

Curated By You: Anna Allen makes Her Own Demeter Dress In Linen

Description

A lot of you, especially those active within the IG sewing community will be familiar with the wonderful Anna Allen Clothing (and if youâ??re in the unknown you absolutely must take a look!). Having outgrown her interest in historical clothing construction, Anna opened her business in 2010 and has been steadily growing her loyal 18K+ community on Instagram. Today she has decided to use FS BLEACHED Lightweight 100% Linen to make her Demeter sewing pattern which she designed especially with linen in mind.



Tell us a bit about yourself and what you do.

I am a clothing designer/pattern maker. I started my business in 2003 sewing mid-19th century garments for historical interpreters. Around 2010, I decided to shift my focus toward designing my own clothing line. I no longer make historical clothing, although I am grateful for the experience and the joy it brought me for so many years. I am currently taking a break from sewing for clients while releasing sewing patterns â?? including a few patterns from my past collections.

What do you love most about having your own business?

I really appreciate the freedom and flexibility to work on whatever Iâ??m inspired by at any given moment. I try to have a bit of structure in place, but I

also allow myself time and space to brainstorm new projects whenever the mood strikes me. This also means if I need to go on a hike to clear my head, I can give myself permission. I feel really lucky to have this opportunity.

Why do you sew?

Iâ??ve been sewing since I was about three years old, so I guess you can say old habits die hard! I canâ??t help but make things with my hands â?? I love the process of making something out of a piece of fabric and thread. The possibilities are endless!

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

When I was seven, my family moved to a small acreage in eastern Iowa where we had lots of space to grow a garden and care for horses, sheep, and barn cats. I have always been inspired by nature and the beauty that surrounds us. I donâ??t know what I would do without my daily dose of nature!

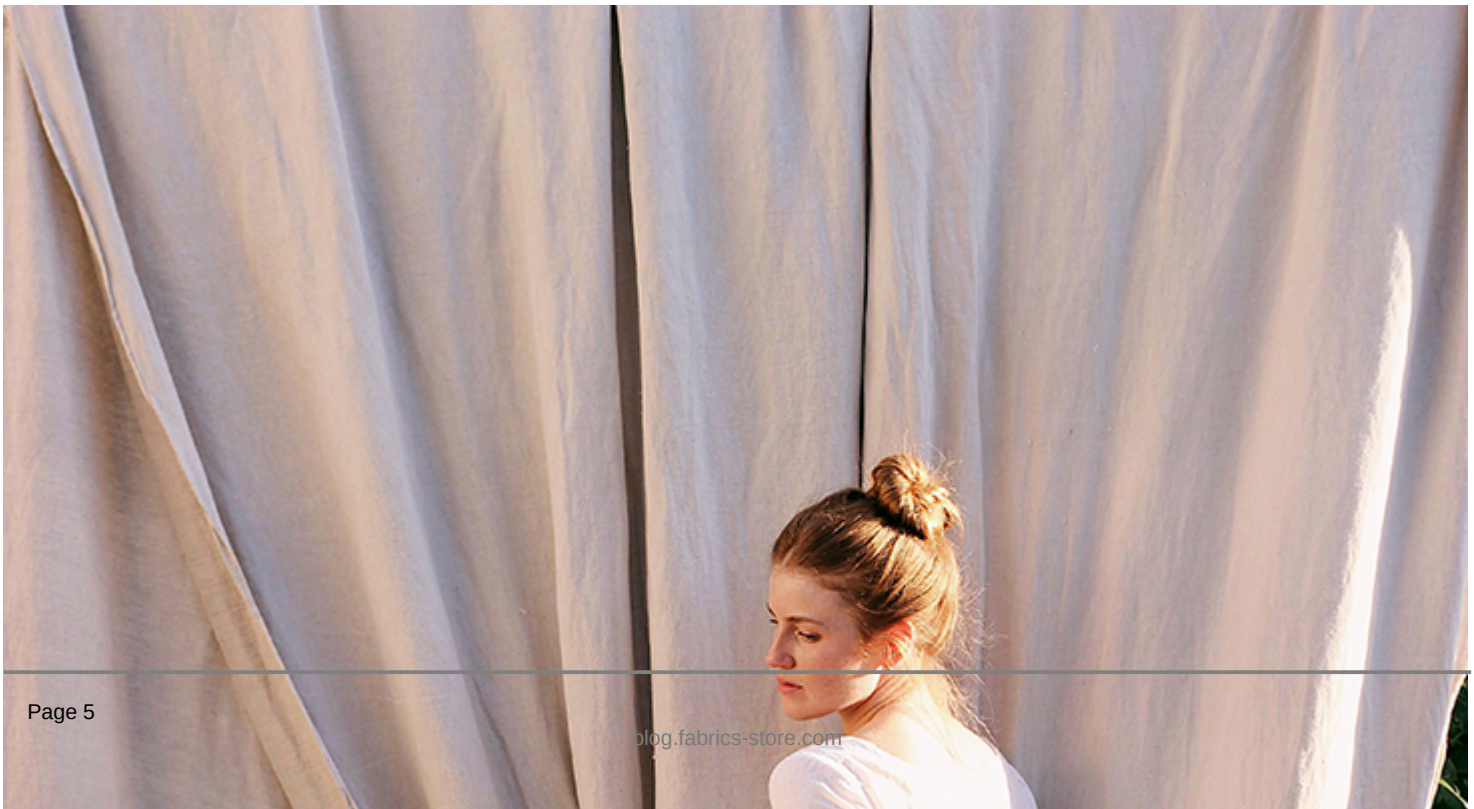


Where is home and how does it affect what you do?

Iâ??m actually in the process of moving back to northern Colorado, where I lived for five years previously. Moving away to New Mexico last year made me realize that Colorado was home all along, and Iâ??m fortunate to have figured out a way to move back again so soon. Colorado is like no other place Iâ??ve ever lived. I come from the midwest, where everything is mostly flat, and although it can be beautiful, I long for the mountains and the cool air. Whenever I feel uninspired, a hike up in the mountains usually does the trick!

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.

I went through a time a few years ago where I was uncertain of what I should be doing with my life. At that point, I had been sewing clothing as a career for most of my adult life, but it had become increasingly more difficult to find work. It was through that difficult time that I decided to begin releasing my sewing patterns. I really didnâ??t think they would sell, but I was trying to be true to myself regardless of what would happen. The word spread through the sewing community on social media, and Iâ??ve been able to continue sewing and doing what I love. I am truly grateful for that time and how it forced me to stop and reflect on myself and my business, and Iâ??m also very grateful for the many people who encouraged me to keep pushing forward.



Anna wears Demeter Dress made out of FS BLEACHED Lightweight 100% Linen

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

I finally read Jane Eyre last autumn, which had been sitting on my bookshelf since I was in high school. Somehow I never picked it up until now! I think I was intimidated by the number of pages. Now that Iâ??ve finally read the book, I know that I will be revisiting it often. Jane Eyre completely and utterly blew me away. Iâ??m often inspired by classic writings such as Jane Austen or Elizabeth Gaskell, but I havenâ??t read anything quite like Charlotte BrontÃ« before. She has a way of transporting you into the pages so that you feel as though you are right there in the remote English countryside. I have a background in historical garment construction, so reading these books written in this time period and in these historic landscapes is incredibly inspiring to me. After reading Jane Eyre, I immediately wanted to create a dress inspired by this gothic novel!

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

The very first thing I remember making was two square pieces of cloth sewn together â?? not exactly inspiring! But soon after that, I remember finding a book at the library about sewing cloth dolls, and I was so inspired by the pattern pieces. The book was called â??Dolls to Make for Fun and Profitâ?• by Edith Flack Ackley. I loved that book so much! I remember there were patterns for historic dresses with puffed sleeves and I was excited to know I could make these dolls and the little clothing to go on them. I also remember thinking how funny the flat pattern pieces looked â?? the Victorian puffed sleeve pattern piece looked just like a tree! Iâ??ve always found the shape of flat pattern pieces so interesting, especially how a flat piece of fabric can be molded into a 3D garment.



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Do you have a mentor or a muse?

I would have to say one of my muses is Julia Child. I find her especially inspiring to me as I get older. Julia didnâ??t even learn to cook until she was 37 years old! She did what interested her, even when others didnâ??t believe she could do it. Something she said that truly resonates with me, â??Find something youâ??re passionate about and keep tremendously interested in itâ?•. I just love this! There will always be frustrating times, when you think there is no way you can do it, but if you are passionate about something, you will find a way of figuring it out. Doing what you are passionate about and trying to make it into a career can be difficult. You not only have to please yourself with what you do, but now you have to think about what others want from you. But I sincerely believe that if you are true to yourself and create what you love, people will start to notice and appreciate the care you put into your work.

How important is social media to your business?

Social media is very important to my business. I donâ??t think I would be doing what Iâ??m doing now without the support of the online community. There was a time that I was unaware of the sewing community on social media â?? I was mostly sewing clothing for others and had just started releasing my sewing patterns. Word of mouth started to get around after I released my Persephone sailor pants pattern, and I soon found a huge thriving community of makers out there! I have met so many amazing people, some of whom I have been able to meet in person and consider to be close friends. I am incredibly grateful for this online community of makers.



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

I currently donâ??t know a lot of people around me who are makers, but since Iâ??m moving back to Colorado soon, I plan to meet up with several people who I have connected with through my Instagram account. It has been hard in the past to meet people, since I work from home (not to mention, Iâ??m also a bit of an introvert). Most of the time the only place I see people is when I go climbing at the gym! I am hopeful that this time around I will have more opportunities to meet makers in my area, thanks to social media.

How important is it to make something with your hands?

Using my hands to create is in my blood! I donâ??t really even remember a time when I wasnâ??t using my hands to mold something or other. Even as a

child I enjoyed forming pots using the clay I found in the soil. Sometimes I find that communication can be difficult for me, especially when I have to clearly articulate my thoughts in words. But making with my hands has always been something I found extremely intuitive and freeing.



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

I absolutely adore working with linen! I have actually been using FS linen for over ten years now, so I was pretty excited when Masha approached me about doing this interview. Iâ??m currently working on releasing my next sewing pattern, the Demeter Dress + Top. I designed this pattern specifically with linen in mind. I decided to make the Demeter dress with the most beautiful ethereal white handkerchief linen, which I have used time and time again over the years. When I first started using FS linen, I was sewing historical clothing, and using this handkerchief linen has been a staple. I love how linen gets even more beautiful with age, and how it softens after each wash.

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