

Faking it

Women's Forum Australia

CAN MODELS WITH REAL FIGURES SAVE US?

the stick insect diet

SEX
LET US ENTERTAIN
YOU

WANTED
Living doll
(no talent required)

WOMEN VS WOMEN

Poses
YOU WOULDN'T STRIKE AT HOME (AND A MAN WOULDN'T STRIKE ANYWHERE)

WHO'S UNHAPPY WITH THEIR BODY?

problems?
you're on your own

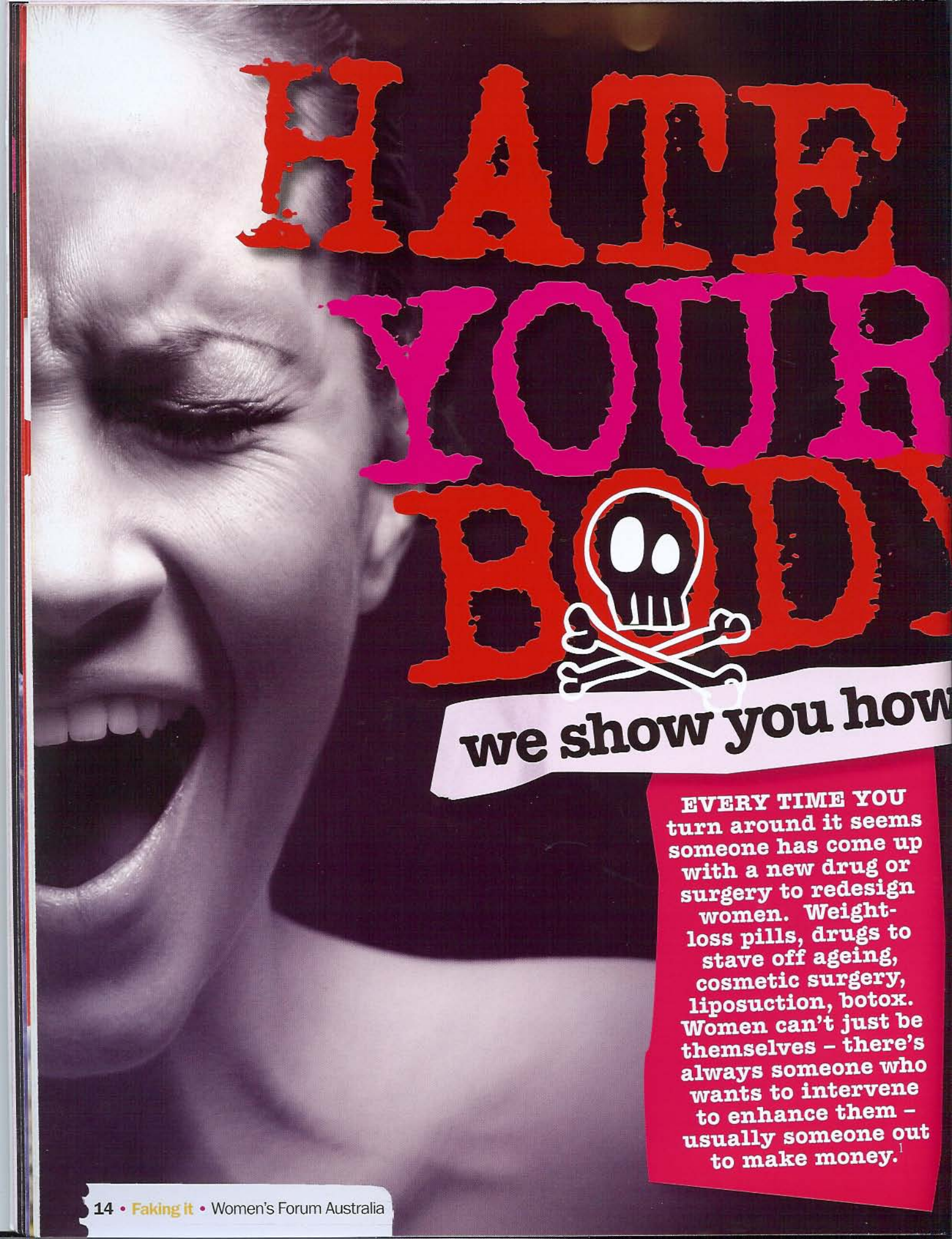
hate your body
we show you how

GET YOUR GEAR OFF ...AND IT'S GAME ON!

of course you're not hot!

PHOTOSHOP 'TIL YOU DROP!





HATE YOUR BODY



we show you how

EVERY TIME YOU turn around it seems someone has come up with a new drug or surgery to redesign women. Weight-loss pills, drugs to stave off ageing, cosmetic surgery, liposuction, botox. Women can't just be themselves - there's always someone who wants to intervene to enhance them - usually someone out to make money.

Every woman knows that, regardless of all her other achievements, she is a failure if she is not beautiful. She also knows that whatever beauty she has is leaving her, stealthily, day by day. Even if she is as freakishly beautiful as the supermodels whose images she sees replicated all around her until they are more familiar than the features of her own mother, she cannot be beautiful enough. There must be bits of her that will not do, her knees, her feet, her buttocks, her breasts... She is human, not a goddess or an angel. However much body hair she has, it is too much. However little and sweetly she sweats, it is too much. Left to her own devices she is sure to smell bad. If her body is thin enough, her breasts are sad. If her breasts are full, her arse is surely too big.

Through exposure to popular culture women learn from the time they are little girls that they are supposed to expose their bodies and look a certain way. Each season's fashion has a new trend, a new look to imitate, and a new body part to expose.

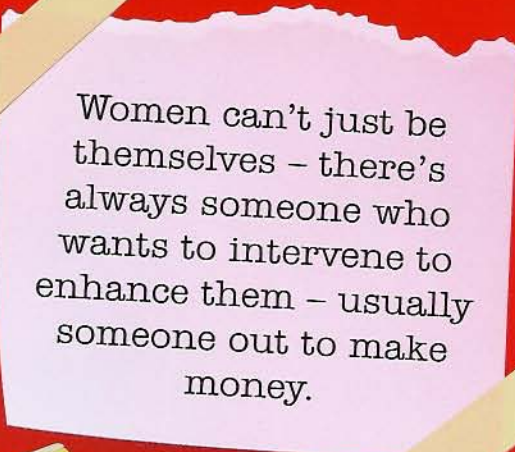
When celebrities, models and Bratz dolls are seen everywhere, girls and women eventually understand that these are the women worth looking at and worth acknowledging, so we need to look like them.

They are then made aware that countless numbers of products exist to help them look 'good enough' for the required exposure of their bodies. The sale of these products help fuel a massive beauty industry.


Germaine Greer has an extremely cynical view on the beauty industry. She writes:

Magazines financed by the beauty industry teach little girls that they need make-up and train them to use it, so establishing their lifelong reliance on beauty products. Not content with showing pre-teens how to use foundations, powders, concealers, blushers, eye-shadows, eye-liners, lip-liners, lipstick and lip gloss, the magazines identify problems of dryness, flakiness, blackheads, shininess, dullness, blemishes, puffiness, oiliness, spots, greasiness, that little girls are meant to treat with moisturizers, fresheners, masks, packs, washes, lotions, cleaners, toners, scrubs, astringents, none of which will make the slightest difference and all of which would cost money the child does not have. Pre-teen

cosmetics are relatively cheap but within a few years more sophisticated marketing will have persuaded the most level-headed young woman to throw money away on alchemical preparations containing anything from silk to cashmere, pearls, proteins, royal jelly, placenta extracts, ceramides, biotin, collagen, 'phyto-tensers', bisabolol, jojoba, 'hydra-captors', serine, fruit hydroxy-acids, oleospheres, corneospheres, nanovectors, glycerol, anything real or phony that might fend off her imminent collapse into hideous decrepitude.³



Women can't just be themselves - there's always someone who wants to intervene to enhance them - usually someone out to make money.



"Got dull, lifeless lookin' skin? That just won't do! To get a gorgeous glow, gently exfoliate your whole face, then dab concealer under your eyes and on any spots, and finish with an illuminator on your cheeks."⁴

Can I try these jeans on in the dark please?

Joan Jacobs Brumberg, in her book *The Body Project*, explains how shopping and dressing can create anxiety and insecurity for many young women. Buying jeans seems to be one of the most demanding exercises for many. Trying on bathers and bras can also be humiliating.

Brumberg writes that the retail business has an understanding that girls try on about 14 pairs of jeans for every one actually purchased. The three-way mirrors and harsh lighting in change rooms are the conditions under which girls will stand and harshly scrutinise their body, being cruelly reminded that they are far from 'perfect'.

"Shopping", writes Brumberg, "is a narcissistic pleasure for some young

women, but for many others it generates serious emotional anguish because of its symbolic complexities and the insecurities it stirs up about the body and its parts".⁵

The history of body angst

Brumberg offers fascinating insights into the history of body angst.

For example, it was not until the turn of the century that middle-class girls had the opportunity to inspect their bodies in detail and in private. Only then were many households able to install running water, mirrors and electric lights. Until the 1920s, women did not generally have access to scales, and could only weigh themselves at drugstores or county fairs. So for a long time, weight was not a critical part of female identity. And until the early 1900s, there were no bras.

There were no 'cups'. There was no interest in 'uplift' or cleavage. Until then, "the bosom was worn low".⁶

It was in the early 1900s, with an expanding economy and increasing prosperity, that mass-produced clothing had an immense impact on women's and girls' body image. Although it allowed girls much more autonomy to define their looks outside their mother's authority, it added new complexities to how girls saw their bodies.

When clothing, including bras, was made at home, garments could be adjusted for the girl they were made for. But when buying from a store, the girl had to fit instantly into standard sizes, from patterns which were supposed to represent the 'normal' body. When clothing doesn't fit, we immediately wonder whether something is wrong with our body.

Brumberg says "in this way, mass-produced bras in standard cup sizes probably increased, rather than diminished, adolescent self-consciousness about the breasts".⁷

Brumberg collected girls' private diaries over the past century, concluding that girls now are "more anxious than ever about the size and shape of their bodies, as well as particular body parts".⁸

This is supported by recent research on women's and girls' body image that suggests that anxiety about the body is a very troubling aspect of many women's lives. **F**