

DOW
485.65 ▲ 42.78 (+0.41%)
S&P 500
1,174.28 ▲ 2.86 (+0.24%)
NASDAQ
992.52 ▲ 1.46 (+0.07%)

NEW YORK

TODAY
Rain, windy. High 54°

TONIGHT
Winds diminish. Low 38°

TOMORROW
Partly sunny. High 58°

The Sun



BAM-tastic
*Pia Catton Thinks 'Contract'
Is a Great Adaptation, Page 19*

Dynamite Dinah
*Mosaic Has a Hit With the
Roulette Sessions, Page 15*



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Feet First

**Tupli Turns Your Designs
Into Custom-Made Shoes**

By PIA CATTON

Need some diamonds on the soles of your shoes? No problem. Bring the shoes (and the diamonds) to Tupli, a tiny, custom shoe salon that opened its doors this winter. Founded by two friends, **Tupli** is devoted to one-of-a-kind footwear designed by the wearer.

At their cozy salon, tucked above shops on upper Madison Avenue, Tamara Chubinidze, 24, and Kathy Myczkowski, 31, have several glamorous samples on offer — from patchwork-leather stilettoes to suede boots with wooden, stacked heels to bridal pumps

with ankle bracelets of pearl beads. But really, the sky is the limit.

"You can bring in anything," Ms. Chubinidze said. "If you have old jeans, you can come up with a design and use the material or add some kind of jewelry."

But you don't need to have favorite baubles, fabrics, or wild notions — **Tupli** also specializes in simply creating shoes that no one else will have. ("Tupli" is derived from *tupli*, the Russian word for shoes.)

The process is straightforward and intended to give the client the freedom to create a look that's personal. Mmes. Chubinidze and Myczkowski start with a consultation about lifestyle and wardrobe. Next, they offer conceptual suggestions on fabrics, shapes, and decorations. Leather or suede? Pointy or round toe? Thin or curvy heel? Maybe you need handmade fabric on your boots, or a rhinestone in the center of a flower?

When the design is set, they take a detailed measurement and create a sketch. Once the client approves of

Tupli offers an alternative to the mega-brands that dominate American fashion culture.

the sketch, it's sent to a factory in Tbilisi, Georgia, the former Russian republic where Ms. Chubinidze was born. (Ms. Myczkowski is from Poland.) A last is made (and kept) at the factory, where the shoes are built by hand. In about three weeks, the finished product is sent back to New York.

"In Georgia, most of the women wear shoes of their own design. They wouldn't go to a store," Ms. Chubinidze said.

Ms. Chubinidze came to New York about eight years ago to be closer to her father, who was already living in America. She began working in the financial industry, where she met Ms. Myczkowski. They worked together for more than three years, then decided to break into the shoe business together. "We like to say that if we could work together in this crazy corporate environment for three years, we could own a business together," Ms. Chubinidze said.

The idea of introducing custom-made shoes came after the two friends traveled to Georgia together to shop. "The culture is very creative. Most things are handmade. It's just part of the culture," said Ms. Chubinidze.

By bringing this Georgian sensibility to America, **Tupli** offers an alternative to the mega-brands that dominate American fashion culture. "Everybody is used to ready-to-wear, but this is about your look," Ms. Chubinidze said. It's also helpful for people with problem feet: "Maybe you can only wear a 6-centimeter heel. Maybe one foot is bigger or wider than the other."

Maybe, too, you just have an idea for a shoe that you've always wanted to create. And that's reason enough.

Tupli, 780 Madison Ave., 212-472-2576, www.tupli.com. Shoes start at \$600; boots start at \$1,200.



TOBIAS EVERKE

STEPPING OUT Tamara Chubinidze and Kathy Myczkowski with some of **Tupli's** custom-made shoes.

For the Big of Foot

Large-size shoes for women are hard to find, but not at **Elleven Up**. This new Midtown boutique is devoted to serving women with large feet. As the title of the store suggests, it stocks only size 11 and higher.

"This is something I wanted to do since 1997," said owner Jerry Geist, who was in the shoe business for several years before deciding to specialize in this niche of the market. "This is very rewarding. The women are so appreciative."

Typically, department stores and shoe stores buy very few pairs of size 11 shoes and usually nothing in sizes larger than that. Mr. Geist, by contrast, buys only large sizes, and so has several pairs to offer clients. Brands include popular, widely distributed names such as Anne Klein New York, Donald J. Pliner, and Claudia Cutili. There is a wide selection of shoes by the French designer Thierry Rabotin, whose sporty shoes are designed for comfort. Mr. Geist also convinced high-end shoe designer Jean Michael Cazabat (who sells to Bergdorf Goodman) to start making shoes in larger sizes. His first collection is available now.

Elleven Up, 12 West 57th St., Suite 1005, 212-757-2154, www.Ellevenup.com. Prices start around \$100.