



She's got the look

Teen model Michelle Lin prepares to introduce herself to world of high fashion

BY VALERIE HILL

PHOTOGRAPHY ALISHA TOWNSEND

Lena Herold has never encountered anyone quite like Michelle Lin.

At only 13 years old, the six-foot-tall Lin already possesses a rare combination of attributes that could make her Canada's next top model.

"The modelling business, it's such a small pool," says Herold, a former professional model who owns Cameo Models in Waterloo. "As tall as she is, she'll be opening doors."

But there is more than extraordinary height to this teen, said Herold, whose agency represents Lin. She also exhibits a grace when walking the runway and the fact she is beautiful, Asian and the exact measurements set down as ideal by the fashion industry puts her in a very small percentile of working models today.

"In runway, you have to fit the sample size," said

Michelle Lin poses with her mom, Karen, at the Cameo Models studio in Waterloo.



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Michelle Lin takes on a few different looks in these photos from her Cameo Models portfolio.

Herold. “That’s five-nine to six feet. She was already something special. It’s not just the height, it’s the measurements, the look.”

“Asian (models) are typically a lot shorter.” She also noted Lin’s personality is perfect for the job.

“She is so lovely looking but what sets her apart is her personality,” Herold said. “You have to be a presence.”

Herold said her young protégé also photographs exceptionally well.

“She is very special. I can’t wait to see what she’s going to do,” said Herold.

Lin is not shy about all this attention, but she is also grounded, with sights set on becoming a lawyer.

“I do get joy walking the runway, wearing the clothes,” said Lin, a straight-As, Grade 8 student at Kitchener-Waterloo Bilingual School. She speaks three languages, including French and her parents’ native Mandarin. She’s also an accomplished pianist and winner of several Kiwanis Music Festival awards, who plays flute for fun but gave up violin to focus on her other activities. Then there are her athletic accomplishments, such as her many wins as a competitive swimmer with the Region of Waterloo Swim Club.

“I do calligraphy to relax,” she said.

It’s an exhaustive list of activities but Lin seems unfazed by the demands on her time and now she’s about to add modelling contracts to her to-do list.

So what has she learned from modelling so far?

“I’ve learned not to trip over a long dress and how to walk properly in heels,” said the personable teen, who has already worked a couple of fashion shows, including a bridal event in Cambridge.

Lin’s height is perhaps not surprising considering her father stands six feet four inches tall and then there is her mother, Karen Lin, whose five-foot 10-inch frame made her stand out at school in Beijing where she grew up.

“I was bullied,” she said. “I was taller than everybody else.”

“I’m very strong. If somebody made me mad, I’d fight back.”

Karen released much of her frustration on the volleyball court and she’s been able to guide her only child to channel that energy through more positive actions.

The problem facing Michelle is that she looks five years older than she is and with that comes expectations, despite the fact she is dealing with all the vulnerabilities and naiveté of a kid.

When asked if Herold is concerned Lin could experience another growth spurt, the agency owner said there is a bit of wiggle room.

“Ideal is six foot but they will certainly take up to six-two,” she said. “There are advantages of being tall: designers like tall because it makes their clothing drape better, it shows off their clothes.”

Lin entered modelling after a teacher, a former Cameo model, suggested she might want to give it a try.

“I took a free lesson,” Lin said. “I’d never thought it was an option.”

Lin is being groomed as a runway model, a much more rigorous type of modelling.

Herold said that with commercial modelling size and age do not really matter but runway models have to be a specific type, partly because they have to fit into the sample sizes provided by designers.

In May, Lin will be in Toronto at the 2017 Canadian Model and Talent Convention, a tough audition into professional modelling where the world’s top modelling and talent agents, as well as scouts, managers and casting directors will be searching for new faces, new talent.

Lin is focused on what she wants and is open to putting her formal education on hold after high school in order to model.

Lin understands that a model’s life is short lived. After mid-20s, runway work dries up and then it will be time to go to university.

“I really like helping people,” she said of a law career. “I was going to be a doctor, but I can’t stand the blood.”

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