



Nikka Lorak

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Story telling behind the lens

История о творческой жизни известного фэшн фотографа, кинорежиссера и просто удивительной девушки Никки Лорак ... о том, как она добилась успеха, о ее профессиональных экспериментах и увлечениях.

From Egypt to London, with numerous adventures in between, the life of Nikka Lorak looks like a bright kaleidoscope captured through her lens. A former film director, who is now photographing fashion for high end commercials and a number of top modelling agencies including prestigious Elite model management, a successful fashion entrepreneur and a citizen of the world, Nikka Lorak could not be missed by Afisha Cyprus.

"Coming from film directing background, I'm very visual and I firmly believe in the importance of storytelling in photography", starts Nikka. We are sitting at Paphos cafe where she arrived after a photoshoot with Matthew Golding, the principle of Royal Ballet for the upcoming Afisha Cyprus February cover.

"Storytelling is a great device to communicate a message. Would it be a fashion brand or a celebrity, a freshly discovered model or a rock star, I always try to get to the bottom of the message that my client wants to transmit through the pictures. I call it 'packaging

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Являясь фешен фотографом, по образованию я все-таки кинорежиссер, и это главное, что помогло мне в моей профессии.

Например сейчас я фотографирую танцовщика Лондонского королевского балета Matthew Golding, я стараюсь привлечь его характер, его привычки, какие то его особенности и кинематографично рассказать историю этого человека в картинках. Мне очень важно понять, какой будет главный результат.

Главная задача донести до зрителя - Brending и Pecketge, то есть соответствие брендинга и упаковки. Ведь, как правило, модели, артисты посвящают всю жизнь своей профессии, а их нужно раскрыть, показать их внутренний мир, показать, что же там, за обложкой. И тоже самое с брендами.



a product', picking up the terminology after a client who convinced me in the power of visual advertisement.

Shooting for Guess Jeans, I had a pleasure to have a conversation with the brand's owner, Maurice Marciano.

"Sir, your merchandise isn't really great, to be honest" – I dared to say to him, to which he replied: "Maybe so, however my packaging is great!" I could not agree more. The store banners and catalogs of Guess jeans are always youth, upbeat and seductive. The brief for my shoot sounded like 'Sensual but not sexual'. As a result of brainstorming and research I came up with a story of an Italian couple who are passionately fighting and equally passionately making up. Tension,emotional rejection, animalistic attraction and enormous sexuality had been perfectly performed by a couple of models, who actually had dated in real life. I have cast this couple because passion towards each other was natural for them. The project was photographed outside an abandoned motel in LA, giving the images a nostalgic retro feel.

I love working with creatives from different backgrounds: musicians, actors, dancers. They always bring a lot of new exciting ideas on board. For instance right now I'm working with Mathew Golding, the principle of the Royal Ballet. Photographing him, Im trying to capture his habits, his individuality. In other words I am attempting to reveal his inner self, to show what is hidden behind the glossy cover of his public image.

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Сейчас я могу поделиться советам со своими коллегам - снимайте бесплатно, снимайте больше, это ваши инвестиции в будущее!

Mathew is a very ambiguous person. He is very sensitive and romantic as well as daring and rebellious. Working with Matthew I have been creatively challenged to step beyond a straight forward beach shoot that we had initially planned. Dancing is Matthew's life and he wanted to express on camera the diversity of emotions a dancer goes through. His input made the project much more personal and dynamic.

I have often been asked how I ended up being a fashion photographer. Well, I guess my background as a film maker was a great starting point. After graduating from Film and TV directing Masters program in Westminster university (London), I have directed and produced few film, one of which, short film "The Outsider", won an award in Cannes Short film corner. It is a story of human acceptance. "You do not need to be a foreigner to be an outsider"-says the longline. Shot in Morocco, with 11 children (the smallest was 4 years old) and 5 grown up actors, this project was as exciting as it was tough to execute. The principal photography was taking place in a small Moroccan village during Ramadan, hence every 15 minutes after sunset the entire village would abandon any activity in order to pray. The prayers were broadcasted through a powerful speaker, so the whole neighbourhood would be able to hear it. We were shooting night scenes, the kids were exhausted and considering that it was our last shooting day and we could not take a shot without being interrupted by the prayers. To my huge surprise my 1st assistant director (a Moroccan and a devoted muslim himself) promised to fix it and suddenly

Делая фотосессию для Guess Jeans, у меня была интересная беседа владельцем Moris Marciano: «Сэр, у вас качество товара не очень» - заметила я в ходе разговора, на что он мне ответил: «Знаю, зато у нас упаковка классная!». Работа была сложна тем, что они не хотели показывать открытую сексуальность, но должна была прослеживаться страсть, накал эмоций, и мы придумали историю об итальянской паре, которая ругается, а затем мирится и у них возникает этот море страсти. Это было снято на фоне Лос-Анжелеского полузабытого мотеля. В итоге все остались очень довольны.

За такие вещи я люблю свою профессию, мне нравится креативить, возможность обсуждать, развивать проект в лаборатории с другими креативщиками и с редакцией журнала, и с самой моделью, встречаться с интересными людьми, но в отличии от режиссуры фильма, учишься сотрудничать с разными людьми, но все же держишь свой ритм.

Очень интересно работать с дизайнерами одежды, они приносят очень много конструктивных, креативных идей в мои проекты, которые я одна ни за что бы не вытянула. Я очень уважаю своих колабораторов, я очень горжусь, что мне приходится работать с такими талантливыми людьми, настоящими профессионалами.

По поводу конкретных проектов, у меня один из самых крупных клиентов, это ELITE MODEL MANAGEMENT.

Я снимаю мужскую дивизию. Мне приходится фотографировать очень молодых моделей, начиная от 17 до 25 лет, и для большинства из них это первая фотосессия, и очень важно сразу настроить их на позитивную волну, убедить, что даже если они в чем то ошибаются, то ничего страшного. Они бывают и капризны, и немного хулиганят, в таком случае я включаю «Гитлера» и говорю, что наш процесс займет уйму времени, приходится с ними играть в хорошего и плохого полицейского, но в целом эта работа очень продуктивная и интересная и приносит много положительных эмоций.

Меня часто спрашивают, как я туда попала? Начиная свой путь фотографа я отправляла свои работы, свои портфолио в очень многие агентства, многие ответили, и один из них был ELITE и конечно же я выбрала его.

Сейчас я могу поделиться советам со своими коллегам - снимайте бесплатно, снимайте больше, это ваши инвестиции в будущее, для ELITE я это делала больше года.

Если говорить о процессе фотографий по сравнению с фильмом это очень легко.

Был момент, когда мы снимали фильм The Outsider 2012 в Марокко, который был взят на Канский фестиваль. На съемках было 11 детей и младшему из них всего 4 года. Они были без родителей, нам пришлось нелегко, благо дети были воспитанные, старшие присматривали за младшими, кормили их, ухаживали за ними.

Съемки велись ночью в деревне, да к тому же оказалось,



deafening praying stopped indeed. It turned out that he had cut the mosque electricity off. That was truly courageous although insane. Being in a small village where most of the habitants can barely read, our action had been taken for an ultimate disrespect. On the other hand, we would not have another day to record the night scenes...While we had been arguing over the morality of the action, we were surrounded by furious villagers. For the first time in my life I had a knife at my throat, but I was really astonished by the fact that my lead actor, a 12 year old boy, Ayoub Tarchani, stood between me and the village crowd and said: "I am a man, talk to me!". Money had resolved the conflict, but I was very touched by this unprecedented act of bravery. By the way, this is one of the examples of great masculine upbringing in the Middle East.

I have discovered cultural and social differences very early in my life. Growing up in Egypt, I had a healthy and carefree childhood: endless beaches, international school and lots of great outdoor activities.

I travel a lot, mostly for business. My clients are from all over the world: USA, Africa, Asia and of course Europe. It is very important to understand the mentality of various cultures.

My father, a Belgian diplomat was commissioned to Egypt and my mother, a Russian painter followed him to the country of pharaohs.

I'm grateful to my parents for being excellent gender models: my father was an old school gentleman, very protective and grounded, while my mother would forever be for me the ultimate symbol of feminine love and care. She had taught me the most important skill - an ability to dream large.

Later in life I've formed an opinion that two main issues that hold people back are fear and laziness. Fear would shut human mind down and would stop him from dreaming... Although, it is so easy to dream. Why wouldn't one dream about becoming a president of a country or going to the Moon?

It is important to set a goal much bigger than your current abilities may allow for. Dreaming large is the only way to develop and grow.

From the early age I had been around the kids of expats whose fathers, as well as mine were working in Cairo. We took for granted the huge mansions we were living in, private drivers, gardeners and cooks. Our colonial lifestyle was very different from the lives of the locals though. Egyptian workers could barely feed their families with low salaries that had been traditionally paid to them. When I had become a teenager, my father sat me down and explained that I was lucky to be born into a privileged family and that such a fortunate social status implies responsibilities that inevitably come with it. I have learnt that it is very important to give back to the society.

That is probably why since my childhood I never think twice when I have a chance to stand up for someone who needs help. Working for Club Med in my early 20s, I had always

что в это время у них был Рамадан, и вся деревня каждые 15 минут молилась. Причем происходило это через громкоговоритель, так чтоб было слышно даже в самом дальнем конце деревни и за ее пределами.

Бедные дети измучились, и тогда мой помощник марокканец-мусульманин по происхождению предпринял кое-какие меры и молитвы прекратились, оказалось, он просто перерезал провода в распределительном щитке, это был отчаянно- смелый шаг, позже он спокойно объяснил мне, что это все пережитки прошлого, нам не нужен микрофон, чтобы достучаться до бога. Но через 10 минут нас окружили, и мне впервые в жизни приставили нож к горлу и велели все включить обратно.

В конечном итоге все решили деньги, как в основном в этом мире решается.

Очень поразил один факт, что в самый опасный момент, за меня вступился 12 летний арабский мальчик Аюб Тарчани, он загородил меня и произнес: «Я мужчина, я буду разбираться».

Меня это настолько тронуло, что ребенок встал на мою защиту. Тогда я почувствовала, насколько в арабских странах развита мужественность, по сравнению с Европой.

Я путешествую достаточно много именно профессионально. Мои клиенты из Америки, Северной и Южной Африки, Азии, и конечно, из Европы. Очень важно понимать менталитет разных стран.

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Мой папа, бельгиец, дипломат, бывший военный, мама, русская из Подмосковья, они встретились во время олимпиады в Москве, а выросла я в Египте, куда отправили работать отца.

У меня было отличное детство и юность - ни наркотиков, ни алкоголя, дискотеки — это потанцевать, в отличии от других возможностей нашего времени.

Мне очень повезло с моими родителями. Я вообще считаю, что все идет от семьи. Семья во мне заложила какие то гендерные законы, я считаю, мужчина — это мужчина, законы чести, если человек дает слово — он должен его держать.

Мой отец — это интеллектуальное вдохновение, это человек старой джентльменской закалки, у него историческое и политическое образование, он всегда меня учил очень важным вещам: «Никка, ты родилась в очень привилегированной семье, ты можешь добиться того, что не могут добиться другие дети, поскольку у них нет таких возможностей. Это круговорот, это такая карма, такой круг, где ты не можешь только брать, нужно обязательно отдавать. Это закон мира.»

Моя мама — это тепло, женственность и уют. Она у меня художник по шелку. Она человек — праздник, человек — бабочка. Она меня научила мечтать, что тоже очень важно. Многие люди боятся это делать.

Я всегда считала, главные проблемы человека, это страх и лень. Страх очень часто замыкает человеческую голову, че-





bigger picture.

Same rule applies to photography projects. I guess most of the photographers want to develop a unique vision and to produce images just the way they have imagined it. This is the final goal, the bigger picture. Breaking it down into tasks one would encounter the challenge of mastering technicalities of the camera as well as getting an inspiration to develop a unique vision.

I strongly advise beginners photographers to Google the best world photographers starting with the invention of photo camera. One can be surprised how many different styles and looks are collected in the world's photography library. This process is very educative.

The vision does not come overnight. It comes with research and practical experience, as in every other profession. Here we are coming to my second advice: practice as much as you can to get the technical bit out of the way. When my mentor is asked about the best camera body, he always relies that it is the camera you actually use. Once I've heard that to master a trade, one should dedicate 8 hours a day to it, 5 days a week. Some people are good at self study, others at following a workshop. Whatever is the case, continues education is vital and it should never stop.

My third advice would be: invest in your career and be prepared to work for free at the start. Today I'm shooting for Elite Model management, that is the most reputable modelling management in the world. I had been asked many times how did I end up working for them.

Well, it's very easy: I had enquired a few agencies about models for an editorial (that was not commissioned and thus not remunerated), some had responded and Elite was one of them. Afterwards, for a year or so I had been shooting models tests for them for free. During this year I had established my name and gained experience working with a great selection of new faces.

Working with models and especially with young models is another interesting topic. As a film director I know that the basic rule of a successful collaboration with an actor is to make him feel safe.

The same goes for a model. People who are making a living off their looks, can be very anxious about how they are perceived. In order to challenge a model to step beyond the regular poses and expressions and to experiment, a photographer has to create a safe working environment. On the other hand, working with teenagers, I often experience some playful and even mischievous behaviour on set. In this case I would either allow the model to have fun if we have time or to remind him or her about the working scope yet to be achieved. I have heard of photographers with a 'star disease' but in my opinion it reveals a photographer's insecurity or just his poor manners.

Sometimes I come along a creative who considers himself to

be a bigger picture. I guess most of the photographers want to develop a unique vision and to produce images just the way they have imagined it. This is the final goal, the bigger picture. Breaking it down into tasks one would encounter the challenge of mastering technicalities of the camera as well as getting an inspiration to develop a unique vision.

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insisted that the members of my team had to be paid equally, regardless of their origin. My decision to choose an Egyptian as my assistant shocked many, however for me it was only logical, as this person was bright and very responsible.

Moving to fashion photography, I see my society contribution in sharing my experience with younger colleagues and helping with advice whenever I can. It is only fair, as I had learned a lot from Oleg Tityaev, a brilliant NYC photographer, who became my mentor.

In my life I was very lucky to meet a number of remarkable people. Barry Vince, my university professor was definitely one of them. He still teaches there, despite being over 70 years old. When he was younger, he used to work as Stanley Kubrick's film editor. He watched the genius director in action. Barry was quite a character himself, he could fall asleep in class but at the same time he managed to cultivate a unique vision of the world in us, his students. Barry always told us that editorial choices may take place only after a director has envisioned the film in its whole structure. In other words, he had taught us to work from the bigger picture towards the details and once being precise working on details, never lose the concept of the

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be an unappreciated genius, and it is exhausting to tolerate. To me the rules are simple: either an artist creates something to express his inner self (not for a public approval) or , if the purpose of artist's creativity is to deliver a commercial, widely recognised piece of art, then he simply needs to tailor it for audience liking. Isn't it simple: you either care what the others thinking about you or you genuinely don't.

At the earlier stages of my career I used to look up to Mario Testino. He is an artist who captures the juiciness of 'bella vita', the most colourful,extravagant and exciting people and places. This amazing photographer produced a series of photo campaigns for the brand Michael Kors. Key emotional elements to his work are youth, jetset lifestyle,adventure,fun and beauty. These images in my opinion made the brand's products to be associated with everything modern society is longing for. Brand Michael Kors is one of the best examples of amazing packing I was taking about earlier and Mario Testing is an great example of a brilliant commercial 'widely recognised and liked by masses' photographer. Nothing wrong about it. Commercial photography is still very challengeable indeed.

I travel a lot, mostly for business. My clients are from all over the world: USA, Africa, Asia and of course Europe. It is very important to understand the mentality of various cultures. In Europe and America people are comfortable with independent women, while in the Middle East and especially in Asia, I still need to comply to the traditions of a male dominated society. It might dictate a certain manner of behaviour, for example with Japanese men a European woman must be very formal and extra polite while maintaining her dignity, because social status plays an important role. At some point I was truly amazed by the Russian mentality. I had been recently working with Alexander Petrov, a famous Russian actor who had also starred in the last Nikita Mikhalkov's movie "Attraction". He has an extraordinary appearance: his main physical feature is his almost transparent light-grey eyes that are very unusual. He is a very versatile actor who can easily transform from a complete jerk into a caring older brother who you would trust your life with. He is a true actor.

We were shooting a project that is called "Drugs-Sex-Rock'n'roll" and it was then when I noticed this trait about Russians: they are like a chestnut: harsh and tough on the outside, but soft on the inside. When we had started shooting, Alexander was very tensed. Was it because of personal circumstances or maybe he was just tired, I don't know. I gave him some time to get into his project character, and then he suddenly said: "I want to smash a guitar". Immediately, I requested my friend to bring me a guitar, that he could break. Then he asked me for 5 bottles of champagne, to which I responded: "What brand would you prefer?" As time went by his ice was starting to melt. By the end of the shoot we have built an understanding, he

шего, я никогда не счастлива тем, что у меня есть, мне нужно учиться жить сегодняшним моментом. Я живу будущим. Постоянно строю планы на будущее, затем останавливаю себя «Секундочку! Мы сейчас что-то важное делаем!» Я этому стараюсь учиться.

Возвращаясь к советам начинающим фотографам, во-первых, просто понять, какие профессионалы до вас уже поработали, собрать какой-то багаж знаний. Во — вторых, как можно быстрее освоить технику, аппаратуру на которой вы работаете.

Мой ментор, человек от которого я очень многому научилась Олег Титяев, с ним я начинала работать, чудесный портретник, живет в Нью-Йорке, на вопрос — какую камеру выбрать отвечает, он отвечал: «Камеру, на которую вы будете снимать.» Можно прекрасно снять и на Айфон.

Не сразу появляется видение, мастерство приходит с опытом, как, наверное в любой профессии. Если вы хотите стать фотографом, нужно работать беспрерывно, как минимум 8 часов в день 6 дней в неделю.

Шаг номер один - погуглите всех успешных фотографов последнего века, чтобы понять, что уже сделано и на кого можно равняться.

У меня, например, идеалом долгое время был Марио Тестино, этот человек умеет схватить вкусную жизнь на камеру. Этот человек очень коммерческий, в хорошем понимании. Вы попробуйте продать продукт, если он сфотографирован не вкусно. Он продает молодость, секс, красоту, безмятежную жизнь. Я считаю, что искусство должно восприниматься массами.

Я не вижу своей карьеры и своего роста без публики, которую это будет как-то трогать. Если человек мне скажет: «Фу, как отвратительно», я буду довольна, потому что уже есть эмоции. Все зависит от проекта.

У меня есть проект, который я до сих пор снимаю это выставка «Драйв, секс, рок-н-ролл» Там не всегда будут красивые люди. Этот проект про рок-н-рольщиков.

Первый раз я приехала в Лос Анжелес, мне совершенно не понравилось, а во второй раз у меня уже были какие - то знакомства, которые мне позволили побывать в интересных местах. Меня представили Джони Деппу, Ози Озбрун, я побывала в Chateau Marmont, это легендарное место которое послужило вдохновлением для написания песни «Отель Калифорния». Это место, где знаменитости в закрытом кругу совершают разные хулиганства, это жизнь мятежников, люди которые восстанут против норм, и традиций общества с традициями. Тогда и пришла в голову идея этого проекта.

Необходимо самообразовываться, читать статьи про фотографии, посещать мастер-классы, конечно у хороших преподавателей, даже если вы живете далеко, все это можно найти в интернете. Рекомендую начать снимать с естественным светом.



gave me his very best on camera and the pictures came out to be outstanding.

In general I believe in good energy and the power of thoughts and dreams. Sometimes I hear that people say that they envy me. This is one of the things that I would never understand. Instead, I'm delighted when a person says: "You inspire me!" Being inspired is certainly better than being jealous. The latter is a highly destructive feeling. Turns out you really want something, but you can't get it. Seems like some kind of a moral impotence that serves absolutely no purpose".

Afisha Cyprus: Nikka, thank you so much for the interview. It was a real pleasure to chat with you. I have also heard a lot about your new project – a fashion platform for fashionistas. Could you tell us a little more about it?

"Yes of course. It is yet another aspect of my work, that consists of collaborating with talented designers from all over the world. Thanks to my work I meet lots of extraordinary designers and each of them proudly carries cultural heritage of his country. My fashion platform www.maison29london.com allows fashionistas to find exotic handmade pieces. We are specialising on handbags, jewellery and custom made lingerie. Lingerie we offer is truly unique as it is tailored specifically according the customers measurements, from XXS to XXXL. In Maison 29 we celebrate the full range of feminine curves diversity.

Our customers, would it be a working professional or a glamorous housewife, are distinguished by their sophisticated fashion style and are always in search for new stand out looks.

Check out Maison 29 for new fashion discoveries or just to entertain yourself reading my travel diary."

Afisha Cyprus: Nikka Lorak's

Photographer's travel diary is due to be released on a weekly basis from November 2016 on www.maison29london.com

Коммуникационные таланты также играет очень большую роль, потому что очень часто мне говорят: «Как с тобой легко работать, мы работали с тем или иным фотографом, они слишком напыщенные»

Человек не может себе позволить работать с людьми и относиться к ним плохо.

Спасибо Никка за интервью. Было очень интересно пообщаться. Я также слышала про твой новый проект — веб - сайт для модниц. Расскажи немного о нем.

Да это еще один аспект моей работы - это работа с талантливыми, но малоизвестными дизайнерами, которые хотят пробиться на лондонский и европейский рынки.

Я вижу, что вещи действительно прекрасные, но они не знают, как их раскрутить

В один прекрасный момент мне пришла в голову идея создать им платформу, свой сайт и предложить им выставлять дизайнерские вещи по доступным ценам для среднего класса, а ведь это самая большая прослойка европейского общества. Например в Лондоне, даже если это обеспеченные люди, они не будут тратить большие деньги на дизайнерские штучки, потому что они не хотят быть похожими на кого-то, они хотят быть индивидуальными.

Сейчас мы работаем с русскими, бразильскими, европейскими и британскими дизайнерами. Это люди, которые приносят очень много креативных идей на сайт, которые я бы объединила в двух словах Elegant simplicity - элегантная простота. Это значит вещи не привязаны к какому-то статусу, сегодня в них можно поужинать в шикарном ресторане, а завтра посидеть в пабе. Это дает свободу, дарит большое наслаждение жизнью во всех ее формах.

Мы выпускаем статьи про разные тенденции моды, у нас есть свои Амбассадоры - успешные люди, представляющие и продвигающие наш бренд. Причем наши Амбассадоры не из мира моды. Это те люди, которые нас вдохновляют, это актрисы, балетные танцоры, атлеты, иногда модели.

Я считаю, разные сферы искусства связаны между собой и могут черпать вдохновение друг у друга. Например балетный танцор больше любит удобство движения, когда одежда не сковывающие и это понятно многим мужчинам. Опять же женщины актрисы, представляющие бренды, бывают очень разноплановые, так как примеряют на себя разные роли, это больше подходит для женщин, ведь нам хочется меняться, одеваться по настроению.



Credits:

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