

Viewpoint

The learning
disability magazine
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“It’s about being

INCLUSIVE in a stylish way”



Creative director Gary Harvey put together the stunning photos on the following eight pages. Below, he explains why he wanted to challenge the fashion world’s image of beauty by using only models with a learning disability

Creative direction: Gary Harvey
Photography: Robert Decellis
Words: Tim Jeeves and Claire Hall

“If an alien tried to understand the Earth by watching television, they would probably think that there was almost no-one with a learning disability on the planet,” says creative director Gary Harvey. “People with a learning disability aren’t seen enough in almost every walk of life.”

Gary lives a life that many would envy, styling music videos, fashion magazine shoots and advertising campaigns for high-profile companies such as Levi’s, Rimmel, Nike and Diesel. His work frequently features in magazines like *Dazed and Confused*, *Vogue* and *Elle*, and he has worked with big names like Kate Moss, Erin O’Connor and Agyness Deyn.

But Gary, who has a brother and a sister with a learning disability, wanted to challenge the “singular image that the fashion world presents” and came to *Viewpoint* with the

idea of putting together a photoshoot using models with a learning disability.

“When people meet a person with a learning disability they just see their disability,” he explains. “I wanted to work with Mencap to challenge the very specific image of beauty that fashion – and the media generally – presents. Our society needs to start celebrating our differences, rather than presenting one view of life and beauty. I’ve been dreaming about doing this type of shoot for a long, long time and decided I had to make it happen.”

Mencap ran a national ‘Include me’ competition to find the models and received over 100 entries. “As well as looking at things like skin tone and facial structure, I was looking for people with animated faces,” says Gary. “I wanted to see the personality behind their eyes and in their smile.”

Bhavina (centre left) wears coat by Stussy and dress by C.P. Company.
Anne-Marie (centre right) wears jacket and sweatshirt by adidas,
T-shirt and body-warmer by Topshop and glasses by Rokit.
Sean (top right) wears jacket by Stone Island, zip top and polo shirt by Ben Sherman.
Jack (bottom right) wears sweatshirt and T-shirt by Stussy.





Enthusiasm and passion

“At times I stood back and watched the models as they posed and what was being shot was truly amazing. I wondered beforehand if we would have to work hard to get more out of them, but we didn’t at

Gary also works as a fashion designer and recently designed a line of clothes made entirely out of recycled materials, which was shown on catwalks during the London and Los Angeles Fashion Weeks. But for this shoot he chose clothes that were more streetwear than high fashion.

“I worked with fashion PR agencies to find clothes the models could relate to – casual wear and sports wear in bright colours. I wanted clothes that were stylish, current and fashionable, but not unattainable. I could have chosen couture, but that probably wouldn’t have reflected the models’ lifestyles.”

On the day of the shoot at the famous Holborn Studios in London’s East End, the models had their hair and make-up done before getting dressed in their outfits. During the shoot Gary talked each model through a variety of poses as photographer Robert Decellis snapped away with his camera.

“I started with simple poses. Then I asked if they knew any jokes and showed them some fashion poses. Halfway through we showed them the photos that had been taken so far. Everyone thought they looked great.”

Gary is more used to working with professional models than people with a learning disability. But he says that “people with no experience of modelling but with an enthusiasm for looking good can work the camera as well as a professional.”



From left, Gary and his brother, Ian; Sheila in hair and make up at the shoot; and some of the models in front of camera

all. Sometimes when you book ten professional models from agencies, one or two don’t cut it. But for this shoot there wasn’t one disappointing person.”

Will other designers and stylists start using people with a learning disability as models in the future? “Some already do, and by being inclusive in such a stylish way, I hope to show other professionals what exactly can be achieved,” says Gary. “But it takes a long time to change people’s minds about what is and is not possible.”

Gary’s mind, however, has changed. “I’ve changed completely! I’ve changed my opinion of working with models – their job is so easy! They get paid thousands and thousands of pounds to stand in front of a camera and some of them get self-conscious or only have three or four poses. These kids had never modelled before and they threw so many poses at us.

“It’s been worth every single minute of the hard work putting the shoot together. I can’t wait to add the photos to my portfolio and show them to people.”



**More of Gary’s work can be seen on www.garyharveycreative.com
See more of the models at www.mencap.org.uk/youngmencap**



Mido, 16, likes snakes and wants to work in the zoo when he's older. He wears jacket and body-warmer by Stone Island, sweatshirt and T-shirt by Stussy.



Chimae, 20, likes going to Thorpe Park, especially on the waterslides. She thought the shoot was “fun and interesting”. She wears nylon jacket and grey top by Levi’s, sunglasses by Dover Street Market and earrings by Canal St NYC.



Lee, 20, wanted to take part in the shoot because he had never had a chance to have such good photographs taken before. He has been working in a hospital since 2007. He wears jacket by Stone Island, sweatshirt by Maharishi and T-shirt by Andy Warhol.



Sheila, 17, wants to set up a business of her own. She liked wearing the sweatshirt and scarf and enjoyed looking at the pictures as they were taken. She wears sweatshirt and scarf by Topshop.



Steven, 16, wants to work at Stansted airport in the future and loved wearing the clothes and being made up for the shoot. He wears knitted jacket by Stone Island, striped top by Ben Sherman and T-shirt by Levi's.