

# California Dreaming

VSB GRAD USES HIS MARKETING DEGREE TO BREAK INTO THE FASHION INDUSTRY

## BORN AND RAISED IN SAN

Diego, Jack Ryan embodied Southern California from head to toe—in his clothes, in his shoes, and the skateboard he rode to classes at Villanova.

“San Diego has influenced me in every way possible,” says Jack Ryan '09 VSB. “I grew up surfing, skateboarding, and eating burritos. I’ve always loved the style, the extreme sports, and artistic culture.”

That style is now replicated in his line of footwear, The Jack Ryan Shoe Art Collection, a venture he launched shortly after returning home as a VSB marketing graduate.

Like many entrepreneurial success stories, Jack’s began as a pastime. “I can remember when I was maybe 11 years old, I would draw all the logos of my favorite skateboard companies,” he says. “But once in college, surrounded by such great business minds, I knew I didn’t want to draw and wear other people’s brands—I wanted to make my own.”

It was on the Villanova campus that Ryan began decorating shoes, transforming his Vans into an artistic representation of his home state. “I loved them,” he says. “I would wear them all the time in Bartley Hall. Even then, people would ask me where I bought them.”

The attention continued after graduation. “I don’t consider myself a great



*“All I wanted to focus on as a Marketing major was coming up with great ideas and trendy ad campaigns. I now realize why my VSB teachers were so focused on aspects of marketing aside from the creative,” Jack Ryan '09 VSB says. Ryan is the founder and creator of his own line of footwear, The Jack Ryan Shoe Art Collection.*

artist, but I am really good at shading in the style of pointillism,” Ryan says. “I started drawing on canvas shoes using fine-tip Sharpies, and shading the vibrant colors by making thousands of dots that fade into each other. As more and more people asked me where I got my shoes, I realized I had a huge opportunity.”

Starting with a website and social-media marketing, Ryan launched his business and found quick success. He attributes much of that to tools he attained at VSB.

“One of the most important things I remember from marketing classes is to keep your brand consistent,” Ryan says. “I get requests to draw Disney characters,

ponies, trees, school logos, and so on, but I tell everyone that I strictly draw my unique floral designs. The more that people see the flowers, the more they ask about them, the more important they are. This has allowed me to create an identity around a product which previously had no personality or significance.”

Another way his Villanova background has helped is through networking with fellow '09 alums. Engineering major Juan Guerra filmed and produced all of Ryan’s promotional videos; communications major Allison Montanaro '09 A&S connected Ryan with Toms Shoes, which has twice featured his product internationally.

As he endeavors to carry his business to further heights and deal with the challenges of expanding a new business in an unpredictable economy, Ryan knows his VSB contacts will be a further means of support.

“When I put my story on the Villanova Alumni Group page of LinkedIn, I was welcomed by so many, commending and congratulating me for my willingness to take a risk and make a name for myself,” he says. “I am so thankful to be a part of the Villanova family. When I decide to move to New York to really make things happen, I know I will be welcomed there too, by Villanova alumni with open arms.” **V**  
— by Chris Nicholson