

## » DESIGNER SPOTLIGHT

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SAMANTA JOSEPH //



## SAMANTA JOSEPH

**S**amanta Joseph didn't plan on becoming a shoe designer. But Joseph was always a bit picky about her shoes and got into the habit of creating her own — taking bits and pieces from one pair of shoes— bows or shoelaces, for example — and putting them on another pair to make her shoes unique. Now, as head of Samanta Shoes, Joseph, 33, is not only sharing her creative twists on footwear but serving a special niche market — large-size women's shoes. The 7-year-old company offers styles up to size 14 and can be found on most major shoe online retailer sites.

**Why shoes?** Every woman I know is into something. Some women are into bags. Some women are into shoes. If shoes are your thing, you have a vision of what you're looking for. I was always picky about my shoes. Always. I'd buy two pairs so I could take things off the one pair and put them on the other and get the shoes just how I wanted them. I just always loved the way you can make a statement with your shoes.

**How did you get into larger sizes?** After I started, a lot of women who were 11s and 12s started asking me about shoes in their sizes. Most lines only go up to a 10. So when I started doing some larger sizes, the word got out that I carried larger sizes ... We go from sizes 6 to 14. I did some research and I realized there was a gap in the market that wasn't being filled at the time. Now, I have a lot of customers, like basketball players, who rely on Samanta Shoes to accommodate their needs for whatever it is they're doing. These women want it all — the height, the comfort features in all of our shoes, the designs.





**What makes your designs unique?** I try to do designs that are classy and classic, clean but with a twist, with an edge. We do a range of heel heights for all the sizes because what I found from my customers is that taller women, women with bigger feet want the high heels too. But we also make sure all of our shoes have support for the arch to give that comfort to a woman with a flat foot and support to the woman with a high arch.

**What role does feedback play in your business?** I make changes based on the feedback I get from my customers. Women love it. They like seeing their ideas incorporated into the line.



I had a customer who was 80 and she told me she wanted to see more red print like a red croc print. She didn't want just a plain red shoe. Eighty years old! But I took her idea and ran with it. It did really well.

**How do you name your shoes?** I name pairs of shoes after the women who have supported me to

honor them. So all of Samanta Shoes are named after customers. People call and ask me if that's really true. Yes, it's true. It's my way of saying thank you. —Karyn D. Collins



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