A clever and wilful child who was difficult to control, she knew her own mind and where she was going. At 17, on the pretext of visiting a friend in New York, she flew to Paris to reinvent herself as a model named L'Wren Scott. "I spoke not a word of French but I wanted to live in the hotel where Jim Morrison lived and died," she recalled.

After making her first catwalk appearance for Chanel, she became one of the most successful models in Paris. She served as muse to the designer Thierry Mugler, who put her in 8in platform shoes. In Britain, she was chosen as the leg of the hosiery company Pretty Polly, starring in a £4m advertising campaign directed by David Bailey.

In London she met Andrew Ladsky, a millionaire property developer whose mother was a member of the Boucheron jewellery family. They lived together in Hampstead for three years but their relationship culminated in a court battle over a floor-length sheepskin coat and two paintings.