



Isabella Rossellini attends the 'Macbeth' Premiere during the 68th annual Cannes Film Festival on May 23, 2015, in Cannes, France. (Photo Credit: Denis Makarenko / Shutterstock.com)

ISABELLA ROSSELLINI

HER FALL FROM GRACE
ONLY TO RISE RENEWED

Written by Kaylene Peoples

From a Golden Globe, Emmy nominations, and an Independent Spirit Award winner, to becoming the face of Lancôme, Isabella Rossellini has mystified the world. She's the daughter of actress Ingrid Bergman and film director Roberto Rossellini, so it's no surprise Isabella Rossellini ended up in Hollywood. She starred in the films *Blue Velvet* (1986), *Death Becomes Her* (1992), and received her Golden Globe nomination for *Crime of the Century* (1996). She started modeling late. At the age of 28, Isabella shot with the photographers Bruce Weber for *British Vogue* and Bill King for *American Vogue*. Throughout her modeling career, she worked with photographers Richard Avedon, Helmut Newton, Francesco Scavullo, Annie Leibovitz, and more. Isabella has graced the covers and appeared in countless magazines, including *Marie Claire*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Elle*. She was even the subject of the exhibit *Portrait of a Woman*, held at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris in 1988. Isabella has appeared on countless television shows, written three books, and even had a short theatre career. And if that wasn't enough, her work as an activist is beyond commendable. She is the president of the Howard Gilman Foundation and a board member of the Wildlife Conservation Network; she trains guide dogs and is the National Ambassador for the U.S. Fund for UNICEF.

Several Youtube videos ago, the renown model, actress, activist, volunteer, and eternally ageless beauty Isabella Rossellini, spoke out about a significant problem in our society that has been an ongoing stigma for women in America—AGEISM. Already starting late in a business that idealizes youth, Rossellini became a model in her late 20s, the age of retirement for most in that profession. She always appeared younger than her years, and that was a blessing to her. Her famous mother Ingrid Bergman once told her that between the ages of 40 and 65, the work disappears for most women in the entertainment-related industries. Well, that held true for Isabella, too. She was promptly dismissed from her position at Lancôme at 43 for looking too old. This came as a shock to Isabella, who had become internationally known for the longest run as the exclusive spokesperson for the cosmetics brand Lancôme (she replaced Carol Alt in Europe and Nancy Dutiliel in America).

“I worked at Lancôme for 15 years. It was a time when modeling evolved. When I began, as they say in France, I was to “soi belle et tai toi” (that is, ‘look beautiful and shut up’). I was an image, there was anonymity, and I worked like that for about 10 years,” Recalls Rossellini.

At 43, Isabella was asked to step down from that role for being “too old.”

Isabella Rossellini:

“When I asked the executive [of Lancôme] why, they said, ‘Women dream to be young. So you cannot represent the women’s dream. An advertisement doesn’t represent reality. An advertisement represents the dream.’”

But, at the age of 65, Lancôme changed their tune and asked Isabella to come back as their global brand ambassador. So the big question is, “What changed?” At 43 Rossellini’s too old, but at 65 she’s not? She was so sure they were mistaken, that she insisted on meeting them in person, so they could see just how much older she looked 22 years later.





CANNES, FRANCE - MAY 14, 2015: Isabella Rossellini at the gala premiere of "Mad Max: Fury Road" at the 68th Festival de Cannes. (Photo Credit: Featureflash Photo Agency / Shutterstock.com)

Isabella and Lancôme renewed that relationship, which started in 1983. She had become the very first face of Lancôme.

“For 14 years, Isabella Rossellini was one of the most beautiful, quintessential embodiments of the Lancôme woman.” Said a Lancôme spokesperson.

There was no confusion why Isabella was let go all those years ago, but she did feel that the renewed contract with the cosmetic company was an opportunity to “right things.” She was told by Lancôme that even now, her name reappears in market research. This information made Isabella “new” again.

Advertising is a two-fold business. Garnering sales and branding illusions to spark the interest of those that have way too many options in the world of consumerism. And having a mature women represent beauty was an oxymoron. But was it really? Or is it merely a selfish motive perpetuated by misogyny to limit women’s opportunities. There is a staggering list of women over 40, who not only manage to stay in the public eye, but dominate the film and TV industries. Our actresses Selma Hayek, Lisa Kudro, Jodi Foster, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Julianne Moore, Nicole Kidman, Angela Bassett, Viola Davis, Ellen DeGeneres, Ming-Na Wen, and others are prevalent and relatable. This age group represents the chunk of consumer women—why else would these icons be icons?

My choice to feature this two-year-old story has more to do with my angst about ageism. Priding myself on being in the know about fashion and beauty, I’m ashamed to admit that I missed this important piece of news. It took a recent Facebook post for me to learn about Isabella Rossellini’s plight. I’m proud of her for speaking out, but I’m sad that it’s taken up till now for the beauty industry to finally catch up!

“I don’t think that there’s an elegance in aging, I think there is an elegance ‘tout court.’ The word beauty, I associate it with elegance and sophistication, and not at all with trying to be who I am not. I don’t try to be younger, blonder, or thinner. I am who I am.”

—Isabella Rossellini