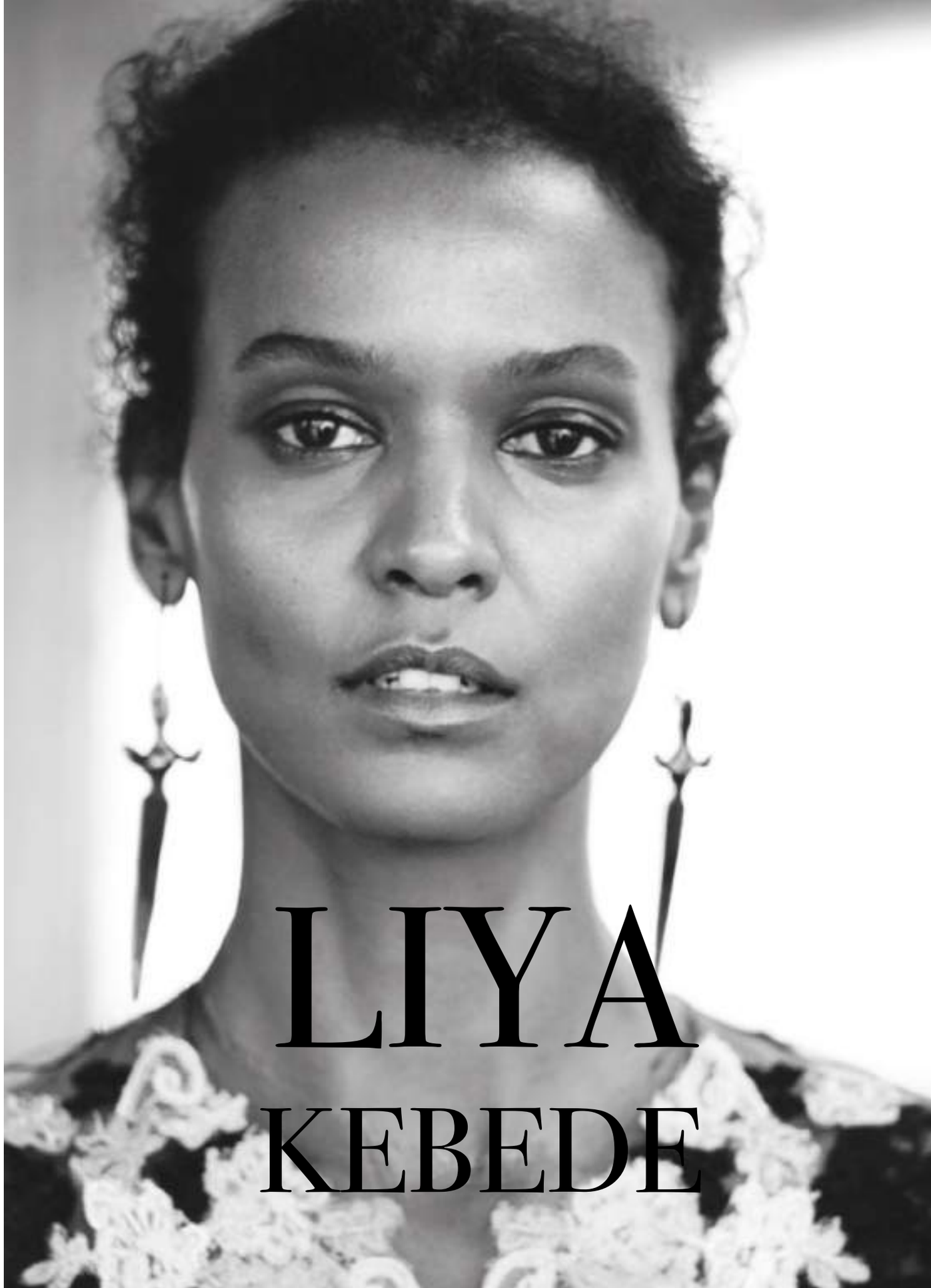
ICONIC

218k followers

The Ethiopian-born supermodel Liya Kebede is effortlessly alluring but she's also smart, philanthropic, and business-savvy. Liya Kebede has been in the industry for almost 20 years— walking and talking for the world's largest fashion houses and magazines, first with names like Gucci and Vogue. She is also a social activist, designer, maternal health advocate, actress, social activist, and entrepreneur.



LIYA KEBEDE

Tall, graceful, elegant, and thoughtful, the mother-of-two was born in Addis Ababa in 1978. Liya moved to Paris at the age of 18. Her modeling career took off as a year later she debuted at the spring Ralph Lauren and was also personally selected by Tom Ford for an exclusive contract for the Gucci Fall/Winter 2000 fashion show. She gained still more attention as the entire May 2002 edition of Paris Vogue was dedicated to her. In 2003, she made history becoming the first ever black model to represent cosmetic company Estee Lauder.

By 2003, Kebede attained the top of the models.com ranking and has been seen on on multiple American and international VOGUE covers, runway shows and major print campaigns for top designers worldwide. She is also an established actress with several film credits to her name.

In 2007 Forbes Magazine named her eleventh on its list of the world's fifteen top-earning model.

Although Kebede still models for the likes of Tom Ford, Donna Karan and Roberto Cavalli, she is now focused on philanthropic ventures. In 2010 Kebede was named one of Time Magazine's 100 Most Influential People and in 2013 - one of Glamour's Women of the Year for her philanthropic work through her Liya Kebede Foundation.

BIOGRAPHY

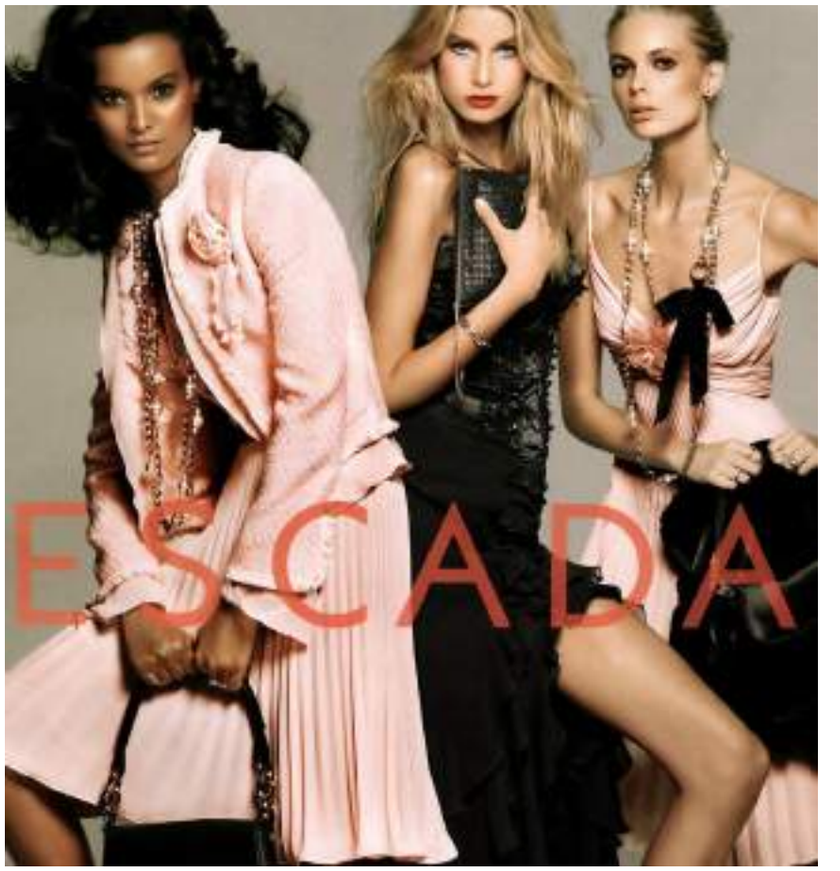
CAMPAIGNS

Liya Kebede has starred in countless fashion and beauty campaigns, from Louis Vuitton to L'Oréal, Estée Lauder to Escada.

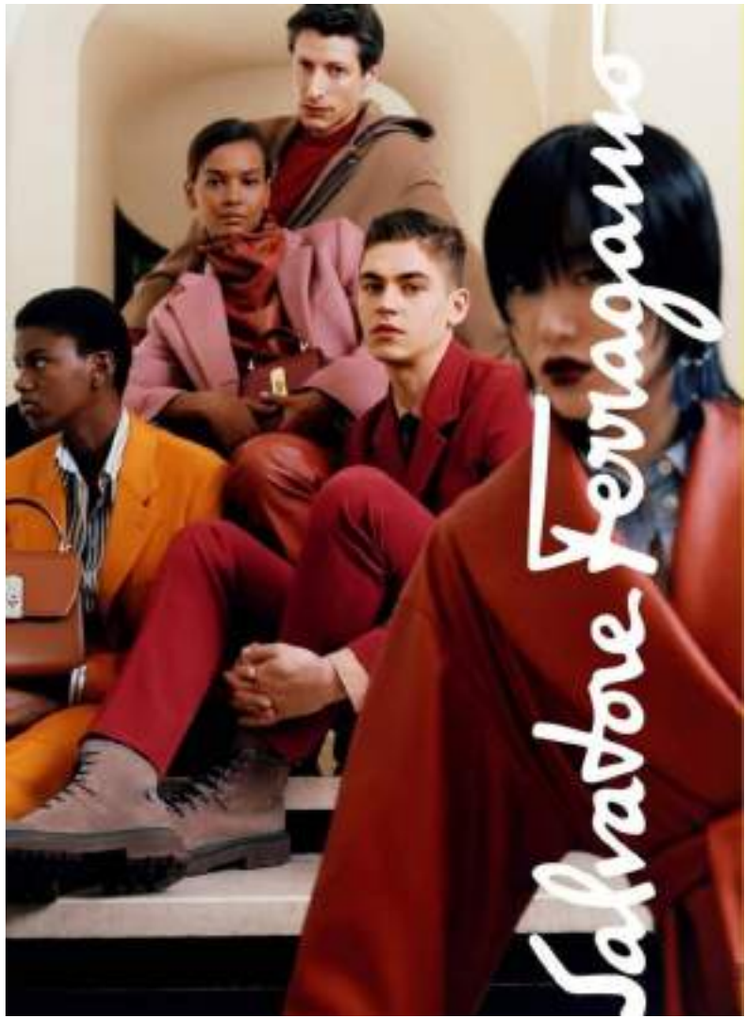
Behind the scenes with Liya Kebede and Peter Lindbergh for the Giorgio Armani fall 2016 campaign.

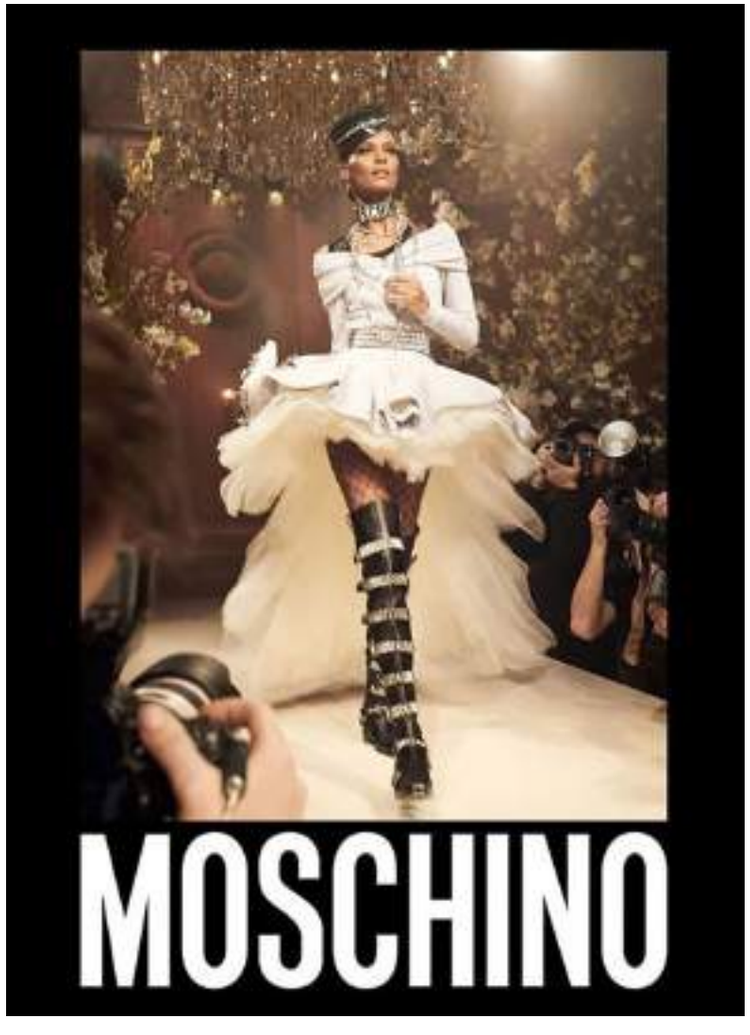
LIYA
HARLEM, NEW YORK
NOVEMBER 2ND 2016

VALENTINO

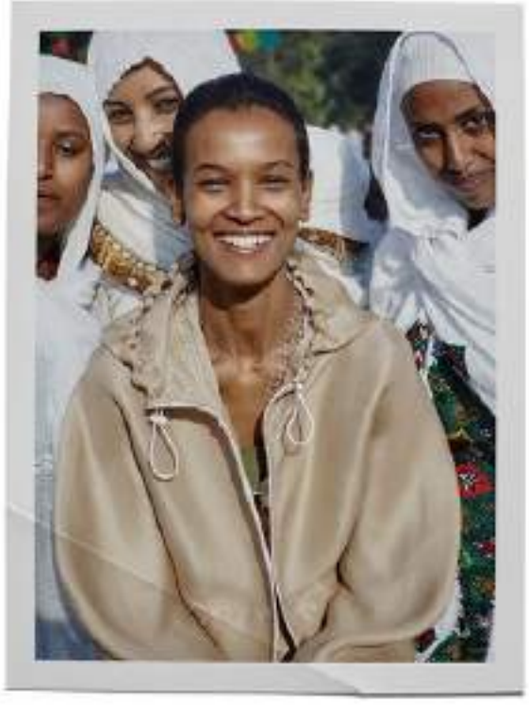


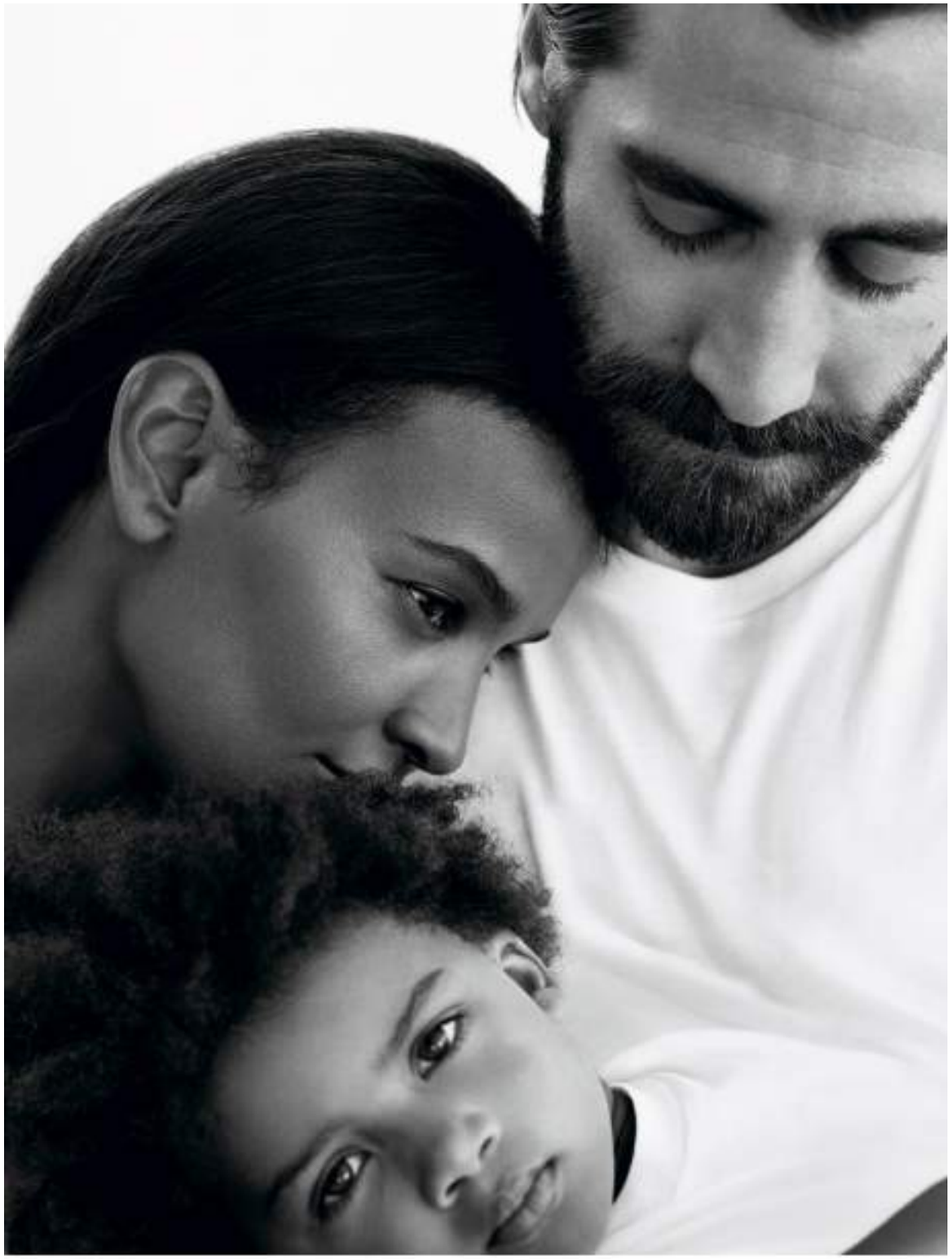
CALVIN KLEIN





3·1 Phillip Lim





Kebede is the star of Iconic Calvin Klein's Eternity fragrance commercial alongside actor Jake Gyllenhaal.

COVERS

Liya Kebede has been seen on the covers of Italian, Japanese, American, French and Spanish Vogue, i-D, Marie Claire, Elle magazines among many more.

UNCONDITIONAL MAGAZINE S/S 2018

BY ALEXANDRA NATAF

VOGUE
PARIS
LIYA Kebede,
l'odyssée
d'une égérie...
Mode:
le
TOUT
c'est
d'OSER!
par INEZ & VINOODH
Interviews
exclusives
Kevin Systrom,
alias MR.
INSTAGRAM.

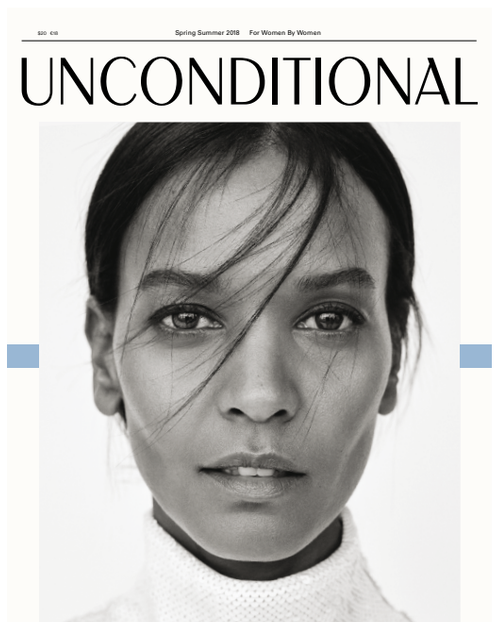
marie claire
2,20€
Spécial
cheveux
Les 7 tendances
des podiums
mode
d'emploi
Mode
accessoires
#RENTRÉE
FACILE
COUPE
LIYA
KEBEDE

PORTER
SUMMER
LUXE
FASHION
feel the
HEAT

VOGUE
KOREA
NOW
NEW

i-D

THE LAST
MAGAZINE


Spring Summer 2018 For Women By Women
UNCONDITIONAL

GRAZIA
ÉTÉ
CHEVEUX SAINS
PEAU PURIFIÉE
CORPS ÉNERGISÉ...
Profitez
de l'été!
VOYAGES

VOGUE
You're
ired!
THE
REAL
LIVES
OF
MODELS
Boyfriends, Babies,
Closets, Catwalks,
Diets, Drama:
AND THE MAN WHO
MADE THEM STARS

ELLE
GIRLS
TALK

VOGUE
PARIS
Belle
de
jour
TOUT
SUR LIYA,
NOTRE
HÉROÏNE
MODE

MANIFESTO
LIYA KEBEDE
55

marie claire
Etre mère
aujourd'hui

madame
FIGARO
SPÉCIAL
320 PAGES
MODE
STYLES & TENDANCES
OUTRANCIÈRE LIBERTÉ

i-D
Sex.
Glamour.
Power.

VOGUE
ESPAÑA
¡VUÉLVETE LOCA!
COMPRAS GANADORAS
EL NUEVO VESTIDO
PRENDAS

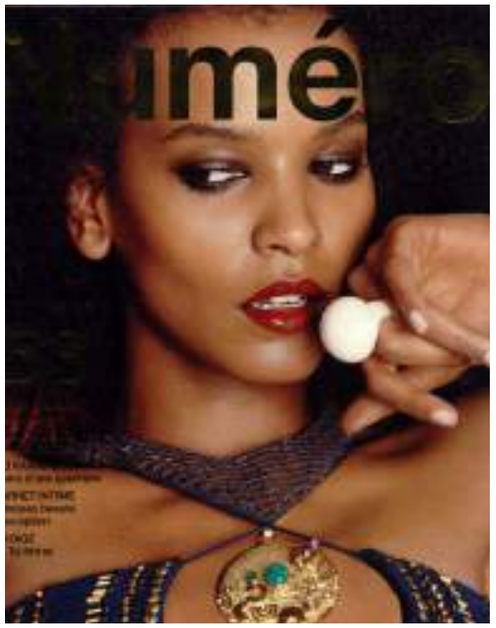
i-D
LIYA KEBEDE MAKES A STAND

MADAME
LUXURY
Issue

VAMP

ELLE
ITALIA
3,00

TIME
STYLE & DESIGN
INSIDE FASHION
The business of imagemaking


umé

ELLE
FASHION
WHAT TO BUY FOR THE NEW SEASON
A SLIP DRESS, EXTRA-LONG EARRINGS, A REVERSIBLE BOMBER
Lights, camera, action!
Liya
RELATIONSHIPS + TEXTING: HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

VOGUE
ESPAÑA
MODA ESPAÑOLA
estilo sexy
EL PLAN PERFECTO PARA TU ARMARIO DE PRIMAVERA

BAZAAR
THE NEW CHIC
GEORGE CLOONEY
TALKS MOVIES & MARRIAGE
THE TRUTH ABOUT SKIN PEELS
BAZAAR'S HOTLIST

VOGUE
Global Chic
Exotik trifft High Fashion
Unsere Favoriten für den Winter
295
Digitaler VOGUE Adventskalender
Stil ohne

BAZAAR
A FIRST LOOK at spring—exquisite gowns, delicate pants, and elegant skirt suits—all with a MODERN TWIST
THE BEST OF WHAT'S NEW

VOGUE
COVER MODEL WITH A CAUSE
THE END OF THE AFFAIR
AN EGYPTIAN WOMAN BUCKS THE SYSTEM FOR THE SAKE OF HER BABY
REALLY TIRED?
YOUR SUMMER SURVIVAL GUIDE
Fun Prints
Cool Whites
Flirty Skirts
REALLY SCARY
REALITY CHIC

大都市
Numéro
12
Role

VOGUE
UNSERE SUPERMODELS
LIYA KEBEDE
KAROLINA KURKOVA
CAROLYN MURPHY
STEPHANIE SEYMOUR
CINDY CRAWFORD
DAS GEHEIMNIS IHRER SCHÖNHEIT
380 SEITEN
GLAMOUR & FASHION

VOGUE ITALY APRIL 2016
BY PATRICK DEMARCHELIER

Tom Ford recalls: *"She looked me in the eyes, and I was quite literally stunned. Liya projects an aura of goodness and calm that outshines even her extraordinary physical beauty. Later in the day,"* Ford continues, *"when trying to remember what she looked like, I could only remember her eyes."*

VOGUE GERMANY DECEMBER 2015
BY GIAMPAOLO SGURA

Die Botschafterin

VOGUE-Covermodel Liya Kebede wirbt mit ihrer Stiftung um Unterstützung für Mütter und Neugeborene in Afrika

Seit vier Uhr morgens ist sie wach, ist für die Louis-Vuitton-Schau auf der *Paris Fashion Week* gelaufen, jetzt steht Liya Kebede frisiert und geschminkt im zweiten Stock eines Studios im 14. Arrondissement. Der Hairstylist bedeutet ihr, dass ihre Haare mehr Volumen brauchen, sie schüttelt die Mähne wild hin und her und ruft: „Wo bleibt die Musik!?“ Liya Kebede kennt ihren Job gut, sie macht ihn schließlich seit Jahren. Und nicht nur diesen: Das Model ist Gründerin einer eigenen Charity-Organisation, eines Modelabels für in Äthiopien gefertigte Kleidung und Accessoires, Schauspielerin (z. B. *Wüstenblume* und *Heute bin ich Samba*) und Mutter zweier Kinder, mit denen sie in New York lebt.

Entdeckt wurde die in Addis Abeba geborene Liya Kebede während der Schulzeit an einem französischen Gymnasium in ihrer Heimat. Sie zog nach Paris und feierte mit 22 Jahren ihren Durchbruch, als Tom Ford sie im Jahr 2000 für die Präsentation seiner Herbst/Winter-Kollektion für Gucci engagierte. Heute ist die mittlerweile 37-Jährige als Model immer noch sehr gefragt und findet trotzdem Zeit für ihre Projekte wie etwa die von ihr gegründete „Liya Kebede Foundation“.

Vor etwa zehn Jahren haben Sie Ihre Stiftung gegründet, die Mütter in Afrika während der Schwangerschaft und bei der Geburt unterstützt. Wie kam es zu diesem Engagement?

Nachdem meine eigenen Kinder geboren worden waren, entwickelte ich so etwas wie eine Leidenschaft dafür, anderen Müttern zu helfen. Ich bin 2005 zur WHO-Sonderbotschafterin ernannt worden. Zu der Zeit starben weltweit jedes Jahr immer noch mehr als eine halbe Million Mütter während der Schwangerschaft oder bei der Geburt. Ich fand das schockierend. In meinen sechs Jahren als WHO-Botschafterin habe ich versucht – und versuche es immer noch –, mit meiner Hilfsorganisation diesem unnötigen Sterben etwas entgegenzusetzen.

Wie sieht die Hilfe Ihrer Stiftung konkret aus?

In Äthiopien haben wir eine Lücke in der medizinischen Versorgung geschlossen, indem wir ein sogenanntes Mutterschaftszentrum gegründet haben. Allein in den vergangenen vier Jahren konnten wir damit mehr als 7000 sichere Geburten ermöglichen.

Haben Sie bei all Ihren Tätigkeiten überhaupt Zeit, sich auch vor Ort ein Bild zu machen?

Aber ja, ich bin zweimal im Jahr in Äthiopien, um von dort aus für die Foundation und mein Label Lemlem zu arbeiten, und natürlich auch, um meine Familie zu sehen.

Die Modewelt und Ihre Arbeit für Ihre Stiftung scheinen auf den ersten Blick sehr gegensätzlich. Wie vereinbaren Sie das?

Ich kann nur sagen, dass mich die Menschen in der Modebranche bei meiner Charity-Arbeit immer sehr unterstützt haben – von Anfang an. Das hat auch sehr geholfen, eine Balance zu finden.

Wie sieht denn ein typischer Tag im Leben der Liya Kebede aus?

Den gibt es eigentlich nicht! Ich kümmere mich immer um das, was gerade am dringendsten ist. Das ist ein bisschen chaotisch, aber es gibt ein System im Chaos. Wenn ich wie jetzt in Paris bin, arbeite ich am Telefon, bin online, schreibe Mails. Ich laufe auf Schauen, sehe mir Schauen an und halte Meetings für mein Label Lemlem ab, das hier im Showroom gezeigt wird. Ich bin also immer gleichzeitig für viele verschiedene Dinge zuständig. Ich muss dann ein bisschen mehr schlafen, aber es geht.

Und was entspannt Sie?

Ich versuche zu lesen, sehe viele Filme und TV-Serien an. Im Moment bin ich geradezu besessen von der britischen Serie *The Game*. Ich habe außerdem angefangen, *How to Get Away with Murder* zu schauen – Viola Davis spielt phantastisch!

Viola Davis hat in diesem Jahr als erste Afroamerikanerin einen Emmy als „Beste Hauptdarstellerin in einer Dramaserie“ gewonnen. Sie wurden 2003 als erste farbige Frau zur Markenbotschafterin von Estée Lauder ernannt. Hat sich Ihrer Meinung nach etwas geändert?

Was die Modebranche betrifft, liefen in den letzten eineinhalb Jahren viele neue Mädchen – großartig! In dieser Saison gab es sozusagen viel Farbe auf dem Laufsteg, worüber ich mich sehr freue. Meine Hoffnung ist jetzt, dass diese Entwicklung anhält, es sich nicht einfach um eine Phase oder einen Trend handelt und im nächsten Jahr dann wieder russische Mädchen das nächste große Ding sind.

In diesem Jahr gab es einige Aufregung über das Cover für die französische VOGUE mit Ihnen als erster farbiger Frau seit fünf Jahren. Nervt Sie so ein Trubel um die Hautfarbe?

Es nervt mich nicht. Die Menschen erinnern einen daran, dass es sich immer noch um ein Novum handelt. Aber gleichzeitig wird ein Bewusstsein für das Thema geschaffen – was gut ist.

Sie sind nach 15 Jahren im Business immer noch relevant, posieren mit Karlie Kloss auf Instagram. Woran liegt das Ihrer Meinung nach?

Ich weiß es ehrlich gesagt nicht. Es gibt eine Menge Menschen, mit denen ich gearbeitet habe und die mich immer unterstützt haben, wie zum Beispiel Tom Ford. Aber ich kann nicht genau sagen, woran es liegt, dass jemand als Model Erfolg hat oder überhaupt anfangen kann zu modeln. Man muss sicher auch ein bisschen Glück haben.

Sie sind Model, Mutter, Unternehmerin, Schauspielerin … Welche Leistung empfinden Sie als größten Erfolg?

Oh, das kann ich nicht sagen. Noch nicht.

SASKIA IBROM

Linke Seite: Mit Pailletten besticktes Kleid, um 12 000 €, und Mantel aus bedrucktem Lammfell, um 10 000 €, von **LOUIS VUITTON**. Netzsöckchen: **FOGAL**. Schnürschuhe mit Nieten: **ALEXANDER MCQUEEN**.

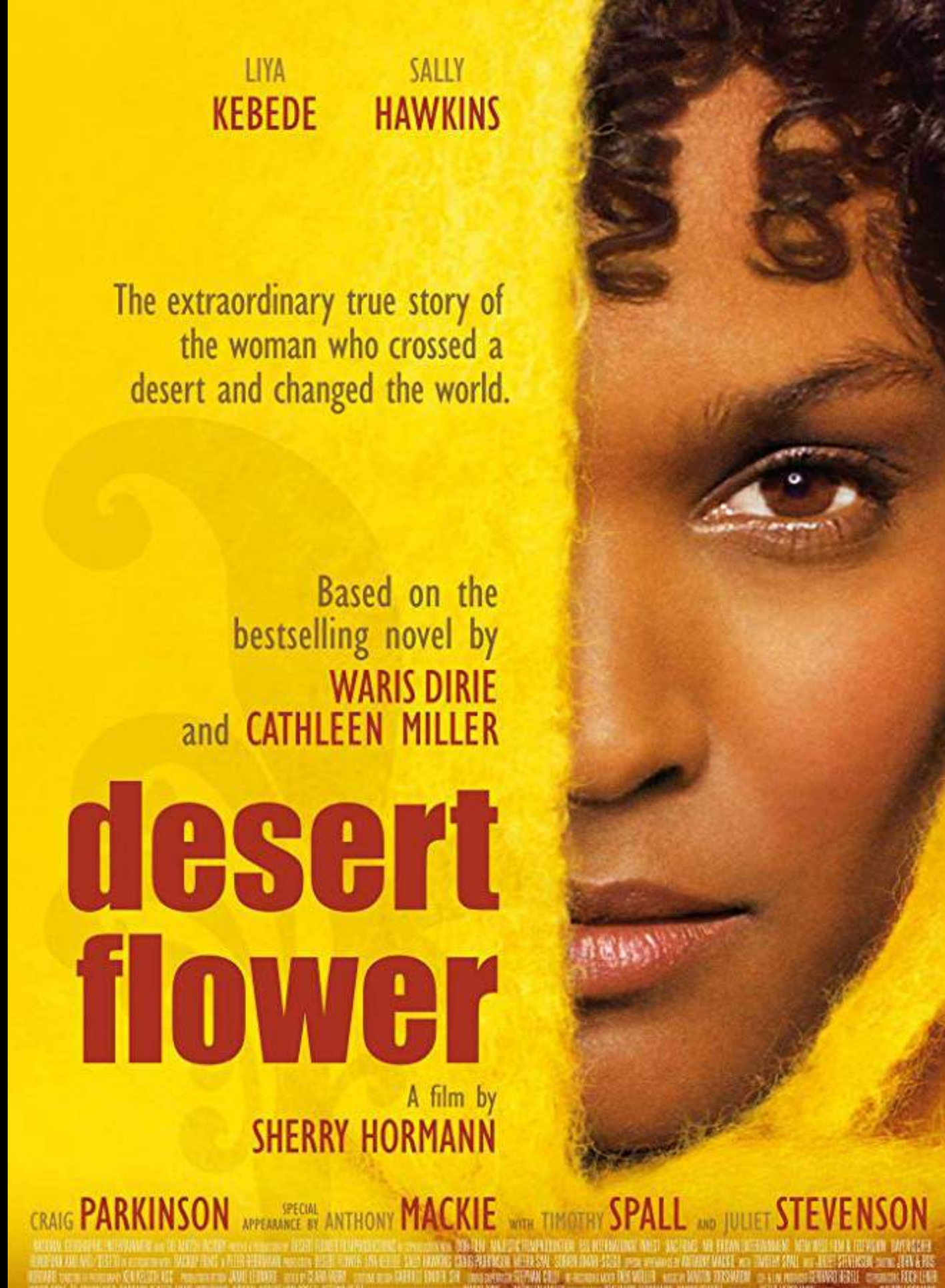
ACTING

LIYA KEBEDE IN BLACK GOLD (2011)

LIYA KEBEDE IN BLACK GOLD (2011)

LIYA KEBEDE IN LE CAPITAL (2012)

In March 2011, Liya starred in the film Desert Flower, an adaptation of model Waris Dirie's autobiography. She also appeared in The Good Shepherd, Lord of War , The Best Offer, Le Capital and Jean-Jacques Annaud's Black Gold.



FASHION SHOWS

Liya Kebede has walked all the major shows from Gucci to Calvin Klein.

Gucci FW 2001

La Perla FW 2002

Chanel FW 2003

Salvatore Ferragamo FW19/20

Versace SS 2016

Calvin Klein FW 2017

Off-White FW 2018

ENTREPRENEUR

LIYA WEARS JACKET AND BLOUSE LOUIS VUITTON, TROUSERS CHLOÉ, HAT STYLIST'S STUDIO.

"Growing up in Ethiopia you're surrounded by poverty, you see a lot of the challenges that people face. You grow up wanting to do something." LIYA KEBEDE

Kebede has been a Goodwill Ambassador for the World Health Organisation's Maternal, Newborn and Child health division since 2005.

Liya Kebede "I've have been working on maternal health for about ten years now. I started out as a Goodwill Ambassador for the WHO, and then started my own foundation. Our purpose is to raise awareness of the problems that mothers, mostly in African and third-world countries, face when they're pregnant. They often don't have access to basic medical care or good doctors or hospitals, so a lot of women die during childbirth. We have now merged the Liya Kebede Foundation with my clothing line, lemlem, and it's become the lemlem Foundation. The crafts traditionally done by women were dying out, and I thought 'OK, here's a problem, maybe I can find a solution.' We want to help artisans, train artisans, give life skills and give maternal health skills. Growing up in Ethiopia, you're surrounded by poverty, and you see a lot of the challenges that people face. You grow up wanting to do something. Sometimes you have a cause that touches you immediately, and sometimes you don't. Then you realise there's so many of them, and they're all so important. It's hard to choose which one speaks to you, and then by chance, it picks you. And I feel like maternal health may have picked me. We're so in need of people in the public eye to speak up, and to have a voice and have an opinion. There's so much more openness about all these things now, and people are realising that they can reach a lot of people because of social media. One of the biggest things that is finally happening, is embracing diversity. That's been long overdue. But now it's going on in full force. Not just diversity – but embracing individuality which is even more interesting in a way. Everyone has a voice, which is great."

lemlem

by liya kebede

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

In 2005, Liya Kebede shifted gears to give back to her roots, establishing the nonprofit lemlem Foundation to employ women artisans in Africa. In 2007 Liya founded a clothing line Lemlem to produce a sustainable fashion line to protect traditional Ethiopian weaving techniques and support women.

Picture the headquarters of a *fashion* label run by an *international* supermodel.

What do you see? Marble floors? Espresso machines? Ladies in stilettos? The offices of Lemlem, the made-in-Africa resort brand founded by model and actress Liya Kebede, have none of these things. The company recently moved into an old Soho loft building in New York City, with an ancient freight elevator. On the day I visit, there isn't much in the way of décor – just a few young women and one man working at computers, and a few racks of colorful, handwoven clothes. Kebede presides over the scene – although she could pass for a (notably tall and slender) intern. She's wearing a brown sweatshirt, vintage Levi's and Vans, and her hair is pulled back in a low bun. No makeup, of course. I remark on the low-key setting. "What were you expecting?" she asks. "I don't know. It's very…" She raises an eyebrow. "Downtown?"

One thing most people know about Kebede is that she's Ethiopian. If they're better versed in fashion-world trivia, they may also know she burst on to the scene in 2000, when Tom Ford cast her – then an unknown model – in a Gucci show. (Ford's casting agent, James Scully, had seen her walk for Ralph Lauren.) For the next few years, Kebede was everywhere: walking runways for Chanel, Fendi, and even Victoria's Secret, in Estée Lauder ads (the brand made her its global ambassador), and in fashion magazines (Carine Roitfeld dedicated an entire issue of *Vogue Paris* to her – a first in the magazine's history). And she's never really gone away: you may have noticed her walking in the Valentino show this winter, or starring in Tory Burch's latest ad campaign. All those years in the nucleus of the fashion world have made an impression. Kebede isn't the bubbly type. Asked for the secret to a long modeling career, she reflects for a second, and then suggests, "Be cool? Whatever that means."

But the coolness masks a certain dreaminess, and a romantic streak. Kebede is a serious reader – of poetry, fiction and *The New Yorker*. "I like beautiful language," she says. On the beach in Mexico, where the photo shoot for this story took place, she spent her downtime tackling *The Glass Bead Game* by German philosophical novelist Hermann Hesse. It was slow going, but she's a Hesse fan. "So I said, 'I'm not going to quit', and I finally >

Previous page: swimsuit by Lemlem, $250; earrings, $550, and bangles, from a selection, all by Jennifer Fisher. This page: top by Abysse, $250; bottoms by Now..Then, $75; bangles (on right arm) by Soko, $105 for a set of five; earrings, $550, and bangles (on left arm), from a selection, all by Jennifer Fisher

PORTER MAGAZINE ISSUE 33 2019
BY CASS BIRD

finished it." She likes George Orwell, too, and has formed an unofficial book club with a writer friend. "We're very much into existentialism."

Kebede grew up in Addis Ababa and attended a French lycée, and she and her CEO, Eva Jean, speak to each other in French. Lately, they've been discussing a different kind of existential question: how will Lemlem do swimsuits? The company is known for its craftsmanship – 90 percent of its inventory is handmade by Ethiopian artisans. But swimsuits have to be made in a factory. (They found one in Morocco.) How would they retain the Lemlem feeling?

They settled on classic shapes, like the French brand Eres: "Comfortable, beautiful, chic, elegant is what I like in general," Kebede said at the time. "And nothing that leaves you feeling super-naked. I don't like that." But the suits come in bright, African-inspired patterns, which give them personality. Jean then produced a square of sample fabric: a red-and-white-checked pattern modeled on traditional Ethiopian weaving. "I love this," Kebede said, touching the sample approvingly. "It's *different*."

Lemlem is what's known, these days, as a mission-driven business. Although Kebede would never have used those words when she started it, 15 years ago. Back then, she said, "I thought I was just fixing something." She was in Addis Ababa, visiting family, when government officials asked her to tour a market street where weavers sold *habesha kemis*, the traditional cotton dresses worn by Ethiopian women on special occasions. The dresses were handwoven, using techniques that had been passed down for centuries. But people were buying Western clothes. "I saw this huge market with all the weavers, and they had no business," Kebede recalled. "They were all sitting in their little stalls." The art of weaving was dying. Kebede had always wanted to help people in Ethiopia. "I didn't know in what capacity." She'd spent several years as an ambassador for the World Health Organization, focusing on maternal health, and the experience had taught her about the limits of foreign aid: "You're always needing to come up with money."

The plight of the weavers presented an opportunity to create something that is economically sustainable. "I am completely, 100 percent an accidental entrepreneur," Kebede said. "I had no desire to do a brand." But, bit by bit, she created one: using her own money, she hired a designer and a stylist and employed a few weavers to make Western-style clothes, using traditional techniques. Today, Lemlem sells to vendors around the world, from The Four Seasons boutique in Hawaii and Le Bon Marché in Paris to Net-A-Porter. It employs 250 weavers in Addis Ababa and five percent of its sales goes to the Lemlem Foundation, which supports women artisans in Africa. "Every time I see someone wearing Lemlem, I have a wow moment – because I know how far we have come."

Kebede serves as the company's creative director, making mood boards and generating ideas, which she works to realize with her design team (Jean came aboard in 2017). She also collaborates with designer friends, most recently with Valentino's Pierpaolo Piccioli on a line of fanciful "puffer gowns" he created for Moncler. Kebede helped Piccioli add colorful borders to the gowns, like those found on the *habesha kemis*. The details do something electric. "It has this feeling of depth and warmth, and a sense that there is another dimension to them," she says. "It bridges these things that you didn't think could be bridged." A bit like Liya Kebede.

Kebede, 41, grew up in Addis Ababa, the daughter of a homemaker and an executive at Ethiopian Airlines. She has written about the contradictions of growing up in Addis: "Poverty was all around us: people struggling to make ends meet, to feed themselves or feed their families." But her home was a refuge; it had a small garden, and it was full, with her four brothers and a rotating cast of country cousins. Kebede was a bookish child. When the time came for high school, her mother sent her to the French lycée in Addis, instead of the English school her brothers had attended. The family didn't have any special connection to France – "She just loved the French language and decided she wanted her daughter to speak it."

Kebede's career path wasn't always clear. "For the longest time, I wanted to be a journalist," she says. Then she discovered fashion. A few girls at the lycée had got into modeling – walking the catwalk at hotels around Addis, wearing clothes created by local designers – and Kebede joined them. She fell in head first, reading fashion magazines and studying her walk on VHS tapes. "To finally be on stage and in some way experience what Naomi Campbell and Cindy Crawford were experiencing, as they were sashaying in Christian Dior or Jean Paul Gaultier, was indescribable," she wrote of that time.

After a few minutes, Kebede says something that seems crucial to understanding not only her, but Ethiopia. "We were lucky, I would say, in that Ethiopia was never colonized." That is, while she and her friends at the lycée

> "Every time I see someone wearing Lemlem, I have a *wow moment* – because I know how *far* we have come" Liya Kebede

wore Levi's 501 jeans and followed fashion – "We were obsessed with Dr Martens" – she didn't think of these Western imports as superior to the traditional garments she wore on special occasions. "Your culture was just your culture." Nor did the white foreigners at her school have any special status. "Everyone was the same."

It was a rude awakening, then, to arrive in Chicago in the Nineties. Kebede had wanted to go to college in the US, but her parents couldn't afford it. So she tried her hand at modeling – first in Paris, and then in Chicago, where her older brother was living. Kebede's first experience of >

PORTER MAGAZINE ISSUE 33 2019
BY CASS BIRD

RED CARPET

American Airlines

Chopard
PREMIERE
Trophée

amfA
MAKING AIDS HIS
Moët

L'ORÉAL PARIS
GLAMOUR

THE LIYA KEBEDE FOUNDATION
teenVOGUE

THE GRAMMY AWARDS

GORDON PARKS FOUNDATION

WOMEN IN THE WORLD
#WITW
MERCK

@liyakebede

LIYA KEBEDE

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