

POINT OF VIEW

Georgia Pratt-Holiber



The first emotion you experienced when you got engaged was probably pure elation, but what came after? If your answer is panic over your appearance, you're not alone – but there is an antidote. Here, newlywed New York-based model Georgia tells how to approach bridal beauty with a kinder mindset.

Bruno Mars, Billy Joel, Mark Darcy – they love their loved ones just the way they are. Your betrothed undoubtedly feels the same, so why don't you? Here we are wishing we had smaller waists, poutier lips, longer hair... the list of beauty ideals goes on, and we think it's high time we tore it up. So does model Georgia Pratt-Holiber.

It's a long way from Northcote Point to New York City, but so goes Georgia's tale of fame and fortune. While completing a Bachelor of Design at Auckland University of Technology then managing the workroom of local label Miss Crabb, modelling was merely a sideline for Georgia. "Fashion is a funny thing you fall into if you like making clothes, which I did, and modelling sort of followed on from that," she says. She

moved to the Big Apple in 2013 after signing with Ford Models, and today is repped by IMG and 62.

Georgia and her artist husband Nicolas Holiber's love story has equally fatalistic undercurrents. "When we met [via Instagram], we were both going through a personal transition of sorts, and our lives began to align in a very organic way," she says. "It felt like I'd finally walked out of a fog and there was this lovely man already holding my hand."

The pair got married last summer in Matakana, just north of Auckland, Georgia resplendent in Vivienne Westwood and a veil and headband she made with a friend. "It's easily my favourite thing I've ever worn," she says. "It's a really clever dress –

a bit mad and somehow whimsical at the same time."

From the moment Georgia got engaged, she was determined not to fall prey to thinking she needed to change. "I hate that it can completely consume women before they get married – it fosters a panic that I don't think is worth the energy," she says. "I had multiple people flat-out ask me if I was losing weight for the wedding, and it hadn't even crossed my mind. What I actually wanted was to fill out my dress and for my bosom to be overflowing out of the top! I did not care about looking 'skinny', but people are conditioned to think that's what every bride wants.

"I wanted my skin to be healthy because that makes me feel good, but I was very certain that I didn't want to lead myself down the road





“We spent the two weeks leading up to the wedding doing day trips, beach trips, and eating, drinking and relaxing together, and I think when you’re caught up in your physical appearance, these things are really affected. Had I been worried about what I was eating or drinking, I would not have enjoyed that time as much as I did.”

of self-critiquing. One of the main things that became a priority was my emotional health. I started meditating every day and getting exercise when I could, and it really helped me when I felt overwhelmed [by the wedding planning]. I think people forget to take care of themselves as a whole human being during this process.”

It might sound easy for an international model to find self-acceptance, but actually, says Georgia, no one’s immune to the pressure. “I completely stand with the women who struggle with this – it takes constant work. But you must always put this first. The insecurities I did have took up so much energy, every day, but eventually I was able to find myself in a space of contentment – and I think being in a supportive relationship helps foster that. The positive energy becomes a habit and it gets easier over time.”

If recent history has taught us anything, it’s that we do have the power to change the status quo. Georgia says it can start with who we spend time with. “You have to keep being your best ally and surround yourself with people who will be that for you too. We must remind ourselves

that we’re responsible for the words we say to our mothers, daughters, sisters and friends, and I also think that with social media, you have to take control. If you’re looking at things that make you feel inadequate, you need to eliminate them from your world.” Feel-good Instagram follows Georgia recommends are actress Tracee Ellis Ross, and models Paloma Elsesser, Naomi Shimada (one of Georgia’s bridesmaids) and Tara Lynn (another close friend).

As well as the outdated standards in terms of size and shape, the pervasive ideal of ‘flawlessness’ is particularly problematic when bridal beauty is concerned. The solution? Don’t subscribe to it.

“The ‘flawless’ thing is annoying and I wish it would go away,” says Georgia. “I think the concept dominates the bridal world because it has always been cemented in a context of virginal youth, which isn’t relevant to most women these days. I think we need to be encouraged to look at beauty in a more real way and understand that flawlessness is an unattainable standard that’s very different from what we experience in real life. I’d been taking such good care of my skin before my wedding and

I still got a pimple on my chin that day!”

Pre-wedding, Georgia gently stepped up her self-care, and advises doing what you need to feel your very best, without resorting to drastic measures. “My skin has always been unpredictable, so that was what I concentrated on. I made sure I had a good skincare routine, and I was getting hydrafacials, which are a good thing to try if you’re a low-fi skincare kind of girl and want a glowy boost.”

Georgia and Nicolas adore married life in their quiet part of Brooklyn with their dog, Vito, though she’ll always call New Zealand home. She says that to her, beauty means “owning everything you are” and urges brides-to-be to remember that on your wedding day, “you’re going to look beautiful no matter what. Whether you’re a few pounds lighter or heavier or whatever doesn’t matter – it’s about you and the love of your life. My mum was 26 when she got married and was going through chemotherapy at the time, but she still looked as elegant and confident as ever. Talk yourself back to reality and focus on the beautiful love you’re about to celebrate.”

