



Curated By You: Monelle Palencia Abaya makes a Linen Paper Theory Olya Shirt

Description



Olya Shirt and Magda altered Pants made with FS Yarn Dyed Linen

Tell us a bit about yourself and what you do.

My name is Monelle. I was born and raised in San Francisco and still live in the Bay Area with my husband and two little boys. I am an attorney by trade, but have always been a creative person. I love all kinds of creative arts, but sewing has always been special to me as my grandmother taught me how to sew when I was 9 years old. I took a long hiatus from sewing, returning to it in the pandemic last year. Revisiting my childhood pastime as an adult has allowed me to refocus sewing around my interest in slow fashion and sustainability. When I'm not camping, Airstreaming or exploring the outdoors with my family, you can follow my sewing and slow fashion journey on [@bashfulleo](#).

Why do you sew?

Sewing for myself is an act of self-care. Though I'm never truly "off" from being a mother, the joy of sewing provides me a momentary "break" from the demands of everyday life. I typically sew at nighttime after my children's bedtime. The silence of the house, the hum of my sewing machine, and my focus on the sewing task at hand are meditative and therapeutic for me. Being alone in those creative moments allows me to show up and be more present in the everyday moments for my husband and children.



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What do you like to listen to when you're working (and why)?

It depends on my mood. If I'm in the mood for music, I'm usually listening to 90's music. I'm still in the mindset that the 90's were only 10 years ago. When I'm in the mood for podcasts, I listen to [@lovetosew.podcast](#) to pick up on sewing tips. Recently, I discovered the [@asiansewistcollective](#) podcast, which explores the intersection of Asian identities and our sewing practices, and I've found those podcasts really interesting as well.

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

I was very, very close with my grandmother growing up. My parents were always working, usually multiple jobs, and my maternal grandparents lived with us and raised my brother and I. My grandmother was my second mother, and many of my earliest formative moments involve her. I spent a lot of time in my grandmother's room, sifting through her jewellery and her clothes. I have so many early memories of lovely chiffon blouses with bow ties, wool coats, and pearl jewellery. I did not realize it at the time, but being on a limited fixed income, my grandmother thrifted all her clothing. When I realized it as an adult, it left a lasting impression on me about what constituted true style and how money does not have to limit one's ability to express their style.

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

My idea of home really evolved this year during the pandemic. With so many limitations put on what we could do and where we could go, we turned toward the outdoors. Being out in nature allowed us to continue to safely get out and about despite the raging pandemic, and the camping fire and our tent became our second home. Camping became our refuge and we became really skilled at camping with two little boys. With eight tent camping trips under our belt over the last year, we decided to make the big leap towards purchasing an Airstream. We are looking forward to having a home on

wheelsâ that will allow us to camp year-round and bring us all over the US!



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

I've been experimenting with different piecing techniques, and my favorite quilting book resource has been "Wonderful One-Patch Quilts" by Sara Nephew and Marci Baker. Before I turn 40, I'm determined to make my first bed-sized quilt using one of the techniques in the book.

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

I sewed my first garment when I was 9. The act of sewing back in 1991 was a world away from how sewing is today. My mother took me to a small sewing store where I pored through sewing pattern books to pick out one pattern I wanted to make. I picked out a midi dress pattern from the Big 4 with big pouty sleeves (the irony of how this style has come back in style has not been lost on me) and picked out a pink large-scale floral fabric. However, since my grandmother was a self-taught sewist and had never sewn with patterns before, she was unable to assist me with reading the pattern. There was no Google to look up answers. With the assistance of a few sewing manuals from the library and some guidance from my grandmother, I undertook the task of trying to decipher the sewing pattern and was able to cobble together my dress. I wish I had saved that dress.

Who are your muses and inspiration?

The ease of social media at my fingertips provides with so much style and creative inspiration. I love when women wear masculine styles; I love streetwear; I love 90s nostalgia; I love sweet-meets-sporty; and the juxtaposition of seemingly different styles and prints (a big poufy dress with sneakers) that give off an air of creativity and wit.

How do you find the time and space to combine creativity with motherhood?

I find the time and space to combine creativity with motherhood because sewing is an act of empowerment for myself. While motherhood has been the most beautiful and enriching experience, all my decisions are oriented towards putting my children's needs before my own, which relegates my own wants and needs to the back burner. During the hours I spend sewing alone, I reclaim something for myself that has nothing to do with my career, my family, my husband, or my children. Expending my energy on this creative pursuit reminds me that I have an identity outside of my career, my husband, and my children.



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How important is it to make something with your hands?

Making with my hands has been an important part of my sustainability journey. Understanding the true costs of what goes into clothes (from the sustainability of the textile, the preparation of the fabric for sewing, the hours that go into sewing the garment itself, etc) has been a major factor in deepening my appreciation for slow fashion.

It's also been so empowering and fulfilling to be able to see an article of clothing, set out to make a garment from scratch, and have a tangible representation of my efforts to share and wear.

What does success mean to you?

Success is living with gratitude. It's knowing that your life is already filled with so much abundance. Recognizing this is an important step to feeling grateful for all life has given you.

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

I chose to sew the [Paper Theory Patterns Olya shirt](#). I really wanted to showcase the different scales of gingham linen that I selected. The innovative cut of the sleeve perfectly highlights the color blocking of the different fabrics and elevates the traditional details of a classic Oxford shirt. It's both something that is unique, but also a versatile wardrobe style that I will be able to wear in so many different ways. With the leftover fabric, I made the Fabrics-Store free [Magda pants pattern](#), altering them into shorts.

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Author

masha