

# Padan brothers share a passion for fashion

## A change in direction led to the expansion of the exclusive Cartise line of womenswear

BY MIKE KING, THE GAZETTE    OCTOBER 26, 2009



Brand recognition: The Padan twins Gadi (left) and Sharoni - shown here with designer Amy Wu - spent the last 35 years manufacturing and exporting women's clothing. Now, they've entered the fashion retail world with their own stores.

**Photograph by:** Dave Sidaway, The Gazette

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MONTREAL – Veteran fashion-industry twins Gadi and Sharoni Padan were at a crossroads seven years ago: change the distribution focus of their St. Laurent apparel firm or go out of business.

The gamble to switch from being a manufacturer/wholesaler supplying chains and department stores to providing their exclusive Cartise International Inc. line of womenswear to independent specialty boutiques paid off.

"Doing business with big-box stores and chains was lucrative but it kept us from expanding," explains Gadi, company CEO and oldest of the 54-year-old brothers by 15 minutes.

In just a few short years, the high-energy siblings replaced their network of major North American buyers with more than 2,000 independent retailers in 27 countries and continue to expand.

That includes five locations in the Middle East to date. One of them is in the world's largest shopping mall in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Company president Sharoni noted dealing with independents is more profitable because of higher margins.

The Padans have taken two other big steps to better build their brand and further strengthen control of their own destiny: filling a void in the market and opening their own retail stores.

They have produced a line of trendy, feminine, functional and classic clothes geared toward women age 35 to 55 and in the size 4 to 18 range.

Sharoni credits his wife for leading to the new Cartise styles after lamenting she couldn't find clothes she liked at a regular price point.

"She said it was either very young and too tight or too matronly," he recalled of the comments that launched the new line designed "for women whose bodies have changed."

That also is where head designer Amy Wu came in.

"I've put a positive spin on a wearable collection that is happy with very bright colours," she told The Gazette last week during a tour of the facility that employs 70 workers who are responsible for half of the Cartise production.

Wu, with the company 12 years, said the emphasis on bright designs led to the Cartise slogan: "Color Your Life."

"Fit and quality are paramount to the success of the Cartise collection every season," Sharoni stressed.

"We want our customers to look incredible and feel confident.

"When she walks into any room, be it a boardroom or a ballroom, today's woman wants to wear something that she feels was made for her," he added. "She wants her outfit to be fashionable, unique and an expression of her own personal style."

Two-and-a-half years ago, the brothers - who share a passion for fashion - decided to undertake the retail venture by opening their own retail stores.

The first opened in Kirkland in May 2008 and the newest one at the Rockland Centre in Town of Mount Royal at the beginning of this month.

"Not only does it give us more control, it allows us to showcase our collection in its true form," Gadi said.

There are plans to open more in strategic locations in urban Quebec centres before eventually branching out to Toronto and Vancouver.

Sharoni said the stores are built to reflect the beauty of the merchandise, which he described as "sophisticated but very approachable in price and comfort."

With the help of local agency Precision Advertising & Promotions Inc., Cartise got 18 months of exposure in the fashion media and is provided with all promotional material to pass along to its retailers.

"We can educate retailers on how to better show the product," said Precision president Glen

Eisenberg.

"We want every Cartise retail environment to offer today's woman, with her multi-dimensional and multi-tasking lifestyle, a one-stop fashion destination where she can find the entire Cartise Collection," the siblings almost say in unison.

They are planning a return to the European market next season after a 10-year absence.

"We used to want to emulate our big competitors then we realized it is more important to be unique with our own identity," Gadi said. "Now we offer what they can't and are no longer looking over our shoulders."

Founded as Cyclope Manufacturing in November 1975, the corporate and brand name were switched to Cartise in 1982.

The private company's initial labels were Cyclope, All That Jazz and Zone until the Padans decided to amalgamate under the stronger name Cartise.

"It's the Hebrew word for 'ticket,' as in ticket to success," Gadi pointed out. "It sounds French, is easily pronounced everywhere and it isn't in the public domain."

On the web: [www.cartise.ca](http://www.cartise.ca)

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