



Thing of Beauty

By Stephen Fried

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A portrait of the tragic life and death of supermodel Gia Carangi chronicles her discovery and rise to the heights of the fashion world, her descent into drug addiction, and her death of AIDS at the age of twenty-six.

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Thing of Beauty By Stephen Fried Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Trashy celebrity bios are usually diminished by the fact that we've already heard the stories about Lonnie and Burt, or Madonna and Sean, or whoever the current target is. Author Stephen Fried manages to get all the sleaze value plus a lot of surprises by choosing supermodel Gia Carangi as his topic. Although her face is widely recognized, Gia finished her modeling career in a blaze of heroin and disease just before the time when models became celebrities with name recognition. Her life is the perfect fodder for the exploitation market, but Fried goes beyond that with fluid prose and a reporter's nose for tracking down sources. His stories about her teenage years, with their mix of late nights in Philadelphia's gay clubs, manic worship, and glam-style imitation of David Bowie, as well as tales of Gia's ability to seduce her friends, male and female, are the product of a lot of work and make for very interesting reading. Gia's unabashed homosexuality and early death from AIDS make her story a palimpsest of life on the edge in the America of the 1980s.

From Publishers Weekly

"Gia" Marie Carangi (1960-1986) hit the fashion world like a storm in the late 1970s, after she was discovered by model agent Wilhelmina Cooper; soon she was pictured on the covers of *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*, delighting photographers with her androgynous look. Relying on interviews with Gia's family and friends, freelance writer Fried details her meteoric rise and tragic fall into drug addiction and death from AIDS. Although Gia lived an independent life as a teenager, dividing her time between the Pennsylvania homes of her estranged parents and openly conducting love affairs with other young women, she evidently could not cope with the stresses of success. Fried brings to life the drug-drenched milieu of the 1980s fashion industry, but fails to dig beneath the flamboyant, rebellious attitude Gia presented to the world to provide insight into her character--although he does convey her troubled relationship with her mother.

Illustrations not seen by PW.

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From Library Journal

One of the biggest "whatever happened to...?" queries in the fashion world gets answered here, as Fried, a writer for *Philadelphia* magazine, details the rise (cover of *Vogue*) and fall (death by AIDS) of Gia Carangi, a sultry young beauty who shot to prominence--and shot heroin--during the 1970s disco heyday. It's also a big "what if" story: if Gia had not died, Cindy Crawford (dubbed "baby Gia") may not have become the overexposed supermodel she is today. Fried obviously means Gia's harrowing life to be partly a cautionary tale for all those young girls who wish to be models. However, Gia had many problems (broken home, drug use, confused sexuality) even before she stepped in front of a camera. Fried deridingly describes a 20/20 segment on modeling as "a report meant to detail 'the dark and anxious' side of the modeling business but manages somehow to make the whole enterprise seem extremely glamorous anyway," yet his saga, packed with juicy scoops about other models and photographers, has the same effect. In other words, this book will have a tremendous appeal to a general audience. For all public libraries.

- Judy Quinn, formerly with *"Library Journal"*

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Users Review

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