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Hi John

Here's the final draft of the Next Top Model article. I'm including the text in this email and sending the file as a backup. Thanks and we'll talk soon.

P. Dior

Knockoff Knockout: Viky Kayia and *Next Top Model*

Global Glam or Force-fed Fashion?

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The singularly soignée, infinitely marketable Viky Kayia has struck again on Greek television. This time Kayia, our only totally-legit, big-time fashion, internationally recognized supermodel, came to us in viewer-land as the hostess and panel judge of the hit reality series *Next Top Model*. The eighteen-week show which ran from October 2009 to March 2010 was a true crowd pleaser, and held the attention of the country in a flashy, couture death-grip for several months. The program featured a smorgasbord of budding passarellas who lived together and competed against one another for the grand prize of some big bucks and a modeling agency contract. As per usual in reality-show culture, fur flew, backs were bitten and frail egos inevitably snapped.

As the perfectly aerobicized, manicured, primped and powdered runway ravishers were slowly eliminated one-by-one from the competition, speculation grew exponentially among the dedicated viewers as to which one of the girls would take the top prize. By the end of the series, *Next Top Model* was the red hot conversation topic of nearly every office, coffee shop, school, and septuagenarian-ladies hair salon (of which there are thousands) in the country. The winner of the 2009-2010 competition was the stunning, twenty-year old Seraina Kazamia of Athens.

Each week the participating pin-ups were coached and given tasks such as how to walk or pose in a certain style, or market a beauty product. They were then judged and rated by experts in the Greek fashion industry for their effectiveness. This season's judges were former model Jenny Balatsinou, designer Christoforos Kontentos and photographer Charis Christopoulos. Viewers were also treated to living quarters and work station cams where we saw piles of social interaction among the svelte rivals.

The Antenna TV, Greek edition of *Next Top Model* is a clone franchise of the hugely successful *America's Next Top Model* which was created by supermodel Tyra Banks, and first aired in America in 2003. It appears Banks has hit the proverbial *fashionista* jackpot with her creation, as now more than forty countries produce their knockoff version of her show, and they are viewed in more than one-hundred and twenty countries worldwide. Our own Viky Kayia joins such heavy-hitter, gi-normous fashion industry names as Heidi Klum, who hosts the German version of the show, and Elle MacPherson who does the same job in the UK.

So, the question's got to be asked, what is all this relentless fabulousness and high-glam gaga for anyway? Well, of course it's for money, but the themes of cultural dominance and western values also come into play in a big way.

It's not a secret that everybody copies what America does. From fashion to business to entertainment to technology industries, everyone takes their cue from the U.S. If western runway model beauty translates into personal power for women, and Tyra Banks sells megatons of beauty products worldwide, then she and her passel of franchised passarellas are the templates for what the women of the world will inevitably choose to look like. Ergo, Tyra Banks is secretly more powerful than the United States' Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, which is, in my opinion, not necessarily a bad thing, but still scary to think about.

But let's talk about us for a minute, just about Greece. Anyone who's spent some time here knows that we're stuck smack-dab-in-the-middle between the Occidental and Oriental cultures. Men with moustaches like bath brushes sit in coffee shops, drink Turkish coffee and diddle with their worry beads for hours at a time. Simultaneously, new-money ingénues run around town in knockoff Italian designer clothing and devour periodicals like *Vogue Hellas*, *Elle*, and *Marie Claire*. Traditional Greek tavernas sit next to TGI Friday's restaurants and practically every Greek pop song on the radio has a western song-construction format, with a mandatory bouzouki track added with reluctance to make it sound "Greek."

So here's the trick- if you tell people how to dress and appoint themselves, you tell them basically how to live, how to be and how to think. Reality-fashion programs such as *Next Top Model*, *Project Runway* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, are essentially creating the acceptable dress code for practically the entire planet, or at least anyone within visual range of a working television set. All these shows are generated in America, franchised abroad, and then released like well-dressed viruses to the unsuspecting global masses. I'm not saying this is a bad thing, I'm just saying people should pay some attention to what's happening around them.

Is it possible that these flashy, entertaining, well-intended but, in the larger sense, mentally anemic programs hold the swing vote to how Greece, if not a big chunk of the whole, freaking world, will chose to sartorially present itself in the near future? Only time will tell. In my chat with Viky Kayia, I asked her a few questions about the influence of western global fashion.

Do you think shows like Next Top Model overly promote American values like form over content and excessive consumerism?

I really think that we shouldn't label thing in life anymore just because values have clearly become global and we all work in the same direction aiming for the best result possible. *Next*

Top Model is in fact an American format that we kept as a base and added our Greek identity to it. You can't really copy and paste personalities and people, I think.

Do you believe Athens can have its own fashion identity one day, a la Paris, Milan and New York?

Athens always had a strong fashion sense and personality. The Grecian style has made many designers inspired and famous around the globe. The reason why the Greek fashion scene hasn't penetrated the international markets is because the budgets and logistics are minimal.

Do you think globalized fashion from U.S., Paris, U.K. cheapen other countries national identities?

I never thought you could have your identity cheapened. Fashion sense is something you carry well or you don't! Your personal taste or identity can be worked around with just about any price range merchandise or designer in any country you might be! For sure, the infrastructure in England, America, and Italy is huge for fashion.

If you had a brand, would you try and promote a Greek identity through your clothing?

I've always been a huge fan of the Grecian style. The pleats and one-shoulder dresses are amongst my favorites. Surely I would make a Greek identity inspired line.

Anything new for Next Top Model's 2010-2011 season?

Great surprises are coming up to NTM2. We air in September with new gorgeous girls and our witty judges! I am super excited... cant' wait! For the time being, on June 16th, I'm hosting *Miss Greece* on Antenna TV.