



Curated By You: Lee Dignan Makes A Linen Cocoon Cardigan

Description

Behind every person, there are stories to be told, a life lived sometimes not so very much unlike your own, even if you were born thousands of miles apart. Community bound by a common interest brings not only wisdom of experience to be shared or the joy for that interest, as this project slowly unfolded it became a quiet reminder that what brings great comfort to humans is a sense of belonging. Creativity is a way to be, it doesn't end with what you make but follows through with how you arrange your thoughts and respond to the world within and around you. This week we are delighted to meet [Lee Dignan](#), a young mother and creative, sharing an intimate portrait of her life with us. Grateful, thank you for the inspiration.



Finish Linen

Tell us a bit about yourself and why you sew.

I'm 32 and a new mom of my baby girl, Mae. She, my husband and I live in an apartment in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Ever since I can remember, I've loved art and creating. My eyes and my hands were one from a young age. I would scribble on a piece of paper and then spend hours coloring in the shapes that emerged. While other kids were playing video games and watching movies, I would sit at the kitchen table cutting out tiny shapes from colorful paper to make collages. As I grew older, I learned I could channel my right brain into self-expression. Close friends of mine still jokingly tease me about the meticulous shapes I'd paint on my nails, or my DIY beaded bobby pins, of which I made & owned many.

My grandmother has always been an amazing sewer, and I remember always wanting to learn. Then, when I was an art major in college, I decided to take some elective classes in the apparel design school. Since then, I've become most inspired by ways to apply art to something you can appreciate not just for its beauty, but also for its utilitarian use. Today, I have folded this concept of creative homesteading into my never-ending mission to try to make before buying. The more I learn about sewing and making, the more I realize how much more I can do, and that's so empowering to me.

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

I usually let my husband control the music in our household because he's so good at it! Typically it's Sam Cooke, Billie Holiday, or Django Reinhardt radio, sometimes Andrew Bird. Or, sometimes I just have a feel-good TV show on in the background (hi, Gilmore Girls) or a podcast that has my attention (How I Built This is a particular favorite). I just go with whatever sounds relaxing.



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

My grandmother (the same one that sews) has a charm bracelet that she gave to my mother. She doesn't wear it, but keeps it in a jewelry box in her bedroom. I would always ask to look at it—it's incredible. It even has a book charm with actual paper pages in it. And scissors that open and close. The intricacies of that bracelet just fascinated me.

Who are your muses and your inspiration?

I'm not sure I have a single muse in one person. Many of the women in my life are inspiration to me in their own specific way. I suppose my "muse" is the amalgamation of all of them. That may be a boring, cliché answer, but for me it's true. I follow lots of wonderful people on Instagram, and I'll fully admit that they give me lots of creative ideas, but real women who I know are the ones who inspire me at my core.

Where is home and how does it affect your creative work?

Home is in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I love it. People here are so embracing of nature and life, and the cyclical, seasonal changes we experience every year. The city has a pretty big sprawl, so there's a pocket for every kind of lifestyle here that's still pretty accessible to the heart of the city. But, while it's no small town, it's also not NYC or LA, and, save for a few little gems, the retail clothing scene is pretty limited to lots of fast fashion, which gets a bit boring. I find my style to be really simple, focused on sustainable fabrics and clean lines, and so I challenge myself to make my own clothes. 4 very distinct seasons always has me changing up my wardrobe and style, so making my own clothes keeps it affordable!

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

This is weird, but I got a cookbook called Jerusalem for a birthday recently, and the author wrote so beautifully about how food is where the people of Israel seem to find peace across different religious groups. I'm from Israel,

and never even realized how true that was. I feel that art and craftsmanship is the same way. It doesn't divide, it helps people find commonalities around something indisputably wonderful.

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

Oh boy. I'm a little embarrassed to say, but in college (back in 2008ish), I really wanted a cute tutu skirt to wear out to the bars (a la Sarah Jessica Parker), and just decided I'd make one. I ended up making 3 (one ivory, one black and one pink), and was so proud to wear them out. When friends wanted to meet, they'd call me up and be like "Lee, put on a tutu and come meet us at the Mad Hatter!" It was my signature.



Lee wearing a cardigan she made with FS GINGER Signature Finish Linen

How do you balance motherhood and the importance of staying creative?

Goodness. In all honesty, I don't do this well. I'm working on it. Sometimes I just wind up making things for my daughter, but I certainly don't sew as much as I did before she came along. I need to find a better balance, but I also look forward to the days where I can share those experiences with her. (She's 8 months and already finger painting at daycare!) But the need to create something lurks within me like a caged animal—eventually, it will find its way out, and I'll find a way to fold it into this new chapter of life. I trust in that!

What's the best advice you've ever been given?

No one can love you until you love yourself. It's so true. You really do need to put on your own oxygen mask first before assisting others.

How important is it to make something with your hands?

Vitality. People, especially in my generation, are so quick to throw money at something they could easily do themselves. The feeling of pride I get in making something that I can also use and enjoy is unmatched by much else. It's a huge part of what defines me.

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

The community around here is huge, but I dabble here and there, so I mostly navigate on my own. I do have a close girlfriend from elementary school who likes to explore making different things with me where our interests converge. I also find making to be my opportunity to let my inner introvert out. She takes a back seat to my extroverted side a lot of the time, but I feel the need to let her out more and more each year.

What does success mean to you?

I'm still learning about the meaning of true success. There's a feeling that accompanies the completion of something you set your mind on that I'm learning to harness and take into my everyday. It's not the same as pride to

me, or achievement—both wonderful things in their own right—it's lies a level deeper and is a little tougher to keep a pulse on. It surfaces for me at random times, like when all I want to do is have a picnic at the lake with my family and we finally do it, or I complete a first hand-sewn baby item for Mae (a bonnet, of course). So it seems to me, so far, that success comes from within. It has nothing to do with accolades or external acknowledgement. And so I try to be mindful and introspective as much as I can, constantly self-checking that the time I spend is fulfilling and true to my whole self and those important to me. I just try to trust that success will follow.



Lee wearing a cardigan she made with FS GINGER Signature Finish Linen

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

I decided to make a relaxed jacket. Awhile back, I made a pattern from a wool cocoon cardigan by a local designer that I replicated in another color and loved. When I was getting ready to go back to work, I realized I hadn't addressed my professional wardrobe in 15+ months and was in desperate need of some new pieces. But, I HATE blazers or any constricting clothing, and I needed to make sure it was something I could still nurse & pump in. So I thought this could be a nice balance between being comfortable, functional and professional. And, in full honesty, a project this mama could tackle in an appropriate amount of time.

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