

FEBRUARY



“I’m really optimistic about this year—I’ve got a very good feeling for 2017”

-MEGAN GALE

Sportmax flax linen and cotton coat, \$2,100; 02-8084 9113

HUGH STEWART

A full-page photograph of Megan Gale standing in a field of tall grass and large green plants. She is wearing a long, flowing, floral-patterned dress with a deep V-neckline. The background shows a stone building and trees under a clear sky. The text 'a new DAY' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

a new DAY

IN HER MOST HONEST INTERVIEW YET, MEGAN GALE SHARES THE HIGHS AND HEARTBREAKING LOWS OF THE LAST YEAR. BUT ONE THING'S FOR SURE: SHE'S STRONGER THAN EVER AND READY TO TAKE ON 2017

by EMILY TAYLOR photographed by HUGH STEWART styled by KATHERINE GREEN

Entertainment Weekly
May 11, 2017
ew.com



Christian Dior
silk-satin shirt, \$3,500;
02-9229 4600.
OPPOSITE: Chloé
silk-chiffon dress,
\$3,260; at
theoutnet.com



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hen we meet, Megan Gale is wearing simple jeans and a cotton top, her dark hair pulled into a messy ponytail. As far as I can tell, she's applied barely any make-up. Yet when she stands up to hug me

hello (yes, she's a hugger), I'm dwarfed by her one-point-eight metre frame—and it's clear in an instant why this woman has become one of Australia's most recognisable faces. She possesses a kind of natural beauty that is stop-and-stare striking, paired with a personality that's just as engaging. When I reference her outwardly glamorous occupation, she laughs. "I've been very, very lucky to still be kicking around at 41 in a career that has a notoriously short shelf life." But while luck may have played a part, so too has sheer hard graft. "The front half [of my career] was a bit of a struggle—I was a late bloomer," she recalls, "so it was great to get to a point where it kind of took off." Those versed in Gale's story will know that things "took off" when she landed a campaign for Italian communications giant Omnitel (now Vodafone) and became an overnight sensation in that country. She subsequently lived on and off in Italy for the next seven years, and speaks the language. "The whole experience in Italy was unforgettable and phenomenal and crazy, and really helped pave the way for things back home."

Home, now, is Melbourne, where Gale resides with her partner, Richmond AFL player, Shaun Hampson and their two-and-a-half-year-old son, River. Of Hampson, she says, "I'm very, very blessed that he's come into my life. He makes me laugh every day—and he keeps me grounded and balanced. We never fight because he's one of those people that is impossible to fight with, even if you wanted to." And as a father? "My god, he's incredible—I think he'd barely held a baby before he became a dad...but he's so great with our son and the best role model I could possibly imagine for River." Choosing not to engage a full-time nanny, the high-profile pair spend as much time as possible with their little boy. Gale explains, "It's a tough balance, like any working parent would agree...but what we try and make an absolute focus is that either myself or Shaun will be with him. So it's meant limiting when I can work and when I can't—which is a good sacrifice for me to make because I get to spend time with my son."

Time, though, is something that's been in short supply lately. In early 2016 Gale was offered a dream job as a judge on Foxtel's juggernaut, *Australia's Next Top Model*. She was thrilled to take on the permanent role after her successful guest judge spot in Season Nine, saying the decision "was a no-brainer—except for the fact that the show is shot in Sydney and I'm living in Melbourne, [and] I was still getting my head around the working mother/career/baby balance...but I really wanted to make it work and do the show."



Marni silk dress,
POA@marni.com
Louis Vuitton brass
and palladium
earrings, \$580,
1300 883 880



There have been a lot of times in my life when I've had to suck stuff up and get on with it, but this was by far the most challenging”





Zimmermann silk
dress, \$3,750;
zimmermannwear.com

Hair: Alan White using Oribe
Make-up: Peter Beard

Gale and Hampson had also been making family plans, and had decided to start trying for another baby. "It took us six months with River...so we thought, let's try around April and see what happens." Gale could not have been more surprised when she conceived immediately, and filmed Episode One of *Top Model* without even knowing the news herself. "I found out in May and I was so thrilled it had happened so quickly, and a little bit shocked. My body was [changing]...and I was hoping to hide it, but I felt very pregnant." And then Gale fell ill. "I had a cold, flu, I got laryngitis, I had a chest infection—it just got worse and worse. I was so bummed because I'd been so looking forward to doing this job and I loved working with Foxtel and loved the show... I wanted to be firing on all cylinders, and I was probably firing on half a cylinder." She explains, "I'm a bit of a nerd in that I just love to be professional and do the best job that I can. But I thought, 'It's worth it at the end of it because I'm going to have this baby.'"

After a reassuring six-week scan, Gale scheduled her next obstetric appointment to fall just before she jetted to Milan with the final four *Top Model* contestants to film the semi-final episode. But, she says, as the weeks progressed, something didn't feel right. "I can't put my finger on it—there was no physical change or a sign or symptom...[I wondered] if I was being overprotective and paranoid, or if something was wrong." She recalls feeling "nervous and horrible" on the morning of her next scan, but "I just wanted to go and see that bub was okay." She remembers, "I hopped up on the table and [my obstetrician] put the ultrasound on my tummy. He just kept moving it and not saying anything and I started to feel sick." After also completing an internal ultrasound, her specialist broke the news. "He was quiet, and then he just said, 'I'm so sorry, it's gone.'" Gale is brought to tears as she tells me her story, and it's clear just how deeply this loss has affected her. I want to cry, too, seeing her so openly distressed. She continues, "I just knew it. I couldn't look at Shaun—but he was with me, holding my hand." Gale admits she immediately wanted to blame herself, feeling that she'd "really dropped the ball [and] somehow played a part". She explains, "I was shocked, sad, [but] not surprised at the same time, because I knew."

What followed was a harrowing sequence of events: an in-hospital procedure in Melbourne, before a rushed trip to Sydney, and then the long journey to Milan. "Part of me wanted to contact production and say, 'Guys, I'm sorry but I need not just time to do this but I need to recover emotionally and physically, and I need to hold my son and be with my man. But I knew that if I told everyone, 'Hey, I've had a miscarriage', there was a risk of it getting out and spreading like wildfire, and I wasn't prepared to deal with everyone knowing." She continues, "I also knew very well how much these production days cost... and how much was riding on me being there with those girls—part of the crew had already gone to set up." So, rather than remaining home with her son ("All I wanted to do was stay with River, this healthy, beautiful baby to hold was so soothing and so therapeutic"), Gale packed her bag and "put on the game face". When I ask how she handled the trip to Italy, she considers: "I'm really proud of how I covered it—I don't feel I let anyone down in a

professional sense," which, it's obvious, is something that's incredibly important to her. "Because miscarriages are so common—[and] I'm very lucky as there are women who've had multiple and I don't know how you get through that—I know that there are a lot of women out there who've [also] had to just get up and go to work. And probably could tell people but don't want to because it's such a deeply personal thing."

I'm interested to find out why she's chosen to share her story now. She reflects: "Anything surrounding your conception as a woman, as a couple, is extremely intimate, and it needs to be handled delicately...I feel absolutely passionate about it—especially now with what we've gone through—because I'd always get asked 'When are you going to have a baby?' And when I'd had River, 'When are you going to have another baby?' I lose count how many times a week—whether it's in an interview, whether it's friends, family, someone at the supermarket I don't know...it happens [to women] everywhere. It's such a personal question, and what makes it that much harder to answer is when you've been through some kind of hurdle with conception." She continues, "I think within 48 hours of having the miscarriage I had been asked [about pregnancy] three times. [When] you've literally just lost a baby—how do you answer that question?"

Gale goes on to describe a "horrible" incident in which a gossip magazine published an article wondering if she was pregnant. "There was a shot of me laughing with my hand on my stomach...and that was so hard to read, knowing that I had been, and I'd lost it." She says, "I never, ever have, and I never will, ask someone about their pregnancy or conception plans because it's so private and so personal. By sharing my story, I hope people might think twice about asking someone something that they might find really hard to answer. And as hard as it is for me to share such a personal story, I feel like by doing so I might be able to help people relate...[and] reconsider if it's maybe the right thing, to ask someone that question."

Six months on, Gale has slowly recovered from the anguish of the year's events and has "made peace". She describes herself as someone who's always been healthy and vibrant, and feels she "totally lost that balance" in 2016. The takeaway? "To put my health first—not just physical health, but emotional and mental health." She continues, "We don't have a deep sense of urgency to have more kids—as nice as it would be, we're so blessed with River. My priority is to get myself healthy and feeling great again...I have to trust that if it's meant to be it'll be, and if it's not, it won't." Gale is reflective: "I've been so grateful for many things over the last few years but it's also been hard—we lost Shaun's dad to cancer, we lost my dad to cancer. [We were] trying to juggle being new parents and sleepless nights and careers and then this happening—it's been a bit of a rollercoaster." She smiles, though, when speaking of Hampson. "We've been through a lot together and it's strengthened us as a couple. I think those things can really make or break you and it's absolutely made us. I don't know what I would do without him. And having River there is just a joy—that constant light when things aren't so great." As I say goodbye to her, again with a hearty hug, Gale flashes me that megawatt smile and says, "I feel like 2017 is going to be great!" And that's exactly what I wish for her. ■