

SARAH KARLSON

Sr. Brand Designer / Sr. Art Director / Visual Storyteller
sarahkarlson.com [LinkedIn](#)

I'm Sarah, a designer and creative leader with 17+ yrs experience in retail, sports, fashion and tech. My strengths lie at the intersection of brand strategy and the human experience. And I have an eye for color, trends, and rhythm. I love creating meaningful and fun experiences for people, from start to finish—**authenticity is in the details.**

Building and being part of inspiring teams is super important to me. Fit is everything. Flexibility is key. Enthusiasm and momentum are a few things I bring to the table. Also a loud laugh – my friends say it's startling. I love being at the forefront of new concepts, imagining what could be, and bringing collective ideas to life. A passion of mine is **discovering emerging artists, designers, and creators** and connecting them to the right product, in the right place, at the right moment in time.

Having an athletic background enables me to lead by visualizing long-term goals while staying connected to the daily progress. Making fast decisions under pressure and easily **adapting to change** are core strengths (actual abs = work in progress). Finding and sharing things that create connections between people, no matter when or where, is what matters. And making great design accessible to everyone.

Things I get excited about—

- straight up networking
- pockets
- *Editing By Design: Third Edition* (By Jan V. White)
- Saturday Night Live
- print magazines & cookbooks
- The Fifth Element
- unexpected but exactly right Brand collabs
- taking photos of people
- any conversation with Yuri Hasegawa

Things I don't take for granted—

- being direct
- Dogs
- the ability to make things with my hands
- taking your time
- early 90's Bay Area hip hop

Things I want to learn—

- Sign Language(s)
- how to fix my sewing machine
- why Lasik surgery affects women differently
- more about film directing
- professional cake decorating
- intermediate Salsa dancing

Career Highlights

- Key stakeholder and driver of the launch of Amazon's first-ever physical retail fashion store with locations in Los Angeles and Columbus
- Experience working with Fortune 500 companies including Amazon, HBO, Viacom, Whole Foods Market, Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN)
- Experience collaborating directly with VP/SVP stakeholders across Marketing, Merchandising, Digital UX, Product & Tech, Store Development, UX Research, and Core Brand teams
- Launched 15+ large-scale Amazon products, programs, and retail events as creative leader and key decision-driver
- Acquired HBO and Viacom onto the Prime Video service through brand collaboration and identity design strategy, the first streaming platform deal for these companies
- Established the first brand lifestyle and product photography for Prime Video and Amazon Style
- Drove the expansion of Amazon's global Dogs 404 Page experience in three new locales by scaling design, web dev, and production as the single-threaded owner, bridging the gap between internal culture and real customers
- Grew the Amazon.com homepage advertising platform from 11 businesses to more than 150 in three years by driving user research and creating a scalable framework for custom campaigns

Amazon.com
2010–2023

Sr. Brand Designer, Amazon Style
2020–2023

Create and launch brand architecture including naming, visual identity, design tenets, and expression across the innovative end-to-end digital and physical retail store. Key decision-driver in defining the customer experience.

- Collaborate with Store Design & Development, Merchandising, Category/Selection, Bis-Dev, and Product teams to define an intuitive experience for in-store mobile shopping and tech-enabled fitting rooms
- Define wayfinding signage system and in-store marketing/merchandising content hierarchy
- Develop visual communication strategy for customer education
- Concept, design, and build physical and digital prototypes
- Gain alignment for overall Brand application across Directors, VPs, and SVP stakeholders during concept development by designing and presenting 48+ decks
- Define brand campaign strategy for high-visibility events like grand openings, Prime Day, and Holiday
- Source manage, and provide direction to external print vendors and creative agencies (large format & traditional printing, branded products and apparel, brand photography, video, and motion design)
- Led the development of Brand/creative team through defining multi-level roles, hiring, onboarding, and mentoring team members including 4 contractor designers, 2 mid-level visual designers, Sr. Art Director, Sr. Copywriter, and Creative Director
- Managed Brand design team formally consisting of two visual designers, one of whom was hired as a contractor, then to full time, and to level promotion in three years
- Managed brand budget and allocation across capital/operating expenditures and external vendors
- Chosen as part of the tiger team that defined the organization's core operational tenets
- Lead Design Team "Joy Committee" to maintain team morale during completely remote work years by creating events, games, quality swag, and personal recognition tools
- Evolved management approaches for Design team (40 people) in collaboration with 7 team leads and Design Director to adapt best practices and mechanisms to the constantly changing work environment

Sr. Retail Experience Designer, Amazon Go

2019–2020

Design environmental graphics, contribute to team management and hiring, and work with business leaders to launch the first physical retail format of Amazon Go Grocery brand with Just Walk Out Technology.

- Defined communication strategy and visual system for customer education
- Worked directly with Store Design Team, Principle Producer, Creative Director, Art Directors, UX Designer, and Sr Copywriter to launch physical store concept
- Establish digital design of cross-category electronic shelf label system in collaboration with UX Design, PM, WebDev, and Tech teams
- Establish and improve creative intake system
- Demonstrated creative leadership by establishing and running the design team's weekly creative studio
- Designed environmental graphics for wayfinding key moments in-store and in the Amazon app

Sr. Art Director, Core Shopping

2016–2019

Define global campaign visual direction, content strategy, templates, and event style guides for Amazon.com Homepage. Partner with UX and Research to develop strategic programs and features.

- Provided creative direction for featured campaigns for 150+ businesses, external partnerships, and sub-brands including Alexa, Prime, Fresh, Music, and Video
- Established, built, and maintained global internal resources for templates & guidelines, best practices, and source assets for three content systems
- Influenced strategic partnerships and drove buy-in for Homepage feature testing with S-Team visibility
- Drove content and creative strategy for company-wide events like Prime Day, Oprah's Favorite Things, Holiday, and International Women's Day
- Lead review process of ~9200 assets in two months for 2018 Holiday; Black Friday week alone garnered over 75MM US customer visits for a total of 2.5B impressions with metrics up YoY
- Created a scalable model for 3P advertisers to be featured on the Amazon.com homepage on Prime Day with increased ad success by 3x
- Established and owned content approval process for 150+ internal businesses
- Defined Homepage visual strategy and championed 2016 redesign in collaboration with Principal Creative Director, Sr UX Designer, and Sr. Product Manager
- Hired, developed, and managed two Art Directors
- Created visual identity and launched org-wide research program Humans of Amazon in partnership with two Sr. UX Researchers
- Drove the expansion of Amazon's global Dogs 404 Page experience in three new locales by scaling design and language, web dev, and production as the single-threaded owner
- Consistent dedication to allyship and mentorship to create space for people by investing in their growth

Sr. Visual Designer, Prime Video

2011–2016

Drive Brand visual identity by developing cross-platform templates and content guidelines. Define visual direction for national marketing campaigns and original content launches.

- Owned creation and implementation of brand guidelines for Amazon Video and Prime Video

- Identified the need for original editorial brand photography; defined and executed on-site art direction including location, and talent selection; worked with internal creative agency to shoot 3 scenes in 1 day with 4 models
- Developed project intake processes that improved marketing and design teams' productivity and production speed
- Demonstrated leadership by establishing design team onboarding best practices, contributing to hiring, and owning community-building activities like Visual Design Summit and weekly design studio
- Launched first original television content, Amazon Original Pilots, by partnering with Amazon Studios and 3P agency on visual identity and marketing campaigns for program campaign and 12 individual shows
- Designed vendor-facing documentation for content ingestion, key art application, and print-on-demand packaging
- Selected by leadership to design multiple Amazon All-Hands business presentations for global internal audience

Fiesta Bowl Organization, 2006–2009

Creative Department Manager

Define visual direction and design graphic packages across digital, physical, and large-format print creative for two football bowl games, 40+ state-wide events, and internal business projects.

- Established design project management system and managed all incoming creative
- Hired and managed seasonal designers
- Sourced and managed external print vendors
- Responsible for in-house event photography and asset curation
- Designed official presentation of the City of Glendale's NCAA Final Four bid
- Launched the Fiesta Bowl Museum, a space dedicated to the community and illustrating the non-profit's history; provided creative direction to external agency/vendor and managed installation; owned design and production of grand opening collateral

Credentials

Amazon Global Mentor Program, 2010–2022

Amazon Design Community

- Conflux (Global Design Conference) Keynote Speaker, 2022
- Conflux Event Volunteer, 2017–2022

Amazon Women In Design Organization

- Brand and Identity Design, 2020
- Board Member, 2020–2021

Global Amazon Accessibility Month (GAAM)

- Identity Design, 2018
- GAAM Volunteer, 2018

Amazon Core Shopping Organization – Recognition of Ownership Award, 2017

Arizona State University, School of Visual Communications – Senior Thesis Review Guest Panelist, 2021

Education

BSD, Graphic Design, Arizona State University, 2006

Dean's Honor List, College of Design, 2002–2006

ASU Women's Swim Team, 2001–2005

Maroon & Gold Scholar Athlete, 2002–2005