



THE TRANSOM

Elettra Wiedemann Will Save the Children of Burundi With T-Shirts

BY MEREDITH BRYAN | AUGUST 25, 2008 | TAGS: STYLE ELETTRA WIEDEMANN ISABELLA ROSSELLINI JAMES MARSHALL

Last week, on a bench outside the Bonsignor coffee shop on Jane Street, near where she lives ("that way, on the water," she said, motioning west), **Elettra Wiedemann**—soon-to-be biomedicine graduate student, international Lancôme spokesmodel and daughter of famed Lancôme model **Isabella Rossellini**—was describing her latest project, a charity website called JustOneFrickinDay.com.

"Originally we thought 'JustOneDay,'" she explained. "We wanted it to be inspirational but we didn't want it to be—we wanted to give it a little bit of *funk*, you know? So we put in the *frickin* because it made people realize that it was very minimal, actually, and that if you pull together you can actually get a lot of stuff done."

The website calculates a person's daily salary, post-tax, and encourages them to give that amount to The Burundi Solar Project, which is raising \$450,000 to install solar panels on a hospital in Burundi.

"We figured out that for somebody who makes \$30,000 a year, you make about \$82 a day," she said brightly, adding that if that sum seemed steep, one could also buy a T-shirt designed by one of her designer friends (she handed one to the Daily Transom one by **Chris Benz** featuring canoodling African flamingos), which go on sale today for \$60 each. Ms. Wiedemann will fete the T-shirts at a September 6 party at the Morgan Hotel; today, she [blogged about them](#) on the Huffington Post.



Getty Images.

Elettra Wiedemann.

"It's the first of a series of [solar] projects taking place throughout Africa," she explained, adding that her website will also take on a variety of other fundraising initiatives. "So it's Burundi, then Lesotho..." She pronounced it correctly, *Le-SOO-Too*.

Ms. Wiedemann, who is 25, wore a cream-colored v-neck t-shirt designed by **Giambattista Valli**, one of the designer friends she'd solicited, with a studded vintage belt, jean shorts, and no apparent makeup. When she lowered large black sunglasses over her eyes, a wisp of unwashed hair fell in her face, exposing her international supermodel status to passerby.

She estimated that she herself has already given far in excess of a day's salary: "**James [Marshall]**, her British boyfriend] and I are the ones who funded all of the t-shirts, all of the silk screening, all of that, and we're not getting any of that money back. So that was *our* contribution to the whole effort, was"-her voice lowered to a whisper- "*several* thousand dollars."

Ms. Wiedemann has always been interested in environmental issues. "I was raised kind of at a conservation center down in Florida," she explained. "With endangered species and animals and a lot of zoologists, and so a lot of my youth memories are at this place and kind of playing with baby gazelles and baby cheetahs." Her mother's best friend, she explained, was the late philanthropist and paper entrepreneur **Howard Gilman**, who had a plantation near Jacksonville dedicated to wildlife conservation. Ms. Rossellini and her daughter used to retire there on weekends. During the week, Ms. Wiedemann lived with her father, Ms. Rossellini's ex **Jonathan Wiedemann**, on Perry Street.

Ms. Wiedemann's current boyfriend, Mr. Marshall, whose bio on JustOneFrickinDay.com reveals him to be former captain of the Eton Excelsior Rowing Club, now lives across the street from where Ms. Wiedemann grew up on Perry Street. "I met him at a party in London, at a big event about a year and a half ago," she recalled. "And he was moving to New York and I was like, 'Oh, well give me a buzz,' and he *didn't*, which was a total bummer. And then I actually took the wrong subway one day, which I never do... and the doors opened and James was standing right in the door. I think we went out for drinks later that week, and we've been together almost a year."

Ms. Wiedemann doesn't have big plans for Fashion Week. She says she doesn't run with that crowd anyway, but with "college students I went to school with" at the New School, from which she recently graduated. She'll soon take a trip to Paris for Lancôme (the company pays to offset all her carbon emissions), complete another modeling gig in Sweden, and then start her biomedicine masters' program at the London School of Economics. "I applied thinking I would never get in, but I got in, so I was like 'Dammit, now I have to go! So now I'm going.'"

"Maybe one day when this whole modeling fantasy world ends I'll go work for the U.S. government and work on, like, agricultural reform and making farms more sustainable," she mused.

In the meantime, her personal eco-practices include trying not to buy many clothes. "I just read this amazing book by Barbara Kingsolver called *Animal Vegetable Miracle*," she added. "And it kind of opened my eyes to how horrible I've been with my food habits." She tries not to preach to industry friends because eco-issues might make her sound like a bit of a Debbie Downer. She's just hoping everyone comes around *in time*.

Ms. Rossellini, for one, is already a convert. "She does her green pornos," said Ms. Wiedemann breezily. "You haven't seen these? You can look them up online. They're for the Sundance Channel, it's not like she's in *porn* or anything... My mom dresses up as a bug, fly, spider, grasshopper—it sounds so weird!—praying mantis, and explains how bugs have sex. Because didn't you always wonder? I mean, I did, kind of."