

Overnight Success

by Summer Johnson



When KayOss designer Amy Johnson realized her passion wasn't for environmental engineering, she booked a sabbatical to study fashion design in Florence.

"Engineering was a great field but I never felt like I was using my own creative talents," said Johnson.

The first day of class, she fell head over heels for fabric, learned to sew, debuted her designs, and started selling. Ironically, Johnson's background in engineering provided the sole for her stride into fashion.

"It's a completely different career path, but the experience has taught me that art and science are strongly connected," said Johnson.

While inquiring about Johnson's design process, I learned that she integrates her first experience with fashion into all of her inventions. Rewinding a bit to her first day of class, Johnson reports that falling for the fabric was the force behind her decision to switch careers. Even now, it's all in the fabric, which prompts her design process.

"KayOss is made to be noticed and create conversation, either by movement, texture, eye-catching colors or an interesting print," said Johnson.

Johnson travels around the globe to hunt for fabric, so it's not shocking that I asked her how she manages globe-trotting, designing, and running KayOss—expecting it to be, well, chaotic.

"This is a second career for me, so first, I make sure everyone working for KayOss enjoys what they're doing. All of my seamstresses are local to St. Louis and sew at their own pace. All garments are delivered within a 2-3 week turnaround, so there is less

stress on my production", said Johnson.

A smaller amount of styles are produced, making each garment distinctive, and the best part? Many are made to fit since everyone's body type is different.

Johnson has moved her line into Chicago, Minneapolis, and a few other smaller cities, also hosting private trunk shows. Personally, this is my preferred venue for finding rare pieces (not to mention one of the best perks is meeting the designer).

She's also been elected to design a dress for Mallori Nicole to don while performing at the Presidential Holiday Party, being held at the White House. The future bodes well for Johnson, as fashion's upcoming patriot.

1. The Shadow Sequin Skirt doesn't quite live up to its name—public interest has shoved this piece into full focus for fall. Worn with a reversible charmeuse silk halter (definitely on my lust list). Top, \$129, skirt \$220, available at Valerie Mills Fine Apparel.

2. For effortless Parisian style, Johnson's ruffled twosome (yes, it's a top *and* a skirt!) is available at Boutique 83, but don't wait long, French chic has caused quite a bit of buzz this season. With its timeless appeal and sophistication, fans are simply oh-la-laing. Top and skirt \$139 each.

Model: Maggie Cadell
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