



# girl ON FILM

BRIAN BOWEN SMITH

With luxury modelling campaigns, *14 million Instagram followers* and her very own posse of It girls, why is Cara Delevingne so set on acting? Turns out, she's *seriously talented*.  
By Elaine Lipworth

**C**ara Delevingne is attacking a large slice of blueberry cheesecake with relish. "This is so fucking good," she sighs, savouring the experience. "I shouldn't actually be having it, I'm not allowed," she whispers conspiratorially, raising those trademark eyebrows. After "a late night out with friends" (including a couple of Kardashians), Delevingne is clearly in need of an energy boost. "I'm a little tired. I flew into LA last night and I'm leaving very early tomorrow morning." She stifles a yawn and smiles cheerfully. Between modelling assignments, auditions, film shoots, premieres and ... well, fun, apparently there isn't much time for sleep.

But the 22-year-old British model, It girl and actress seems remarkably fresh, dressed in a Roland Mouret striped jumper, navy miniskirt and ankle boots. Her face is as mobile as her body. She is constantly on the move, tapping her feet, crossing and uncrossing her long legs. At one point, she removes a heavy silver ring from her finger (it makes eating difficult) and hurls it in the direction of the king-size bed in the middle of the room. It accidentally whacks her unsuspecting publicist. "I am SO sorry, I am not Naomi Campbell!" she laughs.

Making an impressive transition from the catwalk to the big screen, Delevingne appeared in *Anna Karenina* (2012) and in last year's >

*The Face Of An Angel*, directed by Michael Winterbottom who compared her to Julie Christie. This month, she played the female lead in *Paper Towns*, adapted from the John Green bestseller. The story focuses on Quentin (played by Nat Wolff), a young man who has been smitten with his enigmatic next-door neighbour, Margo, since they were children. Delevingne beat out dozens of actresses to land the part of Margo.

"I was by myself in a hotel when I heard I'd got the role. I ran around the room throwing things up in the air and screaming into pillows. They got a complaint and someone called to check I was OK." The news, she says, came as a total shock. "I was sure I wouldn't get it. I doubt myself constantly, and I was worried if I did get it, I wouldn't be able to do it well enough." She pauses. "I don't like to expect anything out of life because then I'm never disappointed."

While grateful that modelling paved the way for acting, she says the job has never been fulfilling. "It wasn't something I was doing for my soul. It didn't make my heart beat or build a fire inside me. It was a game to me in a weird way. I wanted to prove that I could do it." Still, there is no escaping Delevingne's influence – after making debut at age 10, campaigns for Burberry, Chanel, YSL Beauté and TAG Heuer propelled her to supermodel status. Then there are those eyebrows: "They're massive, they take up most of my face," she traces them with her long fingers. "I hated them when I was younger because I used to get teased. But they remind me of my grandmother, who died recently."

Family looms large in Delevingne lore, and she is just the latest member of the privileged clan to hit the headlines. Her mother, Pandora, was a well-known socialite and personal shopper who battled heroin addiction; her father, Charles, made millions as a property developer; and her elder sister, Poppy, is also a model. Meanwhile, Delevingne's godmother is Joan Collins, and her aristocratic maternal grandmother was a lady-in-waiting to Princess Margaret.

While today her face is instantly recognisable, Delevingne is determined

to disappear into the roles she takes on. "I put my blood, sweat and tears into acting, I dedicate my life to it. I'd die for it," she declares. It is a typically dramatic statement from Delevingne, who says exactly what's on her mind. "I grew up in England where everyone's very polite and if something's bothering you, you just keep it in. I'm all about being open. I am who I am and if people don't like me ... they don't like me."

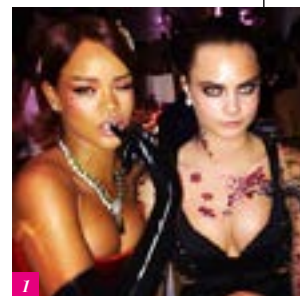
In fact, she is entirely likeable, and intriguingly seems both young and old at the same time. With the full-on enthusiasm of a teenager, Delevingne is also surprisingly reflective. One minute discussing literature ("I just read a book about [German poet and novelist] Hermann Hesse, and a collection of short stories by [American author] Lydia Davis"); in the next breath sharing her views on women's issues. "There should be more women directors. I hope that when Hillary Clinton becomes president" (note there is no "if"), "there will be better opportunities for women."

Adept at multi-tasking, as she chats and eats, she is autographing a tower of *Paper Towns* books for promotional purposes. The plot explores how easy it



**ROLE MODEL**

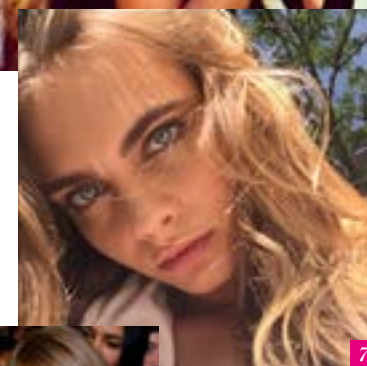
In *Paper Towns* (above), Delevingne co-stars with Nat Wolff in the big-screen adaptation of young-adult hitmaker John Green's novel.



**INSTAGRAM GODDESS**  
Cara Delevingne keeps followers up to date with her Insta-glamorous life: **1** Sporting serious (but temporary) ink with Rihanna at the Met Gala. **2** Photobombing a Kardashian love-in at Paris Fashion Week.



inside CARA'S WORLD



**3** Prepping for the MTV Movie Awards last April. **4** (From left) Ellie Goulding, Delevingne, Taylor Swift and Karlie Kloss at the 2015 Brit Awards. **5** With Kendall Jenner, both looking lovely for the Karl Lagerfeld A/W 2015/16 show. **6** Getting her rock geek on at the Gibson New York showroom. **7** In a reflective mood. **8** Sharing the spotlight with idol Kate Moss for Burberry in 2014.

Left: striking a familiar pose for a fan selfie. Right: She now juggles her careers, recently representing Burberry in LA (near right) and attending the Cannes Film Festival (far right).

is to get romantically fixated on people and idealise them, without knowing who they really are. "Quentin thinks Margo is perfect, he has this fantasy idea of her, but you can't judge a book by its cover. But we all do it," concedes Delevingne. Does she identify with Margo? "She's extremely opinionated and fearless. I'm pretty goddamn fearless. I don't like to think about things, I just do them. And people like to project their ideas of who they think Margo is onto her, which people do to me a lot, but the difference is I'm a public figure and she's just a girl in high school."

So how does Delevingne – who, aside from her own fame, has been romantically linked with celebrities from One Direction idol Harry Styles to actress Michelle Rodriguez and musician St. Vincent – cope with the attention she attracts? "I don't think there's a way of handling fame. It is the weirdest thing but the fans see what they want to see, probably about 20 per cent of who I am." The biggest drawback is, she says, "People think I'm a certain way so they may not think of me for a role." She's not complaining, though: "I love it when people make assumptions of me because I love proving people wrong. It's my favourite thing to do in the whole world."

She certainly defies all assumptions in *Paper Towns*. For a start, the American accent is spot-on. Delevingne's magnetism as the mysterious Margo is undisputable, too. She says her favourite scene is when Margo enlists Quentin's support for a wild night of revenge on her cheating boyfriend, which sees them shaving off someone's eyebrows and covering a car in cling wrap. "I was a gremlin," she says of her days at exclusive UK boarding school Bedales. "I was the leader of

the pranksters. I used to draw on peoples' faces when they were asleep with a henna pen, which didn't come off for weeks."

Frequently in trouble, Delevingne was bright, but refused to toe the line. Acting was an early ambition, along with music (she is a drummer and guitarist). "When I was 13 I asked my parents for an agent for my birthday. I wanted to have a Disney talent show. I came very close to doing *Alice In Wonderland* when I was 16," reveals Delevingne, who sent the film's director, Tim Burton, an audition tape. She lost out to Australian star Mia Wasikowska, "but that experience lit a fire in me".

Her parents, she says, didn't encourage her ambitions. "I think they really wanted me to finish school and to go to university, but they both left school at 16, so I was like, 'Screw you guys, I can do whatever I want!'" That rebellious streak, combined with her independent spirit, shaped Delevingne's approach to life. A committed feminist ("I want to be a strong role model"), she talks about the time she discovered the sexes weren't equal:

"Young boys seemed so sure they were better than girls, and I remember girls being brought down by that. I have a lot of friends who really believed that men were better than women and that just didn't make any sense to me."

Have things improved? "Only a handful of women make it past a certain age in the acting world; I think it's so sad because men can do it forever. But there are definitely more strong female roles," she says. This year, Delevingne plays a

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mermaid in *Pan* with Hugh Jackman, and stars in the comic-book blockbuster *Suicide Squad* with Will Smith, Ben Affleck and Margot Robbie in 2016. "Margot's absolutely amazing," says Delevingne, who plays Enchantress, but refuses to give away any plot details. Other films include *London Fields* with

Johnny Depp, and director Luc Besson's much-anticipated sci-fi epic, *Valerian And The City Of A Thousand Planets*.

It's not surprising she is tired. How does she relax? "Relax? I haven't had a day off for ages and when I'm not working, I'm thinking about working." Close friends, she says, ensure she remains grounded. "They are not scared to tell me when I'm being an asshole.

But, you know, I always remember every single day how lucky I am, and how important it is to keep having fun. Am I having fun now? Oh my God, too much," she grins. And with that the captivating Cara Delevingne signs another book and is off, on to her next adventure. □  
*Paper Towns is in cinemas on July 16.*

CARA DELEVINGNE/INSTAGRAM; KARLIE KLOSS/INSTAGRAM; GETTY IMAGES