

NICOLE PALOMA

ORIGINAL HAND-SEWN DESIGNS

Photos & Article
by Ryan Turk

MEETING
NICOLE
PALOMA
IS LIKE
SEEING
THE
OCEAN
FOR THE
FIRST
TIME.



YOU SENSE SOMETHING SHIFTING INSIDE YOU.

The tectonic plates, the underpinnings of your reality, vibrate. Nearly imperceptible at first, but the tension between what is and what will be rises as you draw near.

A hum in the air—the scent of power, beauty, and depth—excites your skin. Instinct knows you are about to encounter something remarkable, unforgettable.

You think you know what to expect, but your breath quickens, pupils dilate, and your heart races when you see her. More, more...so much more than you expected.

Your brain spins, trying to absorb what words cannot describe—a feeling. An energy. You're struck speechless by the mesmerizing display of color and sound, and the enchanting scent of her fragrance. Enthralled by the realization that the world is bigger, more vibrant, and connected, you open your heart to let her inside, remembering that she was always there—that part of you that you had forgotten.

Like the ocean, Nicole awakens an ancient, long-buried part of your soul.





UNENCUMBERED SPIRIT

Most of us, like gladiators trained by a lanista, have been broken into obedience by the unrelenting hand of Global Capitalism. Our actions define us because they reflect economic value. We are what we do. I am a "lawyer, Realtor, venture capitalist, accountant, mother, etc." We exist from the outside in. But, like the ocean, Nicole Paloma does what she is. She lives from the inside out. This is nothing short of heroic because authenticity requires a measure of vulnerability, honesty, and reverence for the original self, "me" without the modifications added to our identity, attached to the idea of who we are like freak appendages.

The audacity, courage, and discipline demanded by an authentic lifestyle are far too arduous for the masses. Comfort and compliance are far easier to manage, so the juxtaposition between those of us who live "outside-in" and those, like Nicole, who live "inside-out," creates the magnetism that draws us together.

Whoosh! Meet Nicole!

You experience a wave of unbounded enthusiasm, a smattering of irreverence, and a generous portion of unrefined joy in her orb. Her smile is contagious. Her laugh is infectious—you'd know it anywhere—and her presence is glamorous but casual, fun, and capable of being at home anywhere. A real dynamo that you instantly bond with and feel as though you've known forever. Put her in LA; she is a celebrity without the relentless pandering for approval.

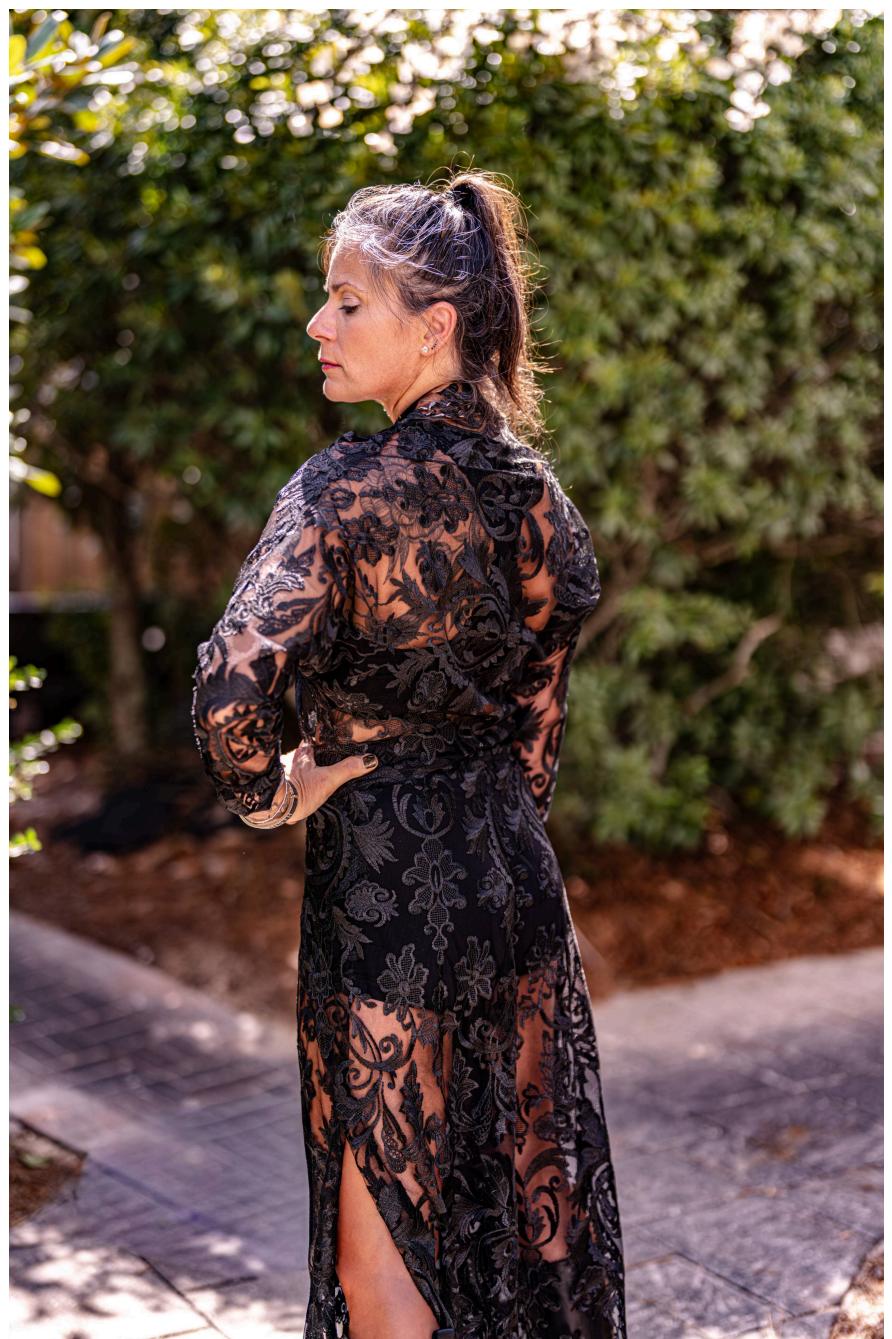
ON 30-A, SHE IS A MEMBER OF THE TRIBE OF LOCALS WHO ARE THE HEARTBEAT OF THE VIBE THAT DRAWS TOURISTS WORLDWIDE.

A single mom who is entirely devoted to her children and an avid enthusiast for the abundance of nature found here, she typifies what it means to be a local. She is immersed in the area's beauty, power, and splendor, whether it's a state park or the silky sands of the beach.

How did this majestic being come into existence? Who was the seedlings' gardener? Of course, her mother.

Without the molestation of interference or convention, her mother was content to allow Nicole's innate unfolding to occur. A hippy flight attendant who understood that life exists in the wings of flight, she provided a safe haven for exploration and discovery without judgment or condemnation, allowing the artist within to fly.

"I remember sitting in my closet, cutting up my clothes, and hand-sewing them back together. I didn't get into trouble. I never got into trouble for that sort of stuff, which is one reason I'm able to have an idea and just go for it without any kind of fear of failure."



CREATIVE RESILIENCE & IMPROVISATION

The arc of a heroine is littered with mistakes, unforeseen obstacles, ridicule, doubt—both from herself and others—and an undying devotion to her mission. For an artist, this is daily life—the abrasive rub between submission and defiance, conformity and rebellion, and expression and silence. The rub is the grind that kills art. For Nicole, the grind is the engine that propels her forward. Harder, tougher, meaner...all fuel for her fire.

Creative Resilience is the inner strength that allows Nicole to bounce back from setbacks, adapt to change, and continue moving forward. It's not something one is born with but develops. The hard way. One must lean into the psychic trauma that is the birth of a new creation and endure its lashes. The reward is a new layer of scar tissue and a soul revolution. What Nicole nonchalantly refers to as data.

Creative Resilience is but a part of the verve that propels her forward. Improvisation is its sister companion. Precisely when resistance, in a fevered pitch of desperation, strikes hard with the whip of doubt, ripping at the skin of artistic expression, improvisation manifests itself. It is the uncommon thread that makes her work unique. It is the left turn when convention insists on turning right. It is a splash of color, a bold pattern, a blush of embellishment that saves something from the trash bin and turns it into a hit. It is the work of the Divine.



INTENTIONAL LIVING & VALUES DRIVEN WORK



Intentional Living, at least how Nicole applies it, is not the mainstream notion attributed to a lifestyle approach centered around making conscious, deliberate choices that reflect one's values and priorities. This works great if who you "think" you are aligns with who you "actually" are, but what if your understanding of yourself is...off? In this instance, adhering to one's intentions may lead one far down the path of misery, conflict, and joylessness.

To understand Nicole's theory of intentional living, consider the difference between a "Free Spirit" and an "Unencumbered Spirit". A free spirit is typically associated with nonconformity, creativity, and a refusal to be constrained by social norms. There is a strong emotional undertone of restlessness, searching, and resisting structure. The Free Spirit's path leaves collateral damage in her wake—"I am who I am, so deal with it." This is not Nicole. Not anymore.

An Unencumbered Spirit finds equilibrium in internal freedom, not from external restraints but from surrendering emotional baggage, fear, and ego. She's done the inner work, released attachments, and lives from a place of equanimity and surrender. Her beacon is clarity and lightness. This is not to say that her frantic pace doesn't leave a cloud of fabric dust in its footsteps, but that the source of her intention does not center in her mind or body but in a God Consciousness.

Nicole's core values for her business are identical to those of her life: vulnerability, honesty, and presence. You won't find these on the wall of a Fortune 500 company, but they make sense for her boutique fashion business.

Stepping out into the world wearing an outfit that says, "I am beautiful" takes courage, self-knowledge, and acceptance—the prerequisites for vulnerability, honesty, and presence. It is a quantum leap from "feeling" or "looking" beautiful. It is an outward manifestation of an inner beauty.



Nicole's clothes are not designed to mask imperfection but to reveal a woman's soul, which is the divine utterance of love itself. Fabric choices, how pieces are cut and sewn, the way they hang and drape are merely the backdrop for a moment of apotheosis—when form, movement, and meaning converge into perfection.

It's a high standard--difficult to achieve, and not for the faint of heart--which is why Nicole's standard is iconic of her brand. As a standard, it's great for art but challenging for a small business in a tourism-dominated market saturated by cookie-cutter products and services. "Perfect for the beach, but I can't wear this in LA or New York." For Nicole, this is unacceptable. Why work so hard to create clothes that reveal a woman's inner beauty if they can't wear them everywhere?

For the fashion designer, creating clothes that work on 30-A and Fifth Avenue create design criterion that constrain the creative process. For the small business owner, it expands the functional requirements for a product line and limits product offerings. This tension demands uniqueness, hand craftsmanship, and bespoke, personal service.

Nicole's devotion to personally serving her clients, a source of immense gratification and personal connection, constrains growth. Expansion takes her out of the dressing room with the client, which is a bridge too far at present. She knows what feeds her soul and is faithful to it--personally interacting with her clients.

"If somebody comes in and falls in love with my brand, if they fall in love with the idea that it stands for vulnerability and honesty, and I'm speaking to their soul—I want them to walk out with something that projects their inner beauty into the world."



IDENTITY & SELF-DISCOVERY

The ocean is a perpetual motion machine. Its surface—tides, waves, and currents—is a churning cauldron of energy, but its depths are calm, anchored, and steady. For Nicole, discovering this truth about herself charted the path for her business: to be dynamic and fast-paced but grounded in self-awareness and emotional stability—movement as direction, not chaos.

Regeneration is possible because the ocean moves, creating space and energy. The ebb and flow of Nicole's journey, born of reflection, rest, learning, and reinvention, mimics the natural world, which Nicole recognizes as an extension of herself and her business. Everything connects and exists now, in this moment. The health of the material and immaterial rises and falls as one entity. Humans are not separate from or a part of one creation—a magical ecosystem we call life.

For Nicole, spirit is the essence of life, more fundamental than breath or a heartbeat. Breath and heartbeat are expressions of life, not its source. Spirit gives life and the freedom to define its meaning and purpose. It provides for self-awareness, love, and creativity. It is the joy of living.

Self-understanding and identity require a less-is-more mentality. It's not about addition but subtraction. The goal is not to become more by adding layers but to apply a process of reduction until the only things left are those things that are essential. Anything less, and "you" are no longer "you." Anything more is clutter/baggage. All forms of creative expression—Art, Interior Design, Fashion, Writing, etc.—adhere to this rule. And, what is life if not creative expression?

"I was being bad, so my mom sent me to Outward Bound for a month in Maine. It worked. I found a spiritual connection. It is probably one of the most important things in my life."



"If there is one thing that I'm most passionate and interested in, it's spirituality, growth, and consciousness. That's why I put inspirational quotes on t-shirts!"

Carved into stone at the entrance of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, a sacred site for prophecy and wisdom, was "Know Thyself". This requires self-discovery and a devotion to unfaltering honesty. The keystones for this process are knowing your ignorance, questioning your assumptions (beliefs, desires, values, and motives), and pursuing truth not outside of you but within you.

Do this and you will not be defined by status, wealth, or public opinion, but by your internal compass. And, you will know Nicole in a way that only a fellow Argonaut can.



"Making my business workplace be really grounded and rooted in self-understanding and growth—really promoting healthy living—is really important."



"The way I design clothes is how I want to feel about going through my day. Like, when I have a skirt on, I feel vulnerable, and when I have pants and combat boots on, I feel like I can conquer anything. Well, put the boots with the skirt, make them pink, and it's like "Damn!" A powerhouse situation."

**ARTICLE & PHOTOGRAPHY
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