

Top and pants by Sacai;  
sandals by Gucci; (right  
hand) bracelet by  
Jennifer Fisher; cuff by  
Arme De L'Amour;  
(left hand) bracelet by  
Jennifer Fisher



# The right track

*From the family farm to the world of fashion,  
Canadian model JESSICA STAM has been on  
quite a journey. She talks to CHRISTA  
D'SOUZA about the reality of modeling life  
and what the future has in store*

*Photographs by NAGI SAKAI Styling by TRACY TAYLOR*

Jessica Stam, a regular at The Smile café in Tribeca, New York, recommends the bacon. “Trust me,” she says simply. “I’m a pig farmer’s daughter.” And she’s right. The bacon – three thickly cut slices, slowly marinated in organic maple syrup – is so succulent that it really does melt in my mouth.

Just back from a break in Miami with her boyfriend, sustainable construction entrepreneur Zac Waksal, Stam has a relaxed, post-vacation glow about her. In her favorite J Brand jeans, Chanel ‘bover’ boots, a cartilage piercing and a Canada Goose parka, it’s clear that even in off-duty mode, the 27-year-old puts clothes together with attitude. No wonder designers clamor to collaborate with her, such as Peter Pilotto, Rag & Bone, and that ultimate style accolade, the quilted Marc Jacobs Stam bag, designed in her honor.

Stam and Waksal stayed at their favorite hotel in South Beach, The Standard, and went wakeboarding, “which feels like flying above the water”. But if you follow the model on Instagram you will already

know this, of course, just as you will know about the Mobb Deep concert she recently attended, where she was pulled up on stage by Mr Deep himself. “A friend of mine once put her hand up and got called up on the stage, and I’ve always wanted to see if I could do that, too. I was just this random person, it wasn’t planned...”

But a “random person” Jessica Stam is not. In the flesh, she isn’t just pretty, she is breathtakingly beautiful; an exquisite hybrid of Natalia Vodianova, Twiggy, maybe even a little bit of Clara Bow, the original It girl. It was Stam – along with Gemma Ward, Lily Cole, Lindsey Wixson and Sasha Pivovarova, or the “Doll Faces”, as they were nicknamed by the

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*“[I lived] with five MODELS in one room, bunk beds, no CLOSET space and a doorman with a CURFEW”*

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Left: Jacket by Marc by Marc Jacobs.  
Right: Jacket and shorts by Marc by Marc Jacobs; sneakers by Saint Laurent by Hedi Slimane; bracelet by Bottega Veneta

Coat by Emilio Pucci;  
swimsuit by T by  
Alexander Wang;  
sandals by Gucci



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*“There’s a certain point [during shows] you just go on AUTOPILOT. If you don’t ZONE out, you’d probably go MAD”*

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industry – who helped wrestle the magazine cover back from the ubiquitous Hollywood celebrity.

Those porcelain doll looks counterbalance the slight ‘bad girl’ aura that Stam exudes. Right now, her hair is short and blond, but remember when it was raven-black and long? With her sapphire eyes and gothic pale skin, wasn’t she just the coolest rock chick in the world? “Yeah, you’d think it would be easy having it long and dark,” Stam says wistfully, “but it was so high maintenance to keep touching up the roots. I had to dye it back blond for a job and it all started breaking off at the ends. I miss my long hair.”

The only girl amongst seven children, Stam was brought up by

devout Christian parents on a 450-acre farm on the banks of Lake Huron in Ontario, Canada. Hers was a rural upbringing, poles apart from the world of modeling: singing in the school choir, feeding chickens, even milking the family’s pet cow, Bessie. Then, at 16, Stam was scouted in a local café, and within two years found herself living in a grim apartment in New York, “with five models in one room, bunk beds, no closet space and a doorman with a curfew”.

**E**leven years later and there are few big-name photographers Stam hasn’t worked with (including Steven Meisel, whom she credits with changing the trajectory of her career), campaigns she hasn’t fronted or runways she hasn’t walked. Lanvin, Dolce & Gabbana, Miu Miu, Roberto Cavalli, Victoria’s Secret... You name it, Stam has done it. At one point, she was appearing in 64 shows a season. “There’s a certain point you just go on autopilot,” she says. “You’ve got three people doing your makeup,



Jacket, pants and sandals by Gucci; (*right hand*) set of three bracelets by Arme De L'Amour; (*left hand*) set of three bracelets and cuff by Arme De L'Amour.



Jumpsuit by Jay Ahr; sneakers by Saint Laurent by Hedi Slimane

Shirt and skirt by  
Victoria Beckham;  
sandals by Gucci; belt  
bag by Newbark



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*“Well, isn’t that the point, GIVING back? Isn’t that what our PURPOSE is in this WORLD?”*

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one person for each eye, four people on your hair, two people on your nails... If you don’t zone out, you’d probably go mad. It was fun, but I’m glad I don’t have to do six shows a day anymore. It’s nice to go to Milan or Paris knowing I’m only doing one.” And nice to be able to hang out with her super-photogenic front-row friends, who include Arizona Muse, Leigh Lezark, Guinevere Van Seenus and Coco Rocha (if you haven’t seen the YouTube video of Stam and Rocha in hoodies, lip-synching to Eminem’s *Without Me*, do so now).

So what’s next? “Maybe my own line of things that women really like,” Stam reveals. “Candles, makeup and lingerie, for example.” And maybe home furnishings, too, for if there is one thing she loves, it

is decorating her apartment near New York’s Union Square. But whatever she ends up selling, part of the proceeds will always go to charity, because as well as being a pig farmer’s daughter and a model, Stam is also a human rights advocate. In February this year, she hosted a gala for Building Blocks for Change, an initiative co-founded by her boyfriend, to build a women’s health center in Kibera, Kenya. And last May, she spoke at the UN as an ambassador for nonprofit organization PeaceJam. “Well, isn’t that the point,” Stam shrugs, “giving back? Isn’t that what our purpose is in this world?”

Plates cleared, time to go. She might take her beloved dog for a walk, she says, and maybe go shopping for cushion covers. Beautiful, generous, unpretentious? Sure. But if there is one thing I will always remember Jessica Stam by, it will be the taste of that sublime bacon.

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