



Vineyard designer favors classic lines

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New Englanders tend to be pretty casual when it comes to fashion. For many of us, jeans and T-shirts are de rigueur. We like things simple. But we're not averse to a little sophistication.

That's where Stina Sayre comes in.

The Swedish designer from Vineyard Haven favors clean, simple lines in a palette of earth and ocean tones, creating a line of clothes that translate easily from urban to seaside settings.

"Items like my jackets can be paired with some jeans and a T-shirt and look great," Sayre says. "I want to make beautiful things; I want everyone to buy my clothes because they love them. I create strong designs that bring together beauty and strength. Strong is sexy. I think my clothes are sophisticated sexy."

Stina Sayre knows about strong. Back in 1986, when she moved to Martha's Vineyard, she was one of the top 10 windsurfers in the world. As a petite, athletic woman, she says, she always had an aversion to "cute." Instead, she says, she opted for strong and classic.

"I design for a woman who is young at heart, a professional woman who has a mission in life and wants her clothing to be a supporting player," she says. "I give them clothes so they can do what needs to be done and feel their clothes represent them in a good way. Just like art that makes you feel something, I want women to feel wonderful about what they're wearing."

Sayre grew up in the northern midland of Sweden, but spent summers on the small islands that dot the coast. Her designs reflect both her life on Martha's Vineyard and her Swedish background.

She says her interest in fashion comes naturally. She grew up in a family that owned clothing stores and was very artistic.

"I can't do anything about thinking creatively, it's just who I am. I thrive on it. Ideas are always popping out of my head. It's just so natural to me," she says.

Her line includes apparel and accessories.

For fall, she's designed asymmetrical fleece jackets, fitted leather coats and wool sweaters with industrial zippers. Her tops are comfortable and versatile — something you could wear to work or on the weekend.

The spring line features ballerina-type skirts that, paired with a tailored jacket, make an outfit for day and night.

Though her classic designs emphasize simplicity and function, Sayre is not afraid to take a walk on the wild side. Exhibit A: fur-trimmed fingerless gloves. Exhibit B: long leggings in Italian lambskin that drape over boots. It's her favorite garment of the season.

Prices include \$55 for the fingerless gloves, \$79 for a cowl neck shirt, \$185 for wool tie-wrap pants and \$245 for a fleece wrap jacket.

When you visit Sayre's Vineyard Haven boutique/studio, her hope is that you gain an appreciation for what goes into creating a garment by hand.

"When people come in, they see my patterns, fabric swatches and bolts of fabric, they see what goes into the craft," she says. "We live in this mega-manufactured world. I try to show real handcraftsmanship, which is so far away from the world of a billion of everything. I want people to understand this is something to treasure that you have the rest of your life. There's a true quality of design."

Her small operation requires great creativity. Sayre employs local people to help sew her clothes, and she travels to New York to find deals on fabric, often buying leftover yardage from bigger designers.

Now that Sayre's daughter and son are 18 and 12 years old, respectively, she says she's enjoying being able to focus on her line and put the time she needs to into her business. But she says she doesn't plan to get too big and lose that personal touch.

"This is a very hard job," she says. "I hire help for certain things, but I'm involved in everything. I'm very proud and feel like I know what I'm doing. This is right for me. I'm secure in my profession, but do I want to work 80 hours a week? Probably not. I want to be someone people seek out to get their special clothing, but I don't plan on being a brand name."

For more information

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