

Photoshop “Phails”

Digitally altered images of models in magazines are creating an unrealistic ideal that is harming readers around the world. It's no secret that women—and even men—are airbrushed and sometimes made to look slimmer in published photographs. Public outcry has led to a demand in some countries for images like these to include disclaimers that indicate when an image has been altered. This demand is a move in the right direction; however, it is neither mandated nor present in every country. A decrease in altered images or a clear disclaimer is completely necessary in order to eliminate this unrealistic ideal, foster appreciation for real body shapes, and stop companies from lying to consumers about their products.

If an image is altered, it does not exist in reality and is therefore an unrealistic ideal for people to attempt to achieve. When a model with a 24-inch waist and 35-inch hips is further altered to look smaller in an advertisement, the message that is being projected is that unnatural thinness is the ideal and that a 24-inch waist is too large. In a 2009 ad promoting denim, model Filippa Hamilton's waist had been pinched during photoshop processing to be visibly smaller than her head. Everyone from impressionable 10-year-olds to full grown women were being shown unhealthy dimensions in a glamorous light. In order to attain such dimensions and be an “acceptable” size in today's society, a person would have to cease eating until his or her body began digesting itself. Readers would not attempt something so dangerous if they were informed that these images were not reality and were merely the result of digital enhancements.

The digital enhancing of images in and of itself should be better regulated. While Photoshop should be used to enhance colors and make a shot clearer, it is instead used to deceive the viewer by creating an image so far from reality that it might as well be a completely different picture. This is an insult to women. It is conveying the message that these gorgeous, fit models aren't good enough as they are; therefore, “normal” women or “regular” women *definitely* aren't worthy enough or pretty enough. These images do not celebrate the real beauty of real women; rather, they celebrate digital paintings that literally erase pores and wrinkles from 30-year-olds. An ad featuring Julia Roberts was pulled in some countries due to excessive altering of her skin. Julia Roberts is a very beautiful woman, as are all the models that are chosen to be in magazines, and it's an insult to the models and women everywhere to suggest that these already perfect individuals need to be “enhanced.”

Some ads for age-reversing products have been pulled due to the excessive buffing of the model's skin in post-processing, which creates an unrealistic expectation for the consumer and is just plain deceit. An ad for wrinkle cream featuring Rachel Weisz was pulled due to excessive altering when the ad was compared to a candid photograph of the actress. The cream did not completely erase barely noticeable bags under her eyes, and the ad looked nothing like the candid photo. These marketing campaigns are lying to the consumer about the power of the product and are also conveying a very nasty message to women: you are not allowed to age, and you are only as good as your youth. How are women over 30 supposed to feel about this when they first start seeing the finest of lines on their face? Ads with plastic-

looking women who are made to appear to be in their 20s when they are actually in their 40s just further perpetuates the objectification of women.

The most honest approach would be to do away with Photoshop altogether; however, since that is highly unlikely, the best option is to push for regulations against digitally altered images that create an image vastly unlike the original. Photos should be made to look nice with vibrant colors and well-placed shadows. They are not meant to communicate to the readers that humans in their natural form just aren't pretty enough. It is time to start celebrating the beauty of real people and stop condemning the aging process.