

CALIFORNIA
STYLE &
CULTURE

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AMBER
VALLETTA
MODEL
ACTIVIST



PLUS ARIANNE PHILLIPS / LOST IN LOTUSLAND / JULIETTE LEWIS / FLAMINGO ESTATE



Amber Valletta has graced campaigns and covers for decades, but it's her focus on the planet that's making waves now

CHANGE AGENT



STELLA McCARTNEY dress, \$2,900. ALEXANDRA JULES earrings, \$4,800.
Opposite: BOTTEGA VENETA dress, \$5,400. MESSIKA PARIS earrings, \$2,240, and ring, \$6,660.

A full-page photograph of Amber Valletta on a beach. She is lying on her side on the sand, propped up on her left arm. She is wearing a long-sleeved, red dress with a pattern of small white and blue stars. Her hair is blonde and styled in waves. The background shows the ocean with gentle waves washing onto the shore under a bright sky.

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AMBER VALLETTA

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On Amber Valletta’s Twitter profile, she describes herself as a “hometown girl, occasional party crasher, hockey mama, fashion renegade.” “Oh my God,” laughs Valletta, when I remind her of the description. “I [wrote] that about 10 years ago. My son doesn’t play hockey, he plays volleyball. [But] I guess everything else remains true.”

Now 46, it is her role as a fashion renegade for which she is best known. She has parlayed her fame as one of the original ’90s supermodels — having appeared on no less than 16 American *Vogue* covers — into a role as one of the most active and outspoken voices for climate change and sustainability in the industry. “Fashion is one of the biggest polluters. ... [But] it can be a huge catalyst for change, because fashion dictates a lot and everybody gets dressed in the world.”

The day prior to our conversation, she was arrested in Washington, D.C. — for the second time in recent weeks — during a “Fire Drill Friday” demonstration, a weekly event spearheaded by Jane Fonda and aimed to pressure lawmakers to take action on climate change. A video on Valletta’s Instagram shows her being handcuffed in November. She laughs as she is cuffed, then chants: “The waters! Are rising! And so are we!”

“[In November] we were literally arrested with cuffs and thrown in a wagon and taken off to a holding place. ... [Yesterday] they decided to arrest us on-site without any cuffs, put us in lines ... and hand us tickets.”

Once she had paid her \$50 post-and-forfeit fine, she was released. Today she took the train from D.C. to New York, and now she is in her favorite salon, Suite Caroline in SoHo, having her hair colored and nails manicured before taking a flight in the morning to Saudi Arabia. “I am multitasking,” Valletta says as she chats to me by phone. “Thank God for earpieces.”

Although she is often in New York, her home is Los Angeles. Born in Arizona and raised in Oklahoma, Valletta was 2 years old when her parents separated and her father moved to San Diego. “I love California. I grew up coming out to visit him.” After her mother enrolled her in modeling classes at the age of 15, Valletta landed her first gig in Italy that same summer. Her debut *Vogue* cover came at the age of 18. Later, when she started acting too (she has over 30 credits to her name, including the movie *Hitch* and the TV drama

series *Revenge*) she moved to Los Angeles and raised her son, Auden, now 19, here.

“I needed to be in a big city, and I wanted to be somewhere close to nature. ... I love that I can look out my window and see the mountains and go walk in the mountains in five minutes. And I can walk and be at the beach in the same amount.” She also enjoys the eclectic culture of the city. “I love the mix: There’s a lot going on in California. ... It’s just a really special place.”

She lives on the west side and likes nothing better than to spend an evening at home with her partner, hair stylist Teddy Charles. “I’m going to be honest with you, I’m pretty much a homebody,” she says. But when she does go out, she has her regular favorites: the Hollywood Bowl for a concert in the summer; Matsuhisa and Sushi Zo for a meal; and some dance cardio at Body By Simone. Her days of surfing have waned: “I like surfing, but I don’t do it enough. I’m sort of a wimp: it’s cold in L.A.”

Married twice — first to model Hervé Le Bihan, then to Olympic volleyball player Chip McCaw, her son’s father — Valletta says she has no idea if she will ever marry again. “It’s not something I’m concerned about. I’m in love. I love someone. And that’s good enough. And he loves me.”

In the future, she says, she longs to live on a farm in the countryside. “And I’m hoping I have some grandkids.”

For now, she is still busy working, having recently appeared in campaigns for Stella McCartney and Holt Renfrew, both brands that take social responsibility and sustainability seriously. “Stella McCartney is No. 1. She’s really holding everybody in the luxury market up and pushing people to change, to be accountable. But there are tons of young brands: There’s a really cool brand called Mother of Pearl; I love Reformation; I like Everlane.”

Gen Z, she says, is helping drive forward the sustainability effort. “They’re more open and inclusive and aware of the problems we’re facing. ... [But] I don’t know if they would be here without the people who came before them.”

Valletta firmly believes that all generations should take responsibility. “I’m working with Jane Fonda, and she’s 82 years old, and she was motivated by Greta Thunberg, who’s 17 years old. I’m 46 years old. It’s not just on the kids, it’s on all of us,” she says. Valletta’s conviction is that all the hard work will eventually pay off. “I do think change is coming, and a positive one. I have to believe that. ... I’ve got to fight until the end.” ●

Makeup: TOM FORD Shade and Illuminate cream duo in Intensity One, \$88, and Scintillate, \$80. Brow Sculptor in Taupe, \$54. Fiber brow gel, \$54, and mascara in Raven, \$46.

Hair by TEDDY CHARLES at The Wall Group using R+Co. Makeup by HOLLY SILLIUS at Frank Reys using Tom Ford Beauty. Manicure by CHRISTINA AVILES AUDE at Star Touch Agency using Chanel Le Vernis.



SEE SHOPPING GUIDE FOR DETAILS, P.139

Opposite: JW ANDERSON jacket, \$1,590, and pants, price upon request. HEARTS ON FIRE ring, from \$6,300.