

Going Dutch

BY JORDANA DIVON

Sure, it's a start. A pretty face may get a model a bit of work, but that alone won't land her worldwide Guess or Armani Jeans campaigns. And it certainly won't earn her a spot on the panel of her country's *Top Model* franchise. That's why at an age when most of her peers have long hung up their stilettos, Holland's entrepreneurial cover girl Mary Rieder is just getting started.

You started modeling at 23 – pretty late by industry standards.

What were you doing all that time before?

Well, certainly not modeling! I thought I was going to be a brain surgeon, or teach sports at a children's school. And besides that I was interested in physics, biology and very interested in how the human body works.

Weren't there people who would see you when you were younger and tell you that you should be in front of the camera?

I think my mom got that question several times, but she always said no and that I could decide when I was old enough. Then at 19 I had a job at a butcher shop and this photographer came in and asked to take pictures of me. I said no. I was very shy. But he asked me a second time and third time, so just to get rid of him I gave the guy my mom's telephone number and said, 'Talk to my parents.' So he did. By coincidence, my mom discovered that they grew up in the same village. So that was the moment she said, 'You know what? Maybe it's good for you because you're very shy



and it will be nice to have these pictures for when you have children of your own.' So the first picture was awkward (crosses arms and makes a face) and the photographer said, 'You can relax,' (releases arms a little). That was the second picture.

See, your mom was right. Those are the pictures you're going to show your kids.

Yes. I'll say look at how bad your mom was when she first started (laughs).

So what made you decide this was something you were going to give a serious shot?

I was thinking about what to do after high school and I had no idea. By that time,

the guy who did the photo shoot sent my photos to an agency and they were like, 'Ah, we want her!' and I decided to give it a try and do it for a year. It was hell.

Why?

Because I wasn't ready. They sent me to Paris all by myself with a map in my hand and a book under my arm, and good luck. And I think the first two weeks I cried and I wanted to leave. It's also something to do with the environment in Holland. I'm not sure how that works in Canada, but you can go to school here, you have health care. A lot of girls who come from Russia or other countries, they don't have that safety net. So it's a different angle based on your experience. And I tried. I went to Milan,



Paris and I hated it.

What was the game changer for you?

I went back to Holland and started studying. Then at 23, I went into a jewelry shop and saw this beautiful picture of a Guess campaign and I looked at the picture and thought, I want to do that. It turned out to be a competition to become the face of Guess worldwide. I took the brochure home because I was too shy to fill it out in the store and I left it. A few weeks later I saw the ad again and I looked at the date and the closing time was that day. I debated whether to enter but in the end I did and they chose me from 20,000 girls. And then the roller coaster started because I became the face of Guess and then I was interesting.

And how was the ride?

I don't remember everything I did, which is

strange. For instance, I only remembered I'd been to Lisbon because I saw some pictures that I took while I was there. I flew so much and sometimes I'd be at the airport and say which airport am I at right now? It was too much.

Is there a difference between the Dutch girls (like fellow national and Victoria's Secret model Doutzen Kroes) and models elsewhere?

Yes, there is. I think the big difference is that we're very down to earth and I think when you work abroad it's in your advantage because we have a no-bullshit attitude. We're all laidback, ready to work. We eat our sandwiches. It's very different, for instance, from working in the States, where you have big productions and you work with the assistant of the assistant who pushes the button for whatever.

What keeps you in the Netherlands instead of branching out to Paris or New York? I was living out of my suitcase and I found a base here in Holland, which has become very important for me now.

You recently started doing TV, like Holland's Top Model. What's that foray onto the screen been like?

Well, I have more Facebook friends (laughs). And I have to put things on Twitter right now, which I'm not very good at. Of course, I get more reactions via email and people recognize me sometimes, but it hasn't changed that much.

You've also launched a foundation to help guide young models. What inspired you to put that together?

These models need an extra hand because sometimes the agencies are busy, sometimes

they have a lack of information, so they can send their models to my foundation (called the MarVie Foundation) and say, 'Here you can learn about finances, about portrait rights, about how to create a good environment for yourself about inner and outer beauty,' – all the questions I didn't have an answer to when I was starting out.

So you're basically arming these young girls with the tools to take control of their careers. Are you seen as working with or against the industry?

The funny thing is in the beginning they were scared because they didn't know what it was and there was nothing similar to it. I had to guess a little and say I'm going to do it to help models, but also to help the industry because I love my job. The only thing I want is to make it better. That's my mandate. Besides, I

really think of working as a model as top sports. You have to take care of your body constantly because when you get a call, you have to be ready for a shoot. It's a 24/7 job and these girls need to know how to take care of themselves and stay healthy.

Speaking of top sports, you wouldn't happen to be a hockey fan?

My boyfriend used to play, so I watched my first hockey game on TV with him and 'Oh my god, I thought! This is so harsh! These guys are seriously killing each other! I don't get it!' Then he made me watch this film (*Mystery, Alaska*) and I learned to love it a bit more. But we're not brought up with ice hockey in Holland. Field hockey, on the other hand...

BETWEEN PHOTO SHOTS, DESIGNER SHOWS AND RUNNING HER OWN FOUNDATION TO EDUCATE YOUNG MODELS, TFP CAUGHT UP WITH THE STUNNING GREEN-EYED KNOCKOUT TO DISCUSS WHAT SEPARATES HER FROM THE PACK AND HOW SHE'S GIVING BACK TO THE INDUSTRY THAT SHE LOVES.

