



Speedway

# Lily Cole: Far Beyond Expectation

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London beauty Lily Cole was discovered by a talent scout in Soho one day, and began her journey toward blasting expectations on a world stage. Modeling in Vogue and lending her China-doll face and striking red hair to Chanel, Versace, and Louis Vuitton, she was embraced for her extraordinary charm and allure. And when she was accepted to King's College, Cambridge, she stunned quite a few. Now, as the buzz intensifies around Cole's co-starring role in Terry Gilliam's latest dreamlike epic, *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*, folks are starting to realize that this pretty young thing is far more than they'd anticipated. Playing Valentina, the restless daughter of Christopher Plummer's cantankerous Parnassus, she rises to battle her father's control, dances with Tom Waits' nefarious Mr. Nick, and falls for Tony, portrayed by Heath Ledger, in his final performance.

Cole was taken with the idea of an old wizard who invites the willing to explore their unconscious and wrestle with their nature by stepping through Parnassus' mirror. "I loved the script," she beams. "I read it twice on a train from London to Paris. There are metaphysical and philosophical ideas all through it, and mysticism and that stuff, has always been my cup of tea. I really enjoyed that. And the craziness of it. It was so rich, with so many things going on. It was very unusual. And also the visual aspects, which are only insinuated and implied on the page, and that expands in your own mind. And when I saw it finished, it blew me away! Everything was more extreme, and more extravagant, and bigger, and more amazing than I'd imagined it to be."

With Ledger's passing in the midst of production, Johnny Depp, Jude Law, and Colin Farrell stepped in to ensure the film's completion. "People really loved Heath, and worked hard at a difficult time," Cole relates. "I say that about all the cast and crew who had been working on the film previously, and, of course, the three men who very kindly came as friends of Heath to help finish it. I think it's a really beautiful story."

In her life as a model, the elegant vision with an adventurer's soul ensures that her travels take her well beyond the pose. "We rode camels, getting sunburned," she recalls of her time in the Jaisalmer region of northwestern India. "We did it for two days, sleeping in the desert. This was a few years ago, and they had the heaviest rains they'd had in around 20 years. It was a huge monsoon, and the night we spent in the desert, there was this crazy electrical storm. The whole night, the sky was full, all around us, with lightning and rain. It was quite extraordinary."

Keeping a keen eye on the big picture, Cole has traveled to the Republic of Botswana in Southern Africa to bring attention to controversial diamond-mining practices. "I think the biggest lesson I learned in my Botswana trip — not so much specific to the [diamond controversy] — is that nothing is black and white," she explains. "The whole time, my evaluation of the situation was being shifted. It's actually a very interesting parallel to what I think is going on in Terry's film — that the good and the Devil exist in everything, and they really can't be divided that clearly."

Currently partnered with the WWF to save a billion trees in Brazil's Amazon rainforest, the statuesque runway sensation is happily defying stereotype. "I try, as much as possible, just to ignore people's opinions of me, and do my own thing," she laughs. "And I also quite like disproving the narrow-minded ideas of what models are."

Next up for Cole is *Rage*, an experimental film featuring Judi Dench and Steve Buscemi, followed by Mary Harron's *The Moth Diaries*. And beyond that? "I don't have any expectations," she says with a grin, "so who knows!" ▼

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