THE GENERATION SHOW

[*Audio*] *Welcome to The Generation Show. Contestant N.o. 1: What do you think defines feminine beauty?*

[*lights on Libby and Stephanie on Station 2*]

Stephanie: For more than 200 years, feminists have been criticising the way that artificial images of feminine beauty are held up as the ideal to which women should aspire. From Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792, to Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* in 1949.

Libby: Yet far from fading away, they have become narrower and more powerful than ever.

Stephanie: What's more, throughout much of our society, the image of female perfection to which women are encouraged to aspire has become more and more defined by sexual allure.

Libby: Of course wanting to be sexually attractive has always and will always be a natural desire for both men and women, but in this generation a certain view of female sexuality has become celebrated throughout advertisements, music, television programmes, films and magazines.

Stephanie: It is modern feminism that created this rhetoric that foregrounds self-expression. Feminists encouraged women to cease seeing the good woman's life as defined through service to others, as it had been throughout the nineteenth century, and instead encouraged them to focus on their own desires and independence.

Libby: But that focus on independence and self-expression is now sold back to young women as the narrowest kind of consumerism and self-objectification.

[*lights off Libby and Stephanie on Station 2*]

[*Audio*] *Spiffing pins ladies. Contestant N.o. 2: Do you think young girls are simply products*

*of consumerism?*

[*lights on Kirsty and Lizzy at chair station*]

**Lizzy:** Well hey there! It often seems now that the dolls are escaping from the toy shop and taking over girls’ lives. Not only are little girls expected to play with dolls, they are expected to model themselves on their favourite playthings.

**Kirsty:** Like a Barbie doll mama?

**Lizzy:** Yes hunny bee! The glittering pink aesthetic now extends to almost every aspect of a girl’s life. She can trip off to school with Barbies or Bratz on everything from her panties to her hair clips to her schoolbag…

**Kirsty:** And come home to look at her reflection in the mirror of a Disney princess dressing table!

**Lizzy:** Yes, baby! Living a doll’s life seems to have become an aspiration for many young women, as they leave childhood behind only to embark on a project of grooming, dieting and shopping that aims to achieve the bleached, waxed, tinted look of a Bratz or Barbie doll. The celebrities they read about in fashion magazines are often women who are well known to have chosen extreme regimes, from punishing diets to plastic surgery, to achieve an airbrushed perfection. The fusion of the woman and the doll at times becomes almost surreal!

[*lights off Kirsty and Lizzy at chair station*]

[*Audio*] *Isn’t she a little doll. Contestant N.o. 3: Are consumerists to blame for the way that*

*young girls view themselves in terms of sexuality?*

[*lights on Jess. J and Jade at costume station*]

**Jess:** When you wander into a toy shop and find new, altogether more slutty and sultry ideal pouting up at you from a thousand figures, you realize that there has been a genuine change in the culture aimed at young girls.

**Jade:** While girls have always been encouraged to see self-decoration as a central part of their lives, today they are also exposed to a deluge of messages, even at an early [reem] age, about the importance of becoming sexually attractive.

**Jess:** These dolls are just a fragment [*nudges Jade, who is looking at jess confused, doll like face expression*]

**Jade:** … of a much wider culture in which young women are encouraged to see their sexual allure…

**Jess & Jade:** … as their primary passport to success.

[*Audio*] *They really have been tangoed. Thank you for watching The Generation Show.*