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# Girl Model

*A Film by David Redmon & Ashley Sabin*

*77 minutes - 16x9 - Stereo - Color - Not Rated  
English & Russian & Japanese w/ English Subtitles*

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For images please visit: [www.girlmodelthemovie.com](http://www.girlmodelthemovie.com)

## ABOUT THE FILM

Told through the eyes of a 13-year-old Siberian girl and the American scout who discovered her, *Girl Model* follows a complex global supply chain of young girls sent abroad to seek their fortunes in the unregulated and often murky world of the modeling industry.

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Despite a lack of obvious similarities between Siberia and Tokyo, a thriving model industry connects these distant regions. *Girl Model* follows two protagonists involved in this industry: Ashley, a deeply ambivalent model scout who scours the Siberian countryside looking for fresh faces to send to the Japanese market, and one of her discoveries, Nadya, a 13-year-old plucked from her rustic home in Russia and dropped into the center of bustling Tokyo with promises of a profitable career. After Ashley's initial discovery of Nadya, they rarely meet again, but their stories are inextricably bound. As Nadya's optimism about rescuing her family from financial hardship grows, her dreams contrast against Ashley's more jaded outlook about the industry's corrosive influence.

*Girl Model* is a lyrical exploration of a world defined by glass surfaces and camera lenses, reflecting back differing versions of reality to the young women caught in their scope. As we enter further into this world, it more and more resembles a hall of mirrors, where appearances can't be trusted, perception become distorted and there is no clear way out. Will Nadya, and the other girls like her, be able to find anyone to help them navigate this maze, or will they follow a path like Ashley's, having learned the tricks of the labyrinth but unable to escape its lure? Indeed, it's difficult to know who these young girls can trust and where the industry will take them.

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*Girl Model* received funding through the Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program, Cinereach, Puffin Foundation, Harvard Radcliffe Institute, IFP, Chicken and Egg Pictures and The Fledgling Fund. In 2012 it will air on POV in the United States, CBC in Canada and BBC in the UK.

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

David Redmon and Ashley Sabin have produced, directed, edited and photographed five feature documentaries: *Mardi Gras: Made in China* (2005), *Kamp Katrina* (2007), *Intimidad* (2008), *Invisible Girlfriend* (2009) and, now, *Girl Model* (2011). They have build a loyal following for their intimate and intricately crafted documentaries, won a variety of film festival awards and have seen all of their work aired on television stations throughout the world. Redmon received his PhD in sociology from the University at Albany, State University of New York and is currently a Radcliffe Fellow at Harvard University. Sabin received her BA in Art History from Pratt Institute.

## A QUICK FILMMAKER Q&A

*How did you first become involved with the story of 'Girl Model'?*

**ASHLEY SABIN:** *This is the first time we've made a film where the idea came to us from the main subject. I attended Pratt Institute with Ashley Arbaugh where we both studied Art History. I remembered her because she was frequently gone on casting trips and afterward would ask me for the notes to our "Chemistry of Art" class. Years later, Ashley saw couple of our films when they screened at MoMA and got in touch to suggest that a film about her work scouting young girls to be sent overseas to model would make an interesting documentary. We were wary at first but after hours of long conversations we decided that there really was something to the story and so decided to try and make it work.*

*How long have you been working on this project?*

**DAVID REDMON:** *We began production the summer of 2008 inside a Victoria's Secret sweatshop in China, where Ashley Arbaugh told us off-camera that Russian girls would be modeling her fashion line in Paris. Over the next eighteen months, we traveled to Connecticut, New York, Paris, cities throughout Russia three times and Japan twice. We've been editing and translating the film since 2009 - a lot longer than we first anticipated. But this turned out to be a much more complicated storyline than we ever could have expected.*

*How was the experience of this film different from your other projects?*

**DAVID REDMON:** *We experienced a lot of uncertainty and ran into some very unusual power dynamics throughout the making of 'Girl Model.' And while it's great for the story, and is likely what helped create the powerful unspoken tensions in the film, it made for a very difficult experience for us*

*as directors. Because some of the people we filmed didn't ultimately trust us, it often felt like we were producing the film in a constant gray area.*

*ASHLEY SABIN: Unlike our previous films, this time around we were forced to figure things out while we were filming, to try and establish what each person's motivation was, to determine if we could trust what they were telling us. It was inside this murky space that we were pushed to some very uncomfortable places.*

*In the film, it's clear that Nadya, the 13-year-old model you profile, is desperately in need of someone who she can trust and turn to for support. Was it difficult to maintain a boundary between subject and filmmaker?*

*DAVID REDMON: I think Nadya's age made the entire situation very difficult. We were the adults and she looked to us for support when people in the modeling industry wouldn't assist. From time to time, when the situation demanded it, we stepped in to provide a little guidance, although none of these experiences are in the film. Frankly, though, I don't know what she would have done or how she would have navigated her complications without at least a little bit of our help.*

*ASHLEY SABIN: Additionally, the language barrier made the situation more complicated for everyone. For instance, when Nadya first arrived at the airport in Tokyo, she was expected to find her way to the agency on her own, with just an address on a slip of paper. She didn't speak the language, didn't know how to get there or even how to figure it out. She didn't know who to ask or where to turn and hadn't ever travelled abroad before. Had we not intervened to help her find the way, she would have become exasperated, completely lost in Tokyo and probably would have lost all trust in us. It was one of the rare times we decided to intervene.*

*Have you heard from Nadya lately? What is she doing now?*

*ASHLEY SABIN: We recently receive a message from Nadya that she has decided to continue working as a model. Having gone through the emotional experience of her first trip to Japan, it's a bit incredible to us that she'd want to continue that line of work. But we also understand that, because of her background and the economic situation of her family, she still views the prospect of being a model as an opportunity to escape and work overseas.*

*DAVID REDMON: The problem, however, is that when 12-15 year old girls are placed inside a marketplace of adults that sexualizes them and treats them as disposable goods, there's an infinite potential for the situation to go awry. At this point, we can only hope for the best for her.*

**CREDITS**

*Directed, Produced, Cinematography*

*David Redmon  
Ashley Sabin*

*Consulting Producer*

*Marcy Garriott  
Robert Garriott*

*Editing*

*David Redmon  
Ashley Sabin*

*Second Editors*

*Darius Marder  
Alan Canant*

*Original Score*

*Matthew Dougherty  
Eric Taxier*