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PEGGY TURBETT | THE PLAIN DEALER

Local talent gets national buzz

Who says you have to be in New York to succeed in the fashion world? A local fine jeweler, a fashion designer and a model, Shelly Marks, above, are proving otherwise. **Details, E1**

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E | THE PLAIN DEALER ENTERTAINMENT NEWS AT CLEVELAND.COM/ENTERTAINMENT



Model/actress/reality star Shelly Marks says one of her favorite — and most steady — clients is AmeriMark, a Cleveland-based catalog company. "They use me a lot for pieces parts," she says. "Legs, arms, knees, that sort of thing." Here, she works on shoot for the company with photographer Tena Craig at CR Studios in Cleveland.

Cleveland's own get national buzz

Meet three who live here and are making it in the fashion world

Common wisdom says that to succeed in the fashion world, you must live in a vast metropolis such as New York, Los Angeles or London. | Poppycock, answer Russell Trusso, Shelly Marks and Valerie Mayen. | These local folks — a fine jewelry designer, a model and a fashion designer, respectively — are creating national buzz for their work, right here in Northeast Ohio. | Bergdorf Goodman just hosted Trusso's work for a hugely successful trunk show at the iconic Manhattan store. Marks is one of the few remaining contestants on TV Land's post-35 modeling competition, "She's Got the Look." And Mayen just won a \$20,000 grant that further supports her design work — and thus City Mission, to which Mayen regularly donates a percentage of her profits. | "People are always somewhat fascinated that I'm from Cleveland, Ohio," says Trusso with a laugh. "And I always spent off about what a great place it is." | "There's a lot of talent here," agrees Marks. "You just have to know where to look for it." | Meet the buzz-makers, pages E4.



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BUZZ-MAKERS | FROM E1

A dose of reality TV for model/actress

KIM CROW
Style Editor

Shelly Marks definitely has the look.

The Chagrin Falls model is one of the contestants on TV Land's "She's Got the Look," an eight-episode modeling competition among models ages 35 and up.

All the standard reality-TV themes are here — the plotting, the back-stabbing and the general nastiness that erupt when strangers come together for a chance at prizes and the national spotlight.

The series was filmed earlier this year. With only two episodes to go, Marks is still in the running for the ultimate prize, a contract with Wilhelmina Models. The 40-year-old knows who the winner is, but she's as mum about that as she is upbeat about having an acting/model career in the Midwest.

"Keep it local is my message," says Marks cheerfully during a recent phone conversation. "That's why I wanted to be on the show ... I wanted to shine light and happiness on Cleveland, because this is a really great place to live and to work."

Marks has been modeling and acting in the region since she was 15, in everything from commercials to print advertising to fashion shoots and shows to promotional modeling. She's able to support herself and her family — a daughter, almost 14, and a son, 15 — through the steady jobs that come her way. "The work is there, especially if you're willing to travel," she says.

The statuesque brunette was working for Toyota in Dallas when she heard about ongoing tryouts for "She's Got the Look."

"There were two things we liked about Shelly," says Marco Bresaz, vice president of development and original programming for TV Land. "She has a dream and a passion, and she had the goods. She's a tremendous beauty, a little bit of a diamond in the rough ... The show is about transformation, and in Shelly, we really saw someone who was ready to go to the next level of her career."

Marks says she realized beforehand that reality TV can be as creatively edited as scripted programs, but it was still hard to watch herself on the show.

"I thought it would help my career, that this would be huge," she says now. "But now I know, maybe not so much! It was all so fake. ... so many things were taken out of context."

For instance: "It was hard to be around some of the other women, who were really mean to everyone, then be supernice when the cameras were turned on them. So people would see a shot of me, rolling my eyes and looking disgusted, when there was really nothing happening to justify my reaction — nothing that the TV audience was seeing, anyway!"

This is not an unusual reaction from reality-show contestants, says Bresaz.

"You probably hear that from 100 percent of the people who do reality," he says. "We can't show all the footage we shoot, and we have to make choices on what works best for the show. But people always feel like it's not really themselves that they're seeing. ... but I think Shelly comes across quite well."

Marks is sanguine about her experience. She made a few close friends on the set, fellow contestant Jamie and the show's stylist, among them. And she learned a lot about polishing her personal look when she's not in front of a camera.

"I'm a mom, so I always dress like a mom, very casual," she says. "Capri pants, baggy T-shirts ... I just don't have this lifestyle where I'm running around looking like a model all day."

Yet after several weeks' worth of access to fashion and beauty advice from professional stylists, Marks says she's made a few changes to her wardrobe.

"I am wearing things a little more form-fitting," she says. "I'm paying more attention to fit than I did. I didn't really think about looking sloppy, but I do now!"

America will know who wins the TV Land competition on Friday, July 31, but Marks has already moved on in her mind. She's now working on demos for her own show, one that focuses on several of her interests — traveling, cooking and hunting.

Bow hunting, to be specific.

"A lot of women will go on a hunting trip with their husbands or boyfriends, but they don't want to hunt all five days," she explains. "So we'll show them a local spa, or the sites to see near popular hunting places. We'd have a cooking segment using wild game. It could be so much fun."

And with Marks producing her own program, she wouldn't have to worry too much about editing, hmm?

"That's definitely a plus," she says with a laugh.

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PEGGY TURBETT | THE PLAIN DEALER

Shelly Marks of Chagrin Falls has enjoyed steady work as a model and actress throughout her career, but she just got a bump in her national airtime. The 40-year-old is among the few contestants still standing on TV Land's reality show, "She's Got the Look."