

No.2/March 2012

**MEDIA
PLANET**

FULL-FIGURED FASHION



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Ask the experts

Exclusive insight
from the industry's
leaders

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A global perspec-
tive on size, style
and culture

Sneak preview

Spring and
summer must-haves
sweeping the
runways this year

PHOTO: PLUS MODEL MAGAZINE
(PLUS-MODEL-MAG.COM)



CURVY EVOLUTION

As a diversified view of beauty sweeps the runways,
a bold new set of rules is heating up the fashion industry



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CHALLENGES

We're **creating new rules** to a game all our own, and no longer trying to fit in. Those days are over.

A new standard of beauty

Over the past 20 years, I've lived through the subtle dance between the viability of plus-size spending power in the fashion industry and breaking through the stereotypical set beliefs classically held for women above a size 2. Neither has ever really gotten its full share of respect, I believe.

In the mid 90's the bell rang loudly when the glass ceiling shattered and women above a size 12 saw an array of models reflecting a more inspiring and aspirational image of their own in major advertising campaigns, TV shows, and mainstream media. A new beauty standard was in place and it took the industry by surprise and was seemingly here to stay. The public's response was resoundingly positive (despite a few hecklers), but on the

whole the plus-size modeling industry and the community that supported us, was on a roll.

Make movement

Is there growth potential? I'd say! With tens of millions of women above a size 12, how could the market NOT grow? However, in order to get the change we're seeking, we need to work together. Then change is powerfully inevitable. When we can look at each other's business as partners in the movement, instead of competition, we're making progress.

To create the new "norm" today, we need to encourage corporate leadership to support, create and heavily advertise missy plus, curvy plus, and contemporary plus lines. We need, as an industry, to actively listen to the customers who have not stopped using their voices throughout the blogosphere, implement their innovative solutions and suggestions and reward them for

not giving up with incentive programs.

Together it's possible

Actions speak so much louder than words, which, lastly, comes down to you and me, the customers. We must get out and shop the stores, go online and browse, be on top of the new deliveries, offer feedback on lines to the buyers and merchandisers, and reconnect. Let everyone in the buying chain know we are watching and treat each new line like it's our own. Their success is ultimately our gain. This is where we can move mountains. Together, all things are possible.

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Emme



WE RECOMMEND



**Top Model
Whitney
Thompson:**
Not just another
pretty face, also a
role model.

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**MEDIA
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INSIGHT



TIPS

Don't ever feel less than your best

■ No matter who you are, we've all experienced those mornings when nothing seems to look, feel or fit right. On days that we struggle to get dressed and our confidence wanes, the right wardrobe staples and a few styling tricks can keep you looking your best and even give the illusion of a slimmer and trimmer you.

First and foremost, a well-fitted pair of trousers is the base to a leaner physique. Invest in high waist bottoms that accentuate your natural waist line. Choose a slimming straight-leg pant instead of leggings or skinny jeans that can be unflattering and tend to make hips look more pronounced.

Basic black is a natural choice when you want to feel your slimmest, but the most valuable pieces are ones that provide options beyond an all-black outfit. This especially applies for your go-to little black dress. The most flattering cut for all body types falls right above the knee and lays over your curves without

"The most flattering cut for all body types falls right above the knee and lays over your curves without pulling."

pulling. A long v-shape neckline accentuates the neckline while a belt fastened above the hips can create a skinny waist and the appearance of longer legs.

Black is not your only option for a slender look. Layering bold colors and prints over monochromatic separates can refresh your style without adding pounds. Go for longer, lightweight jackets that skim your figure, avoiding anything too boxy or structured.

Armed with these foolproof tips, there's no reason to ever feel less than your best.

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Madeline Figueroa Jones

Editor-In-Chief, PLUS Model Magazine

PROFESSIONAL INSIGHT

We all know mainstream fashion turns a **blind eye to plus-size fashion**, but is the plus-size industry doing everything it can for its customers?

A changing landscape

It seems like every time plus-size fashion or models are mentioned, the subject of health also weasels its way into the conversation. When PLUS Model Magazine decided to publish the pictures of Katya Zharkova in the January 2012 issue that created worldwide media buzz, startling statistics were included, which people did not want to see because it exposed everything that has been so well hidden in the modeling industry to date.

I asked the owner of Dorothy Combs Models, a boutique modeling agency specializing in plus-size models, about her views. Dorothy revealed, "The term 'plus-size model' has been used for many years to depict the curvier model. I don't feel this is a negative label for the models I represent. A plus-size model is an empowered woman,

a woman who has accepted her body image and feels confident about herself. These models are the backbone of our industry. There will always be a difference between straight size and plus just as there is a difference between petite, lifestyle and fit models. I don't ever see the fashion industry joining these two labels together."

The hard truth is that the current marketing scheme toward plus-size women is rife with hypocrisy. The primary focus of selling to the plus-size woman has shifted for some in the industry and instead has turned its focus on ego, money and attempted control of the industry.

Are things changing? Absolutely. Recently one of the bookers at a plus-size specialty brand store told PLUS Model Magazine they were

looking for new faces and bigger models because the customers were no longer responding to how small the models on their rotation had become.

Numerous excuses are provided, but here is the reality: larger, beautiful plus-size models exist, potential plus-size models knock on the doors of agencies daily, and cutting larger sample sizes is possible. In a time of great economic difficulty, the bottom line is that retailers should be scrambling to market to a woman with tangible dollars to spend on a product that she feels is respectful and representative of who she is. Fashion designers are leaving hundreds of millions of dollars on the table by ignoring 65 percent of the female population. Maybe plus-size women are just the boost the economy needs!




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INSIGHT

↓ QUESTION & ANSWER

Fiona Ross, Brand Director, Evans

Why was Evans inspired to expand into the US market?

→ We understand women's shape, and recognize that everyone is an individual. For us, everything starts and ends with fashion. We help our customers understand and dress for their shape, which we believe US customers really value.

What inspires you, professionally and creatively?

→ The Evans customer is the brand's and my personal inspiration. The pleasure we take in helping our customer dress confidently inspires us to create fashion pieces to the latest styles, and deliver looks that fit to flatter.

PLUS-SIZE FASHION'S GREATEST ALLY: SOCIAL MEDIA

No longer silent or passive, the plus-size woman has found her voice. She no longer sits frustratingly by, taking the afterthoughts of fashion or its injustices—she speaks up and out.

Through the advent of social media, the plus-size industry and community is empowered. The plus-size woman, once forgotten, now has multiple platforms to positively change and affect her fashionable lifestyle. Through Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, fashion and style blogs, digital magazines, the newest kid on the block Pinter-

est, and a multitude of outlets, the movement of plus-size fashion has found an ally—social media.

Finding a voice

Social media has allowed new designers to be found, personal style to be explored, frustrations and injustices to be voiced, stereotypes to be challenged, and plus-size fashion to be celebrated and embraced. Social media has fostered a community of women whose voice has long been muffled to give direct feedback on what they want, what they like, and what they could care less about.

Those designers, brands, and

companies who cater to this plus-size woman are listening and those who have been listening from the very beginning are at the forefront of the plus-size fashion scene.

■ Take Monif C Plus Sizes for example. Monif C. leverages her social media presence through an active blog, an engaged audience on Twitter, and responsive fan base on Facebook, to deliver successful fashion collections each season.

■ Personal style blogger, Gabi Fresh garnered the role of MTV Twitter Jockey through the support and enthusiasm of the plus-size community.

Creating a revolution

These are only a couple of the notable moments in plus-size fashion that were made possible via its new ally in social media. Not only has the plus-size woman and community found her voice and used it to affect change, but brands and designers are listening and reacting to this by giving her what she wants—fashion from a plus perspective—and we are only just beginning.

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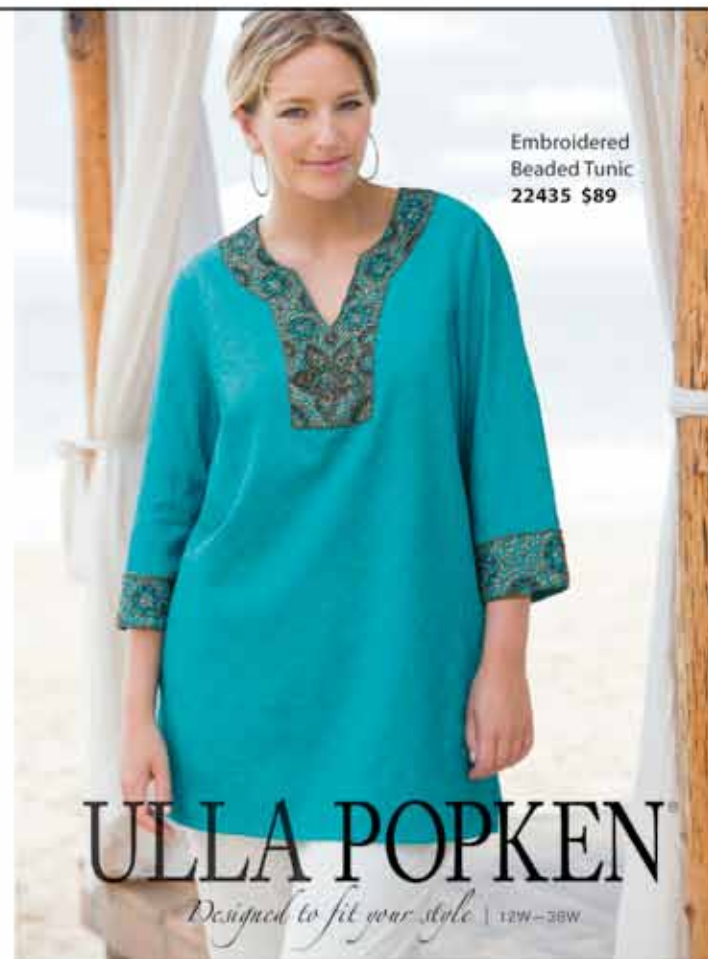
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NEWS

Attitudes about body size vary from culture to culture

■ **Question:** Are views about body size the same among all cultures?

■ **Answer:** No. Views are as varied as the options of styles that are available.

Many prefer the term “curvy” rather than “plus size”—and with good reason. In a world where the average woman wears a size 14, but a size-8 model is considered “plus size,” size categories quickly become meaningless. Notions about what is normal and what is “plus” also change as cultures change. Marilyn Monroe was definitely curvy, but in the 1950s she wasn’t “plus size.”

Around the world

Attitudes about size vary not

just in time, but place as well. Europeans are thinner on average than Americans, but (with the exception of the French) they tend to obsess less over body size. According to one study, heavier Europeans are actually more satisfied with their weight than thinner Europeans. Despite assurances to the contrary from the popular book *French Women Don’t Get Fat*, French women do seem to obsess about their weight. But they may be the only Europeans who do so.

Fashion passion

German plus-size retailer Ulla Popken has hundreds of stores across Europe. Their products are fashion-forward and edgy,

demonstrating that great style makes size irrelevant. Ulla Popken now has an online presence in the United States. “The American market is different,” says Diane Cantor, VP of Merchandising for Ulla Popken U.S. “Styling is different and Americans shop differently, preferring to cherry pick items, rather than purchase collections.”

One thing is the same on both sides of the pond: the trick to looking good is enhancing, not hiding, curves. “Clothes are exciting,” says Cantor. We are finally getting that European passion for fashion, no matter the size, on our shores.

AVERY HURT

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↓ TRENDS

Spring forward: Trends that make style sense

■ **Color blocking**—A really great trend for full figured women especially if you wear the blocking vertically and allow the contrast to “break up the eye.” Judicious color blocking has energy in it...a thing of bold, modern, graphic drama that reminds me of Mondrian from the 70s.

■ **Someday your prints will Come**—Such an array of florals, art inspired watercolor motifs, Jackson Pollock abstracts on skirts, pants, and jackets. Wearing one printed item over basics is a great way to wear prints and not have them wear you. Pairing of mismatched patterns feels fresh, too.



Catherine Schuller, AICI, CIP

Veteran and icon in the plus-size industry, Catherine started as an actress, comedienne, model, eventually becoming an image consultant and inspiration for many women who are perplexed by all the mixed messages in the fashion industry today.

■ **Tangerine Dream**—Orange is available in every hue from sassy sophisticated sours to calm and subdued corals. The key is finding a warm shade or cool shade depending on how you want to complement your

individual skin tone.

■ **Pastels with punch**—Sassy pastels in sorbet colors look ladylike and sophisticated. Punch them up with metallic accents to keep them from getting too “sweet.”

■ **Sheer madness**—Sheer is a curvy girl’s dream option for covering your arms but not taking all the sexiness away from the look. Sheer is sexy and feminine and intrigues your admirers—it covers up without negating completely.

■ **Clunky, chunky and funky**—How to update your look in one easy purchase? The shoes of the moment have a heel that is stacked and wider and therefore more stable.

CATHERINE SCHULLER, AICI, CIP

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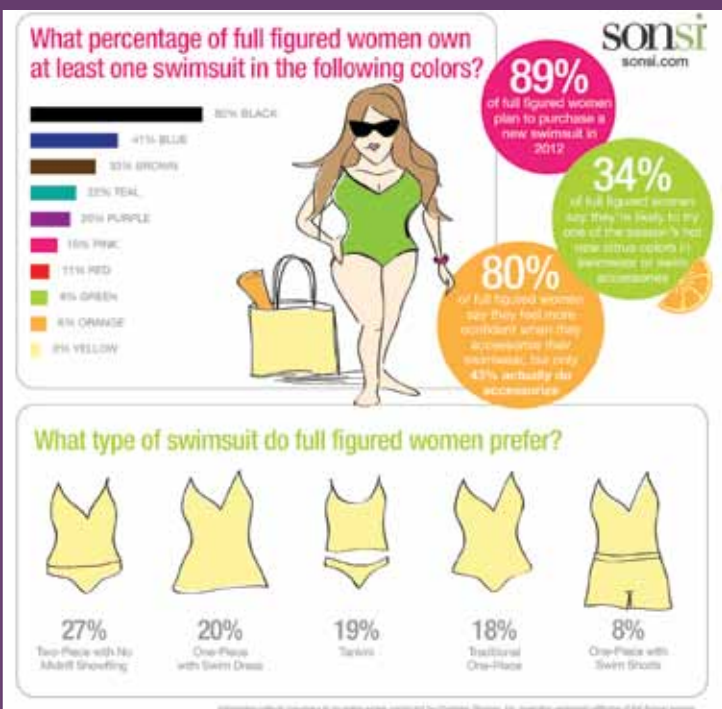
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NEWS

✦ SWIMWEAR CENSUS

Here's a glimpse into the plus-size woman's most private domain: her swimwear collection. The recent Sonsi.com Bathing Beauties Swimwear Survey of more than 500 women, sizes 14 and up, reveals she may be swimming in black, but she's also willing to dip her toe into the season's bright new color palette.



Searching for the **right swimwear** can put any woman in a state of high anxiety. Finding a luxurious swimsuit that both supports and accentuates curves can be even more of a trial.

Perfect pool-side style

Question: Do plus-size women have options when it comes to swimwear?

Answer: These days, they do.

"I've never felt that curvy women have the fashion options that straight-sized women have," says Jessica Petersen, designer and founder of Sorella Swim, a brand of luxury swimwear for the curvy figure. This has been especially true when it comes to swimwear. But that is changing.

Invest in quality

Designers who believe that voluptuous women want to hide their figures in baggy, boxy styles show a lack of appreciation for both the

"A swimsuit should give you ample coverage and support, while letting you move about with confidence."

subtleties of design and the women they design for—and shape is not the only factor in designing a curve-enhancing suit. "The right fabric matters. Better quality swimwear smoothes your curves," explains Jeanne Grasso, marketing manager at Always for Me swimwear. "And separates allow you to customize a look," she adds.

Move with confidence

The perfect swimsuit should not

only look great, but feel great all day at the beach or pool. You want to be able to swim, play, and enjoy yourself without worrying about adjusting straps and tugging at seams. "A swimsuit should give you ample coverage and support, while letting you move about with confidence," says Grasso.

A good suit offers support, but doesn't try to hide or hold anything in—the days of girdles are, thankfully, well behind us. Today's best plus-size swimwear has been described as "classy, luxurious, and sexy." And in the right suit designed and fitted for your body, that's exactly how you should feel.

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The Return of the Curve

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INSPIRATION

More than a modeling contract—a platform for change

Atlantic Beach native Whitney Thompson hit the national scene in 2008 when she became the first plus-size model to win America's Next Top Model.

Though she was surprised by her Top Model win, Thompson hasn't found being plus size an issue in the national or international modeling scene. "There is more opportunity in the larger market," she says. "Therefore room for more types of girls." The fact that Thompson is a size 8 has made it easier. "I represent the average American woman. Designers need to understand that," says Thompson.

Resist stereotypes

Her Top Model win has yielded Thompson more than modeling contracts. "It has given me

a platform to do things that are really meaningful to me." One of which is being an ambassador for the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA). "Since winning Top Model, I have heard from people all over the world who are dealing with eating disorders. I want to help people resist the social stereotypes and images that lead to unhealthy behavioral patterns."

Love your curves

Thompson also launched a dating website specifically for plus-size women, called The Big and The Beautiful. "It wasn't fair to curvy girls to

have to compete with skinny girls on other sites," says Thompson. "I created this site so that women could post sexy pictures of themselves just the way they are and find a mate who loves them just the way they are."

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"I represent the average American woman. Designers need to understand that."



AN INSIDER'S VIEW

Whether or not you've heard the name Yvette Nicole Brown, you have seen her beautiful face and body (in all her curvaceous glory) in numerous television commercials, sitcoms, and movies, and most recently on NBC's hit television show "Community."

Yvette shares some personal insights, below:

On size discrimination

I just feel like size discrimina-



Yvette Nicole Brown
Actress
and comedian

tion is the last form of discrimination that's allowed. You don't see anyone telling big girls, "It gets better." I think the mindset is, maybe it doesn't get better. Maybe you NEVER get to the point where you're accepted for just being who you are, and that is just tragic to me. I would love it if people could look at chubby folks with all of our curves,

bumps and ridges and just say, "She's beautiful" just like that.

On "mainstream" retailers and plus-size fashion

They don't get it. I think the perception is that if you're overweight, you did it to yourself. So if you want to be in cute clothes, you would diet and exercise and get into cute clothes. I would love to walk into a mall and see more than two or three stores catering to women who are a size 14 and up!

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INSIGHT



Phyliss Mosca
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Ulla Popken



Jay Dunn
CMO,
BareNecessities.com



Erin Lynn
Director of Marketing,
Olga Intimates

**Question 1:**

What advancements would you like to see made in this industry in the next few years?

Feature aspirational but realistic models. Straight-size models are 5'11 inches, size 2, and plus-size models start at size 10; however, the Average American woman is 5'4 inches and wears a size 14. These unrealistic images hurt the self-image of all women making it hard to feel acceptable and beautiful just as you are. Beauty comes in all shapes, heights and sizes.

There is now so much great product for the curvy woman from so many great brands, but still very few retailers who are selling that product. This is why we launched bareplus.com—so that women can discover the great bras that are now available.

Technology and innovation have always been an important part of the intimate apparel industry, as we are constantly introducing new ways to lift, shape and support a woman's assets. Fabrics have become lighter and more supportive. Underwire bras and shapewear have become more comfortable. I hope the rate of innovation remains aggressive so we can continue to provide stylish undergarments that are increasingly more functional and comfortable.

Question 2:

What is a common misconception about the Full Figured Fashion industry?

That plus styles need to be less fashionable. Our inspiration comes from the most beautiful designs we can find. Then we decide how we can make them even better for our customer for less, offering what we strongly believe is the absolute best choice and value available in the plus-size market. Size is not the first factor.

It's viewed as a novelty, a result of how traditional retailers have treated the category. The majority of women in America are size 14 or better. As long as those retailers ignore this important consumer, we'll be there to delight her.

It's a common misperception that full figure women always want to be "covered up" and not draw attention to themselves. So many curvy women are proud of their bodies and want to show them off. We are seeing more deep plunge bras, push-ups and balconettes in full figure for women who want to flaunt their figures. This attitude impacts their color choices as well.

Question 3:

What is one shopping tip you would give full figured women?

Shop to be your personal best. Don't imitate others or aim to look thinner. You are unique and beautiful. Have fun developing your own style. Feeling beautiful is empowering but beauty comes from you, not just the clothing. Clothing should fit well, be comfortable and complement your life. It should enhance your beauty and reflect your individuality, not overpower you.

When shopping online, make sure you shop from a reputable retailer with a reliable return policy. You want to make sure that they have a real commitment to full figure fashion, and a real commitment to you.

A woman should never settle for a bra that doesn't make her feel her best, both mentally and physically. With so many choices available today, there is no reason to sacrifice fit, comfort or style—women can have it all! When a bra fits properly it will deliver the support she needs and the comfort she deserves. I encourage every woman, regardless of her size, to get a professional bra fitting.





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