

Second Hand Fabric Shopping in Phoenix, Arizona

## Description



Last fall, my family and I relocated to a small rural town south of Phoenix, Arizonaâ??a stark contrast to our previous urban lifestyle just minutes from downtown LA. One of the things I knew I would miss was the easy access to the Fabric District, where I could find endless bolts of deadstock fabrics. As a sewist, I have a deep appreciation for the unique qualities and sustainability aspects of deadstock and secondhand fabrics. Deadstock fabric refers to surplus materials from fashion brands or textile mills that would otherwise go to waste. Secondhand fabrics, sourced from thrift stores or creative reuse centers, offer a similar sustainable advantage. These fabrics have a history and character that new materials often lack, giving my projects a one-of-a-kind aesthetic. Using secondhand fabric aligns with my commitment to eco-friendly practices by promoting recycling and reducing the demand for new textile production, which can be resource-intensive.


FLANNEL
FLANNEL
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BLUE

As we settled into our new home in Arizona, I was organizing my fabrics in my sewing studio. I thumbed through a few yards of second-hand fabrics purchased during various thrifting jaunts in LA, and my curiosity piqued as to whether there were any creative reuse centers in my new town. Good old Google to the rescue, and the first result that popped up was The Arc, short for The Art Resource Center, in Tempe, which is just east of Phoenix. I pinned the address on my maps app and immediately made plans with my husband (whoâ??s also an artist and hobby enthusiast) to visit during one of their open days.


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The ARC is a non-profit providing arts & crafts materials free to educators and other non-profit organizations. All other patrons are welcome to take supplies for a donation of what the items are worth to themâ??which I thought was a great take on â??the honor system.â?• Sherrie Zeitlin, a fiber artist active in the Arizona arts community for over 30 years, founded The Arc in 2004. Inspired by her experiences in art residencies at various schools and communities with underfunded art programs, she began collecting and donating art supplies. Meeting the vibrant Sherrie and learning about the 4,000-square-foot creative space she runs, with the help of volunteers, was a delight. Like other creative thrift shops, The Arcâ??s inventory is donation-based and ever-changing. If you see something you like, grab itâ??it might not be there next time.



Sherrie gave us a tour of the front of the house, where the check-out area is alongside revolving curations of art materials displays. There is a used book library room, and right next to that is the Residency Room, a space dedicated to invited artists to make art and offer workshops during their stay. During our visit, Sherrie had taken up the space for the month with a large loom featuring an almost finished tapestry piece she had been working on. The roomâ??s walls featured beautiful small woven works sheâ??d created over the years. Sherrie invited the public to come and learn the ins and outs of tapestry weaving with their own cardboard loom and materials, courtesy of The Arc.



She then let us loose in the backroom, the giant warehouse section of the space featuring every type of craft material your hobbyist heart could ever dream of! My favorite section, of course, was a wall of shelves stocked full of color-coordinated fabrics that spanned the entire length of the left side of the space. Fabrics were organized by size and, in some cases, by print or pattern. To be a sewist is to be a tactile person, so of course, I ran my fingers delicately through each carefully folded piece of fabric, noticing the subtle differences among the stiff quilting cottons, the softly nubby linens, and the pebbly textured upholstery jacquards. Although the selection of bolts was slim this visit, The Arc frequently receives new fabric donations, and Sherrie keeps the Facebook and Instagram updated. There were also tubs full of vintage sewing patterns just waiting to be looked through, and the selection of yarns was definitely not to be missed by fellow fiber enthusiasts.



I was on a personal fabric ban when I visited, but it was hard to resist picking up a few pieces of floral and stripe printed fabrics for a couple of patchwork projects on my â??to makeâ?• list. But I know for sure on my next visit Iâ??ll be stocking up as Iâ??m keen to try hand-piece quilting, and the selection of fabrics at The Arc is just perfect for a novice like me.



What I especially admire about Sherrieâ??s mission is that, as a non-profit, The Arc not only diverts items from the landfill to be reused and recycled for arts, crafts, and education, but they also support communities in need. A current ongoing project this summer invites local crocheters to beat the summer heat by coming into the air-conditioned space and spending some time helping transform half-done crochet projects into blankets for those in need come the colder winter months.


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BAG
of
YARN
Per Person
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Rug Yarn
Warm Yarn
(yellow orange red)
Warm Yarn
(yellow orange red)

Visiting The Arc was a delightful learning experience that highlighted the growing appreciation for sustainable creativity in Phoenix. Sherrie Zeitlinâ??s vision has created a vibrant hub for artists and hobbyists, offering inspiration and resources while promoting eco-friendly practices and community support. As I explore my new surroundings in Arizona, I look forward to many more visits to The Arc, discovering unique materials and contributing to this remarkable initiative. Whether youâ??re a sewist, crafter, or someone who values sustainability, The Arc is a treasure trove worth exploring.

## CATEGORY

1. COMMUNITY
2. SUSTAINABILITY

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**Date Created**
August 1, 2024
**Author**
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