



PHOTO BY CAITLIN CRONENBERG

INTERVIEW WITH PR QUEEN

Natasha Koifman

By ELIZABETH QUAYLE

GET INSPIRED

It's easy to get inspired. Watch an uplifting TED Talk. Read a great book. Feel the music deeply. But unless that momentary impulse becomes action, it's meaningless. Natasha Koifman is a radically different kind of inspiring. That's because, as President of NKPR—one of Canada's 'go to' PR agencies—she spends her (long) days inspiring real change. She inspires clients like DAVIDsTEA and Swarovski to embrace the digital tools, brand-building ideas and innovative strategies that drive measurable business success. She inspires her team to create award-winning campaigns and then to find material ways to give back through NKPR's 26 Acts of Kindness program. She's inspired her industry to turn their talents toward philanthropic endeavours more often. She's helped inspire to raise more than \$30 million to Artists for Peace and Justice, which aids the people of Haiti. And now, to help celebrate NKPR's 15-year anniversary, her goal is to inspire the people of Toronto to Share the Love. Recently, Natasha talked to *Fresh Magazine* about what's inspired her over the years, including passion, fear, art, and the desire to leave the world a better place.

PASSION SPARKS SUCCESS

I started NKPR in my basement. I didn't think it was going to turn into a company. I just thought, I get to work on what I really love and that will make me happy. And it really brewed from that intent, because if you start with the intention that you're only going to work on things you're passionate about, then the business starts to come to you.

Early on, I received a call from CIBC. It was December 23rd and they needed to hold an important press conference on January 3rd. I remember thinking "I can't just throw together a press conference for one of Canada's biggest banks!" But I called back and said "Sure, I can do that!" What it taught me was, when you're most afraid that you can't do something, is when you'll put your absolute best foot forward. That was a turning point. Over the next year, CIBC gave us their entire sponsorship portfolio and NKPR became their agency of record. Had I said "no," that never would have happened.

ART AS INSPIRATION

My desk faces a beautiful piece of work by Peter Tunney. It's a piece that says "Believe." And I look at it every single day. I have a couple other pieces in my house by the same artist. The first big piece you see when you walk in says "Gratitude." There's one in my study that says "Love." I love art that has words on it, because I feel like it's a way for me to connect to that feeling.

I also collect photography. I have a great Marilyn Monroe by Bert Stern, who shot photos of her six weeks before she died. I have some really cool photography from Roberto Dutesco, who is a Canadian photographer I discovered when I was in New York City. He was the only photographer able to shoot the wild horses of Sable Island. They're spectacular pieces. I have one piece in my bedroom and another in my apartment in New York.



SHARING THE LOVE

At NKPR, we're committed to sharing our love of art and photography. We've been working with the Scotiabank CONTACT Photography Festival for 12 years. It's the largest photography festival in the world, where more than 250 photographers showcase their work across Toronto for the entire month of May. I love it because you're exposing people to more and more art and giving them a chance to discover what they like. We're also working with LandMarks 2017, which will see 11 contemporary art installations created all over Canada. The pieces will all have strong Indigenous themes and the idea is to use art to start conversations about our shared Canadian identity.

CAUSE AT THE CORE

Cause is at the core of what we do. We started 26 Acts of Kindness a couple of years ago. When we launched the holiday campaign, our entire staff worked for 26 hours straight with 26 different charities to give back in ways that were meaningful to them. A year later, I noticed four or five other PR agencies finding ways to give back too. I loved it. It's about setting an example. It's about spreading the love. If they want to copy that, I'm all for it.

ARTISTS FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

I sit on the Board for Artists for Peace and Justice (APJ) US and I'm the Chair of the Board for APJ Canada. Paul Haggis founded the organization eight years ago. He had just come back from a trip to Haiti and wanted to help the people there. I helped create APJ's first major fundraiser, where Paul and his now ex-wife invited all of their celebrity friends. People like Penelope Cruz, Nicole Kidman, Barbra Streisand, Pierce Brosnan, Javier Bardem. We had a room of 30 A-list celebrities, and most of them committed to giving \$50,000 for the next five years. Very quickly after that, we bought land in Port au Prince, we built a free high school and enrolled our first 150 students. The goal is to help Haiti get back on its feet through the community helping its own community.

INSPIRING GOOD

Inspiration comes in so many different forms. There's an amazing street artist Hektad, who does heart-themed pieces all over New York City. For our 15th anniversary, we're bringing him to Toronto to create an installation on our office windows, which will depict hearts, with the words 'I choose love'. We want to inspire people to take pictures in front of the piece and then share them, so that they can help spread the love as well.

Inspiration is really important. Paul Haggis inspired me. I inspired my team. We inspired our industry. That's how good happens in the world. If every single person who was able to, could do one kind thing or support one cause that really mattered to them, the world would be a better place.

PHOTOS BY KATHERINE HOLLAND