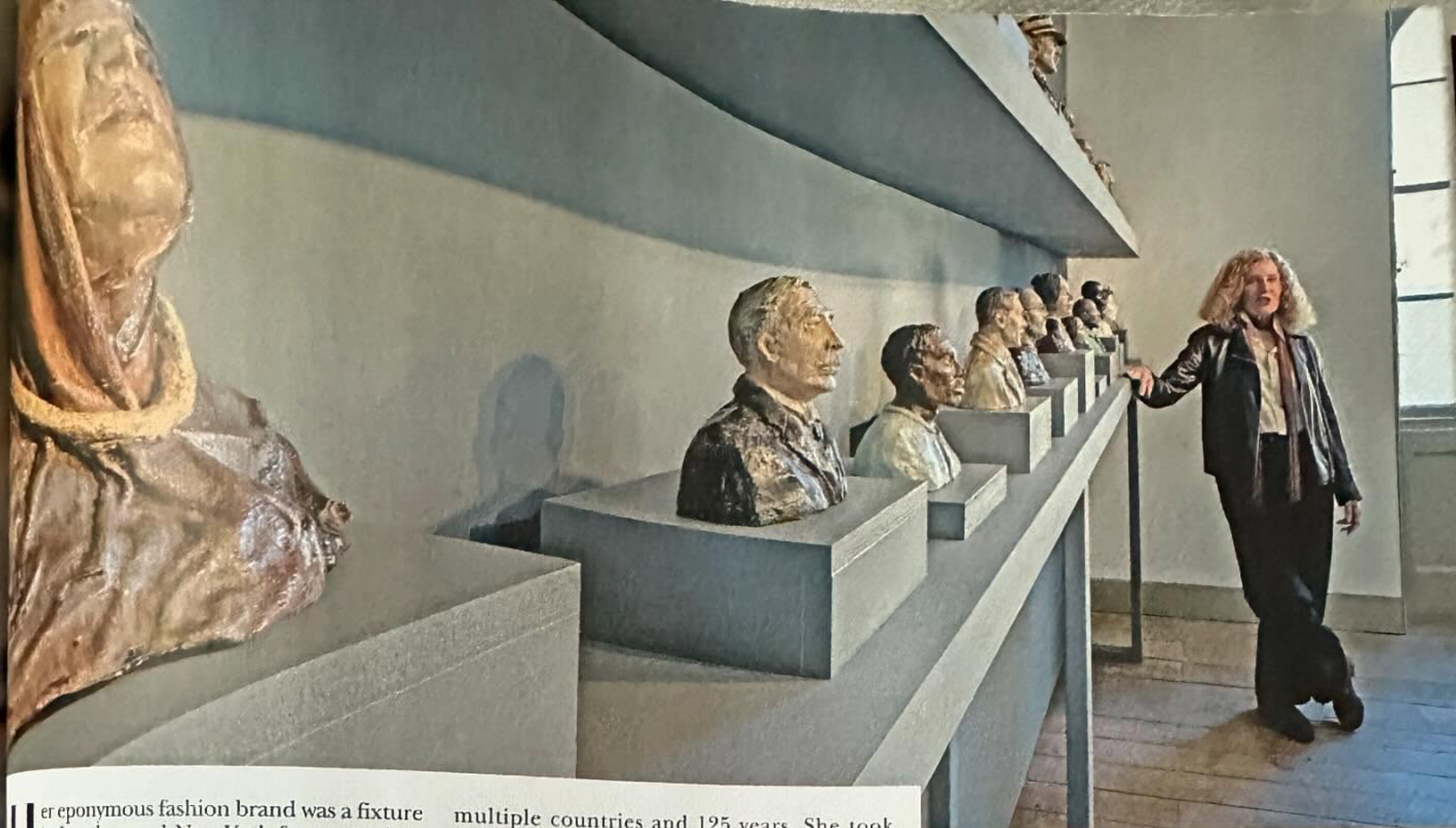


A full-page photograph of Nicole Farhi, an older woman with voluminous, curly, light-colored hair. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. She is wearing a bright blue button-down shirt under a black zip-up jacket. A black leather strap with a silver buckle is slung over her right shoulder. She is holding a small, dark object in her hands. The background is a workshop or studio filled with various sculptures and art pieces on shelves and tables. The lighting is warm and focused on her.

# SCULPTING GREAT STORIES

*Designer turned ceramicist Nicole Farhi explains why she's moved from fashion to art, how her new exhibition pays tribute to lost children – and why her daughter buys her clothes*





Her eponymous fashion brand was a fixture in London and New York for more than 30 years, but these days, you are far more likely to find Nicole Farhi wearing overalls and covered in clay than sitting in a front row.

The celebrated fashion designer hung up her tape measure and scissors years ago, and for the past two decades has turned her creative talents to an alternative career as a sculptor.

"I have no interest in fashion these days," Nicole tells **HELLO!** in this exclusive interview. "My daughter is the one who encourages me to take an interest in clothes – she often buys them for me."

"The work and life of a sculptor involve working alone most days. It's physical work and can be messy, so I would describe my wardrobe as more functional than fashionable these days."

For the past two decades, Nicole – who also goes by her married name, Lady Hare – has been creating busts of a variety of famous figures, from artists Francis Bacon and Thomas Gainsborough to Sigmund Freud and her friend Dame Anna Wintour, editor-in-chief of *Vogue*.

"Essentially, I'm drawn to people who have changed lives," says Nicole, who has been married to playwright Sir David Hare for 33 years.

"I started doing these little busts for my husband when he wrote a play called *The Judas* about Oscar Wilde. As a present for the first night, I made a little head of Oscar Wilde."

"When he adapted *The Seagull* at [London's] National Theatre, I gave him a bust of Anton Chekhov. And I celebrated his new version of *The Master Builder* with a bust of Henrik Ibsen."

"We are very supportive of each other's work. I was the first to read his scripts and screenplays; he was the first to see and discuss my sculptures."

Nicole's latest work – 25 hand-sculpted ceramic busts depicting victims of miscarriages of justice – is now on display in West London in a new exhibition called *J'Accuse...* among the guests at a special preview of the

multiple countries and 125 years. She took inspiration for the title from French writer Emile Zola's famous open letter to his country's President, which exposed antisemitism and the unlawful jailing of Jewish army officer Captain Alfred Dreyfus in 1898 for being a German spy.

Along with Alfred, the collection includes busts of Timothy Evans, whose wrongful execution helped abolish capital punishment in the UK, and George Stinney, who at 14 was the youngest person executed in the US in the 20th century.

"The children resonate most with me," she says. "Their deaths should never have happened."

#### CAREER CHANGE

Born in France to Jewish-Turkish parents, Nicole, 78, found success in the fashion industry as head designer at French Connection, before launching her brand with co-founder Stephen Marks, the father of her daughter Candice, who is vice-president at creative agency Art Partner.

She and David are grandparents to Candice's two children, as well as five more on David's side.

By the time she sold her company in 2010, she had been sculpting as a hobby for some time, having been taught by British sculptors Jean Gibson and her friend Sir Eduardo Paolozzi.

"The transition was a natural evolution rather than an abrupt shift," says Nicole, who believes that her dressmaking skills have helped her adapt.

"You could say that my training and background in draping and shaping fabric translates into moulding and working with clay."

"I bring a strong sense of form, movement and texture to my sculptures."

Nicole completes some of the works in just one week, while others take three to four. And finding out about her subjects' lives before sculpting them helps her create a special connection.

"This new exhibition is the most personal and deeply felt of all," she says. "The least we can do is remember and honour these victims." **H**

INTERVIEW: TRACY SCHAEVERIEN



Nicole shares a joke with her