

# The Inner Beauty of Philosophy | Interview with Victoria Maddocks

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**MiND had the pleasure of meeting with Victoria Maddocks, Vice President of Creative & Merchandising at [Philosophy](#) – a brand that is warm, inviting and full of heart and passion. And Victoria is no different. Her love for the brand as well as design and nature comes out not only in her work but in her life as well. We met at the Philosophy store in the Oculus, in Downtown NYC. A store that is beautiful and inviting but the more you learn, the more you see how truly special the store and the brand really are. We left with a new found appreciation for Philosophy thanks to Victoria's wealth of knowledge of beauty, design, aesthetics and art. To know more about Victoria and her inspirations, read our Q&A with her below!**



philosophy at the oculus

## **You have a degree in graphic design. What eventually led you to the world of branding, retail, and beauty?**

I grew up in the UK in the '80s when there was a great music and fashion scene – remember Fiorucci and Vivienne Westward... TV shows like, *Dallas*, *Top of the Pops* and *Style with Elsa Klensch* – all of which influenced pop culture and me at the time. I also went to furniture auctions and art shows with my dad. As a child I learned all things craft. By about the age of 8, I was creating: from spinning (with yarn!), sewing, screen printing, making pottery and experimenting with batik... My first experience with graphic design was seeing New Order album covers and realizing that this could be a job!

## **Why Philosophy? What drew you to the brand?**

I love brands that have the ability to really connect with their customers.

Philosophy has an authentic story – and uses poetry (philosophies) and inspirational messaging as a means to start a conversation, which for us, really starts on the package. When this is done well, it can resonate with an audience and allows us to strengthen that emotional connection across all the brand touch points.

The design is also quite simple and minimalistic so that appealed to me from an aesthetic standpoint. I was given an almost blank canvas to update the brand, I was asked to just keep the logo and the lowercase type. I love evolving brands from a 360° standpoint as my experience spans one side: videos, digital, social media and packaging – to the other side: store design and visual merchandising, so my team and I can impact all consumer touch points and that keeps the brand story coherent.

For me, once a brand starts to look more alluring and sales start climbing, well that is really rewarding!



philosophy at oculus

## Can you describe the retail experience that customers have when entering a Philosophy store?

We call our store the ‘*wellbeing workshop*’ as we want it to be a place where you can learn more about yourself, discover products that impact your skin health and make you *look good* – as well as a place that makes you *feel great*. A place that is welcoming, relaxing and engaging – a home away from home. In street locations we added a “philosopher’s bench” to the exterior facade that encourages a feeling of community and camaraderie.

As she enters the store, we want the soft lighting to soothe her. An oversized sink is a central feature which resembles a community fount where she can experiment with the products. If she wants to explore on her own, the fixtures are designed to allow her to discover the philosophy skincare regimen through cleanse, peel, and treat. The fixtures are embedded with videos and we recently added a new tech feature – consumer generated content –so she can see what other customers think about the products. She can also enjoy the grace scent collection for a full multi-sensory experience. In the New York store, she can customize an amazing grace label with her very *own* philosophy.

Given that gratitude is one of our core values, you can enjoy a meditation of gratitude, narrated by wellbeing ambassador Gabby Bernstein. It’s set to a 360° landscape in Arizona, as if you’re actually there.

Her journey concludes at the gifting area where she can customize a gift with one of the ribbons – all of which have different philosophies for every possible life event.

There she’s also reminded of our mission to give back – which we do through our hope & grace initiative. To date, we have donated over \$4M to mental wellness charities and helped over countless women all over the US.



Victoria Maddocks at Gates Pass

**Some of Philosophy's brand values are: making women have beautiful days, generosity, confidence, charity, community and beauty. How do you apply these values to your job and on a personal level?**

The brand values should be intertwined in just every piece of communication. We want to inspire women to feel confident of course, not just in their physical beauty, but their inner beauty. Many brands do this now, but our

founder was really at the forefront of this 22 years ago. She studied color therapy (and the seven chakras) and the importance of balancing our emotional well being with the physical, as she truly believed that if you feel good then you generally look great.

Going beyond that, it's about having a very clear brand purpose, which for us is the hope & grace initiative. Through these charitable endeavors, we want to inspire our customers to go out into the world and do good. We try to create this synergy of feeling, looking, and doing great – hopefully inspiring our customers to do the same.

In addition to our charity, kindness and gratitude are deeply rooted in our core. I find it refreshing to work on a brand that embodies both strength and softness – which really engages our customers and followers.

### **Where do you look for inspiration?**

Art, fashion, music, architecture, social media and history – also lively conversations around the dinner table!



Victoria Maddocks at Seven Falls

**What career achievement or life achievement are you most proud of to date?**

I'm proud of everything that I've done in my career! I started my career at the age of 21 as an art director for *Southbeach Magazine*. It was a niche, Miami-based fashion and lifestyle magazine when Southbeach was on the cusp of change. We approached fashion and beauty in a different way and it became nationally distributed after three issues. In retrospect, I was naïve and had no

idea what I was doing, which can be a total plus!

Another career highlight was working for Gucci. Tom Ford was among the most inspirational of leaders I have had the privilege to work for. He taught me that you really can't compromise brand aesthetics and in order to keep your core customer, year on year, you must be consistent and clear with your story and maintain the quality of your products. Our budgets were pretty great which is always fun from a design standpoint!

My tenure and contribution to Kiehl's was perhaps my most impactful from a brand-building and revenue-driving stand point with year on year double digit growth. Kiehl's became the fastest growing brand in L'Oréal during my tenure and during that time I was responsible for launching over 300 points of sale (stores, shop-in-shops, and counters) and launching the brand in 35 global markets. We built everything in that company from scratch from design to process, while seamlessly modernizing the brand to be more relevant for global expansion. I built an in-house design team who lived and expressed the brand ethos.

Now, at this point at Philosophy, I could not be more proud. While I still have work to do, the brand is much more modern, relevant and true to its core today. This has been my most challenging of all my career endeavors. We simultaneously redesigned every brand touch point while fueling and managing a fast-paced, multi-channel business – ensuring that all cylinders are firing for QVC, wholesale distribution and e-commerce. I led the development and design for our new free-standing stores – which included me camping out in a hard hat on the construction site as well as staying up half the night to ensure we passed fire inspections!

We have also completely created a new media approach for the brand that is resonating and indexing far above industry standards. Taking our social media, namely Instagram, to new heights is now a focus, as is sharpening our 3D packaging so the product –although minimalist is really beautiful. Oh, and a new website which will be more of a brand site than a shopping site... all of



this to come soon.







## **How do you see the future of branding and store design evolving, specifically in the beauty industry?**

The blurring of digital and the brick and mortar arena is quite an interesting evolution. The physical brick and mortar retail business is changing rapidly and has to become more competitive because she can shop in a few clicks from her phone now.

The US has the most amount of retail stores per capita in the world – and the recent shrink in retail was likely inevitable given the proliferation of stores and increasing online competition. Now, we have to give people a reason to go to a store and give them fun experiences. It's human nature to love being excited (and by all the 5 senses) and generally people like interaction with each other. So, if you get retail right, it's much more fun than shopping on your phone. But clearly for a busy working people, the convenience of online shopping gives us the freedom to spend our free time how we want, which is fantastic.

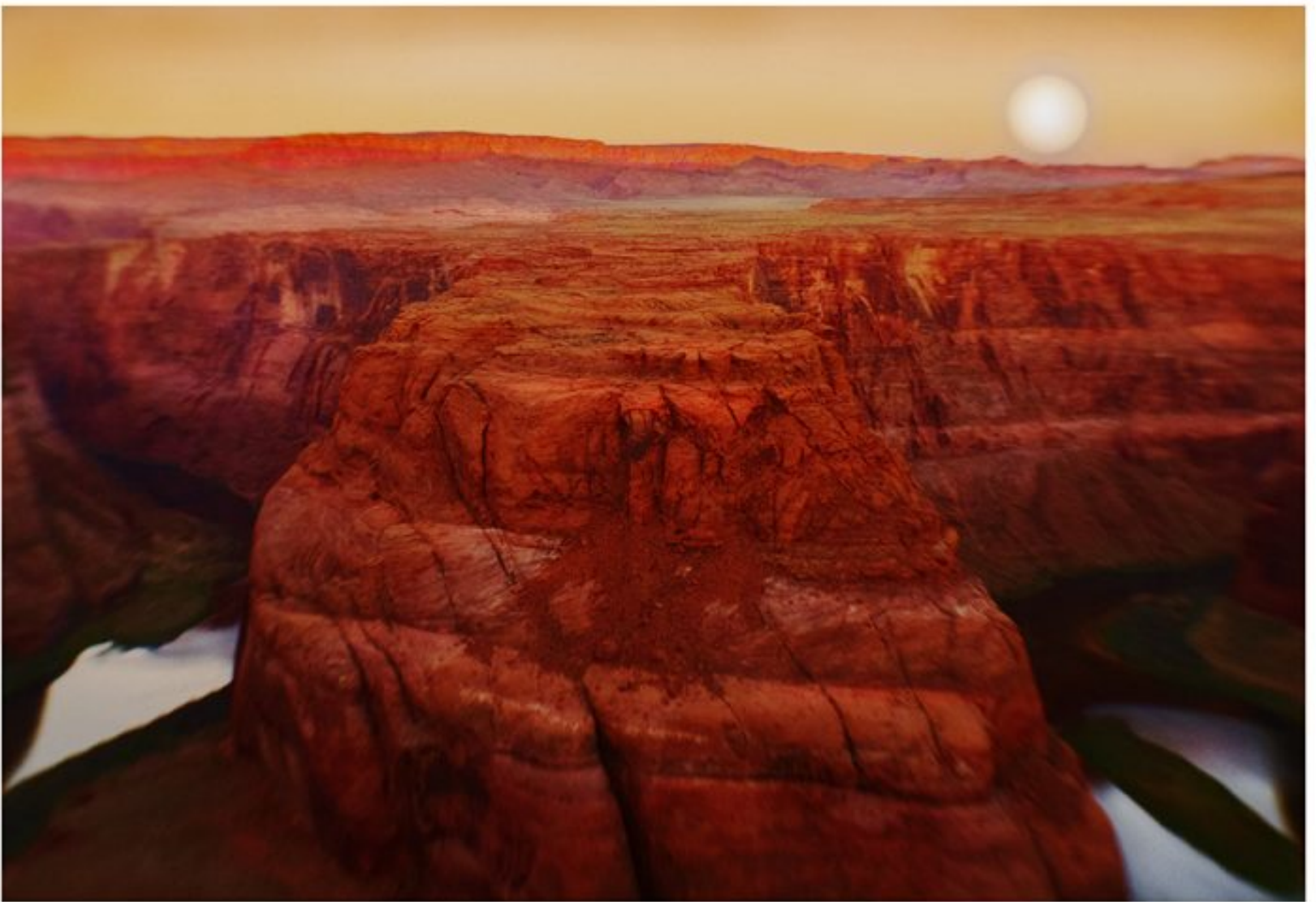
The beauty arena allows customers to play with and touch products in a way that you just can't online so it's quite exciting to think about different ways to connect through textures, scents, engaging all the senses. You can also incorporate great new technologies in a way that become part of the retail seduction. In our most recent New York store, we added a large monitor that displays dancing poetry which the customer can write herself... it's really quite beautiful.

Both physical stores and the convenience of shopping online have a place, but like building any great brand – do it well, or don't bother!

**More and more beauty brands are integrating digital devices into their stores, to build a better customer experience/interactive services. How is Philosophy responding to this? And what innovations (digital or not) is Philosophy using to revolutionize their stores/experiences?**

We've actually introduced a skin diagnostic tool, which gives our customers a better understanding of their skin health – like sun damage or skin dryness. These devices give the customer more power, so she can learn about her physical health, as the skin is the magic armor that protects us from harm... We introduced a custom label app that allows her to write her own philosophy on a fragrance bottle and a new user-generated content feature that allows her to see what other customers think of products. This puts the power in the hands of the customer to decide what products they like for themselves.









**You were born in the UK, live in NYC, speak French and like to travel a lot. How has this worldliness affected the way you live and work?**

We live in a multicultural world. I deal with customers of every age group and every ethnic background and gender. Having a worldliness and being open-minded helps me understand customer needs and ensure that communication between a brand and customer is relevant and that products are really catering to what people want.

**What piece of advice do you have for people just starting out in their careers in the cosmetics industry?**

Oh my what a question! Be curious! Start from the ground up and become savvy about the particular sector of the business that you want to become a part of. Have an open mind, get out into the street and look at the



competition. Being an avid consumer is key... this business is constantly changing... be comfortable with change and embrace it. Be passionate because doing something well requires blood, sweat, and tears – as does becoming proficient in any area of expertise. It really takes a lifetime to become knowledgeable in a particular craft. Surround yourself with people that you can learn from and who you respect. And have fun! We spend a lot of time working so you better love it.







