

INSTAMODELS

Photography KENNETH WILLARDT — Styling VIBE DABELSTEEN — Creative Direction JAKOB F.S.
Makeup & Body Art ANASTASIA DURASOVA for Temptu / The Wall Group — Words ROBERT TUTTTON

Surely you're familiar with Instamodels. They're the ones whose bikini selfies get more "likes" than most people have followers. Now they're being plucked from their feeds and thrust into high fashion by modeling agencies cleverly leveraging their camera readiness and, most importantly, their coveted following. Like it or not, Instagram has officially revolutionized the modeling industry. We've embraced the change, handpicking five of our favorite babes who boast followings of over 200K to sit for up to ten hours of body painting, getting this season's most memorable prints applied to their bikini-ready figures. As the resulting images indicate, these Instamodels are just as arresting as their street-scouted contemporaries.

By now, Instagram has become a fact of life, but that means more than dinner conversation losing ground to #FoodPorn. The platform can deliver the raw heartbreak of #PrayForParis, as well as the all-consuming flame of the Kardashian-Jenner-West empire. For better or worse, we fill it with our hope and our hate, our love and our longing, and take from it everything from inspiration to kinship. But, most importantly, Instagram is a place to be seen.

Few industries are as harmoniously tuned as fashion and Instagram. Together, they form a sprawling world of beauty and artistry thriving within a behemoth of self-promotion. And when it comes to self-promotion, there are few worldly creatures as deft as the InstaModel. They're the ones that generate rivers of sun-kissed selfies with boatloads of hashtags, as they amass staggering followings. The most successful among them have elevated what may appear to be an unapologetic exercise in vanity to bona fide lucrative modeling careers.

Instagram has become more proactive in its relationship with fashion, hiring Eva Chen, the former editor-in-chief of Lucky, who, since starting last summer, has brought her fashion acumen to the company as its head of fashion partnerships. "The day-to-day of my job wildly varies," Chen tells us. "My role is to work with everyone from models to stylists to designers, to fashion magazines and brands to help them elevate their Instagram content." As for the brands, they're becoming increasingly better at harnessing the app to meet their own ends. Whether it's Gucci's digital art display, #GucciGram, or Misha Nonoo foregoing the runway to show her collection entirely on Instagram, the photo app has proven itself to be more than just another marketing platform.

And it may very literally be changing the face of the industry. "I think for so long your access to fashion was very much a one-way conversation — designers would create things, they would be in a store or in a magazine, then that was it," Chen says. "Now the velvet rope has been taken away and it's been much more inclusive. It's an

amazing opportunity, especially for models."

ONE Management, a New York-based agency that already represents the likes of Bar Refaeli, Poppy Delevingne and Eva Herzigova, has been mining the vast fields of Instagram for new talent. "I started to see a shift in traditional media buying," says Scott Lipps, ONE's founder. "It used to be, years ago, people would call you and say, 'This is for our magazine or catalogue,' now it's like, 'This shoot is only for social media.'" The result is ONE.1k, a division dedicated entirely to repping Instagrammers with more than 100k followers. Lipps has since signed a slew of Instagram personalities, including Rocky Barnes and Sahara Ray (all featured in our body paint editorial) and less traditional "models," like The Fat Jewish.

The key is that they all come pre-equipped with massive fan followings. "Girls are getting campaigns for major brands because of their popularity," Lipps explains. "If they have four million followers, that's four million eyeballs that are going to see that." There's little doubt that Kendall Jenner and Gigi Hadid have seen their demand skyrocket because — aside from their stunning good looks — brands uncovered a very simple equation: Gigi + their product = their product + Gigi's 11 million followers (which pales in comparison to Kendall's whopping 45 million).

It's the very same logic that inspired Lipps to build ONE.1k. There is an undeniable elegance in its simplicity: It is easier to market girls skilled at marketing themselves, and you can hit the ground running with models who already live in front of a camera. Pepper in a unique aesthetic and maybe a compelling backstory and much of the agency's preliminary work — and risk — is covered. "If you're smart enough to figure out how to take a medium and make an incredible living off it, then you're heads and tails above other people," Lipps says. "It's a new age, so better to understand it and monetize it and be a leader in the space than be left behind trying to figure it out 10 years down the road." Others are following suit as well, like IMG, using their Instagram-based model search

dubbed "We Love Your Genes (#WLYG)." "People have gotten very hip to the fact that this is a real business," Lipps says. "This is not trivial. This is here to stay." Where scouts used to scour the streets and malls in Middle America for a hidden gem and groom her to thrive in front of the camera, Instagram has injected an element of crowdsourcing into the industry. The girl pushing a million followers must have more going for her than a few swimsuit selfies. "In a weird way, we're reverse engineering," says Lipps. "We're trying to sign people that we think could legitimately do day-to-day modeling, whether it be ad campaigns, fragrances, look books, editorials — we're not looking for people we think can only be famous on Instagram." But, followers aren't the bottom line. As Lipps points out, it's all about engagement. Someone may have hundreds of thousands of followers, but if their posts only draw a hundred likes, it's not a good sign (it may also signify a purchased army of bots, rather than actual people).

Eva Chen echoed the same idea, explaining that engagement with your community is an oft-underestimated metric of success. Another is, perhaps surprisingly, honesty. "I think the best ones are the ones that feel authentic and genuine. The more authentic these girls are, and the more themselves they are, it's not surprising to me that they're the ones that brands have their eyes on because you have to be comfortable in your own skin." ... And take a good selfie.

HAIR Dennis Lanni / Art Department (Jocelyn Chew & Rocky Barnes), Sasha Nesterchuk / Kate Ryan INC (Joy Corrigan & Kyra Santoro) & Thanos Samaras / The Wall Group (Sahara Ray) — MANICURE Honey / Exposure (Jocelyn Chew & Rocky Barnes) & Sunshine / ABTP (Sahara Ray, Joy Corrigan & Kyra Santoro) PHOTO ASSISTANT Eric Hodgman — DIGITAL TECH Dante Guerra — FASHION ASSISTANTS Auriane Grados, Elsa Boutaric, Henriette Arnevig & Maja Barlose Production Coordinator Mateen Mortazavi — RETOUCH Clinic Studio — THANKS TO ONE.1K (Scott Lipps and Andrew Majca) & KWPF Studio

@JOCECHEWBACCA

JOCELYN CHEW

Jocelyn Chew punctuates her e-mails with lots of exclamation points, an accurate reflection of the unbridled excitement and sheer joy that comes across on her Instagram feed. Sure, the Icelandic-Chinese Canadian (it's a magical combination, evidently) dons a bikini more often than most regular humans, but in between the requisite model-babe posts, she's bowling, boxing and even skydiving. Yes, this girl is up for adventure, so it's only fitting that her nickname comes from everyone's favorite Wookiee, Chewbacca.

(Read the full Q&A online at vsmag.com)



Jocelyn Chew in GUCCI



Rocky Barnes in **GIORGIO ARMANI**

@ROCKY_BARNES

ROCKY BARNES

Rocky (née Rachel) Barnes has a lot going for her; the perpetual California tan, the sun-kissed mane, the killer physique, the mega-watt smile... the list truly does go on and on. But Rocky's greatest asset is that rare, indescribable ability to physically embody the definition of hotness while remaining amiable rather than enviable; just ask her besties – a combo of models and non-model LA babes – who make frequent cameos on her feed. Though we do have to admit that we're jealous of Barnes for one very specific reason: she starred in Justin Bieber's 'Boyfriend' music video.

What was your very first Instagram post? Pretty sure my first post was a selfie... I guess not much has changed.
What posts do you find to be more successful than others? My bikini photos are pretty popular... Shocking, I know!

Nighttime shots are never a good thing.

Have you been reported? I've only been reported once... It was a wet t-shirt shot from one of my trips to Tahiti... Haters gonna hate.

Why do you think people follow you? Bikini shots and the occasional epic sunset.

Do you follow a posting schedule? I pretty much post when I find the time... My Insta is a real-time diary for the most part.

How did you get signed to ONE.1K? I met with Scott Lipps on one of his trips to LA and was so excited to hear his vision for the future of social media. I knew immediately I wanted to be part of the team!

Do you ever read your comments? Always read the comments – they are usually pure entertainment.



Sahara Ray in BOSS

@SAHARA_RAY

SAHARA RAY

Scrolling through her Instagram feed, it seems as though Sahara Ray is almost always wearing a bikini... not that her followers are complaining. The blonde bombshell is so keen on the clothing item she even boasts an eponymous swimwear line. And when she's not lounging by a body of water, Ray is hanging with her impossibly attractive pals, often while covered in glitter.

Have you ever been reported? Only once, can you believe it? I posted a photo from one of my favorite shoots of me completely nude on a motorbike. I was eating soup and flipping through the magazine, so I picked up the spoon I was using and put it across my chest. I got a "warning," and I was so surprised because the spoon covered everything perfectly.

What sort of posts get the most likes? I don't only post photos I think people will like. Expression isn't about making

things for the masses. As Sylvia Plath said, "The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt."

Why do you think people follow you? Not sure, maybe you should ask them...

How did you get signed to ONE.1K? I never wanted to be with an agency, however between managing myself and running Sahara Ray Swim, there was too much to do and not enough time in the day. I ended up taking a meeting with One.1 Management, but I told them I wouldn't go to casting or cattle calls, ever. I'm bad at emailing back, brushing my hair and am always terribly late...and they loved it.

Do you read your comments? I am much too busy with, you know, the usual; flower hunting, glitter sharing, dancing in the moonlight, riding unicorns and having tea with mermaids.



Joy Corrigan in DSQUARED2

@JOYCORRIGAN

JOY CORRIGAN

Like any savvy 'grammer, Joy Corrigan has perfected her pout, but IRL she's more like the bubbly girl next door — that is, if you happen to live in a very attractive neighborhood. Yes, she's easy on the eyes, but what we love most about this Miami-based babe is how her sunny persona proves she truly feels #blessed.

What was your first Instagram post? It was three years ago, and it was a truffle, gluten-free lasagna I had just baked — my grandma's recipe!

What sort of posts are most successful? I'll post a beautifully polished photo from a shoot and get a third of the likes compared to a raw selfie taken straight from my phone camera! Maybe it's because fans can relate more to a candid photo.

Have you been reported? I got reported for a picture of my girlfriends and I lying by the pool. I thought the tanned booties of four girls in thong bikinis would make a great post!

Do you follow a posting schedule? I try to post at least one or two pictures per day, and I like to mix it up a little. For instance, you prob won't see me posting two selfies in a row... unless it's a really good selfie, and I can't wait to upload it!

Do you have any selfie tips? Look at yourself in the camera while slowly spinning around in a circle until you find the perfect position with the best lighting.

Do you read your comments? It is impossible to read all of my comments, but when I read a sweet comment it always puts a smile on my face.



Kyra Santoro in FRANCESCO SCOGNAMIGLIO

@KYRASANTORXX

KYRA SANTORO

The first thing you'll notice about Kyra Santoro's feed is how often she smiles. This Cali beach girl is a welcome alternative to the standard waif-like, sullen-faced Insta-models. Whether she's chilling at Coachella or wolfing down Shake Shack, Santoro offers her female followers (somewhat) realistic #goals.

Why do you think some posts are more successful than others? I don't think there is any secret to Instagram; it's simply about branding yourself and posting photos of your life. People either like it or they don't.

Have you been reported? Once, on a photo that had no nudity or anything offensive in it... I actually had no clue why it was reported [laughs].

Why do you think people follow you? Being a model that is healthy is definitely inspiring to girls out there; it's hard seeing models that are so curvy that it's unrealistic... or so skinny that it doesn't seem achievable. I push being happy in your own skin, which is a strong message.

How did you get signed? I was never scouted by any agencies; I always had to put myself out there. I started modeling at 18 by shooting with different photographers and building up a book. It didn't really take off until about two years ago, and Instagram definitely had a part in that.

Do you ever read your comments? I feel very lucky in that I don't get hate comments. I know a lot of girls do... especially models. I maybe get one hate comment on one out of ten photos, so for that I usually don't sit and read my comments all day.