

Anti-Anorexia Model Isabelle Caro Dies at 28



PARIS -- Isabelle Caro, a French actress and model whose emaciated image appeared in a shock Italian ad campaign and whose anorexia and career were followed by others suffering from eating disorders, has died at the age of 28.

Her longtime acting instructor, Daniele Dubreuil-Prevot, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that Caro died on Nov. 17 after returning to France from a job in Tokyo.

Dubreuil-Prevot said she did not know the cause of death but that Caro "had been sick for a long time," referring to her anorexia.

Caro featured in an ad campaign by Italian photographer Oliviero Toscani in 2007 for an Italian fashion house. Under the headline "No Anorexia," images across newspapers and billboards showed Caro naked, vertebrae and facial bones protruding.

In later interviews, she said she weighed about 27 kilograms, or 59 pounds, when the photos were taken.

Caro said on her blog and in interviews that she had suffered from anorexia since she was 13. She wrote a book published in France in 2008 titled "The Little Girl Who Didn't Want to Get Fat."

The Italian ad campaign came as the fashion industry came under an unusually bright spotlight about anorexia, after a 21-year-old Brazilian model died from the eating disorder. Her agent, Sylvie Fabregon, told AP that it was intended "to show what it is like to be anorexic."

Some groups working with anorexics warned, however, that it did a disservice to those afflicted with the disorder.

Images of Caro appeared on so-called pro-ana, or pro-anorexia websites. On Wednesday, one posted a notice about her death and a photo of her, large blue-green eyes peering over a child-size upper arm, with the caption, "die young, stay pretty."

Her life and death drew other kinds of followers, as well.

Swiss singer Vincent Bigler and Caro had been working on a video for a song he wrote about anorexia called "J'ai fin," a wordplay in French that means roughly "I am the end" but is pronounced identically to "I am hungry."

Bigler said he penned the song after being so moved and worried by seeing Caro on television, and meant the lyrics to focus on hope and healing.

Caro "left me with many images, and much hope," he said by telephone, describing her different moods and ideas as they worked on the project together.

Caro herself spoke out about her anorexia and her efforts to recover, and the menace of eating disorders on the fashion industry.

Her acting instructor described years in and out of hospitals. Her death and her illness "are an absolute waste," Dubreuil-Prevot said.

Caro's Facebook page says she was born Sept. 12, 1982. She took violin lessons and then acting lessons in Nantes and Versailles, according to Dubreuil-Prevot.

The Italian ad campaign gained Caro widespread attention in media in countries around Europe and in the United States. She subsequently served as a member of the jury on Top Model France, and worked periodically as a film and television actress.

Caro's father alerted a few close friends at the time of her death, and a funeral service was held in Paris, according to Dubreuil-Prevot. Her family could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

In one online video, Caro ends with words of advice for aspiring models: "Believe in life."

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ktla-isabelle-caro-anorexia-dies,0,4325764.story>