

Curated By You: Meet Leila Knoll Free Spirited Veterinarian On A Self Taught Sewing Journey

Description



Tell us a bit about yourself and what you do.

For a few years, I worked as a mixed animal veterinarian in both general practice and at a non-profit sanctuary (think dogs, cats, hedgehogs, mice, cattle, horses, pigs, chickens, eagles, hawks, snakes, camels, and zebras). Then I decided to go back to graduate school to continue my work in wildlife disease research. I would say, hands down, my favorite type of animal to work with is free ranging wildlife (think wolves, coyotes, deer, and bison).

My long term dream is to build a homestead and sew my days away. But this may be veering into retirement territoryâ?¦

Outside of professional work, Iâ??m usually hanging out with my dogs either hiking or looking for boulders to climb. I also love to dabble in natural and fiber reactive fabric dyeing, tinker with woodworking, and try my best at DIY home repairs.

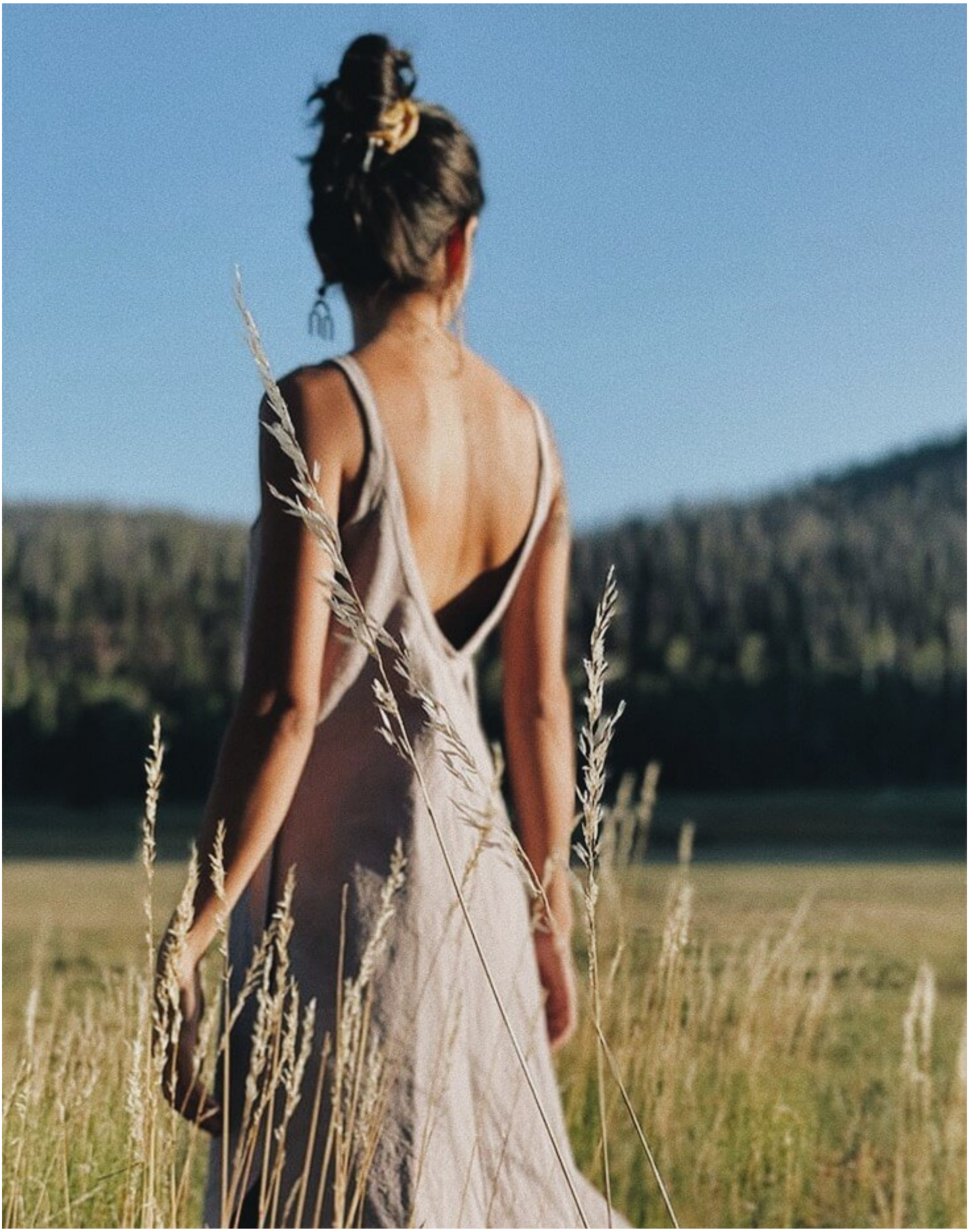


Why do you sew?

I sew because it lets me create functionality where it didnâ??t exist before. To me, it is the purest form of creativity. I sew because it challenges me to review my wardrobe, my style choices, and my own body to determine how I want to present myself to the world. I sew because at the end of the day, it lets my mind unwind and at times even shut off.

Sewing also gives me a sense of community where I did not have one before. I am a self-taught sewist and I do not have any close family members or friends that sew so this was completely new territory for me. Through social media, I have found a wealth of friends, information, and tips on how to problem solve whatever sewing project I have at hand.

I also sew to better understand the details of clothes making, the politics of textile production, and just getting to know my overall fashion sense dictated by my own interests and not whatâ??s advertised to me.



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

Terrible and great TV shows. My all-time favorites are: Adventure Time, Bobâ??s Burgers, Rick & Morty, and Futurama. I will also just put on a very â??binge-ableâ?• show to serve more so as background noise than anything else. And although I am rarely ever looking up at the screen to watch the show, I do seem to need a visual component to keep me company; I have no idea why, but itâ??s comforting to me!

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

This is a really tough question for me. I think Iâ??ve blocked a lot of my childhood memories out for some reason or another.

I guess, for that reason, I have to break this question down further â?? what do I define as beauty? Any thing or individual that brings me joy. Whether it reminds me of a lovely feeling or is simply visually pleasing to me. And when I think of encountering beauty now, I almost always think of patterns in nature. You can find patterns and color palettes all over the landscape that have been reproduced time and time again in quilts, clothing, and even building structures.



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

I currently live in Davis, California. But I actually just moved here last month so I wouldnâ??t necessarily call this place â??homeâ?•. Iâ??ve moved around a lot since I figured out my professional goals and my training has taken me all over the states (MN, TX, UT, and now CA) over the past several years. And while Iâ??m originally from the East Coast, my immediate family have all relocated out of my home state.

So, to me â??homeâ?• is not so much a physical place as it is a figurative one. My idea of home is somewhere I can sit comfortably with myself and think freely. It greatly affects what I choose to do in my daily life. A huge requirement for me is to have whatever rented/owned space Iâ??m in to feel cozy; I want to be constantly reminded that Iâ??m in a safe space, surrounded by objects that remind me of my friends, family, trips, and special occasions.



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

I am a terrible reader. Historically, I would only read the same book over and over again because I knew it was good (to my standards) and I wouldnâ??t be disappointed (my mind immediately goes to â??Enderâ??s Gameâ?• by Orson Scott Card).

Currently, I am halfway through â??Braiding Sweetgrassâ?• by Robin Wall Kimmerer and â??Duneâ?• by Frank Herbert. But as Iâ??ve said, Iâ??m a terrible reader. I will pick up and put down the same book over the span of several years.

Something inspiring that Iâ??ve taken away from Kimmererâ??s book is the reminder to be present and grateful in the natural world and to truly appreciate all that it has given us and continues to give us despite our shortcomings.

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

For whatever reason unbeknownst to me, I decided that I wanted to make a quilt for my bed. I remember feeling overwhelmed the entire time and looking back I definitely did not know what I was doing. I had never heard of a walking foot before, let alone ever quilted something in my life, I thought there were only two types of needles â?? standard and denim, and I had no one to ask for help if I needed it. It was a challenge and I was determined to get it done. And I did!

I donâ??t think Iâ??ll ever give that quilt away, I can see all of the things I would do differently now that I have a handful of quilts under my belt, but I wouldnâ??t change a thing about that one.



Who are your muses and inspiration?

I would have to say my immediate surrounding environment and my ever-growing list of maker friends on social media. I have noticed that I tend to match my surroundings closely. For example, in the desert I tend to pull for warmer tones like reds and yellows whereas in the more wooded area I find myself in now, I am all about greens and blues.

As for social media, I could write an entire blog about this concept. Like any geriatric millennial, I was blown away at the fact that there are an infinite amount of communities on the internet. And I managed to find myself in a lovely little one otherwise known as the sewing community (that I have categorized myself). I am constantly impressed and inspired by other makers from all around the world with what they come up with and decide to make. I feel that I subconsciously want to lean into a minimalist clothing style, but almost always end up with a very flashy dress instead (ruffles, puffed sleeves, the works).

How important is it to make something with your hands?

Sewing and making in general are very important to me. I come from a family of engineers (Iâ??m talking mother, father, uncles, aunts, cousins) so understanding how things work has always been an important lesson in my household.

I have also always been a hands-on person and greatly appreciate tactile learning approaches. So when I have the time and energy to make something for myself, that renders the item all the more special to me. It offers me a technical lesson, it gives me a tangible item to remind me of special moments, and it allows me time to reflect when I wear or see the item later on.



Self Drafted Pants made with FS ASPHALT Midweight Signature Finish Linen

What does success mean to you?

Success means feeling at home with yourself every hour of the day. It is the constant act of being mindful, being present, being grateful, and being alive.

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

Iâ??ve decided to make a self-drafted pair of pants with a special feature: a wrap tie waistband. These pants have been living in my brainspace for several months and while I tried to put the thought to fabric with indie designer patterns, none of them produced quite what I had in mind. Then, I met Jocie of JocieByHand (her own slow fashion brand) and she had created a pair of pants that were the closest to what I had been imagining all this time. While she wasnâ??t selling the pants or the pattern at the time, she was very generous with her time and shared tips and techniques to try my hand at making my own personal pair.

Fast-forward seven months later and I finally managed to pull this pattern together with the softest and most reliable linen I know: the IL019 series in ASPHALT GRAY. I am a sucker for linen for its breathability, natural fibers, and signature wrinkle so this fabric choice was the perfect fit for me.

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