

Penny Long

Written by Written by Corbin Chamberlin

I was 15 years old when I first visited Electric Ladyland, a store of overwhelming glamour—one that force-fed your eyes with shimmer and sparkle. Electric Ladyland teased and tingled every creative nerve in my youthful body; I had seen nothing like it before. What laid before me when I first entered the store was a plethora of jeweled, studded, embroidered and feathered treasures. Almost seizing-up on first look, my flamboyant mind was intoxicated with the merchandise. I thought to myself “Who is responsible for such a blissful creation?” As I examined every single article, I saw her. The one who was accountable for this palace of rhinestone rapture: Penny Long.



Long stood in glistening light of a crystal chandelier which was overflowing with pearls and other trinkets: her hair golden and untamed, Chanel shades that were dark as obsidian and a smile that could pierce the most bitter shrew. I was captivated by this woman and what she had created, I was most eager to say hello but did not want to come across as odd. I quickly picked up two brooches and asked her which of the two I should purchase. She replied, “That one, without a doubt. It is so you.” She had pointed to a maltese cross that was encrusted with pearls and rhinestones. Without second thought, it was charged and bagged and the love affair began.

Always being on the elaborate and flamboyant side myself, I always understood what Long was doing with Electric Ladyland. It was a breath of fresh air in the mundane grey-and-white jungle that is sometimes Arizona’s fashion scene. Where there is praise, there is ridicule and Long was no exception to this rule. People did not understand her vision and preference. Perhaps it is a matter of taste and Arizona was not ready to digest such an intricate person like Penny. The negative comments and reviews were steady, the people of vile remarks cried “gaudy, overpriced and showy.” Like a sparkle flees from a diamond without light, Long left Arizona swiftly and unannounced. One by one the stores that once housed the sea denim and other glittered things closed. Long has recently reemerged in California where she is burning up the town of Corona del Mar with her brilliant antique store and recently opened a 1stDibs online store where she carries exquisite high-end articles such as Hermes Birkins and gorgeous one-of-a kind couture. I would like to believe that one day Long will come back to Arizona with a vengeance and the local consumer will be more responsive to the tastemaker. When she does, she will rule the land of local retail with a rhinestone scepter and crocodile Birkin. Pennylongcouture.1stdibs.com.