



THE ILLUSIONISTS

A critically acclaimed documentary about the globalization of beauty.

More than just a film, The Illusionists aims to build a movement, encouraging people to accept themselves for who they are and to “speak truth to media.”

contact

Elena Rossini

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mobile: +33 6 98 26 57 68 (France)

website: www.theillusionists.org





the film

OVERVIEW

Genre: Documentary

Writer, Producer & Director: Elena Rossini

Running time: 84 minutes (director's cut)

Narrator: Peter Coyote

51 minutes (edu cut)

Original Score by: STAL

Languages: English, French, Italian &

Production Company: KMI Srl

Japanese (with English subtitles)

Website: www.theillusionists.org

Foreign versions: subtitles for the film are

Distribution (Educational Market): Media

available in Spanish, French, and Italian

Education Foundation (51 minute cut)

Format: HD

Distribution (General Public): VHX

(84 minute cut)

the inspiration

ELENA ROSSINI

Writer, Producer, Director &
Editor – **THE ILLUSIONISTS**



www.theillusionists.org

I never imagined that one quote could change the course of my life. Back in March 2008, I came across an essay that started with these provocative words by Ambrose Bierce: *“To men a man is but a mind. Who cares what face he carries or what he wears? But a woman’s body is the woman.”*

The truth – and the profound injustice – of this sentence was on prominent display all around me. And it hit close to home: was that the reason why every woman in my life was insecure about her body? I was reminded of this beauty imperatives hundreds of times a day, whenever I saw a billboard ad, opened a magazine, or when I turned on TV. Everywhere, there seemed to be an obsession over female youth and beauty, and about a very specific body type that excluded 99% of the female population. And so I started asking myself: who profits from this?

That’s how **THE ILLUSIONISTS** was born. I began researching the topic, wrote a screenplay, and when TV networks turned down my pitch – fearful of reprisals from advertisers – I raised money for production online, through a crowdfunding campaign.

The title of the film comes from a line uttered by Howard Beale in the iconic film *Network* (1976), exhorting the audience of his TV show to realize that the media “deal in illusions” and lamenting that people are increasingly unable to tell what’s truly real, as they try to imitate the lives and images they see on TV. They, too, in turn become illusionists.

What differentiates this documentary from other films that discuss beauty and media representation is that **its focus is truly global**: I filmed interviews in eight countries across four continents, from the United States, to Europe, Lebanon, India and Japan. And, importantly, **THE ILLUSIONISTS** talks about how this epidemic of body dissatisfaction is affecting not only women, but also **men and children**. *Everyone* is a target.

My ultimate goal is that the release of the film will spark public discussions about the link between media messages and negative body image. I want to empower the audience with new knowledge and to give people a platform to “speak truth to media.”

the film

SYNOPSIS

“We’re losing bodies as fast as we’re losing languages” says prominent British psychotherapist Susie Orbach. “Just as English has become the lingua franca of the world, so the white, blondified, small-nosed, pert-breasted, long-legged body is coming to stand in for the great variety of human bodies that there are.”

From Harvard University to the halls of the Louvre Museum, passing by a cosmetic surgeon’s office in Beirut, to the heart of Tokyo’s Electric Town, **The Illusionists** explores how the body has become “the finest consumer object.”

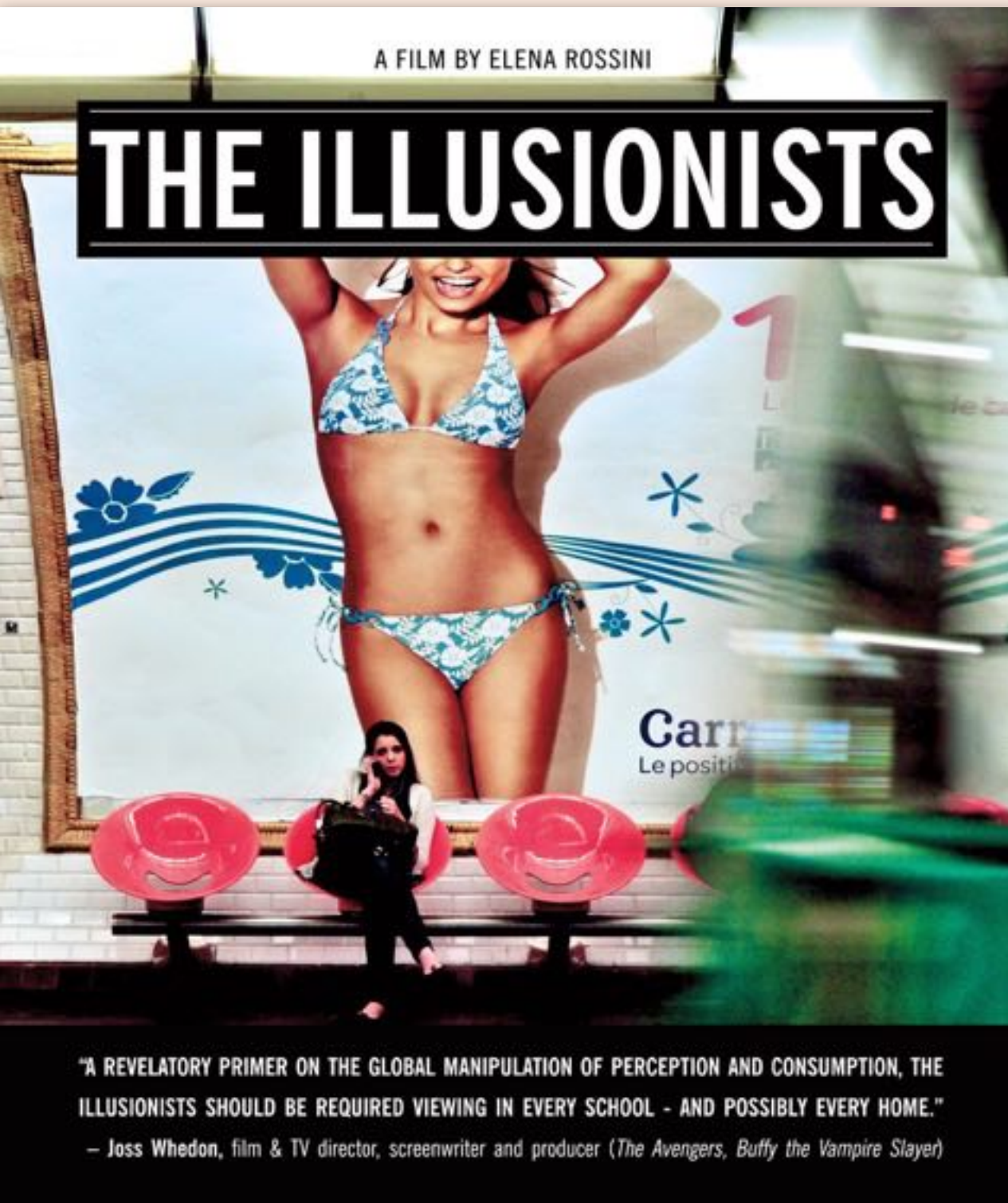
The preoccupation over physical beauty is as old as time; what is different today is the central role that the pursuit of the perfect body has taken: it has become our new religion. A beautiful body is seen today as key for personal and also, more importantly, economic success for both women and men. The fast-paced culture brought on by globalization and the new economy has created a new paradigm of self-making: individuals are increasingly pushed to re-invent themselves; the key anxiety of the 21st century is the fear of disposability.

From New York to Tokyo, relentless propaganda reminds us that we have only one body – and that we have to enhance it.

Through advertising and mass media, multibillion-dollar industries (most notably cosmetics, fashion, dieting, and cosmetic surgery) saturate our lives with images of idealized, unattainable beauty, of an “Official Body” that does not really exist in nature and that can be obtained only through cosmetic surgery... or digital retouching. Flawless beauty is on display everywhere: in street ads, newspapers, magazines, TV, films... as well as in video games and pornography. The very quantity of these images makes it impossible for people not to be affected by them. Indeed, the ideal consumer is someone who is anxious, depressed and constantly dissatisfied: academic studies from the most respected institutions show that sad people are bigger spenders.

The beauty industry is constantly expanding and has now found two new targets: men and children. A revolution is under way in the perception that these two groups have of themselves.

The Illusionists explores these themes through the testimonies of sociologists, politicians, magazine editors, scientists, artists and activists in North America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia.





praise for

THE ILLUSIONISTS

“ “ The genius of this piece is in its simplicity. A revelatory primer on the global manipulation of perception and consumption, *The Illusionists* should be required viewing in every school - and possibly every home.” ”

Joss Whedon

Film & TV director, screenwriter and producer
(*The Avengers*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*)



Matt McGorry ✓
@MattMcGorry

Fantastic film by @_elena "The Illusionists, a powerful documentary about the globalization of beauty" theillusionists.org/film/teaser/
[@illusionists](#)

Matt McGorry

Actor
(*Orange is the New Black*, *How to Get Away with Murder*)



Facebook HQ
Menlo Park, CA



praise for
THE ILLUSIONISTS

“ *The Illusionists* teases apart complex ideas about power, consumerism and beauty, and leaves the viewer feeling enlightened and ready to make change. A valuable contribution to media literacy and body image education, this is an inspiring documentary with a unique global perspective!

”

Claire Mysko

CEO at the *National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA)*



“ As someone who is very involved in the conversation around body image after screening the movie, I can honestly state that *The Illusionists* is a game changer in opening up the body image conversation up to a world wide audience.

”

Brian Cuban

Author of *Shattered Image: My Triumph
Over Body Dysmorphic Disorder*



ici di tutto il mon-
usionists”, il docu-
di Elena Rossini,
e che ha lasciato
lavorare a Parigi.
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e felici occorra un
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di donne dedic
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scarsa autostima». A
terviste raccolte dalla
America, Europa e As
intende aprire gli occhi su
de illusione mediatica che
di stampo occidentale la qu

illusion Liverani

mente snello e forever young. È
ale secondo i media, da Los
Bombay, a Tokyo. Come racconta
indipendente di Elena Rossini



Qui n'existe que dans la pensée.
Une existence idéale. Théorique. / Un



who's talking about us

PRESS, TV & RADIO

VOGUE

VOGUE ITALIA

“Impossibly thin and forever young. It's the ideal body according to mass media, from Los Angeles to Mumbai, to Tokyo. A look into the independent documentary by Elena Rossini.”



WBAL (NBC) Baltimore

“Film seeks to promote positive body image”

NEW YORK | nymag.com

NEW YORK MAGAZINE

“Picking up where Jean Kilbourne's 1979 film series, Killing Us Softly, left off, The Illusionists examines the ramifications of the globalization of Western beauty ideals and marketing strategies.”



KPCC Take Two

“The Illusionists: the documentary that explores the costs of beauty on a global scale”

For the full list of articles and TV appearances, see: www.theillusionists.org/press/

media

TEASER TRAILER



YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ak22UNcDa1k>

Embeddable code by VHX – copy & paste:

```
<div style="position: relative; height: 0; padding-bottom: 56.25%;"><iframe style="opacity: 1 !important; position: absolute; top: 0; left: 0; width: 100%; height: 100%;" src="https://embed.vhx.tv/packages/19263?title=0&sharing=0&color=d44325" width="1200" height="675" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen="allowfullscreen"></iframe></div>
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Previous screening partners have included:

Google



facebook

UN WOMEN
USNC L.A. Chapter



Berkeley
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA



PARSONS PARIS
THE NEW SCHOOL



Demand
Media

GOUCHER
— college —



PACE
UNIVERSITY

OCMA



TOWSON
UNIVERSITY



Saint-Jean de Passy



Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia

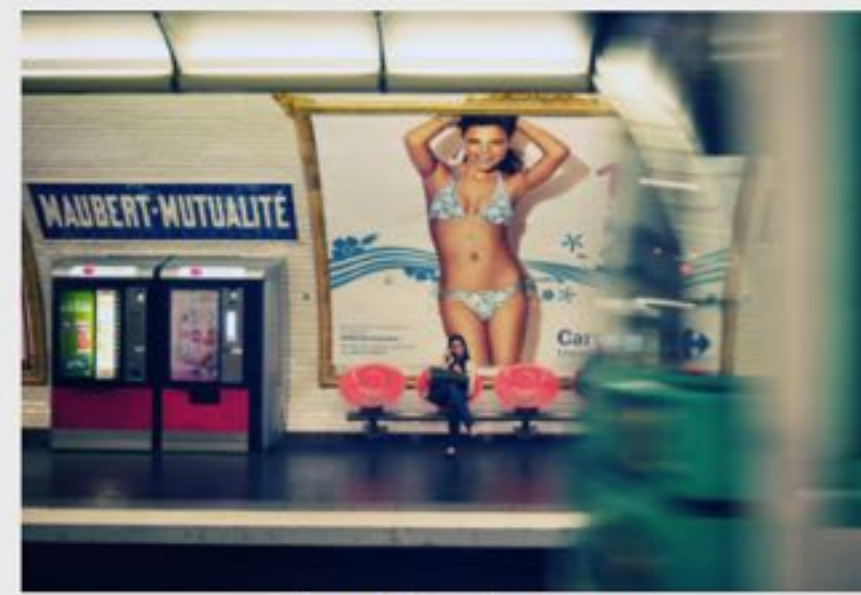


Jewish Community Services

media PHOTOS

High resolution promotional images
can be downloaded at this link:

<http://theillusionists.org/press/press-kit/>



Film still: Paris, France



Film still: Milan, Italy



Film still: Tokyo, Japan



Film still: Milan, Italy



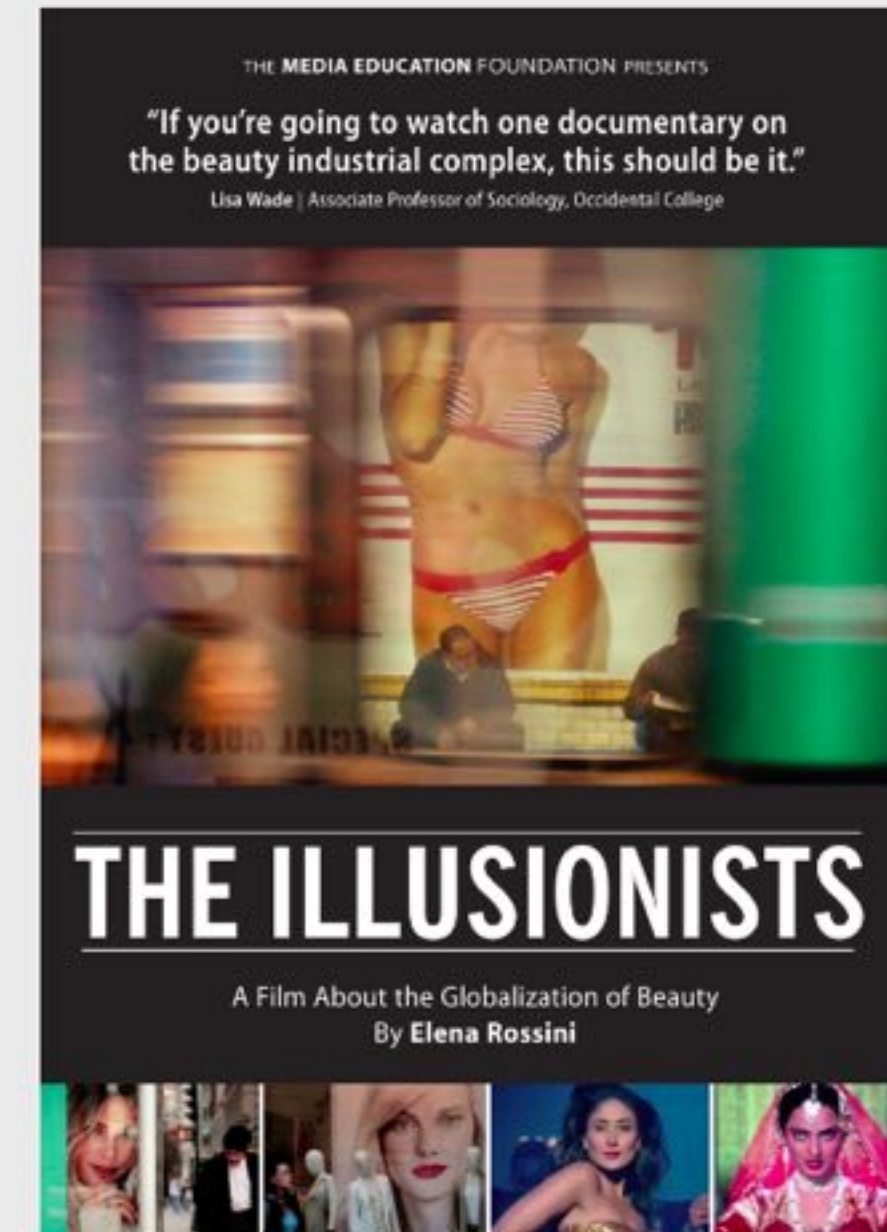
Promo card



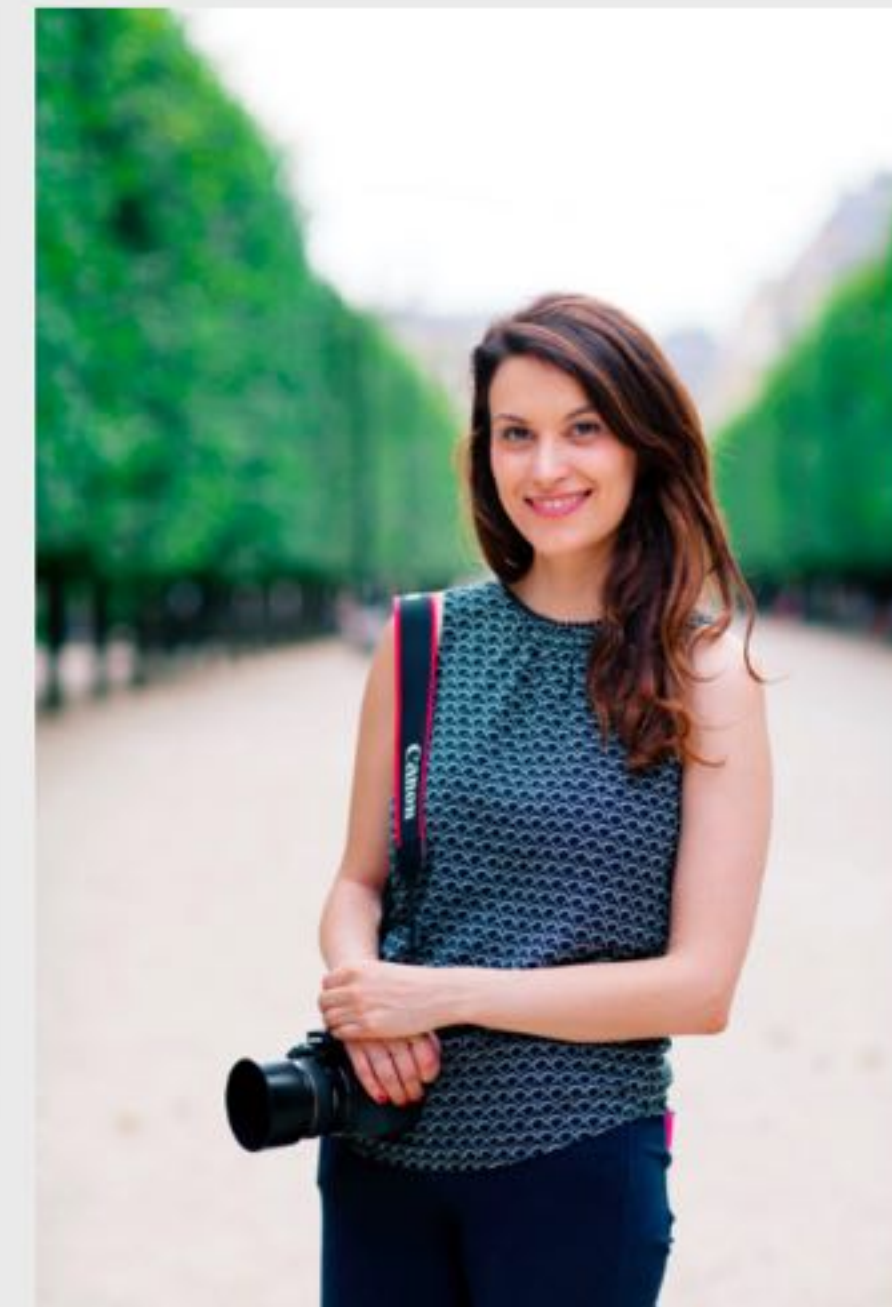
Promo card



Poster: The Illusionists (director's cut)



Poster: The Illusionists (educational version)



Headshot: director Elena Rossini

photo by: Sara Melotti

the team

ELENA ROSSINI

writer, producer, director, cinematographer,
editor for **The Illusionists**

Elena Rossini is an Italian filmmaker, photographer, multimedia producer and public speaker. Rossini's work focuses on issues of social justice, media representation, and the empowerment of women and girls. **The Illusionists** is Rossini's labor of love: it took her 8 years fund, produce, shoot and edit the film – which she made almost entirely on her own. Rossini is also the founder of **No Country for Young Women**, a multimedia platform whose aim is to provide positive role models for young girls. The site features over 120 interviews of women representing five continents, seven decades, and over two dozen professions – from NASA engineers, to illustrators, architects, filmmakers and entrepreneurs. In 2014, Rossini partnered with French engineer Elia Carsenat to create **Gender Gap Grader** – a platform empowering companies and organizations with innovative tools to measure the gender gap. Rossini is a recent laureate of the **Young Leaders Program** by the Council for the United States and Italy.



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the team

SERENA SHAPERO

The Illusionists Development and Outreach Director

Serena Shapero is a Baltimore based health educator, writer, radio show personality, and musician. She oversees **ifiknew.org**, a health initiative for young adults through **Jewish Community Services** that uses a multimedia approach, including social media and in person programs, to address the contemporary issues that impact the well-being, self-image, careers, and relationships of people in their 20's and 30's. Her work focuses on finding ways for young adults to feel seen, valued, and heard. Serena works with an incredible team to create and implement prevention education programs on positive body image, HIV/AIDS awareness, substance abuse, cyber bullying, media literacy, and healthy relationships for the greater Baltimore community. Recently, Serena collaborated with Elena Rossini to bring the critically acclaimed documentary film, **The Illusionists**, to Baltimore and Southern California.





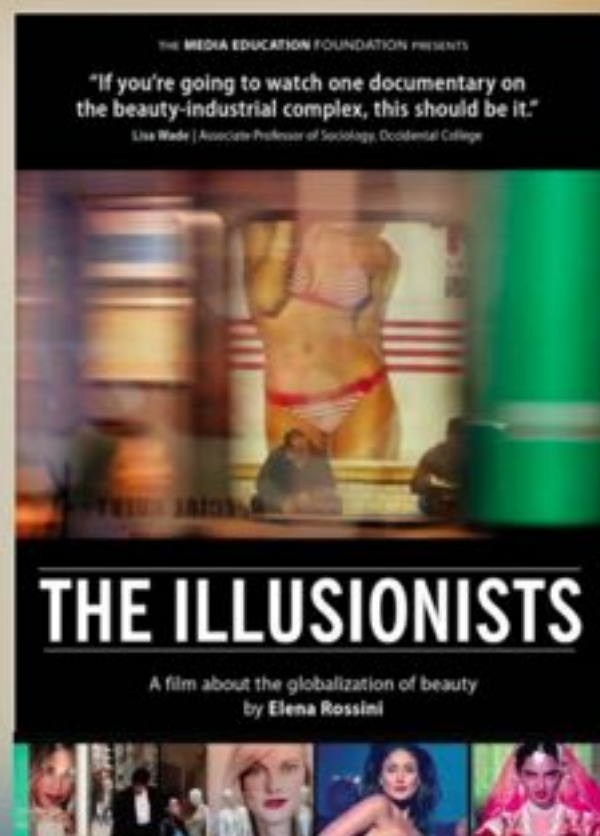
Sex sells. What sells even more? Insecurity. Multi-billion dollar industries saturate our lives with images of unattainable beauty, exporting body hatred from New York to Beirut to Tokyo. Their target? Women, and increasingly men and children. *The Illusionists* turns the mirror on media, exposing the absurd, sometimes humorous, and shocking images that seek to enslave us.

The Illusionists is a documentary about the marketing of unattainable beauty around the world.

Enter your email address to be notified about upcoming releases, screenings & talks:

your email address here

SIGN ME UP



ORDER THE FILM FOR YOUR SCHOOL, LIBRARY OR NON-PROFIT

Worldwide educational release:

The Illusionists is distributed by the Media Education Foundation. You can purchase the film for your library, classroom or for streaming here:

BUY THE FILM

LINKS & CONTACT INFO

Website: www.theillusionists.org

Email: press@theillusionists.org

Twitter: [@illusionists](https://twitter.com/illusionists)

Facebook: fb.me/theillusionists.org

Instagram: [illusionistsfilm](https://www.instagram.com/illusionistsfilm)