

BALTIC IMAGE ENHANCEMENT AWARD

Carmen Kass

Carmen Kass of Estonia is one of the world's most recognizable supermodels, but that has not been enough to hold her complete interest. The 30-year-old Kass plays competitive chess, and was elected president of the Estonian National Chess League in 2004. She ran a campaign to obtain the right to organize the 2008 Chess Olympics in Tallinn, but the honor was given to Dresden, Germany.



Kass has also been active in Estonian politics; in February 2004, she joined Estonia's ruling Res Publica Party and ran energetically but unsuccessfully to represent Estonia at the European Union. She is also a businesswoman, as part owner of her mother agency, Baltic Models.

As a child Kass first lived in the village of Sika, where her single mother worked on a farm and they lived in a cramped apartment. She grew up in the town of Paide, and at the age of fourteen was "discovered" in a Tallinn supermarket by an Italian modeling scout. The young Kass had already been modeling for Baltic Models. She had wanted to compete for the Miss Estonia title, but an offer to fly to Milan, Italy, to start a modeling career seemed like a more glamorous and lucrative option.

Kass officially moved to Paris at the age of 18. Soon after, she received exposure on the cover of magazines worldwide, such as *Vogue* (France) in 1997, *ELLE* (Australia), *Image* (UK), *Madame Figaro*, *Numéro France*, *Vogue* (France), and *Vogue* (US) in 1999.

The statuesque (5' 11") Kass is sometimes considered part of the "big model" movement which followed the popularity of waiflike models such as Kate Moss. In 1999, Kass modeled for top designers such as Marc Jacobs, Michael Kors, Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, Donna Karan, Dolce & Gabbana, Gucci, Prada, Versace, Fendi, Chanel, Chloe, Valentino, Louis Vuitton, and Givenchy.

In addition, Kass has posed in many advertisements for Calvin Klein, Chanel, Donna Karan, Givenchy, Fendi, Michael Kors, Versace, and also for General Motors. She is also recognized for her appearances in a The Gap denim advertising campaign. Kass was a spokesperson for Sephora, one of the world's leading cosmetics retailers, and the Christian Dior perfume, *J'adore*. She was awarded by *Vogue* as "Model of the Year" at the 2000 VH1/Vogue Fashion Awards. She has now signed to be Max Factor's newest spokesperson.