Alumni

Hari Nef: Woman of the Year

Spring 2016



Hari Nef on the "Transparent" set. Photo by Jennifer Clason / Amazon Studios.

Since graduating last spring with a degree in theater, Hari Nef ’15CC has made her runway debut at New York City’s fashion week, been featured in *Vogue*, earned a coveted modeling contract with IMG, and nabbed a recurring role on the hit Amazon series *Transparent*.

It’s an impressive list for any actress and model. For Nef it was also groundbreaking. She is the first openly transgender model to sign with IMG — she transitioned while at Columbia — and one of very few in the entire field.

“I’ve always been obsessed with fashion,” says Nef. “But I never thought that anyone would see me in that light.”

Nef says she owes her modeling career to connections she made while interning for several fashion designers during her time at Columbia.

“I knew a lot of photographers from my internships. When my appearance started to change, they wanted to shoot me,” Nef says.

Nef posted the photos to her robust Instagram account (@harinef) and started to get a reaction from some unexpected people — including Jill Soloway, the creator of *Transparent*, a show that follows a Los Angeles family in the wake of the patriarch’s gender transition.

“I thought that maybe they’d fly me out to do a cameo, but I was lucky enough to get a role in the second season,” Nef says. “The show resonates with me for a lot of reasons. I give it a lot of credit for contributing to the change in our collective consciousness around trans issues.”

Nef says the year ahead will be filled with auditions and more modeling work, though she admits that the last twelve months will be difficult to top.

“I told *Vogue* that the only thing that would make my year better is frozen yogurt and girl talk with Caitlyn Jenner,” Nef says. “That still hasn’t happened. But maybe she reads *Columbia Magazine*.”



Guide to school abbreviations

All categories >