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## Sculptor Nicole Farhi Loves a Good Nude

Ahead, we chat about her remarkable work ethic, interest in the human form, and her latest exhibition at Beaux Arts in London.

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Designer-turned-sculptor Nicole Farhi has spent her career dressing women in her Mediterranean-inspired designs. Now, as her solo exhibit *Nicole Farhi: Folds* opens at the Beaux Arts Gallery in London's Mayfair neighborhood, the artist chats with *L'Officiel USA* about how her current work—which she left her eponymous brand seven years ago to devote herself to—is all about undressing them.

Farhi's transition into art was more of a return to her roots rather than a new endeavor. In fact, she believes she has always been more passionate about

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the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere. She moved to London in the 1770s and worked for with then-husband Stephen Marks at French Connection before launching her own womenswear brand, Nicole Farhi, on the French Connection label in 1983. The brand went on to expand its signature laid back elegance into menswear and home decor.

During her years in fashion, she continued doing sculpture on the side. Today, after officially trading textiles for clay, Farhi's exhibit explores the wondrous beauty of the female body in a different context. Without the distraction of clothing, Farhi's sculptures invite viewers to experience the curves and textures of the female body through a fragmented point of view. Her Jesmonite and bronze pieces, which often depict the torso in unusual positions, reveal the body's resemblance with natural phenomena such as waves or sand dunes. Art-lovers can catch *Folds*, Nicole Farhi's "antidote to fashion," at the Beaux Arts London (48 Maddox Street) from January 31 to March 2.

Cybele, 2018



**How do you go about celebrating the female body in your artistic practice? Does it differ from how you envisioned it when you were working as a designer?**

As a designer, I spent many years dressing women. As a sculptor, I am undressing them. I am showing them without any artifice but in all their glorious beauty. This show is obviously an artistic antidote to the ephemeral fashion. It is a study and an ode to the female beauty may be in a way that has not been shown before. We just don't notice our own form, and the idea of what is or isn't beautiful is cliché and boring. I want us to look at ourselves anew.

**What were you trying to highlight by portraying these bodies as fragmented?**

Each study of a part of the body is an evocation of the whole. By deciding to only show fragments, I want to show how expressive, beautiful and unexpected each part of our bodies are. They are unique and distinctive. Oddly, completion can often stop us seeing, not help.

**What feelings and emotions do you hope your exhibit evokes in those who view it?**

I have been told my work is moving it is tactile and very sensual. Some see in it abstract shapes, others see shapes of dunes, mountains, ripples of the sea. I overheard someone saying it was a feminist work. I think I can say the work is leaving no one indifferent.

**Tell me what your sculpting process is like. What do you do to get to a good place creatively?**

The models come and sit for me several times, during these sessions I make little maquettes in clay, and I get to know their body, I decide which is the part I want to give my attention to. I take photographs, blow them up, draw on them the limits of the area I will cast. Then the models come back for a lifecasting session, which is comparatively quick because the different medium I use cure very quickly. A first mold is made in which I will get my first plaster cast which is unique. The foundry will later make a rubber mold in order to make an edition of the work which will be cast in bronze or Jesmonite a hard resin sometimes mixed with marble powder.

**Onwards, is the female body something you would like to continue exploring, or do you have new concepts in mind?**

My primal interest will always be the human form, and the emotion it elicits.



'Nicole Farhi: Folds' is on view at Beaux Arts London now through March 2.

For more information, visit the Nicole Farhi [website](#) and the Beaux Arts [website](#)

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