

HINSDALE LIVING

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Custom Couture



Need a one-of-a-kind creation to wear to your next charity gala? With a new design studio in downtown Hinsdale, Cameroon native Nathalie Loma brings her international style and glamour to the western suburbs. PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBIN SUBAR

When Hinsdale-based fashion designer Nathalie Loma was just two-months-old in the country of Cameroon, her father suddenly passed away. This personal tragedy served as the catalyst for Loma's eventual career.

"Losing my father created financial hardships for my mother and I," explains Loma. "To make ends meet, my mother taught herself to sew and became both a seamstress and dressmaker specializing in African fabric and special event clothing. I grew up watching my mother provide for our family by making beautiful clothes for others."

This, Loma shares, is how she fell in love with fashion.

Loma recalls seeing her mother look at fabric and ask what it wanted, as if she knew the garment would speak back to her. Loma incorporates the same philosophy into her own work as a designer.

“My inspiration comes from the voice of the fabrics,” says Loma. “When I touch a fabric, I have an idea of the perfect design for it.”

Loma specializes in custom design so she also sources inspiration from her clients, including their body types, shapes, and skin tones, which aids in selecting what kind of design, fabrics and colors to use in their project.

“If they can dream it, then I can bring it to life,” says Loma. “My designs give every woman the opportunity to make a unique statement.”

Most often, clients utilize Loma for her expertise in special events, like weddings, charity galas, proms and homecomings, media appointments, and red carpet appearances. Loma has a hand in setting the seasonal trends, and she expects to see more ruffle sleeves and dresses, and stripes and florals with the spirit of the ‘80s for spring/summer 2017.

Loma’s designs have appeared locally, nationally, and internationally on shows like Good Morning America, FOX & Friends, Windy City Live!, the Steve Harvey Show, and You & Me This Morning.

To further serve her growing clientele, Loma will open a studio in Hinsdale this spring. “I prayed for a bigger and better location where there is a need for my services,” says Loma. “My friend Gail, the owner of Ma Belle Avenue, shared with me a perfect space for my studio in the building next to her boutique. Now, Hinsdale has a local fashion designer for their custom designs!”

The studio is currently appointment only, as the custom design process can take anywhere from three to six weeks, including fabric selection, design, and fitting. Loma loves to spend time with each client, getting to understand her wants and needs, her current style and taste preferences, and to make her feel special.

“I understand many women have never even considered a custom-made dress,” says Loma. “Most people think it is unaffordable, but I make sure it’s attainable for all.”

Loma has truly made a home in Hinsdale and notes YiaYia’s as a favorite spot for breakfast and for their friendly service and Casa Margarita for their (what else?) margaritas. She is also a member of the Hinsdale Junior Woman’s Club (HJWC), a community service organization that strives to enrich its community, the lives of its members and their families. Through the HJWC, Loma serves as a leader of volunteer and philanthropic service and works with the Club to identify, support and financially contribute to charities and organizations in need.

A commitment to philanthropy permeates all aspects of Loma’s life, and she donates 10 percent of each purchase to UNICEF, an organization that provides humanitarian and developmental assistance to children in developing countries.

“As a single parent, my mother gave me all the love and support that I needed, and she taught me to share and give back,” says Loma. “Being somewhat of an orphan, I wanted to give back to an organization that supports children and mothers.”

Because of her mother's support, Loma was able to pursue a better life through education and in 2006, she moved to the United States to study journalism and broadcasting. In that same spirit, Loma currently mentors high school students to encourage them to follow their dreams.

After her graduation, Loma hosted red carpet events, fashion shows and worked as a fashion writer. But with the passion to become a designer, Loma rented a small workroom and spent every free moment designing and sewing for her line.

"I quickly realized my love for fashion was imbedded in my DNA," says Loma. "As much as I loved journalism, fashion became my driving force."

More than a decade later, Loma has plans to open more studios worldwide and says, "I am beyond excited that people are becoming educated in the world of fashion. I truly believe custom-made clothing will become the norm in the next five years!"

It would seem the time is now to book your first appointment.

For more information, please visit nathalieloma.com (<http://nathalieloma.com>) or visit the new downtown Hinsdale studio at 50 South Washington Street, Studio 201.



Nathalie Loma in her Hinsdale studio