



Curated By You: Elise Montecastro Makes Zero Waste Self-Drafted Extra Puffy Sleeve Top and ZW Block Pant

Description



with FS PURPLE HEART Midweight Linen

Tell us a bit about yourself and what you do.

My name is Elise and I live in Los Angeles with my fiancé, our new baby girl, and our sweet American bulldog. I'm a photo stylist in the fashion ecommerce space, so I style garments for different brands either on model or pinned up on boards for product shots. I'm also a small batch production sewer – I do everything from pattern drafting and sample making to custom made garments for clients. I pretty much get to play with clothes for a living!

I dipped my toes in a little bit of everything fashion related after studying Fashion Design in college – I did retail management for a few years while moonlighting as a street style writer for an LA newspaper, then moved into styling and producing shoots for big fast fashion brands for several years, and also did some assistant celebrity styling work. Working in the fast fashion space was a huge eye opener for me and heavily informed my commitment to and passion for sustainability and the slow fashion movement, which is why I feel like I struck gold when I found the sewing community on Instagram!

Why do you sew?

Besides doing it for work, my personal sewing practice is what makes me feel most myself because I've loved the craft since I was a little girl. Sewing my own clothes is my little luxury; it's the (now limited) time that I get to spend making a mess and draping myself with beautiful, sumptuous fabrics dreaming up all the possibilities while the whirring, sometimes clanking, sounds of my machines are in the background.



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

When I'm working on production projects for clients, I like to listen to podcasts (The Daily & Love to Sew are favorites) because I'm usually on auto pilot so it's easier to pay attention to what I'm listening to. However, when I'm sewing for myself, whether trying out a new indie pattern or self-drafting, I find that I like to work in complete silence as it helps me keep focused.

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

My earliest memory is actually my first encounter of beauty – it's of my mom when I must have been a toddler. I was staring into her big dark kohl-lined eyes and feelings of warmth and softness came to mind – for sure beauty as I see it.

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

I was born and raised in LA – and I still live here today. I lived in SF for several years for college and moved right back home. Los Angeles is a major hub for fashion so my work is heavily centered here. Majority of the studios I shoot at and the fabric district are both downtown; I'm very lucky to live only a few short miles away so it's very convenient for me to commute to set and to source fabric and notions for both clients and myself.



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

I recently got the Pattern Magic Stretch Knit Fabrics book – I now have the whole Pattern Magic series which I'm completely geeked over! I haven't tried any of the patterns just yet but the half scale samples and the drafting in all the books are gorgeous and completely mind blowing. Whenever I'm in a creative slump I like to thumb through the pages of those books to get re-inspired.

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

I was always creative as a little kid and loved to draw. I distinctly remember drawing on things I wasn't supposed to – like the walls in our dining room that I squiggle-lined with a red marker, or the borrowed library book that I used as a personal sketchbook (mom and dad had to pay for a new copy for the library, oops!). As far as garment making, when I was 11 or 12 I remember sneakily taking a half zip sweatshirt from my mom's drawer to cut up and refashion into a short sleeved top. I chopped off way too much from the sides and sleeves knowing nothing about seam allowance or how to hem, but I did a pretty satisfactory job of hand-sewing the side seams! I only wore it about twice around the house because it was definitely way too tight to wear out.

Who are your muses and inspiration?

Before learning about and constantly being inspired by the whole online sewing community, I would religiously follow street style coverage during all the fashion weeks. The late street fashion photographer Bill Cunningham was another major source for inspiration because he would capture and write about the most beautiful details in even the most “everyday” outfits. I also collect vintage sewing patterns and clothes from the late 70s through the early 90s that I’m always referring to for inspiration.



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

Yes and I'm so grateful for it! Because I went to an arts high school and art college, I've always been surrounded by creative friends who are illustrators, tattooers, photographers, choreographers, and everyone in between, who are constantly putting out work. My fiancé, whom I met while in art school and has a BFA in painting, has numerous creative hobbies that include building and painting classic cars/motorcycles, woodturning, & photography.

Within the past two years one of my closest cousins picked up sewing as a hobby and it's been so much fun having a sewing buddy to nerd out with on sewing patterns and fabric shopping!

How important is it to make something with your hands?

Making with my hands is everything to me! Whether I'm on set styling clothes, at home in my studio space drafting patterns and sewing samples for a client, or making clothes to add to my own wardrobe, using my hands is literally my livelihood and I wouldn't have it any other way.

You've just recently become a new mum. Congrats! How do you find the balance between motherhood and creativity?

Yes, thank you! Since becoming a mother I feel as though I've unlocked a new level of creativity (picking up a dropped cell phone with your foot while cradling a napping baby, anyone?) I will say it can be challenging to find balance between juggling the domesticities of mom life (cooking, feeding, cleaning) and personal creative projects but my fiancé is a big support and will trade off with me in the evenings to care for the baby so I can indulge in my hobbies or catch up on client projects. I'm also very lucky to have my parents help with the baby every other weekend which affords me a whole day or so of focussed, selfish sewing.

What does success mean to you?

Success to me is living a life full of gratitude and without regrets. Not a day goes by without feeling grateful for the life I've carved out for myself with my little family thus far. My fiancé and I each have big dreams and goals that we're always encouraging each other to accomplish, and I think that type of support in a relationship is a success.



FS PURPLE HEART Midweight Softened Linen

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

One of the ways I like to practice sustainability is by sewing zero waste garments, which is really satisfying. Like most zero waste patterns, this self-drafted extra puffy sleeve top is made up of several rectangles, using up just

about 1.5 yards. I love the little keyhole detail at the center front that the straps create and the lovely drape from the voluminous sleeves that only linen can do. The pants were made with the remaining yardage – they are the #ZWBlockPant with the front fly hack by Birgitta Helmersson and they were really cool to put together. It's such a well thought out and highly detailed pattern, especially with the fly hack, and works beautifully with the [midweight linen](#). I'll admit making these two garments wasn't entirely zero waste but I'm glad to report the resulting scraps all fit into my hand and will be used as stuffing for a floor cushion!

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