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Canadian Fashion Retailers



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nisse by Nargisse Akyüz

Euro-vibe Boutique Chic

By Kirsten Mogg

In the ten years since launching her **Nisse** collection, **Nargisse Ennasri Akyüz** has achieved a level of national and international retail success few Canadian designers have equaled. The collection is currently sold at over fifty leading independent boutiques across Canada and has also been building international retail channels through distributors in the UK, the Middle East and New Zealand.

"I have a store in Eastern Canada and in the West, and the line does very well across Canada," says **Tammy Beltrami**, owner of **Aria Boutique** with locations in Toronto and Regina.



Photos: courtesy Nisse

Nisse designer Nargisse Akyüz



Photos: courtesy of Nisse

Boutique Nisse at 4109A Saint-Denis in Montreal

Nisse designer Nargisse Akyüz juxtaposes transparency and opacity, adds detail with fine pinstripes, pleats and quilts, embroideries and organic or text prints.

"A remarkable collection - pure, simple, timeless and feminine."

Édith Foliot, ElleQuebec.com

Tiiu Poder, co-owner and buyer for **Aphrodite Art & Fashion** in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, says she looks for lines that stand out from the ordinary.

"When I saw the line I was really knocked out. I thought it was so innovative, interesting and I loved the colour combinations. I thought it was a little bit daring."

Poder says the Nisse line helps take her customers a little outside their comfort zone. When she blogged about carrying the line this spring, she received a lot of interested feedback.

Valérie Campeau, owner of **La Complice Boutique** in Gatineau, Quebec, has carried Nisse in her boutique for three seasons.

"We find that it attracts the ladies that like classic cuts but wish to be different without having too many details or froufrou."



Runway photos: Jimmy Hamelin

SS14 Collection



Photo : Jimmy Hamelin

Nisse A/W 14/15 Collection



Photo : Jimmy Hamelin

Photo : Jimmy Hamelin

▶▶ DESIGNER PROFILE

LISTEN, DON'T TELL

The successful distribution of Nisse to diverse markets can be attributed to several assets: an international point-of-view, a production source in Turkey, and a deep understanding of today's contemporary boutique clientele.

Unlike some designers who impose their point-of-view on consumers, Nargisse Akyüz takes the reverse approach - she listens to the customer. And in the diverse Canadian and international markets she listens very carefully. In 2011, Akyüz opened an atelier on St Denis in Montreal and for the first two years, she personally ran her boutique. The direct interaction with customers taught her what women want from their clothes and how to pull together an ensemble that pleased them.



Runway photos: Jimmy Hamelin

SS14 Collection

In her experience, a busy professional woman wants her wardrobe to function effortlessly. She wants clothes to fit and feel good. She needs pieces suitable for work that are, with a change of shoes or accessories, appropriate for either a casual or formal evening out. *"It gave me real feedback on what she needs, how to make it work for all parts of her life,"* said Akyüz.

Business growth and sell-through suggest that she is fulfilling those needs and desires with a design aesthetic that produces chic looks, beautiful and interesting fabrics, fits for real women (not teenagers), and pieces that mix with business suits or jeans.

Campeau says Nisse is, *"often compared to Hugo Boss, for the modern look ... and its elegance."*

"It has a bit of an edge. It's contemporary chic with a European vibe," agrees Beltrami, who bought Nisse for the first time for the spring 2014 season. She said the line did well with her customers because of its cuts, versatility and quality of fabrics.

"Most of the pieces are seasonless. You get good value because you can wear it all year."

The introduction of Nisse to one of her stores located in a business district earned a positive response from her customers.

"I get a lot of doctors and lawyers and corporate women, they can pick up a piece to wear to the office then go out in the evening - wearing the pieces with denim. It works [for all occasions]."

"I see this line for younger women," said Poder, whose boutique, located in a house on the Main Street in Antigonish, is divided into different rooms catering to various clientele. *"I have it in the upscale, more interesting, edgy room."*

INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE

Akyüz, Montreal-born with a Moroccan heritage and speaking several languages, was in advertising before she followed her heart to Istanbul. It was there she left the advertising world and began her formal fashion design training at the Collège LaSalle d'Istanbul campus in the world's only bi-continental city.

"Ten years ago, I launched the Nisse line in Istanbul," explains Akyüz.

The designer's international training and experience contributed to the growing success of the Nisse collection - a line that attracts working women with the desire and ability to spend money on clothes that project a modern and polished look.

Akyüz travels regularly to oversee production and quality control at the manufacturing facility near Istanbul. Meryeme Ennasri, a key member of the business team and director of marketing and distribution, keeps the operation running smoothly and ensures timely delivery.

Their business structure allows them to continue to add points-of-sale and markets via distribution relationships in the UK and the Middle East. In addition to boutiques across Canada, Nisse opened retail accounts in Beirut, Lebanon and several locations in New Zealand.

She began presenting on the runway at Montreal Fashion Week to gain exposure and attract additional distribution. In 2005 she trademarked her brand and in 2008 she expanded her distribution network across Canada and began exporting.



Nisse Boutique

Photos: courtesy Nisse

DESIGN AESTHETIC

In January 2013, Nisse was selected as one of the five finalists for the Target Emerging Designer Award at the finale of Montreal Fashion Week. A review by Édith Foliot in ElleQuebec.com described Nisse fall 2013/14 as:

"La collection se distingue par des lignes pure, simples, intemporelles and feminine's."

Nisse is primarily a woven sportswear collection with dresses, separates and knits plus a strong assortment of coats. The look is pared down yet feminine revealing clean modern shapes with refined elements such as a singular ruffle on an otherwise tailored shift dress or an insert of contrasting lace on a bodice. The quality is apparent in the selection of fabrics with luxury fibre blends plus the attention paid to small details inside each garment.

"I don't make clothes only for supermodels." Akyüz said in a video interview at the last edition of Montreal Fashion Week with **DiaryofaSocialGal** blogger, **Jennifer Campbell**, *"My aunt, my sister, my mom. I really want to see all of them wearing my clothes."*

Nargisse Akyüz encourages customers to, *"Invest in a few very good pieces that are expertly designed to work with many looks rather than a lot of trendy inexpensive pieces that never quite hit the mark."*

The outward design of Nisse pieces draws attention and the woman who wears Nisse will know and appreciate the quality.