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*anti-aging, beauty, lifestyle*

## *Natasha Koifman*

NKPR + TIFF = CHARITABLE LOVE

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DRESS AND CAPE BY ZUHAIR MURAD (THE ROOM AT HUDSON'S BAY) / SHOES BY SERGIO ROSSI

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# NKPR:

## *A Love Story*

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By LIBERTY CRAIG

PHOTOGRAPHED BY LIZ ROSA / PRODUCED & STYLED BY CRYSTAL CARSON

MAKEUP ARTIST & HAIR STYLIST: JODI URICHUK (PLUTINO GROUP) / LOCATION: THOMPSON HOTEL TORONTO

**N**atasha Koifman is about as well-connected as they come. A high-profile style maven who is regularly featured in fashion magazines and invited to comment on celebs on *Entertainment Tonight Canada*, her career coalesces around her award-winning PR firm with offices in Toronto and New York. NKPR seems innately successful—with a clearly apparent work ethic—while Koifman appears effortlessly, wildly gorgeous and fabulously dressed. “Cool” is an understatement.

So it is a real delight to discover that at the heart of all this fashion, beauty, and success is... heart. A lot of heart. In fact, Koifman's entire life is governed by love and compassion for others. The most obvious facet of this might be her deep commitment to philanthropy—among other initiatives, Koifman acts as Chair of the (star-studded) Board for Artists for Peace and Justice Canada, and is a member of the advisory committee in the US. But her principles of selflessness seem to permeate everything from her PR approach to her worldview.

*Fresh Magazine* caught up with Natasha Koifman as she and the NKPR team gear up for the Toronto Film Festival this September, where NKPR will host the IT Lounge for the eleventh consecutive year as a place for celebrities to escape, relax, and have a portrait taken—all in the name of charity.

### NK BEFORE PR

“I have always been surrounded by so much love and support. My parents are my inspiration. I was born in Kiev, Ukraine and came to Canada when I was very young. My parents worked hard to create a good life for us. They've been married 52 years—and still hold hands every day. Being surrounded by that kind of love made me want to give back to other people. It's the reason I became involved in philanthropy: I knew I had to do something that would be meaningful to other people.

“When I was 18 and in university, I had my son. Some people would say that having a child at 18 is hard. I look at it as an incredible blessing. I had to grow up quickly, but having him helped guide my life: I became me because of him. He was like a moral compass in my life that helped point me toward better decisions. I wanted to make sure that the choices I made would make him feel proud of me.

“I think we should always feel grateful for our experiences, for making us who we are meant to be. My son is a big part of that. I have two tattoos on my arm. One says: Gratitude to the power of 26. My son's birthday is 06/26, and it's a reminder to always be grateful. The other one says: Be Brave.”



## THE MEANING OF PR

“I never wanted to do PR for the sake of doing PR. There are people who do a lot of talking, who try to be more *interesting* than *interested*. For me, being interested is more important. That’s how you learn. What’s important is to ask questions, and to listen. This is our approach when it comes to creating programs that are truly meaningful to our clients—and that’s what really sets us apart. I believe that we can do anything; there are no limits. But it only means something if it’s pushing the needle forward on our clients’ objectives. We’ve had a lot of our clients for many years, and we’re a partner at the table; an extension of their team. We really understand what they need from us and how we can maximize every opportunity.”

## A BORDERLESS WORLD

“We have offices in Toronto and New York, and I do think it’s a borderless world now. I believe the world is our oyster. Because of the internet and social media, we have access to everything and anything, and we are inspired and motivated by so much. At NKPR we think this way. What’s going on locally continues to be important, but let’s not limit ourselves to what’s around us.”

## TRENDSETTING: NKPARLOUR

“We were the first agency in Canada to have a showroom. On one of my trips to LA, where there are a lot of PR showrooms, I thought: NKPR is on the ground floor, in the epicentre of Toronto. We should create NKParlour to make it easier for stylists and producers to be able to pull. So we did. A lot of other agencies followed suit—and I’m glad, because it makes things easier for everyone. We see about 150 people at our previews, and up to a dozen media and stylists daily. Our job is to make it easy for them. If you think about others before you think of yourself, you have a formula for success, whether in your personal or business life. That’s always our mindset.”

## BACK IN BLACK

“I love fashion. I think fashion is an incredible way to express yourself without having to say a word. It expresses your confidence and your individuality. Black has been my favourite colour for as long as I can remember. It’s what I feel best in. It also helps pare down the decision process—my life is so busy, and not having to worry about red, green and purple makes it a lot easier. I will do a killer red stiletto or colour in accessories, but definitely not in my clothing.”

## THANKFUL FOR TIFF

“We’ve evolved a lot over the years, but TIFF is something we remain passionate about. TIFF was such a big initiative for us 11 years ago, and it continues to be an important part of who we are today. It’s a time in the city when there’s a huge spotlight on Toronto, and we are a part of all the activity and buzz. I love Toronto and I love the transformation that happens during the festival. The energy is palpable and I never get tired of it—even though I do get tired!”

◀ TOP BY ELLERY (THE ROOM AT HUDSON’S BAY / BRACELETS BY LINKS OF LONDON

“We’re very excited this year about our partnership with the Scott Brothers, through which we’ve made the IT House a five-day destination, day and night, giving celebrities an opportunity to have their portraits taken by Caitlin Cronenberg and featured in *W Magazine*. The Scott Brothers are going to be hosting their annual Producer’s Ball. We are also doing an incredible art exhibit with Peter Tunney, a really cool pop artist out of New York City who is also on our advisory board for Artists for Peace and Justice. We’ll hang almost fifty pieces of his work, and fifty percent of the sales of his work will go to Artists for Peace and Justice.”

## ARTISTS FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

“This is a cause that’s so important to me. We built the very first free high school in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. I go to Haiti twice a year, and on my last visit I watched the very first class graduate. I just sat there, crying, watching these kids. Because of every person who works at NKPR and all the people who support Artists for Peace and Justice, we’ve been able to give these kids a future, a life, an opportunity to create a better future for the next generation and have an impact on their country. That’s a huge part of what motivates me on a daily basis. Do more for others than you do for yourself.”

“NKPR hosts an annual gala for Artists for Peace and Justice. It’s such an important event for us as we often raise between \$1.3 and \$1.5 million for Haiti, which has a significant impact in a place where people live on a dollar a day. This year we’re so happy to be honouring Sean Penn at our gala. He’s done so much for Haiti and is such an inspiring individual, and we couldn’t be more thrilled that he’s receiving the Peace and Justice Award.”

## CAUSE AT THE CORE

“Social responsibility is at the core of NKPR, and Cause is how we support a number of different charity initiatives. Our work promoting Artists for Peace and Justice during TIFF helped inspire a lot of this activity, like the 26 Hours of Kindness initiative we did last year. Instead of giving gifts to our clients, my entire team gave back to different charities every hour on the hour, for 26 hours straight. It inspired this year’s initiative, which is 26 Acts of Kindness. Throughout the year we’re creating acts of kindness—one of which is a scholarship for two individuals who want to get into the PR industry.”

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*“Where you are today should be an amazing experience. You are the creator of your life right now.”*

#### FINDING BRAVERY

“You need to trust your instincts, because your instincts are never wrong. I’ve been fortunate in many ways. My son was my compass. My parents were my role models. But it’s your gut instinct that guides you. I function on intuition: it’s a huge part of the business decisions I make. Nothing is ever a mistake—you learn from everything, and it helps you become the person you’re supposed to become. You need to believe it. And just like we need to be kind to others, we need to be kind to ourselves, too. We are hardest on ourselves.

“Be open to learning. Ask a million questions. Be patient with yourself. There’s a really great saying: Patience allows life to fall into place. I think it’s so important.”

#### THE JOURNEY OF AGE

“I’m in my early forties, but I never look at age as a number. I think that with experience comes wisdom—and I think I’ve become wiser about some things. I learned so much in my twenties and my thirties, and I’m continuing to learn now. I didn’t feel anything when I turned forty—except gratitude; I was just happy to be me. My guiding principle is to be kind to others, kind to yourself, and to treat everything with love and kindness.

“It’s about the journey. We might have a plan for five years from now, ten years, but we also have to enjoy the moment. Where you are today should be an amazing experience. You are the creator of your life right now.”

#### LOOKING FORWARD

“I really just want to be happy in an authentic way. We often don’t understand what joy is. I was recently asked: what do you do for fun? And all I could come up with was, well, I love my work! It got me thinking. I think that’s why the relationship I’m in now entered my life. It’s pulled me out of my comfort zone, and I’m experiencing joy. My goals for the future are to really listen to myself and not get stagnant. I’m an introvert by nature, and while I’m quite innovative professionally, I can get stuck personally. I want to continue to embrace change, and seek out happiness and joy.”

*Liberty Craig is a freelance writer and editor living and working in Vancouver.*

◀ LEFT: TOP BY CUSHNIE ET OCHS (THE ROOM AT HUDSON’S BAY) / SKIRT BY SIMONE ROCHA (THE ROOM AT HUDSON’S BAY) / BRACELET BY LINKS OF LONDON / SUNGLASSES BY CHANEL

RIGHT: TOP BY MUGLER / PANTS BY MARY KATRANTZOU / SHOES BY ALAIA