

SUPPLEMENT OF THE YEAR

YOU

11 JULY 2010

GIVING UP IS GOOD FOR YOU
When it's best to quit while
you're not ahead

**'MY SON-IN-LAW WAS
HER MURDERER'**
One mother's chilling discovery

**BEWARE THE
STRAPLESS TRAP**
A celebrity revelation too far

More tease, Vickers!

**THE X FACTOR ALSO-RAN
WHO BROKE THE MOULD**



FASHION FOR LIFE

MIMI SPENCER



IT'S HIPS, HIPS, HOORAY FOR REAL WOMEN!

Great news from the front line, my friends. Following decades of female self-loathing and rampant body hate, inspired by the bizarre images of perfection that hog our walls and screens; influenced by all those actresses with perfect teeth and salon hair; and models with unfeasibly long limbs and concave bellies – after all this, respite. It's time to whoop down the corridor and repossess your body image!

I have, of course, been writing hopeful pieces about this moment for years, willing us as a gender to shun size zero and fad diets and heroin chic and whatever other pernicious body trend was doing the rounds. But still we persisted, with the eventual idiocy that plenty of women (maybe you know a few) tried hard to resemble an airbrushed, digitally elongated, touched-up version of their favourite star. It's where hair extensions and fake boobs and collagen plumpers came in: a sector of the sisterhood went potty and ended up looking like inflatable dolls, their quest for perfection turning them into curious she-beasts, divorced from the soft warm fleshiness of the real world.

But now, the backlash. Two key components: first, the glorious

It's time to repossess your body image as rounded bodies hit the catwalk and celebrities forgo Photoshop

prevalence of proper, rounded, feminine bodies on the catwalks at some of the most important labels in the land. Generally in the past, a no-name designer from New Zealand would stick plus-size models on his catwalk to make a point and the media would nod sagely before returning to its usual love affair with the underweight chickens that we see in every ad and fashion shoot. But this time, look. It's Marc Jacobs! It's Prada! It's the big guns, and they're aimed at exploding the myth that hips and bottoms and bellies and thighs are somehow objectionable. I loved the models at Vuitton and Prada – girls with creamy skin and quivering breasts. Not big, but bigger. Not old, but older. And beautiful enough to make the scrawny birds seem irrelevant.

Fine, you may shrug, and? Well, it's the 'and' that makes me think real change is in the air. Now add the new celebrity trend of forgoing Photoshop. Across Hollywood there's a growing anti-retouch movement, led (weirdly) by Britney Spears, who has released un-retouched pictures of herself in a campaign for a swimsuit company called Candies. The 'true' shots show bruises, a hint of cellulite, uneven skin tone, wider hips, even the chicken skin as it's pulled up towards the bikini line. Crikey. Meanwhile Jessica Simpson appears barefaced on the cover of an American glossy, with the cover line 'No make-up, no retouching, no regrets!' Kim Kardashian's at it, too, and the trend is only in its infancy. Sure these women have benefited from great lighting and good cheekbones, but the natural shots feel like a blessed relief from the years of fantasy and falsehood that have governed the way real women feel about their bodies. Look at me, goes the new subtext, really look at me – I'm not a plastic droid, I'm a human, a woman, a flawed goddess, a bit like...you. Let's hope this is one trend that lasts.

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True Brit: Ms Spears struts her un-retouched stuff in the Candies ad



PRADA



HOW NOW KATIE LESTER

BETA CHECK THIS OUT...

Want to bag brilliant pieces you can't buy anywhere else? Betafashion.com invites designers to submit ideas to a specific brief, then the Beta community decides which designs will go into production – such as this very covetable dress (£145) by American artist Graham Murrough.

WRAPPERS' DELIGHT

You could blame Alexander McQueen's skulls or Louis Vuitton's leopard-print for kick-starting scarf fever, but it's American

brand Love Quotes scarves that the A-listers (SJP, left, J-Lo, Nicole Richie, et al) are loving, and no wonder. Not only do they come in dozens of chic shades, but ten per cent of profits go to children's charities. SCARF, £80, Love Quotes, from Austique, tel: 020 7376 4555, austique.co.uk



They're darling



SHOES, £560, Nicholas Kirkwood for Liberty, tel: 020 7734 1234