



THE VFG NEWS

SHARING OUR PASSION FOR VINTAGE FASHION

August 2024

Leigh Wishner: Fabric First

—BY **MAGGIE WILDS** (DENISEBRAIN)

In conversation with the personality behind [Pattern Play USA](#), I kept notes that included “super authentic,” “truth talker,” and “not a minimalist.” How VFG Member Leigh Wishner presents herself to the world is as a confident, colorful, generous, scholarly, and inspiring person. That is her work, how she talks, how she thinks, what she does, who she is.

Leigh’s education and career have taken her from Los Angeles to New York and back to LA. She describes herself as a design historian specializing in modern textiles and fashion. Her B.A. in Art History and Archaeology was from Barnard College, and she received her M.A. in Decorative Arts and Material Culture from Bard Graduate Center.

Leigh weaves together circle skirts and Mesoamerican ceramics, fine art and Frank Lloyd Wright interiors while discussing her work. She shares her 1934 house with her husband, Brian (whom she met over a shared love of vintage Hawaiian clothing), dog, Satchmo, and cat, Cookie. Her holistic approach to design is apparent in their home: A Josef Frank textile just happens to be her Zoom backdrop, and there is color, texture, and pattern in every direction.

I asked Leigh what piqued her interest in fabric, and she recounted a graduate school class, History of Textiles, taught by Michelle Majer. Majer brought in samples of 18th-century brocaded silk that each student got to take home, analyze, and write about. “It was beyond my wildest dreams that I could have something that old in my hands and then also be tasked to figure



Leigh Wishner (wearing a tunic by Catherine Ogust) standing by Olafur Eliasson’s wall sculpture at Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, photo by Lorraine Triolo.

it out. That was the moment.” From there, she was introduced to the Cora Ginsburg gallery, where Michelle Majer also worked. It didn’t take long for Leigh to know that this was where she belonged. She spent the next decade at Ginsburg, growing her knowledge and experience with historic textiles under the mentorship of Titi Halle, owner and director of Cora Ginsburg LLC.

Returning to Los Angeles, Leigh held a position at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. This solidified her interest in California fashion while doing a massive inventory project in anticipation of moving the entire permanent collection for the rebuilding of the museum. The highlight was cataloging all of the Gilbert Adrian holdings in

LACMA's formidable possession. Following that position, Leigh went to the FIDM Museum at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising, where she most enjoyed her educational work, including her extraordinarily interesting and influential social media posts. She is currently Projects Manager at Frank Lloyd Wright's Hollyhock House, which is LA's only UNESCO World Heritage site. Her project du jour involves having Wright's curtains and upholstery (of which only one cushion remains) reproduced.

And then there's **Totally Textiles**. It's easy to tell Leigh is excited about this new selling venture, which combines her love of material, prints, and clothing. When I first saw her bright branding on Instagram [@totally_textiles](#), I thought, "That is so LEIGH." She loves calling her own smart shots and dipping into her broad knowledge and love of fabric and fashion. She says the vintage and secondhand fashion collection she just launched



at Tiki Oasis was not about labels, designers, or silhouettes, but the textiles. And certainly, her sparkling personality would make purchasing from Leigh a treat.

Totally Textiles currently includes some of Leigh's own vintage collection, and she also offers "future vintage"—contemporary clothing that checks boxes for quality fabric, details, and construction. She is always on the lookout for items

worth wearing and caring for well into the future. She says this is a museum best practice: Always look for what you don't already have in the collection. Always be collecting the NOW.

What else might you find on offer at a Totally Textiles pop-up or Instagram feed? Leigh declares an absolute love of 1980s and '90s fashion, "the frontier of vintage," as the most openly avant-garde period in fashion, including influences from Japan and globally sourced hand-crafted fabrics used for commercially manufactured clothing.

I asked Leigh about her progress on the passion project book she is writing (working title *Pattern Play USA*). On her website, Leigh says this project "allows me to harness my passions for modern American fabrics, fashions, and interiors—and dig deep for the hidden stories behind the designs, the artists, and the manufacturers that made twentieth-century American textile design so fascinating." Having just spent a couple of years on a deep dive into the life and work of weaver and designer Dorothy Liebes, including her contribution of the chapter "Modern Fashion's Secret Weapon" to *A Dark, A Light, A Bright: The Designs of Dorothy Liebes*, and offering her expertise via social media posts, blogs, podcasts, and public lectures, Leigh is giving herself permission to take time on her book. She says she has a patient literary agent.

Engaged as she is in material culture, particularly that which excites her, at one point in our conversation I suggested that Leigh is the midwife of all things colorful. She accepted that with glee. While being a serious researcher, she is able to translate her knowledge to others with the joy and clarity she feels. For some, the adage might be a cliché, but the future really does look bright for Leigh Wishner—bright, patterned, and fabric first.



NEWS SNIPPETS

WHERE FASHION NEVER GOES OUT OF STYLE

The Fashion History Museum's Director/Curator & Co-Founder **JONATHAN WALFORD** (**JONATHAN**) announces a new must-read. "Embark on a stylish journey through time! *Our First Twenty Years* invites you to explore the captivating evolution of the Fashion History Museum as we celebrate two decades of preserving and showcasing the artistry of attire." You can purchase the book through the [FHM bookstore](#).



HALCYON DAYS: A VINTAGE SHOP MEMOIR

Want to read about the inner workings of a beloved vintage shop of long-standing?

CONNIE CARROLL, the founder of [Halcyon Vintage](#) in Richmond, Virginia, has written a memoir about the store which opened in 1983. It's called *Firsthand Tales from a Secondhand Store*.

The book has many stories about the triumphs and trials of her long career. It's a charming read and has been very well received. In fact it's in its third printing!



To purchase the book, please contact Didi Chisholm, the new owner of Halcyon at shophalcyonvintage@gmail.com or Connie at Conniefox505@gmail.com. The book is \$20 plus \$5 shipping.

Reported by **DIDI CHISHOLM** (HALCYON VINTAGE)

MORE GREAT NEWS FROM DIDI:

Halcyon has just won **Best Vintage Clothing Shop** in Richmond, Virginia, via *Richmond Magazine*. Congratulations!



PARTY LIKE IT'S 1824

Lockport, New York is turning 200. To celebrate, **ELIZABETH VISCIANO** (AUNTIEB), proprietor of Betsy Ross Costumes, was tasked with costuming town officials for their bicentennial events. Using her 40+ years of costume experience, she found vintage pieces and created period-accurate ensembles, ensuring they looked the part for the 1824 reenactment. It was a fun challenge, and

the outfits were a hit! The best part? These costumes are now available for rent, perfect for your next Bridgerton- or Jane Austen-themed event.

THEY'RE PUTTING THE *CHIC* IN *CHICAGO*

By **ANASTACIA BANIKE** (GandP)

We are excited to share the [Heir Apparent Vintage Show](#) held in July 2024 in Chicago. Our Chicagoland-based vintage sellers offered carefully curated collections of designer and fine vintage fashion, jewelry, accessories, and furniture, covering over 150 years of fashion and design history. We hope we helped our shoppers create their own archive of heirloom-worthy pieces—perfect for wearing now and sharing with future generations.



Goods and Provisions collaborated with Schlesak Vintage to plan the fashion-focused event. Local television coverage spotlighted the accessories, while printed and digital materials showcased our vintage >>

NEWS SNIPPETS (CONT'D)

fashion vibes. Friday night started off with a non-alcoholic "Sip and Shop" to the accompaniment of a live jazz duo. Throughout the weekend, shoppers smiled with delight when finding their perfect vintage Dior sunnies, Versace silk dress, or Chanel wallet. We heard many chic shoppers appreciating discoveries of long-sought-out pieces. With the July 2024 Heir Apparent Vintage Show in the books, we are quietly contemplating the next steps in offering Chicago another special vintage event. Please stay tuned!

SON-SATIONAL FIND

For her son's role as Prince Charming in a community theater production of Cinderella, **SUE BRODER (SUES * STUFF)** posted an in-search-of notice in the VFG forums and **MARY HENDERSON (THE VINTAGE MERCHANT)** found a white tailcoat in her inventory. And it fit like a glass slipper! You too can find what you are looking for by [posting in our public forums](#).



THE APPLE DOESN'T FALL...

HARRIET ULPH (HATTYSATTIC) went to see her son Finlay's degree show at the University of Lincoln (UK) where he has been studying for his BA in Conservation of Cultural Heritage.

The final year students had all chosen projects to research and restore and Finlay chose a 1920s dress and created the display boards as part of the assignment. Sign him up!



VINTAGE FINDS AWAIT

BROOKE NAULT (**BROOKENAULT**) of Daisy and Stella Vintage is the mastermind behind the [Twin Cities True Vintage Show](#), held on September 28, 2024. She describes the vibe she's going for with the show, which includes older vintage and antique fashion and textiles, as "an immersive experience." You're encouraged to dress in vintage!

KERRY TAYLOR AUCTIONS (**KERRY TAYLOR**) is holding [Biba Girl!—featuring the Pari Collection](#) online-only September 9–16, 2024.



AUGUSTA AUCTIONS (**AUGUSTAAUCTIONS**) will hold its [End of Summer Elegance Sale](#) on September 25, 2024.



THE VFG MEMBER DIRECTORY

Ever wished you had a guide to the members of the VFG? Dive into to the [Vintage Fashion Guild Member Directory](#)! This comprehensive resource features our vetted members—passionate individuals with expertise in vintage textiles, fashion history, and more. Many are trusted sellers, offering a curated selection of authentic vintage pieces. Whether you're seeking a rare find for your wardrobe, expert advice on your collection, or the author of your next read, this directory is your go-to guide. Explore the directory today and discover the vibrant community of the VFG!

Welcome to our newest members!

MARIE LODI (MakeoverMontage) Los Angeles, CA

Marie is a fashion and beauty journalist and vintage fashion enthusiast who has a special interest in costume design for film. Her [website](#) showcases insightful articles like "In 'Feud: Capote Vs. The Swans,' Wigs Help Weave a Story of Betrayal and Refusal to Age".

Want to get your fix of film fashion and behind-the-scenes insights? Follow her on Instagram (@MakeoverMontage) and TikTok (@MakeoverMontage)

ISABELLA CARELLO (Isabella Carello) Maxville, ON

Isabella brings her passion for vintage fashion to our platform with her Etsy shop, [MoonstoneAlley](#), offering styles from the Edwardian era to the 1990s. She has a background in print journalism and social services, and a history of running a brick-and-mortar shop called The Red Bolero. Isabella believes that "the real retail therapy is the vintage kind."

The VFG board for 2024

vintagefashionguild.org/about/board/2024-board

President: **MAGGIE MUELLNER**, USA

Vice President: **MAGGIE WILDS**, USA

Secretary: **HARRIET ULPH**, UK

Treasurer: **VICTORIA LAZAROVA**, USA

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Jolene Bramer, Terri Brown, Abby Kuehne, Sandra Mendoza,
Diana Peloza, Heather Ramey



facebook.com/vintagefashionguild



[VFG on Pinterest](#)



facebook.com/groups/vfgshop



[VFG on Twitter](#)



[@vintagefashionguild](https://instagram.com/vintagefashionguild)



[VFG on YouTube](#)



[@shopvfg](https://instagram.com/shopvfg)



[VFG on TikTok](#)

