

STRONG AND FEMALE

Chicago-based artist Andrea Harris, known for her "Women of Courage" portrait series, is looking for new subjects. If you have a woman who you'd like to nominate for her next series of portraits, let her know at www.andreaharris.com.



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THE RIGHT TOUCH

WHAT'S REAL? | Now that Photoshop is so hot, how do we know what celebrities actually look like?

BY PAIGE WISER

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'Ugly Betty's" America Ferrera is beloved because she says things like this: "We're not all a Size 2 and we're not all a Size 0, and you know what? That's OK, because some of us like to eat!"

Apparently it's not OK with Glamour magazine. Bloggers are sniping about the star's insta-makeover on the cover, in which it looks like Ferrera's head has been transported onto Jessica Alba's body. Her arms, her waist and even her breasts seem to have been downsized. Ugly Betty has become a Barbie doll.

Glamour denies tampering with the photo. "We shot America for the cover in June," says a spokeswoman, "and there was no slimming done to her figure in this image; as she says in the interview, she is a Size 6/8. Readers love her as is."

However, the arms on the "Ugly Betty" star that were in full view at the "Emmys" Sunday night sure didn't look like the ones on the Glamour cover. That mixed message bothers young women, particularly Latinas who look up to her. They're not sure what to make of the Glamour cover. "It's not right to change her appearance," says Marlene Delgado, 17, of the Southeast Side. "It does bother me because I don't want to look like I look. I want to look like those artists."

"Weight means nothing," says Nancy Majia, also 17. "It is what you are inside." Still, she struggles with the mixed messages in the media. "Sometimes I'll say I wish I look like her, but then I say, 'No, I am fine the way I am.'"

Why all the confusion? Welcome to the magic of Photoshop, a software program that can distort pictures with a click.

You may have noticed something about celebrity photos. When they're taken by paparazzi, celebrities look sloppy, sweaty — almost human.

When they're on the covers of magazines and albums, now, that's when they look like stars: flawless, glowing — as if they've been touched by the hand of God.

Or retouched by a specialist.



UGLY BETTY TO PERFECT BARBIE: Glamour's cover shot of America Ferrera is noticeably slimmer than her Emmy self. PHOTO AT RIGHT: FRAZER HARRISON—GETTY



"It's amazing how much they do," says Tom Sesek, a Chicago retoucher for more than 30 years. "Taking out small wrinkles, bags under the eyes and discolorations of the skin. There are all kinds of tricks and methods."

So Britney Spears, who on her best days appears to be a very tired mother of two, has recently been on the cover of Allure, looking like a prowling goddess.

The gossip Web site TMZ.com recently posted an everyday photo of Jodie Foster, in black spectacles, white T-shirt and suspicious glare, with the glamorous cover shot of her for California Style magazine. "Move over diamonds," read the caption. "Photoshop is now a girl's



Photoshop (right) can change the look of anyone, even Mayor Daley.

best friend!"

At this point, celebrities can't help but acknowledge it. Keira

Knightley recently told the U.K.'s Radio Times, "OK, I'm on the cover of a magazine, but somebody else does the hair, and the makeup, and airbrushes the f--- out of me — it's not me, it's something other people have created."

Other people like Tom Sesek. "Some photographers I know that do glamor, after they shoot a particular model, they'll automatically extend and stretch her legs so they look longer."

It might sell magazines, but it has other effects, too. "Girls are taught to compare themselves to the images presented in magazines," says Judith Matz, director of the Chicago Center for Overcoming Overeating Inc., "even

though they are unaware that these pictures have been manipulated to present a thinner, more 'perfect'-looking body."

"Studies show that 70 percent of girls and women feel worse about themselves after just three minutes of exposure to these magazines," says Dina Zeckhausen, founder of the Eating Disorders Information Network. "People with a predisposition to eating disorders are highly sensitized to these images, even seeking them out to confirm that their anorexic belief system is 'correct.'"

Zeckhausen is especially alarmed by the apparent transformation of Ferrera. "The message is very clear," she says, "that 'real women' may have curves, but 'real women' don't end up gracing the cover of Glamour. 'Real' is not the look they are courting."

Of course not, says Sesek. "These things just become habits," he says. "I don't know how long photographic evidence will still be admissible in court — even experts have a hard time telling where certain things have been retouched."

And it's not just for celebrities anymore, either. After photographing weddings, Sesek has routinely switched closed eyes in one photo with the open eyes of another. "I'm not really misrepresenting that person," he says. "It's a very common thing to do, to save a photograph. I switch entire heads all the time."

It's more common because the technology is getting so much easier to use. Photo retouching goes back to at least the reign of Joseph Stalin in Russia — he reportedly had Leon Trotsky retouched out of a photograph of a 1920 Lenin speech. To do something like that, it was necessary to be an artist.

Sesek notes that images have always had an "interpretive" quality to them; this is not a new trend. "People in the old days, even before photography, they had their pictures painted. And those paintings were never really accurate, because the painters made them look good — they wanted to be rehired for the next job. That's what's really happening with Photoshop."

So doubt it, even if you see it with your own two eyes. And Sesek right: "You never can tell what they really look like, that's for sure."