

Letting the Beauty of Mature Women Shine

By Sophie Braccini



Photo session with Penelope Lippincott & Patti Camras

Photo courtesy Fuse

Achievement has always been the trade mark of Patti Camras. The former President of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce, a successful real estate agent, is beginning to build an additional career: modeling. In the first issue of Fuse, a new Lafayette fashion magazine, the 63 year old model shines in the most simple of outfits, radiating mature beauty and confidence.

Camras got into this new past-time quite unexpectedly. She modeled for the Orinda fashion show organized by the Orinda Women's Club and when a friend saw her picture she referred her to Penelope Lippincott, Director of Fuse. Lippincott is not an agent, she manages several businesses all linked to fashion. Her latest addition, Fuse, promotes local fashion designers featuring models in their early twenties as well as mature women. A professional fashion photographer, she offers women in their 40's to 60's a training curriculum to become independent models, building their own practice. The training costs between \$1400 and \$4000.

However, for Camras, the experience is transforming her life. She started in March of 2007 by learning basic modeling techniques: posture, walking in high heels, pivot and kick turns, runway presentations, make-up and hairstyle. "The classes are phenomenal," she says, "Penelope is a coach, a trainer, a teacher. When you pay for the whole cycle of twelve classes, you can retake it over and over. I'm doing it again for the third time and I'm learning a lot."

Camras is known as Patricia Kennedy in the modeling world; having a different name is part of creating the image and marketing strategy. Camras chose the Kennedy last name to convey the elegance and power she so easily embodies. And Patricia Kennedy has already got some jobs lined up. She has worked on "stock jobs," pictures that are taken in specific situations and that can be purchased by marketing professionals; she worked for Fuse, modeling for a hand-bag company and she was part of a bridal show. "This additional career is totally igniting my enthusiasm and passion," comments Camras, "and the energy is spilling over to my other profession, real estate."

Camras is not the only beautiful mature woman radiating with confidence at Fuse. Connie Menzies, a yoga instructor in her mid fifties, has been training with Lippincott for several months as well.

The tall and slender Lafayette resident looks like she's walked the runways in high heels all her life. It is not the case though and it seems that starting this new career is allowing her to own the power and joy she always had but was a little to shy to let shine. This may be the case of many aging baby boomers. "We are under-represented in the market," affirms Menzies, "we want to affirm who we are and re-conquer our self-esteem."

The challenge for these two women and others working with Lippincott will be to build a successful business. Lippincott is optimistic: "Three out of five women who start in the profession of mature modeling will make it," she says, "the market is there, and success will come to the ones who have endurance and commitment."

Lippincott continues to look for such women. She regularly organizes "open calls" where women come in and audition; Lippincott and her team decide who they will accept as clients. "I choose women who can tell the truth, who embrace the beautiful flaws that come with a certain age, rather than erase them. I need to see that sparkle in their eye. Height and weight are less a factor than energy, determination and motivation.

A beautiful woman in her mid-fifties went to an open call in Lafayette recently. After the interview she was a little confused. "It sounded like a talent agency, and it looks like they have a lot of connections and opportunities for jobs," the woman said, "but then they kept talking to us about business. I'm interested in modeling and there is a need for mature women doing it, but I do not have the time to do my own marketing."

Camras and Menzies both know what it means to be free-lance and as part of their marketing strategy, they are going to New York in March to participate in an international fashion convention where they will get exposure. They'll go as part of a group with Lippincott, who has been successful at this event in the past.