

'Your home has to be an expression of love. My home is my sanctuary'
- NATASHA

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW AND PHOTOS

TASTEMAKER AND PUBLIC RELATIONS STAR
NATASHA KOIFMAN
TALKS LOVE AND LIFE LESSONS AT THE STUNNING TORONTO HOME SHE SHARES WITH HUSBAND ERIC HENDRIKX

Even a native Torontonian would be enchanted – and surprised – turning on to Natasha Koifman's private cul de sac in uptown Toronto. She describes the feeling of its discovery as "a sense of arrival." It's here, on this hidden cobblestoned laneway, that you'll find her secluded 3,000-plus-square-foot, four-bedroom home, which is enveloped with vines, surrounded by trees and trimmed with black – a signature shade for the glamorous founder and president of the NKPR public relations agency.

In 2009, the mother of one (her adult son, Justin, is a lawyer) moved into the space on her own. She had found her sanctuary. Today, it's an oasis for two, since she met – and recently married – Eric Hendrikk, a journalist from California who writes celebrity features for titles like *Men's Journal* and *Rolling Stone*. He also serves as NKPR's creative director.

It's been a whirlwind romance for the pair, who met on Raya (an exclusive dating app) in late 2019. Newport Beach dweller Eric happened to be in Toronto when the pandemic hit in early 2020 – so they decided to move in together. "Our only challenge was geography, but when we ended up on the same side of the border, it's like the universe worked that problem out for us," says Eric. "We've not spent one day apart since," adds Natasha fondly.

This June, after 16 months in lockdown, they married, in an intimate ceremony at their home – the very place their relationship blossomed.

A benchmark year by anyone's measure, but Natasha is a woman who thrives on change, growth and a busy schedule. Naturally, other projects are afoot – including the development of a 47-storey high-rise condo, inspired by her singular style and named after her: Natasha ▶



What a ride! The glamorous NKPR founder, in a glittering Zuhair Murad gown, and her creative director husband, who wed in June after a whirlwind romance, pose with his sleek Triumph Rocket 3 GT.

'As soon as you step into this house, there's a calm energy'

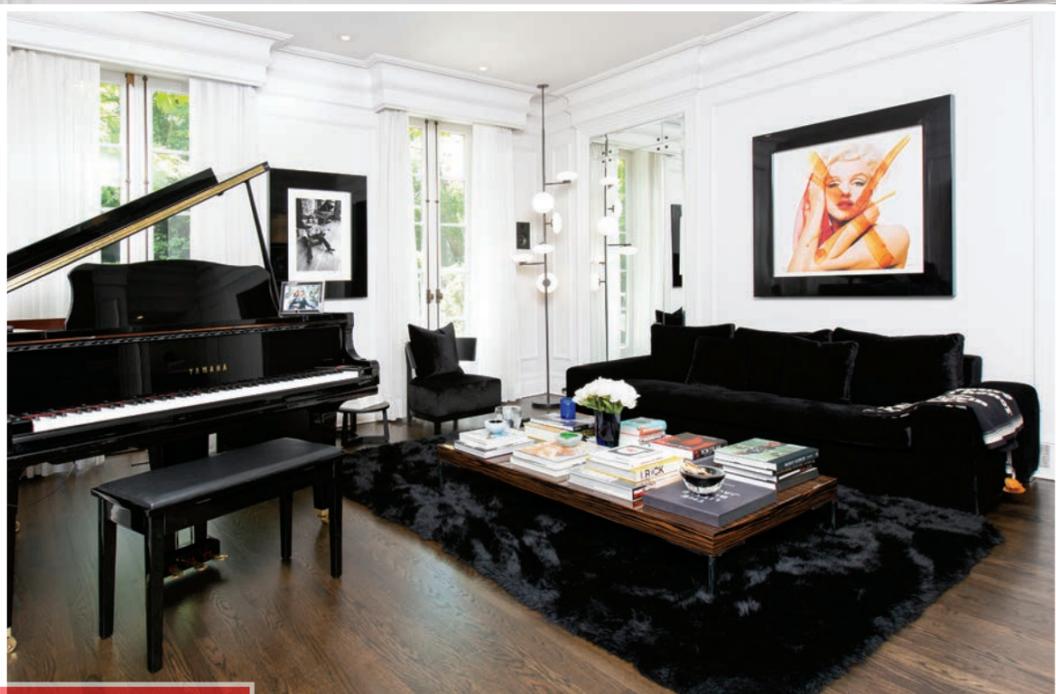
the Residences.

And with September came the Toronto International Film Festival – the annual extravaganza that's high season for PR movers and shakers. "I love the energy that takes over Toronto during TIFF. It's palpable," says Natasha, who also embraces another passion project around this time. For years, and with celebrity support during the festival's run, she has hosted her annual Artists for Peace and Justice gala, which raises funds to support communities in Haiti by providing better education.

Natasha and Eric recently welcomed *Hello! Canada* into the spectacular home they share to chat about their love connection.

It's a pleasure to sit down with you both! Natasha, tell us a bit about finding this home, which, until you began sharing your life with Eric, was a space you envisioned for yourself ... It was the summer of 2009, I think. The house was very different. You could tell it was a man's house – it was very dark. But I realized it just needed a bit of TLC! I fell in love with it right away, moved in and started renovations almost immediately. I modernized it.

What do you love about it now? For me, it's less to do with things; instead it comes down to energy – as soon as you step into this house, there's a calm energy. This may sound cheesy, but your ►



Left: Like many homeowners, Natasha and Eric gave the place a bit of a refresh during the pandemic. The two redecorated the living room, adding this king-size coffee table, Bert Stern portrait of Marilyn Monroe and grand piano, which Eric, who plays, purchased from a local music school that shuttered over lockdown. Top: A portrait of style star Victoria Beckham by photographer Ellen von Unwerth spices up the décor.

'I like when you walk in and the first thing you see is the word "gratitude,"' says Natasha of the art (far right) in her foyer by artist Peter Tunney (who brings some 'attitude' to the word with an extra 't'). 'It grounds you in what's real. It's also tattooed – "gratitude" – on my wrist. Words matter.' Peter is also the artist for her condo project, Natasha the Residences, due to open in 2026 (right, a rendering of the interior).





'We're very similar. We're balanced. We haven't had a single disagreement!'



Stretched across their charcoal French linen Bed Threads sheets (available at shopnk.ca), Natasha is clad in her favourite comfy James Perse loungewear, while Eric strums on his guitar. 'I love the bedroom,' says Natasha. 'It's where I recharge.' For the couple's low-key wedding (top right), which they held at home, Natasha pulled a 'beautiful, simple' Zuhair Murad gown from her closet.

home has to be an expression of love. My home is my sanctuary.

And now it's a home for two (or four, with your black labs, Kody and Poe). Tell us a bit about your courtship, how you met.

Eric: I had matched on the Raya app with Natasha – there was a picture of her with the TED Talk sign behind her. She was onstage giving a TED Talk! So I looked her up and watched it on YouTube. And I was just taken aback. I was like, we share so many parallels in life. I'm listening to her storytelling about

how she raised her son as a single mom, and her trials and tribulations. There was this piece about showing up for others, and how others come back later in life and can show back up for you. And so I wrote her a letter: "Hey, I watched your TED Talk. And I've just got to say it, there's some parallels that I can relate to and have tons of respect and admiration for." And she came back and was like, "What kind of parallels?"

Natasha: I remember saying yes to that TED Talk because I was terrified to do it, but the things that scare you are the things you need to do.

No sooner had you started dating than you were in lockdown together! Natasha, was it hard to transition from long-distance dating to living under the same roof? Well, you have nowhere to go and you're just together for like 365 days. But, honestly, it's been awesome. What I think we discovered is that we're very similar, even-tempered, just want to please and not confrontational. We're balanced. It's like we still haven't had a single disagreement and we've been together nonstop since that first lockdown. It's never been like this with a partner. It's just...just easy. I can't explain it. ▶

WEDDING PHOTO: RENATA KAVEH

'I grew up feeling like anything is possible with hard work and loving what you do' - NATASHA



The kitchen (far right) may gleam in white, but touches of black are common throughout much of the house. Even black labs Poe (left) and Kody co-ordinate with the design scheme! 'Eric fell in love with my dog, Kody, so we got a second, Poe, from the same breeder.'

Eric, tell us about the unusual date you set up for the two of you. After the first few weeks of quarantine, I realized I had not been in Natasha's closet. I know it's this beautiful space, filled with gorgeous things. And it's her most special room in the house. But there was really no purpose for me to be fishing around down there, especially because I'm not a fashion guy. But I had a curiosity, so I proposed a date night in her closet and made us cocktails. Natasha probably showed me a

hundred different items, telling me the story of the pieces she bought to collect and the ones she wore for different photoshoots or events. And now I can tell you all about Alexander McQueen and Tom Ford! It's stuff that we can do together and I can appreciate, and in a way it's magical.

Can you take us back to the day you proposed? We were in California at our house in Newport Beach. I had been waiting for

the right moment, and I just knew it should be when we woke up on Christmas morning [2020]. I got us a couple of cups of coffee and we were in bed staring at the ocean and it was just the two of us, which is how our life's been since we've known each other. I buried the ring in about 10,000 gummy bears... Luckily, she found it and said yes!

Natasha: Once restrictions lift, we'll have Eric's family and friends fly down and we'll throw a reception. I've actually already had two dresses made for it. We were in Paris earlier this year and had the best time. Andrew Gn created a beautiful dress, and Mikael D is also making one. But for the actual wedding day, I pulled from my closet, which was easy because I love everything in there. It was a beautiful, simple, cotton Zuhair Murad.

Speaking of fashion, black famously dominates your wardrobe and your esthetic. Why are you drawn to it? In my early 20s, I would buy colour and it would just sit in my closet. Or when I did wear it, I just didn't feel like myself. But when I wore black, I felt confident. Same with certain silhouettes. For instance, I'll never go into a pitch wearing a dress, I feel more powerful in a pantsuit. I felt good in black early on in my career, so I gave myself permission to just wear it all the time. It simplifies my life and it's what I'm known for. That said, black has depth, so when I'm collecting pieces I'm buying items with texture, finishes and of course interesting proportions.

I had a uniform, probably – especially because in the early days I worked with a lot of men, and my uniform was black turtlenecks and black Theory pants. That's all I wore, ▶





Staying true to her brand, Natasha's expansive closet is brimming with racks of designer treasures, all in black except a few well-chosen bags and shoes to add a rare pop of colour. 'I really love my dressing room.'

'There are no rules... It's what you love'
 - NATASHA ON HER DESIGN CHOICES



'Being an introvert, I really do value my time in the spaces I live in. Everything in the house has a purpose,' shares Natasha, perched on a Tom Dixon chair in her newly renovated dining room. Her gown? A custom design by Canada's Greta Constantine.



whereas a lot of people, I remember, wore pinks and pastels; twin sets were really popular. I was like, no, this is my thing! I feel like most successful people have uniforms.

With September comes a swell of professional obligations for you, including your work surrounding the Toronto International Film Festival. What's your favourite thing about the tradition? I always throw an annual "festival countdown" party, two weeks before. And that's probably one of my favourite events because it feels like camp, like when you haven't seen people in a year, because everyone's just been really working hard and then you get to come together.

And you're launching the Toronto condo project. What is it like having a 47-storey building named and designed after you? I'm still a little stunned, to be honest. Lanterra Developments is a client of mine, and after a meeting with the president, Mark Mandelbaum, he told me he was building around the corner from NKPR's offices on Adelaide and asked me what I thought about calling the new project Natasha the Residences. I felt truly humbled and appreciative. It's a wonderful acknowledgment of the lifestyle I lead. At its core, my lifestyle integrates work and life – and when I look at this project, it's very much around city living. I've lived in New York City, L.A. and now Toronto. I work in the city, I'm a five-minute drive from the office and literally work two blocks away from where the condo is going. With that comes a real understanding of city life and how people will use their space. I'm very particular about how I live, and I also love design. ▶



In a Sid Neigum dress, with her co-ordinating pooches, Natasha takes dogwalking to the next level.



'I gave myself permission to wear black all the time. It simplifies my life'



Draped in a Christopher Esber frock, Natasha drinks in the serenity of her backyard oasis, where she's thrown many iconic parties, including (for the past two years) her annual Artists for Peace and Justice gala (left), a star-studded charity event that brings insiders and friends together to benefit families in Haiti. Left top: Eric and Natasha with (from L) Canadian Changemaker of the Year Award recipients Shantelle and Yannick Bisson; rock star and Lifetime Achievement Award winner Geddy Lee, daughter Kyla Weinrib and wife Nancy Young.

Speaking of your lifestyle, can you tell us a bit about your website, *ShopNK*? The idea to launch it was because I was constantly being asked, "Where did you buy this?" Or, "What are your staples?" I just thought, how great would it be to just have it all on one site? Through it, I can share with others the things that make me feel grounded at home, while emphasizing mindful shopping, because every purchase allows consumers to choose a charity [that will benefit from a portion of proceeds] during the checkout process. Plus, they can learn more about the charity and feel empowered and good about contributing.

Yes, for sure. I was born in [the Ukraine capital] Kyiv and immigrated to Alberta when I was four. My parents came to Canada with literally \$100 in their pocket, so what I watched was them start a new life in a brand-new country, not knowing the language. You can't grow up watching that and not think that the world isn't your oyster. I grew up feeling like anything is possible with hard work and loving what you do. And for me that was PR! I fell in love with it.

INTERVIEW: JULIA McEWEN
PHOTOS: CONSTANT VAN RUYMBEKE
HAIR & MAKEUP: JODI URICHUK/PLUTINO GROUP

Have you always had this entrepreneurial spirit?

RYAN EMBERLEY FOR ARTISTS FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE (2)