



Curated By You: Ella Clausen Makes a Linen Unfolding Jacket from Wiksten Patterns

Description



Tell us a bit about yourself and what you do.

My name is Ella. I'm 29, a proud first-generation American, now Californian, and a home garment sewist by night.

By day, I work for a nonprofit foundation connected to Levi Strauss & Co., offering hardship support for Levi's employees and retirees. When people in our community have emergencies big and small, we offer hardship grants to prevent an eviction, help with a medical emergency, or offer aid in a natural disaster or other situations. I started this job remotely and we've only just started going back into the office in person, so I'm excited to get to know some Levi's designers, learn more about the textile innovation process, and hopefully get some denim scraps and offcuts. It's fun being a home sewist at a clothing company. People have asked me before if I'll try to make jeans and I think that's actually the one thing that I think I *won't* try to ever do.

You can follow along with my personal sewing [@HandmadeMillennial](#) on Instagram.

Why do you sew?

I'm a relatively new sewist, at it for two years now, but when I fell in love with sewing, I fell hard. We're talking about regular nights with the sewing machine humming away until one am because I can't put down a project, then waking up problem solving a construction issue in my head as I lay in bed, kind of love. It's brought me a lot of solace, joy, and a sense of control during the pandemic. I sew because I think it's nearly magical that I can dream up an idea one day and manifest it into being the next. I marvel at that.

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

I like to mix it up, but it's often audiobooks, sewing podcasts (like Love to Sew or the Asian Sewist Collective), or trashy TV. Sometimes I like watching other sewists making things on YouTube. I tried watching some fashion competitive shows and actually hated them.



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

I have fond memories growing up of running around wild and playing in the Evergreen forest on the edge of my neighbor's backyard. I loved those woods. We'd spend the summer eating wild blackberries and rubbing piney-smelling sap onto our hands and looking up at those tall, tall Evergreens and hardly seeing the sky through the treetops. I was born and raised in the pacific northwest of the US in the suburbs outside of Seattle.

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

I live outside of San Francisco in Oakland, California and I love it here. The climate is mild most of the year, which informs the styles that I choose to sew and what fabrics I like to use. I make mostly elevated casual pieces that when I'm sewing, I'd imagine I'd wear to a picnic at the park or meeting friends for a nice dinner.

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

I've just finished re-reading Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* and rewatching the movie that accompanies it. I have a soft spot for stories with romance and magical realism – where we're in the modern world and there are just twists and turns of magic that walk the line between fiction and fantasy. I love that little bit of magic, just a hint.



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

As an adolescent, I used to have fun embellishing or modifying my clothes. I guess this hobby has been a long time coming. I remember dip bleaching jeans, and adding little gold studs onto a shirt. Before I discovered natural dyes, I had fun with dyeing things in different colors with Rit Dye.

Who are your muses and inspiration?

I love spending time in the city and admiring people's styles walking around and thinking "Oooh, I could make that." I also source a lot of inspiration from the sewing community on [Instagram](#) and the creativity of my online friends there. I find like-minded creativity infectious. Is it too soon to use the word "infectious" again like this? Oh well, too late.

How important is it to make something with your hands?

I think sewing is magic, it's a superpower to be able to turn raw materials into wonderful things for ourselves and others. This question has me musing about my grandmother. About how far my family has evolved in two generations, but also come full circle. About how the magic of our hands probably wasn't such a revelation to my grandmother, Rosario. She was the last woman in my family to sew, and she clothed her entire family. In a far removed village in the Philippines, she wasn't taught to expect that the clothes on your back should be made far away in factories. She did it herself. So when people picture sewing as a lost generation's hobby, I take that as a point of pride because my grandmother was an incredible woman to take on the feat of clothing a family of nine by herself.



What does success mean to you?

Success is putting your head to the pillow each night and feeling fulfilled and happy with how you lived that day.

A few years ago, I had a near dream job designing social impact programs for a really cool brand. They decided to move their headquarters a few thousand miles away to a place I wasn't interested in living, and I had to think long and hard about whether to choose my career or my personal life. I chose myself (and my friends, community, and lifestyle that I was happy with), and I have never regretted that decision. Success to me is feeling genuinely happy with the life you lead, doing things big or small. I've since found an equally dreamy job, even though I had been so scared I wouldn't. Life works out that way sometimes.

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

I selected a heavyweight [MOSS](#) Green linen to make a quilted, oversized Japanese-style jacket. It has a large foldover collar, slant patch pockets, and is a shorter jacket length. The pattern is called the Unfolding Jacket from Wiksten Patterns, although it's now been discontinued. I've been curious about quilting lately and decided to stitch on mild waving lines throughout in an accent thread. Someone told me the effect is kind of like flowing seaweed on the ocean floor, and as a coastal human, I kind of love that. I'm really into the lining – it is a cotton blend that I ice dyed over the summer. It was my first time ice dyeing and I love the watercolor effect and tones of pink, teals, blues as they melt together. From the linen scraps I also made a quick little envelope clutch to go alongside the jacket.

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