



### *sweetpeas & gypsies* by *Nicole Dubensky*

*Written by Christina Romeo*

Nicole's display was warm, inviting, and matched her already sunshine-like self. With wooden displays, matched with a beach-like undertones, and her tapestry flowing in the wind to pull her display all together—it was a booth that caught your eye. There was a story waiting to come out, and Nicole was more than eager to share hers with me.

Nicole started making her jewelry six years ago. She moved to Puerto Rico for the winters, and would live in New York for the summer. She would collect shells and sea glass, which then lead to her making jewelry out of the shells and her drive to keep creating moved forward. She recalls always being a creative kid, but she would never consider herself an artist. Her first show was in Fire Island at Ocean Beach.

She started her business to fund and fuel a developing creative passion. She recalls always going to markets, where she was “always inspired by the people who made things there,” this led her to sell in markets today. She states, “...I sell wholesale in many stores, but I genuinely love to sell in the markets so that I can meet the people who will take a piece I created with them. It all just feels more authentic.” She always bought other people's jewelry, but then she started making her own. People would always compliment the shell jewelry she made, so eventually she made these pieces for them too. The love her customers have for her pieces propels her forward and allows her to experiment with different tools and materials as time goes on. Without her clientele, this would only be, as she puts it, “...a really expensive hobby.” Overall, her business mission is simple; to produce “Authentic, quality, meaningful jewels, handcrafted in the USA.”



Over time, her work has grown alongside with her. She states that it has shifted from “...the baby steps of wire wrapping shells, to using professional jewelry making tools, having a mentor, and a studio to make them in.” Her work has come a long way from the “small baby” it once was. Nicole pointed out one of her more simpler designed necklaces as her favorite. She said, “It’s an everyday piece, but I always feel happy making it.” She also motioned towards the rings as being another favorite piece to make. The rings are a little more complicated because she has to bust out her soldering tools to make them and “...all the intricacies that go into it.” She states, “There are many phases where the [rings] look like an ugly duckling until it's polished and the stone is set, then all the hard work comes to light. It’s gratification at its finest.”



Her primary passions are surfing and music. Her jewelry business has been able to support her “surfing lifestyle.” This means that she can continue to afford living in Puerto Rico during the winters and surf their warm ocean-waves. She continues to make jewelry there and sell the in those markets. She is grateful to have “...the freedom to live where I want to live and chase waves.”

If interested in her work, you can visit her website at [www.sweetpeasandgypsies.com](http://www.sweetpeasandgypsies.com) or email her at [sweetpeas.and.gypsies@gmail.com](mailto:sweetpeas.and.gypsies@gmail.com).