



Curated By You: Erika Jean of Portland Apron Company Makes An Indigo Dyed Linen Apron

Description

To celebrate our growing community and the joy that is sewing and creating, we've decided to ask our favourite small businesses, makers and independent seamstresses to curate something out of 3 yards of [FS linen](#) of their choice. We welcome you to 'FS Curated by you series'. Each has a story to tell about why sewing is an integral part of their lives, and how they make their businesses, motherhood, relationships works alongside pursuing creativity. We hope in sharing these interviews and ideas, you will be inspired to keep making, to keep embracing the beauty surrounding us, and in return to share your stories.

Erika Jean of [Portland Apron Company](#) who makes beautiful aprons out of her recently relocated studio in San Diego decided to use our Heavy weight [Bleached Premier Finish 7oz linen](#) and make an Indigo dyed linen apron which she will be giving away on her [IG](#)!



BLEACHED Premier Finish

Tell us a bit about yourself and what you do.

My name is Erika ([Portland Apron Company](#)) and I design and sew linen aprons, smocks, and more recently, a bit of clothing too. I am from Portland, Oregon but have recently relocated my life (and business) to San Diego, California. I am married, have two Siamese cats, and love to garden. I'm a Summer-forever kind of person and love to be barefoot in the sun. If the doors and windows can be open at my house they will be. I love to travel, enjoy a good meal with friends, and explore new places.

Talk us a little about the creation process- from idea to final product. How big is your team?

The creation process is one of my favorite parts! I love going into my sewing studio and just trying out an idea I have in my head. It's so satisfying to see a tangible garment in front of me after contemplating it for so long, that's something that I really love about sewing. My team is very small, it's just me! It works for my lifestyle because I love working from home and having that flexibility. I really enjoy looking out of my studio windows onto my garden (my studio is in the back yard). I also like that being a small business lets me stay more easily connected with my customers, I know many of them on a first name basis at this point. It's simple and that's how I like it.

What do you love most about having your own business?

I love being in charge of my day to day life and the satisfaction that comes from creating something from nothing. I love getting to choose my values for my business and setting them in motion. I love the flexibility that owning my own business gives me. Though I definitely work more than 40 hours a week, I like knowing that IF I need to take a few days to recharge, or if a family emergency comes up, I don't have to ask anyone "Can I have this time off?" I just make sure all of my work is caught up and I'm free to do what I need. There's some quote I heard that goes, "Entrepreneurs will work 80

hours a week so they don't have to work 40." That pretty much sums it up!



Erika Jean photographed by Kim Brandagan

As a child, what was your first encounter and memory of beauty?

My first memory of beauty as a child was of laying in the grass in our backyard in the Summer reading books. My mom read a lot of books with us and I loved that. I just remember how much I enjoyed being outside, running around in the grass, and reading. It felt good to be outside in the warm Summer, no shoes and blue skies overhead.

Can you talk us through a failure or a setback in your business that you learned from or an experience that helped improve your business.

Oh there have been so many! In the moment they feel like overwhelming “failures,” but with the perspective of time they definitely become learning experiences...I carry several weights of fabrics because some people prefer a lighter weight garment, while others need something super heavy duty. I had a customer get quite angry with me when the thick paints she used bled through her apron and onto her shirt. I learned the importance of communication on that one! Had I better communicated which fabrics were suitable for which tasks I could’ve avoided receiving that angry email. Oh well, live and learn. Refund your customer and send her a new apron for free and apologize. I better explain my fabrics on my site now.



Portland Apron Company by Kim Brandagan

Name a book that you've recently read which inspired you and why?

I recently read the book by Elizabeth Gilbert called "The Signature of all Things." It was such a fun and inspiring adventure of a book! The main character is a brave and unique woman who lives her life in a way that is not the norm in the 18th and 19th century. She is a scientist and botanist and travels the world at a time when many women did not. Her character is a trail blazing, norm breaking, curious risk taker that shows you the world of botany. I absolutely loved reading this book.

What was the first thing you ever remember making on your own? Tell us about this memory.

I started sewing when I was really little with my mom. We would always have some fun, practical project in the works, like pajamas. The first thing I made on my own was a stuffed sock doll for the Nutcracker ballet that I was in one Winter. It was without a doubt the ugliest doll in the show, but I didn't care. I was really proud that I made it, I felt like it showed how serious I was about being in the ballet.



Erika Jean photographed by Kim Brandagan

Do you have a mentor or a muse?

I don't really have a specific "mentor" (though I've received so much love and advice and support from my grandma I'd consider her a lifelong mentor). When it comes to creativity I do have some people I really admire. I really like the way Alabama Chanin runs her business. She has made it an integral part of the small, tight knit community she is in and I think that's really beautiful. I also really admire Moonshadown Goods. Her dedication to no-waste sewing and natural dyes is inspiring.

How important is social media to your business?

It's important! It's been an awesome way to connect with my peers and customers and show the world what I'm doing. It can also be a lifeline when I'm needing some inspiration or a friend to message with. I've found social media to be a fun tool that is very helpful, while at the same time making sure I don't get too serious about it. It's meant to be fun, so I try to keep it that way and not obsess too much about numbers. It's meant for connection and support and inspiration, and for me that's been wonderful!



Erika Jean photographed by Kim Brandagan

Do you have a community of crafters/ makers around you or do you find you are on your own?

I had a pretty solid creative community in Portland. Since I've moved to San Diego it's definitely smaller, but I'm working on making more connections! A lot of my friends are spread around different states, but we still keep in touch. I am by myself often throughout the workday and listen to a lot of books, podcasts, and music while I sew.

What is the best and the hardest part about being your own boss?

The best part of being my own boss is having creative control and autonomy. The hardest part is making all of the decisions. There are days where I wish someone would just tell me what to do.

What does success mean to you?

To me, success means choosing the path that feels right to you, regardless of what you think you "should" do. Find what makes you happy and do that. Generally speaking, I go to bed on Sunday night looking forward to the next day. I like what I do, and I like who I am. That's success to me.



BLEACHED Premier Finish

What have you chosen to make out of FS linen and why?

I chose to make an apron in [white premier finish 7oz linen](#). I then took the apron I made and indigo dyed it to make a fun and unique piece! I love sewing, but sometimes it's nice to challenge myself with a new medium, and shibori dying was the perfect challenge. I've done it before in a class, but wanted to try it again. It was a really fun way to come up with an apron that is totally one of a kind.

[FS IL076 BLEACHED Premier Finish comes in Heavy weight 100% Linen](#)

CATEGORY

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