

MUSLIM GIRL

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SPRING FASHION ISSUE

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APRIL/MAY 2008
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Samira Atash

Fave Tunes:

Buddha Bar

Fave Movie:

Too many to list!

Fave Designers:

Oscar de la Renta, Anna Sui, Roberto Cavalli, Valentino

Career Highlight:

Media Coverage: *The Washington Post*, Oxygen Network, *National Geographic*. Two time nominee for Fashion Group International's RISING STAR AWARD. Design featured in *Men In Black II*

List of Clientele:

Designs sold to over 60 boutiques worldwide

samiraatash.com artizansarai.com

Why fashion? My mother and grandmother were very stylish ladies, so as a young girl they both were my inspirations. I was shy growing up, so clothes allowed me to express myself. As a youngster I learned to sew and draw illustrations which led me to view fashion as a potential career choice. My parents weren't too thrilled about this idea as it wasn't a "serious" field in our culture at the time. I put off the idea, graduated from college and worked in the corporate world. I felt confined, so I started dreaming of a way to embark on a fashion career. I had to pave the way for myself beginning with my original label SAMIRA in 2000, launching my maternity line in 2003 and the SAMIRA ATASH label in 2005.

What obstacles did you face, being a Muslim designer?

I'm a first-generation Afghan [immigrant] and we lived in the South for many years before I moved to New York City. There weren't many Afghans or Muslims living in the southern U.S. during the '80s. That made me resilient and proud of my identity. I do not

accept ignorance and intolerance towards anyone. It's hard enough to be a woman in this world but to be a Muslim/Afghan woman in the United States—and to be independent on top of that—definitely makes you strong.

As a fashion designer, I initially faced most obstacles from within my own community. Culturally speaking, it was hard to be taken seriously as an artist. Now, eight years later, I have established a brand and have proved that it can be done.

What career advice do you have for young designers?

I would say preparation is key. Get as much training/experience as possible before launching your own label. The industry is not as glamorous as it looks, and you have to be ready for plenty of competition, rejection and loneliness. Define yourself, your image and stick to it. Most importantly, don't let it consume you.

Has the post 9/11 world affected your take on fashion?

Definitely. September 11th happened and the fashion industry took a hit. I removed myself from the industry because I thought it was meaningless compared to what the people in Afghanistan were going through. I missed fashion and returned with a maternity line. My label evolved into designs inspired by the Silk Road. I now hope to unite East and West with my SAMIRA ATASH label and Artizan Sarai, a new label created with my sister helping artisans in Eastern countries.





I believe that *more*
is more and that
class never goes out of
fashion...

