

NICK VON K

DESPITE LAUNCHING HIS OWN JEWELLERY LINE JUST MONTHS AGO, NICK VON K HAS ALREADY BEEN PICKED UP FOR RETAIL BY ONE OF AMERICA'S LEADING RETAILERS. SIGNS OF GREAT THINGS TO COME WE THINK...

Nick Klarwill has been in the jewellery business for twelve years, collaborating with Ricochet on seasonal accessory ranges since 1998. In September earlier this year, he also launched the Nick Von K jewellery line, which turned out to be quite a success despite Nick having 'no idea at all' that things were going to pan out the way they did. The only reason Nick did manage to head along to this year's New Zealand Fashion Week, where American fashion designer Nicole Miller happened to pick out three pieces from his latest collection, was to meet the people that didn't manage to turn up to [his] launch the week before. From collaborating with Ricochet, something that Nick claims happened from 'being in the right place at the right time', to recently catching the attention of American fashion blogger Derek Warburton, and impressing Nicole Miller with several of his own pieces, it's nice to see that his plans to branch off with his own collection have truly paid off.

Fast forward twelve years and it's obvious that Nick has come a







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long way from 'living out at the beach and not doing a lot. I was just cruising around on the dole, living the life and having a good time.' By finally getting to the point where he wanted to put out his own range, it was merely a matter of building up faith in himself and not wanting to work with other designers, and it has proven to be all the more worthwhile. 'The funny thing is I've always loved jewellery but I never realised how much I loved it until more recently. I never really thought about being a jeweller. It just kind of happened that way and I'm going 'this is perfect.' Perfect indeed, at least in regards to the response that he has received from Nicole Miller's American stores. 'I just got an email from her head of retail earlier today saying they want to get some more pieces.'

It seems that Nick is a natural when it comes to art. If it wasn't for jewellery design he'd be doing some other artistic pursuit, perhaps sculpture. In saying this, it still requires hard work and a lot of time. 'It took a long time; you just can't churn this stuff out overnight'. And as far as the design process goes, 'there is a lot of business involved in this kind of work', by his own estimation, leaving about one percent of the process to the actual design part itself.

There are a lot of skull references seen throughout Nick's latest collection, a number of reasons as to why. Although it begins with his teenage love of Guns n Roses, his fascination with skulls goes a lot deeper than just that. Referring to the 'Day of the Dead' festival in South America where they celebrate death and the spirit world, suggests that it's not such a bad thing to die. 'It celebrates the transition of the dead people and the fact that

they're existing in the spirit world'. Rather than death being associated with this idea of 'darkness' and 'heaviness', Nick's idea is 'to get humorous with the skulls', symbolising the transition from life into whatever happens next. As far as what happens next for Nick Von K, plans to stock further nationally are on the cards. 'I'm keen to expand out to the rest of New Zealand but at the moment it's all just a matter of fitting stuff into the days. There's so much to do. I start the morning and the next minute the days finished and I haven't got all of the things that I wanted to, done. But I'll get there, I'm definitely keen.'

Fortunately for Nick, the New Zealand market is a bit easier to crack into than the American one. 'A lot of business people in the States are quite hard lined and you have to be really careful, whereas the New Zealand fashion industry is quite casual and they don't need you to be a big name.' So it's good to know that his business foundations are firmly planted in the ground. Being in the industry long enough has had its benefits. 'My foundations are really solid; my systems and my suppliers especially.'

After the recent success of late, it's nice to see the Auckland boy done good for himself. Creating his own jewellery line is clearly something Nick is passionate about and has no regrets doing. 'It's something that I never thought of doing before, but now that I've done it I should have done it years ago. It's the most fun thing. I can see this whole brand going for the rest of my life.' So far, so good.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY OLIVER ROSE. STORY BY NICOLE LEYBOURNE