

# fashion

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# narcisse designs

By Kevin Michael Overa

Chicago based Narcisse Designs is taking the fashion world by sexy storm. The House of Narcisse is an umbrella encompassing a creative world that starts at fashion, progresses past music, movies, graphic art, and into the void of creative possibility. Behind it all are masterminds Veronika and Derek, who have recently expanded from Chicago to New York, Milan, Los Angeles, and Paris. Welcome to the Empire of Seduction...

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*The House of Narcisse is pretty well established in the Chicago area. When was Narcisse formed and what was the catalyst?*

Veronika: Many times we were approached with questions such as "where can I buy that design" or "can you make me an outfit like that". To most people's shock, Narcisse was actually founded less than three years ago in the Fall of 2000.

Derek: Yeah, interestingly, we started seeing designs we had made for ourselves around town. I guess if people couldn't find these designs they were willing to make their own versions. After a while we figured it's safer to sell our designs than have knock-offs floating around deluding the origins of the design.

*House of Narcisse is actually an umbrella company for several other projects including the Echo Gallery, Entropy Studios, and Die Schon Kolectiv. How do you two find time to manage it all?*

Veronika: It is hard. There are only so many hours in the day and as our projects become larger, they tend to demand more manpower. Then your time becomes a bit more focused on management aspects of the business. Unfortunately, that means less "hands on" time with the creations which we enjoy.

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Derek: It's a... balancing act. It's important to us to be accessible to the public and be able to run with any creative ideas we have, but that often requires a support team. We are lucky that we have a reliable network of staff and business acquaintances that make things happen with no additional hand holding.

*Aside from having a hand in almost every creative outlet-- from art to music, fashion and movies, modeling, web design, and so on-- Narcisse is also opening shops in New York, Milan, Paris, and Los Angeles. Can you tell us a little bit about your plans for those stores and how the project is going ahead?*

Derek: We felt a good way for us to have a world-wide presence while not becoming too removed from the creative process, was to work with several established clothing artisans and respected tailors [that] we've met during our travels. Our satellite locations have a few garments from our current collection, but more importantly they act as examples of the construction quality of Narcisse Garments, while the local tailor provides the custom sizing and fitting that really makes or breaks a design.

Veronika: One of the most important aspects of any design is the fit.

*With stores opening in such exotic locations, are you planning to remain in Chicago where there is often less funding for the arts?*

Veronika: Yeah, it's become our battle cry to put Chicago on the map. The more we travel the more

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we appreciate what Chicago has to offer. I would feel like we lose some integral part of ourselves if we did what the masses do by migrating to a coast.

Derek: I definitely agree... Chicago is becoming more of a world city. While traveling throughout Europe, throughout the years, there is a definite sense that Chicago is becoming more and more well-known. We may always be the third largest city in the States, but the world market is a different story.

Veronika: As for funding... If everyone leaves Chicago to try to carve out their niche in the stale old networks in place on either coast, the funding situation will never change.

*Your web site describes Narcisse as: "Hauteur haute couture. Classically seductive. Teasingly provocative. Uninhibited", and I'd say there is a definite, dangerous sexiness to your designs. But do you design with seduction in mind?*

Veronika: Sex is a big part of being human. Celebrating your sexuality with a classy, upscale presentation, whether it is a dress, suit, or costume, makes the general public a bit more accepting to the fact that we are all sexual beings.

Derek: Well said... A good example might be the garments you see at events like the Oscars or Grammys. Many of the designs are incredibly sexy, but it is accepted because of the emphasis on presentation. A slightly see-through dress on the average women may simply look cheap or may be perceived as sleazy, but on a woman who has done her hair, fussed with her make-up, and has impeccably accessorized her ensemble, it looks like she belongs at the Oscars

Veronika: ...and that's our clientele.

*Can you give me a rough definition of what fashion is for you?*

Veronika: For me not only is it a form of self-expression and creative passion, but most importantly, it's a unique identity to stand out from the "fashion machine" currently dictating what we wear.

Derek: Attention to detail... I'll explain. Every aspect of your being can be part of fashion. If you do your homework, understand the history, and have a specific direction with any aspect of your life, whether it's food, music, artwork, or clothing, you then have a justification for your actions. It is this attention to detail that is fashion. Everything else is just opinion.

*What's waiting in the future for the House of Narcisse?*

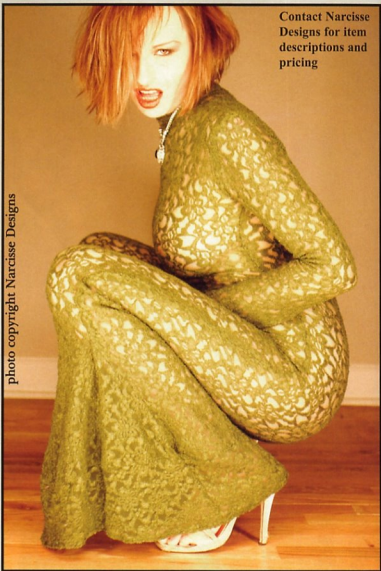
Veronika: Hopefully a fruitful future of creative projects.

Derek: ...sounds good to me. ♦

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