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The Great Journey

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"But you know that we don't like
to talk about precious things...
When something so pleasant
happens to you, you want to keep
it only for yourself! Do you agree
with me?"

MONICA
BELLUCCI

Photographed by SZILVÉSZTER MAKÓ, wearing **BALENCIAGA** and **CARTIER**

All by Nicklas Skovgaard “Collection 08”

In conversation with
Carolina Benjumea

Photographer
Kavian Borhani

Nicklas Skovgaard



Nicklas Skovgaard is an exploration of the self and a deep understanding of the human experience. His brand started as a way to find calmness and peace and now transcends mere garments. After working in the interior design industry, a sick leave and a career change led Nicklas to create unexpected combinations and explore new paths. As he learned to weave by himself, he created the first braids of this new journey with a simple loom, where every thread woven is a declaration of self-love and self-discovery, representing the quest for expression and creation. We sat down with Nicklas in his studio in Copenhagen, to discuss his brand, his inspiration for Madonna and his mom, the subtle dance between art, craft, and the dreamlike narrative that defines his label.

CAROLINA BENJUMEA. How are you doing?

NICKLAS SKOVGAARD. Good! Working on a new collection; we have our second show in two weeks. So, I've been working a lot these days.

C.B. I would like to start with the fact that you weave your own fabrics, which requires a unique skill set, and yet you learned that

by yourself! Can you share how the process of teaching yourself this art has been and, also, what you have learned about yourself in the process?

N.S. I want to give a small background on how I started weaving... I used to work in interior design and travel quite a lot around Europe to decorate stores for this Danish company. After years

of working, I went on sick leave due to stress. I was just kind of "fixing" my soul at home. I was in a weird place in life; I used to work full-time, and then suddenly, I didn't work anymore! So, I needed to do something while being at home. Then I found this old small loom in a thrift store, but I didn't know how to use it. I found an old book that explained it and then I just tried it out. I made many



Gracelyn Dress
"Collection 08" by Nicklas Skovgaard

mistakes in the beginning but as time passed, I learned how to work the loom. I found it really peaceful in a way, just sitting by myself, using my hands and the yarn, creating small pieces of fabric. It was peaceful and quiet—in a way that made my mind think about something else. The process of teaching myself was *really* intuitive! I tried to look it up online or in old books but as I went along, it all came together by itself. One thing I learned in this process of teaching myself was the importance of using my *hands* and living the life I want to live. It was like a sign that [before] I was not doing the right thing.

C.B. Your journey into weaving and creating your own textiles is intriguing. Weaving, as you mentioned, is very therapeutic—using your hands and creating something out of nowhere. Let's say that it gives your designs a more personal and meaningful approach. How has this “hands-on” approach influenced your design and brand philosophy?

N.S. It has had a significant impact from the very beginning. Mainly because the brand grew out of nothing. It grew very much from just being in my studio every day, working with these textiles and eventually being able to craft a jacket, and then craft a skirt. It was a *slow* process! So, from the beginning, it had a very heavy influence. It was such a *personal* experience. It was also a healing process which makes it even more personal.

C.B. One of the characteristics of your designs is that you often use unexpected combinations of materials and textures. How did you start combining these?

N.S. From the beginning, it was only the hand-woven textiles. I was weaving fabric and the fabric I weave is quite heavy. At some point, I had this urge to see these hand-woven fabrics in combination with other fabrics. Something interesting happens to a full look when you see different textures working together. Hand-woven fabric can complement a basic jersey. I think the combination and the opposite materials are an

important part of my work today.

C.B. What is the most innovative combination you have made?

N.S. Many people from the industry see



it as something quite innovative and new, even though it's such an old tool and an old way of making fabric. So I don't feel like I invented something new. I'm simply using an old craft tradition. I incorporate new materials into the weaving; for example, I mix the fabric you use for making bathing sponges in the loom with wool and mohair. Putting these two materials together, because they're so opposite, creates this really interesting fabric that has a lot of depth. You can see the different textures inside one fabric, and I think that is one of the fabrics I use most. It's not a fabric that you can go buy in a store. It's something quite unique because it's made here in my studio.

C.B. Are there specific materials that you prioritize in your creations?

N.S. I use quite a lot of natural materials, like wool and cotton. I also use a lot of after-treatment. For example, I use this metal brush to make the fabric even more alive, so it's fluffier and has a little bit more texture. I also love this combination of working with something that's based on nature, like silk or wool or cotton, but then mixed with fabrics that are man-made, like polyester.

C.B. Do you have a specific material combination that you found particularly challenging and one that you found was the most surprising?

N.S. A good example of a challenging one is this fishing line with this heavy wool. I made a few samples of this fabric and the look of it was so nice! It moves in a way that is hard to describe. But these two materials don't really go together. The fishing line and the wool is so slippery! So, as soon as you take it off the loom, it falls apart. But once it's on the loom, it just looks beautiful! That combination I found really challenging because I was somehow pushing the boundaries of what the loom could *actually* be doing. And it hasn't worked out yet. So, hopefully, someday, I'll find a way of working with this.

C.B. Your work draws inspiration from various sources, from Baroque portraiture to Madonna's music videos. How do you balance these historical influences with modern

and more contemporary sources to create a cohesive collection?

N.S. Whenever I start working on a new collection, I try not to put any boundaries to my inspiration sources. Whatever gets my attention, I just take it in and use it somehow. So, I will answer your question by saying that I try *not* to balance them too much! This is because creating a collection or a piece of clothing is so vulnerable in a way and is driven by *who* I am. I try to put all these elements into a box of inspiration. I also work with many historical references; clothes are nothing new. I'm just referencing old things that were in the past. But to make it relevant today, you need to have something that talks about the world in 2024, which is the world I live in. I have been influenced a lot by pop culture because I like music. Baroque art is also very interesting—all these small signs on the clothes with their significant meanings. So, I *try* to balance them sparingly, but when it comes out as a final collection, it will be put together in a *balanced* way.

C.B. Are there other pop cultural references you'd like to visit for inspiration?

N.S. Yes, the 1980s! I was born in the early '90s so I never lived in the '80s. But I have this fascination because when I was a child, I used to hear my mother

explain a lot about when she was young in the '80s—what music she listened to and the clothes she wore. So, I have this complete fascination with pop culture in the '80s! And Madonna is also from the '80s but she's one of those artists who have stayed for a long time.

C.B. Part of the creative process is to be able to communicate a little bit about yourself or your ideas in a design. How do you transform your personal experiences and memories into a design or a collection?

N.S. First of all, the brand has my name on it. So, of course, it's a *very* personal thing! [Laughs] The collection and the pieces are created as I live my everyday life. I have good days and bad days, and on the good days, I might create a dress; on a bad day, it might be a black jacket. This is a very personal journey, and, from the beginning, the brand was driven by the people I work with. It's also based on the friends that I have. One of my best friends is a photographer who shoots many of my images. We see each other daily and this also influences the brand.

C.B. Are there specific themes, narratives, places or ideas that you find yourself constantly revisiting and exploring in your collections?

N.S. The main thing I return to is my mother. She was really the one who introduced me to fashion when I was a child. We grew up in a small town in the countryside of Denmark, and there were no fancy stores or anything. But she had her own style; she always tried a lot of different looks. Looking at it now, she played a lot with characters. When she was going out, she was almost doing it very conceptually. I have a lot of images of her. It's nice for me to return to my mother's life and how her experiences transformed her look since she was young. She used to do Jane Fonda-type gymnastics when I was a child and I used to go with her. She

would teach people this and she used to wear these '80s bodysuits. So she was the first to introduce me to fashion and exploring your identity through what you wear.



C.B. When you present your collections to your mother, does she see herself in some of the pieces?

N.S. I think she does. She also has a lot of pieces that I've made for her. I went for Christmas and gave her this bright red jersey dress she was really into. It's a dress that you need to be able to pull off, but she really *wanted* that dress! For me, it's about *pushing* the boundaries of what I create. Because when I was

a child, she *pushed* the boundaries of what she wore. So I think she also sees herself in many of the pieces.

C.B. Part of being a designer is transmitting a narrative, transporting people into a specific time and place, and sometimes making them travel through different realities. How do you achieve that through a collection, runway shows, or a campaign?

N.S. Part of my brand philosophy is to

transform the viewer or the wearer into a dreamlike state, where you *forget* the world around you for some time. When you put on a dress and get a certain feeling. When I was a child, I would see a fashion show from the Millennium—those massive old-style fashion shows—and I would *transform* myself into the world of that show or that designer. The way I do it is to build a strong narrative around the brand and use a cast close to myself, like my friends. But I also did a show in August with only one model! I had this really strong idea that I wanted people to come to the show and step into my world for just 15 minutes. I had all of these small details that I wanted to put into the way people actually see the brand. So, it's very personal putting all these things together to create *my* world. It could be a color, a particular cut, or a specific material that I'm obsessed with at the moment.

C.B. Preparing a collection implies having a deep knowledge of trends and garment construction, but it is also important to understand the current state of the world, the social sphere, and even the economic sphere. What aspects of your cultural and social surroundings play an important role when you create a design and define the specific aesthetic you want?

N.S. An example of this, and also something that really started to grow in my brand, is that there has been a focus on new talent and craftsmanship, which has had a *huge* impact on my brand. Today, it's about niche brands. It's not just about creating a major brand anymore; it's also about doing something that has the *right* to be in this world. Spend time creating good garments and have a big focus on craftsmanship.

C.B. Are there specific cultural or geographical influences that have played a significant role in shaping your design perspective?

N.S. I live in Copenhagen. It's not a big city, and the weather is freezing, so





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we wear a lot of practical clothes. My designs are not always just practical; they’re also something else. It’s about stepping into a world where you *forget* what’s around you! My brand would be very different if I was based in Paris. Of course, it played a big part in shaping my artistic or creative vision because this is where I grew up and what I’ve seen all my life. Another thing that shaped me a lot is that I grew up in the millennium when the internet grew. We had this stationary computer at home, and then, all of a sudden, all these blogs came around, like Tumblr. At the time, the fashion industry was centered more on big European cities and the States. When I was around 10 or 12, the fashion world opened up to me because you could *share* your clothes online. The fashion industry opened up!

C.B. When it comes to creating, it is easy to feel inspired when seeing new places, but do you feel inspired by the calmness of your own home?

N.S. I haven’t traveled for four years, since before COVID came to Denmark. So, I’ve stayed in this city for a long time now and would love to go on a vacation soon. But with all of the situations around COVID, which made the whole world go into lockdown, you couldn’t be traveling. So I started looking for inspiration, and the place I would be going every day was my own home, studio, or thrift store just across the street—small, everyday places. So, for the past few years, I’ve really tried to look for inspiration in the place where I’m living. It’s also more personal. When I travel, I don’t feel calm. I feel like I need to figure out this new city. Meanwhile, when I’m here in my everyday life, I feel very calm, and I feel like I’m more *open* to finding inspiration.

C.B. How do you balance staying true

to your artistic vision and meeting the demands of the fashion industry?

N.S. That’s also a very *new* thing to me! Even though the brand has existed for a few years, it has really grown quite a lot in the past year. It’s like a journey at the moment. I am still trying to figure out an answer to exactly how I do it. If we have a new retailer or a new demand in the fashion industry, I try to think if this is the direction I want to go in. I take a step back and try not to get overwhelmed by the fashion industry’s demand—sometimes because it’s also such a fast-paced industry where everything is going too fast. Also, in Copenhagen, things are calmer, which helps balance the artistic vision and meets the demands of the fashion industry.

C.B. You mentioned earlier that you used to work in interior design. Are there elements from interior design that you borrowed to create your brand?

N.S. Again, it’s very much about texture—the kind of fabrics you put into your home. There’s this big difference because when you buy a piece of furniture, you want to keep it for a very long time, and it’s something that you take care of, and you know it’s something where you really invest a lot of money. That’s something that I translate into my pieces. How do I create something you want to keep for a long time? Like when you buy art, you know it’s something you want to *keep*. And that has to do with creating a world around the brand, where a dress is more than just a dress. It’s a whole feeling when you put it on; it’s something you want to *cherish* and *keep* for a long time! And that is also an element I got from working with interior design: you see a

piece of clothing almost like an object you could be walking around with daily.

C.B. Yes, you’re right! Interior design works with a different schedule to fashion. You change your clothing every day, but you don’t change your furniture every day, and fashion is trying to go a little bit more into the pace of interior design, which is slower and more thoughtful.

N.S. Yes! Another thing is that some of the most iconic pieces of furniture were designed 50 to 60 years ago—and they *never* go out of style! It’s something that stays there forever. It’s so fascinating! How could you translate this into clothes? Of course, there are also pieces of clothing with the same iconic feeling, like a Chanel jacket that you put into your children’s wardrobe when they become old enough! And I hope that we see this more in the future.

C.B. How do you see your designs and brand evolving in the future, especially in the context of changing fashion trends and what is considered “popular”?

N.S. I really hope that this journey I’ve been on for the past two and a half years will continue as it has been—because it’s been a *slow* process! It’s also been about *feelings*: How do I *feel* about doing this? How do I *feel* about this design? And about this collection going in this direction? I hope to evolve the look of the collections and also the pieces so that it slowly takes its own direction in a way where I’m not trying to plan too much. One of the really important parts of working with design and creating a collection is trusting your intuition.

Conversation edited by
SAMANTHA MAYER

“Part of my brand philosophy is to transform the viewer or the wearer into a dreamlike state, where you *forget* the world around you for some time.” – Nicklas Skovgaard



Gabriella Dress
"Collection 08" by Nicklas Skovgaard



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