



Thing of Beauty

By Stephen Fried

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At age seventeen, Gia Carangi was working the counter at her father's Philadelphia luncheonette, Hoagie City. Within a year, Gia was one of the top models of the late 1970's, gracing the covers of *Cosmopolitan* and *Vogue*, partying at New York's Studio 54 and the Mudd Club, and redefining the industry's standard of beauty. She was the darling of moguls and movie stars, royalty and rockers. Gia was also a girl in pain, desperate for her mother's approval—and a drug addict on a tragic slide toward oblivion, who started going directly from \$10,000-a-day fashion shoots to the heroin shooting galleries on New York's Lower East Side. Finally blackballed from modeling, Gia entered a vastly different world on the streets of New York and Atlantic City, and later in a rehab clinic. At twenty-six, she became one of the first women in America to die of AIDS, a hospital welfare case visited only by rehab friends and what remained of her family.

Drawing on hundreds of interviews with Gia's family, lovers, friends, and colleagues, *Thing of Beauty* creates a poignant portrait of an unforgettable character—and a powerful narrative about beauty and sexuality, fame and objectification, mothers and daughters, love and death.

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Thing of Beauty By Stephen Fried Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #95154 in Books
- Brand: Pocket Books
- Published on: 1994-06-01
- Released on: 1994-06-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.75" h x 1.20" w x 4.19" l, .51 pounds
- Binding: Mass Market Paperback
- 432 pages

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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

Charts international cover girl Gia Carangi's descent from \$10,000-a-day modeling jobs to heroin addiction and death from AIDS at age 26. Photos.

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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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