says, between swigs from a bottle of vivid-green kale juice. 'I feel like I've seen every way that I can be, so I often don't even look in the mirror or at the monitor because I don't really want to know... I'm around good-enough teams

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Black viscose jersey
mini-dress, £1,397,
Calvin Klein Collection



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Black viscose jersey mini-dress, £1,397, Calvin Klein Collection. Black and white canvas heels, £440, Paul Andrew

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that I can trust and have faith that they will make the right choices.'

During lunch, she takes a paper plate, piles it with pasta and tuna salad and sits with the rest of the team, chatting about her trip to Glastonbury ('It wasn't raining,' she says in surprise) and her addiction to the television series *Homeland*. 'I'm obsessed. We were the last people [to get hooked]. Sometimes it's one o'clock in the morning and I'm like, "Can we watch just one more?"'

Later, as she relaxes in a huge red chair, the manicurist massages her arms and hands. 'How's it going?' asks the photographer. 'Can't complain,' jokes Turlington through half-shut eyes. 'Hard day at the office...'

The middle daughter of an American pilot and a flight attendant from El Salvador, Turlington spent her early years in Walnut Creek, California, moving subsequently to Florida. She was discovered by a local Miami photographer while riding horses and began modelling at the age of 14. It was the first time anyone had really picked her out. 'I didn't grow up with an emphasis on my looks,' she says, now back in her normal clothes and having removed most of her make-up herself the moment the shoot wrapped. We are sitting in a quiet side room overlooking the Meatpacking District and Turlington is stirring a milky coffee. 'Even later [in my career], if I wasn't in a circle who knew who I was, I didn't have that kind of attention.' At school, she says, she was never the

one that the boys all fell in love with. 'Never, never, never. I was not the ugly duckling either. But I was just average, perfectly average.'

Within a year, she was modelling in Europe and was regularly featured in *Vogue*. After signing to Ford Models in 1984, she moved to New York to live in her agent Eileen Ford's Upper East Side townhouse.

Instead of finding that modelling disrupted her life, she feels that it was her salvation. 'I was starting to get into some trouble and was hanging out with some rebellious friends.' At 12, she was caught smoking in the toilet of a plane that her father was flying. 'I was sneaking cigarettes. I was this juxtaposition of a girl and a rebel teen. I had lost confidence at school – we moved twice during critical years and I was getting behind and nobody really noticed – so in a weird way the career gave me structure. I had to learn to be responsible and to catch my flights. There weren't even cellphones in those days.'

In the industry, she quickly established a reputation for being not only beautiful but also, almost as important, easy to work with. 'You never hear, "Christy got in late," or "Christy's tired,"' the photographer Arthur Elgort once said. 'Her eyes are not on the clock. She'll drive the Jeep. She'll help with the suitcases.'

Turlington laughs. 'I realised that all I had to do was be early, hang up my clothes and be polite and then I'm known as 'the nice one'. I'll take nice! I would hear how they talked about [other models] and I thought, "I would never want to be talked about in that way". I was happy to hold something or help somebody else when it wasn't me being photographed. I figured I might as well learn as much as I could about all of the various parts of the industry because I really wasn't planning on still doing this now.'

In her mid-twenties, Turlington decided to go back to school to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy at NYU. 'I hated the idea of being a cliché. When I said what I did, there'd be an "ohhh". That kind of assumption bothered me, the idea, "Oh, she's a model, she can't be very smart." I don't think that's fair.'

Certainly Turlington is driven. 'I've definitely challenged myself; I would never want to just be in a comfortable place. Whenever I've got too comfortable, I've gone back to school or back on the road.'

She likes the fact that the focus is less on her looks these days. 'Age has allowed me to be viewed in a different way. I'm not a threat to anybody, whereas maybe as a younger model people might think, "Oh, she's a model, is she talking to my husband?" Not that I was ever the kind of person to be concerned about – but I think there's a weird insecurity that other people have. It's nice to be a woman who's in my mid-forties like other women...'

Turlington says she doesn't really watch what she eats – 'I've never deprived myself of anything, but the things I crave tend to be things that are better for me' – and keeps in shape by practising yoga and, more recently, running long-distance. Shortly after we meet she is running a half-marathon

and then the New York marathon, using both to raise money and awareness for Every Mother Counts.

As part of her campaign, she directed a powerful documentary, *No Woman, No Cry*, in 2010, focusing on maternal health in Tanzania, Guatemala, Bangladesh and the United States. 'It doesn't matter if you are in sub-Saharan Africa or upstate New York. A woman can bleed to death within two hours.'

Her interest in the issue was sparked by her own experience of childbirth and the realisation that hundreds of thousands of women every year die in the process. Ninety per cent of those deaths are deemed preventable. But the group has a broader objective: 'A big part of our mission is trying to elevate the importance of the mother and of her role in society, so that she is recognised for being more than the vessel.'

As for herself, she says: 'I wasn't at risk at all – I had a great pregnancy and was perfectly healthy. Even the delivery was exactly as I wanted it to be. But an hour after the delivery, I didn't go into the fourth stage of labour – my placenta was retained.'

She was bleeding copiously and eventually the obstetrician intervened. 'It was very, very painful: delivering a baby without

'All I have to do is be early, hang up my clothes and be polite and then I'm known as "the nice one"'

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January 2014 | HARPER'S BAZAAR | 123 ►



Black crepe jacket, £384; ivory
viscose trousers, £618, both
Calvin Klein Collection



ALEXI LUBOMIRSKI

medication feels like nothing compared to having your placenta torn out of your uterus. But that's the only way to do it and they have to be very careful they don't leave behind any pieces because that can lead to sepsis.'

Turlington soon realised how easily it could all have gone wrong. 'I was trying to understand why it happened to me when I stumbled across this information. Many post-partum haemorrhages happen more than 24 hours later. I didn't lose enough blood to need a transfusion, but if I had needed one, it was all just a floor away; most women don't have that option.'

Not that her experience put her off having more children – three years later, she gave birth to Finn, and would happily have had more. 'But my husband was like, "We've got one of each, we've been lucky, why don't we just spend more time with the ones we have?" I can't really argue with that. Also we're both very hands-on and I think maybe my mistake was to have him do so much. Our son was a colicky baby and he had a very vivid memory of those first few months.'

Turlington met Burns in 2000. 'I knew right away he was probably the right person, just the timing was a bit off as I was coming out of a relationship. But he was so wonderful and persistent, which kind of broke me down... He was just an easy person and I kept thinking something was going to reveal itself at some point. I would wonder, "Why is he so forthcoming? Why is he so expressive and emotive?" Ultimately, I got that time to myself [they were engaged in 2000, then split up in 2002, finally getting married in 2003] and it was exactly what we needed. I feel like that was the first test for us and I'd rather test that before we're married...'. She says that they have a lot in common. 'We're the same age, we're both middle children, we both grew up in Catholic families...'

Turlington's father died in 1997 of lung cancer, inspiring her to throw herself into a different cause: raising awareness of the dangers of smoking. She remains very close to her mother and sisters, one of whom now lives in New York. 'She's married to my husband's brother, so I see her all the time. Our kids are double cousins: perfect donors for each other.'

Burns, she says, has taught her to relax a little. 'I've had to work on letting go, to some extent... [Eddie] loves to explain how, when Grace was a toddler, I was behind her all day putting things back in order and he was like, "Why?" Even to this day, they all come into the house and throw their shoes anywhere. They're just carefree and I'm the only one going' – she winces – "Ooh, that hurts me a little bit..."

Grace, she says, is just becoming aware of her mother's career. 'If she sees make-up – because I never wear make-up – she says, "Ohh, are you doing that fashion thing?" But then, she knows that the majority of my days are spent doing other things... My kids are always my priority. I've never missed any important event in their lives: a school function, a loose tooth, I've not missed one thing.'

In case there is any doubt about what Turlington considers most important in her life, she describes herself on her Twitter account in the following order: 'Mom, Wife, Daughter, Yogi,

Marathoner, Founder, Every Woman Counts, Author, *Living Yoga: Creating a Life Practice*, Model'.

Every so often, she checks in with her family on her battered iPhone, which has a smashed screen and a white case imprinted with the word 'love' in capital letters. 'Our babysitter is on maternity leave,' she explains apologetically, 'so we have an intern person who we just met a week ago and the drop-offs are so complex.' Her family life, she says, is as chaotic as anyone else's. 'I have to find ways to be more patient. Getting them out of the door to go to school in the morning is like herding cats. I know that we'll probably get [to school] at the same time if I'm stressed or if I'm a little bit more relaxed. Once they're off, my day begins. I either go to yoga or go for a run and then I can start my work day.'

The Turlington Burns family lives in Tribeca in a converted loft. 'We get a beautiful view of the city and lots of space

because we went there early before the area was so populated,' she says. 'I'm more of a minimalist and my husband is more of a collector-clutterer, but he has an office down the road, so I've trained him to put some of those things there. I try not to manage him too much but I do like a clean aesthetic.'

That minimalist approach is also reflected in the way she dresses – a style that has changed little over the years. She does not seem to follow trends yet somehow manages to present herself as both timeless and modern. 'I like nice things but I also hate shopping,' she says. 'I usually get slightly more contemporary versions of something I had 10 or 20 years ago. I never really covet anything.' She laughs. 'I'm probably the most unglamorous of models.'

Often, when she is out and about, she notices people trying to place her. 'A lot of people say, "I think I know you but I'm not sure, what's your name?" If I say "Christy", they say "What's your last name?" That's just socially awkward!'

These days, she says, she is rarely bothered by paparazzi. 'Nobody will be waiting outside our door. There's no controversy, no mystique...'

Yet even with her face and body once again plastered over billboards across the country, Turlington does maintain a certain mystery, a quality Calvin Klein knows how to harness. This year marks the 26th since she signed with the brand. 'I once told Calvin, "You can't name a fragrance Eternity if you're not planning on going the distance," she says. 'At the time I was joking – yet here I still am.' □

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Black viscose jersey mini-dress, £1,397, Calvin Klein Collection. See Stockists for details. Hair by Ben Skervin for Vidal Sassoon Pro Series at the Magnet Agency. Make-up by Romy Soleimani for Management Artists. Manicure by Donna D, using Chanel Christmas 2013 and Body Excellence Hand Cream. Set design by Todd Wiggins at Mary Howard Studio



ALEXI LUBOMIRSKI